

Sexism in Indian Education

“. . . It is more important, if there can be any comparison, for the women of a nation to be educated — than its men. One of the truest measures of a nation's advancement is the state of its women . . .”

Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, 1964: p. 424

In the land of Saraswati, where learning is embodied as a goddess, Hindu women were traditionally forbidden to read the scriptures.

The position of women in India represents a paradox. On the one hand women are visible in positions of power and prestige. On the other, the great mass of women are illiterate, powerless and vulnerable.

This paper examines the factors which act as barriers to women in India with regard to education, and which prevent them from achieving equality of status and opportunity — rights guaranteed to them by the constitution. The issues involved in the access, practices and outcomes of the educational system which reflect the social system are related to socio-cultural norms dictating women's role in the family and society, female ideology in terms of status, and society's stage of economic development.

Inequality in women's position is at least, two-fold. Inequality in socio-economic terms is not by any means unique to India or Third World countries, but its scope is more pervasive in poor countries. The small group of women who have university degrees form about 3% of the female population. They are part of the urban middle class and are the élite for whom education and modernization are generating new life options. Their lives are in no way similar to the masses of illiterate women whose basic concern is survival.

Inequality in the status of men and women is also a universal occurrence. Sexual stratification is a complex phenomenon, and while some women of some sections are better off than men of other sections, the salient feature is that in each section of society women are under-

privileged in social, economic and political spheres (Ghosh, 1981: xi). The question with regard to human rights and sexism is, are women from all sections more disadvantaged than men of those sections of society? The impact of inequality is magnified on women of lower socio-economic groups. In India the situation is more complex because of urban-rural disparities, as well as regional, religious and cultural differences. To the extent that women in India suffer from the disadvantages or repressions according to gender and class they are victims of what can be called the multiple negative, and therefore face both vertical (class) and horizontal (gender) oppression. There is no question that the issue of human rights must focus first on basic rights for all — males and females — in terms of food, shelter and clothing. The economic aspect must precede equality of distribution because socialism is not a distribution of poverty; and equal opportunity is meaningless if it means equal deprivation.

Sexism

When women are excluded from participating in any sphere of activity on the basis of their gender, it is sexism. Sometimes discrimination is overt, but in the face of equality legislation and ideology, it tends to acquire covert forms, as for example, by denying opportunities through social restrictions. The attempt here is to analyze sexism in the educational system, whether perceived or not. Some elite women do not face many problems in society and may not see themselves as being unfairly treated. Many are not aware of their rights and do not perceive discrimination because their socialization teaches them to accept differential treatment without question. For the majority, economic needs are so overriding that further discrimination does not seem important.

The Indian Constitution

In modern India the demand for independence¹ and the adoption of Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution² (1949) were based on the belief that democracy cannot be established unless certain rights are assured to all citizens and that guaranteeing these rights would be meaningless unless inequality is banished and each individual is assured of equality of status and opportunity. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution mentions essential individual rights reflecting the spirit of Article 1 of the U.N. Declaration:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”

The classification of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of India begins with the right to equality. A number of provisions relate to the rights and status of women: discrimination is illegal on the basis of sex etc. (Article 15:2), equality of opportunity in employment is guaranteed (Article 16), and Article 14 guarantees equality before the law.³ The provision of education for all up to the age of 14 is a Constitutional responsibility (Article 45). An important goal is "to guarantee equality of opportunity for all in education to improve their quality of life and to participate in the tasks of promoting the general well-being of society" (India, 1981a, p. 43).⁴

Evidence suggests that while far-reaching changes in women's position have taken place since independence in 1947, and some gains have been made by females, particularly in higher education (Ahmad, 1979), inequality in the education of women is pervasive and substantially disparate in terms of access, survival, sex-differentiation by field and content, and social economic outcome. In India today, as universally, women still have lower status in society than men, less women are literate, they are less educated and concentrated in female fields of study which restrict their economic opportunities.

Women and Education

Although it is almost 100 years since the first Indian woman obtained a University degree, till independence there was very little improvement in woman's educational status. And the roots of the problems in post-independent India can be traced back to the colonial Period when formal education of women started. The impact of the British Government in the evolution of formal education in India is significant. The colonial administration initially cast the educational system in a male mold (Smock, 1981) and favoured the education of boys for government service jobs. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Victorian concept of females as helpless and dependent excluded women from the public sphere and relegated women to the private or domestic sphere. In general, the British policy was cautious with regard to women's education. Even Indian social reformers who emphasized the importance of educating women during that period did so to raise their status within the family, to make them more capable in their traditional roles as wives and mothers (India, 1974: p. 234), rather than for participation in the wider social sphere.⁵ The goal of women's education was linked to the conception of marriage as the only career for women. A differentiated curricula supported by the Education Commission of 1882, was based on the view that certain subjects were more suited for the desirable roles girls were expected to

perform in society. Hygiene, domestic science, needlework and music are examples of subjects which emerged as "feminine," while physics, chemistry and mathematics became "masculine" subjects (Ahmad, 1982). Private girls' schools, both missionary and those run by social reformers emphasized the feminine subjects and did not generally have female staff trained in science subjects.

The issues and the manifestations of the problems were governed by differential responses in the social context to women by class, religion, culture and region. Women's education was given impetus by private organizations and their activities were restricted to urban areas, and rural areas were almost entirely neglected. During that period social handicaps such as sati, child marriage, the ban on widow remarriage, and purdah (or seclusion) denied women access to education. The effects of purdah and its related concept of female chastity and honour continue to have its impact to this day in terms of early withdrawal from school and fear of co-educational institutions. Although practices such as sati and child marriage are now illegal, the Report of the National Committee on women's education summarized the problem in 1959 thus:

Illustrious women who, inspite of such adverse social conditions made their mark as statesmen, rulers, soldiers or saints, appeared in all parts of the country from time to time and were honored by men and women alike. But even such exceptions do not reduce the gloom of the general picture of the subjection of women who were denied opportunities for education (India, 1959: p. 13)

Independence became a "watershed in the history of women's education in India" (Ahmad, 1982). Nevertheless the wide disparity in the education of men and women at the end of the colonial period (Table I), the impact of past policies and practices, and a long history of a lack of education for women were great handicaps for the new government.

TABLE I

	1951	1981
Female literacy	7.9	24.8
Male literacy	25.0	47.7

With the acceptance of the equality of women after independence the purpose of their education was recognized as being the same as men's education. It was seen as a means of providing equal opportunity, and more recently emphasised the need for human resource development in the process of national development (Mies, 1981: p. 132). The cur-

riculum emphasized vocational and occupational bias. However, as the Report on the Status of Women (1974) points out, there is evidence of ambivalence between the old and new views regarding the content and purpose of women's education both among individuals and in official documents. The impact of this ambivalence on educational planning, allocation of resources and development of societal values is significant. It has been pointed out that the idea was to reform society not change it (Ahmad, 1982), because neither increased education nor constitutional guarantees strike at the structure of social relations of men and women. Until the perceptions of the social roles of men and women change significantly the ideas of women's education and career training will continue to be viewed as being at the cost of their traditional social role (whereas men's education and career development have never been questioned in terms of their social roles as fathers and husbands).

What is the contemporary picture? The enrollment of girls at the elementary school level in 1979-80 dropped from 55.9% in classes I-V to 27.7% in classes VI-VIII as compared to boys 100.2% in I-V and 52% in VI-VIII (India, 1981a). The percentage of girls in the total elementary population was 35% in the same year, and by the time they reached the tertiary level the figure was 26% of total for females (UGC, 1981).

Women and Equality of Opportunity

Given the great heterogeneity of India it is important to link dimensions of traditional culture, religion, region and class to attitudes and decisions regarding the education of girls. The lack of data makes it difficult to establish a causal connection between cultural characteristics for example, and opposition to girls' schooling. Nevertheless, certain factors are obvious hindrances to the concept of equality of educational opportunity for girls. Equality of opportunity can be analyzed in four ways (Finn, 1980): (1) equal access to the educational system, (2) equal participation in the educational system, (3) equal educational results, and (4) equal educational effects on life chances.

1. Equal access to the educational system regardless of social circumstance and retention depends both on availability of facilities and the disposition to take advantage of these facilities. In India, these are in turn affected by a constellation of variables such as social norms and values relating to women which are critical in defining women's roles and which affect all dimensions of their education (Smock, 1981). Availability of educational opportunities does not ensure their utilization. While there are regional religious and class differences, in gen-

eral, lack of special facilities makes access and retention for girls less likely. Girls' schools are few and tend to be run by private organizations. In 1970-71, 70% of girls enrolled were in boys' institutions and only 30% in girls' institutions. Norms disapproving co-education lead to withdrawal as girls grow up, especially in rural areas. Lack of teachers at Secondary levels, absence of suitable transportation and boarding schools for girls, and early marriages are additional reasons why only about a quarter of all girls enrolled in class one complete primary school. The benefits of female education are maximized when the traditional value system is conducive to the expansion of women's roles (Smock, 1981). Not only are there urban/rural disparities regarding women's roles, but there is an overlap between regional and religious factors because different religious communities respond according to the variations in their socio-cultural traditions (Ahmad, 1982: p. 26). The 1959 Report of the National Committee for Women's Education identified regional imbalance as a major drawback in women's education, and *Towards Equality* (1974) stressed the need for equal distribution of educational privileges not only among males and females, but also among women from different regions, castes and religious groups. Scheduled caste women in rural areas are the most disadvantaged in the country in spite of the government's progressive discrimination policy for scheduled castes and tribes. The tribal groups of the North-Eastern States (some of whom practise matriarchy) are distinct from other tribal groups in the position they accord to women, and the rapid advances made in the education of their women, not surprisingly, is significant. Traditional patterns of female seclusion designed to preserve female virtues view the education of girls as risky. Communities which have historically practised *purdah* and therefore sex-segregation, have low education rates among their female populations. Cities and regions with high proportion of Muslims or scheduled castes and tribes indicate low literacy rates while those with a relatively high percentage of Christians have high literacy rates. In general, the Southern States have maintained higher literacy rates (Gopal and Madhav, 1974). A survey conducted by the Status of Women Committee indicates that lack of formal education among Muslim women continues to be very high even in those States which have made considerable progress in women's education (India, 1974, p. 268). The wide gap in urban/rural education is universal in India, but interestingly the rural literacy rate in Kerala is higher than the country's city population as a whole (Gopal and Madhav, 1974). There are several reasons for this: *purdah* is not practised even among the Muslims of Kerala, the Nairs followed a matriarchal system, and Kerala has a fair sized Christian population. The gap between the

education of boys and girls at the primary level is largest in Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and the least in Kerala, Meghalaya, Manipur and Punjab (India, 1981a: p. 186).

Cultural bias is an important determinant of opposition to female education. The perception of women as dependent, first as daughter, then as wife and finally as mother is not an incentive for investment in their education. Fathers, in general, continue to be unwilling to invest in the education of their daughters and would rather divert funds for their dowry, a practice still prevalent in many areas, social classes, as well as religious groups. Their greater claims to boys' incomes in the absence of social security in old age induces them to the preferential treatment of boys. Girls are "lost" to the family after marriage and in any case they do not need to go to school to learn to be wives and mothers. In fact, education is viewed often as making them defiant and unsuitable for their traditional role. Not surprisingly, dropout rates for girls is higher than for boys and two-thirds of this wastage occurs in class one (India, 1959). Interestingly, the gap between male and female enrollment is narrowing much more rapidly at the University level than in primary and secondary levels in India, unlike in Western countries. The proportion of women enrolled at the collegiate level rose from 10% in 1950-51 to 27.2% in 1980-81 (UGC 1981). This is because class is an important determinant of educational opportunities for girls. University education is more or less confined to urban centres and middle and upper classes where educated men have a preference for educated brides. In the upper-middle class there is no distinction in the education of boys and girls. The number of colleges exclusively for women rose from 95 in 1950-51 to 609 in 1980-81 (UGC, 1981). In addition, economic need in the middle class is encouraging double income families and women must have some education for the service oriented jobs which they generally enter, although a small percentage get into professional fields.

The more inequities in income, the more highly stratified the society, and the greater the traditional basis for social differentiation, there is less prosperity for the majority of women, in addition to other disadvantages in lower socio-economic groups (Smock, 1981). In India it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between cultural and economic forces as a major determinant to lack of access and high wastage levels. With the majority population below the poverty line, extreme poverty coupled with cultural disparities reduces aspirations, and the opportunity costs of educating girls (who are more useful at home) enforces a legacy of limited opportunities for girls and displaces them in the education system.

2. The participatory factor is most significant. The question is: are girls and boys accorded equal chances in the educational process, i.e. are they exposed to the same curricula and treated in the same way, or is there sexrole stereotyping? The need for a separate curricula for girls had been accepted as official policy in women's education since the Hunter Commission of 1882. It was not until 1959 that this view was challenged when the National Committee on women's education recommended no differentiation in curriculum on the basis of sex. The Committee on the Differentiation of Curricula for Boys and Girls (1964) endorsed a common curricula emphasizing that differences exhibited by men and women are the result of social conditioning and unequal social position accorded to the two sexes in society. The Committee on the Status of Women (1974) notes that while a common curricula is widely accepted, and girls are increasingly taking science and maths courses, many States still continue to prescribe different curricula for girls and boys. Girls schools tend to employ "feminine" subjects and make less provision for science and maths, and adequate numbers of female teachers are not trained in those areas. The Recommendations on Women's Education by the Education Commission (1965) proposed an educational system conducive to sex-role equality, reiterating the 1964 report that differences among males and females are the results of social conditioning.

An amendment to the Indian Constitution in 1976 proposed to "... remove any practice derogatory to the dignity of women" (Kalia, 1980: p. 209). Several organizations which prepare and approve text books at the national level have developed guidelines for the State agencies which control school text books. While the scheme of things has been theoretically designed in favour of women, a study analysing the content of Hindi and English language text books (classes 9-11),⁶ (Kalia, 1980: p. 210) asserts that school books "promote an ideology which refuses females equal access to opportunities and rewards even in areas where the sex of a person is totally irrelevant." The result is that the educational system, subtly through its text books, is preparing "males for a bustling world of excitement and decision making, while conditioning the females to seek fulfillment in the background where servitude and support are the only requirements." Male characters clearly dominate the text books, hold a large variety of occupational roles many of which are prestigious, and display attributes of bravery, intelligence, achievement and action orientation. "In Indian text books," says Kalia "the best of humanity is masculine" (p. 217). Female characters are not only in a minority, but are depicted in service-oriented occupations or in ascriptive roles such as Queen. Women appear most often as housewives, "an occupation that defines

their identity in terms of domesticity and economic dependence on the male" (Kalia, 1980: p. 215). Females are characterized by their beauty, obedience and self-sacrifice —they "merely exist." To quote Kalia again: "the texts condone the use of physical and verbal abuse against women who fail to comply with archaic sex-role expectations." (p. 223). The variety of roles depicted by women through the ages in India, and the many examples of wisdom, bravery and achievement displayed by them are not adequately treated in the books that Indian school children read. In general they tend to stereotype males and females and "are decidedly patriarchal and male favoured" (p. 223).

Denying females the full range of course contents and sex-role models, and thus limiting their aspirations is to deny them equal opportunity in another sense (Finn, 1980: p. 52).

3. What are the *results* of differential curricula and treatment of males and females? An important question is how the process of education affects student achievement. What is the significance of the messages of the "hidden" curriculum in educational results? Although there is very little data on the impact of the "hidden" curriculum, the results of differential treatment in the formal system are obvious at the tertiary level (Table II). Women continue to be concentrated in faculties of Education and Arts. Their enrollment in medicine has lately been more or less constant. The enrollments in Education and Medicine can be explained partially because of the symbiotic relationship in girls' colleges and female patients. Teaching is attractive, because it is considered more suitable for combining with women's home roles. Enrollment in Commerce and Science fields indicate improvement.

TABLE II

	Percentage of Female Enrollment Faculty Wise								
	Arts	Science	Comm.	Educ.	Eng/ Tech.	Med.	Agri.	Vet. Science	Law
1950-1	16.1	7.1	.6	32.4	0.16	16.38	0.17	0.45	2.1
1970-1	33.2	18.6	3.1	36.5	1.0	22.9	0.5	0.7	3.7
1980-1	37.7	28.7	15.9	47.3	3.8	24.4	3.3	3.3	6.9

Source UGC, Delhi, 1981

Several recommendations have been made to facilitate and promote greater involvement of women in Science and Technology.

TABLE III

Subject	Percentage of Women			
	Enrolment at the M.Sc. level		Research Enrolment	
	1978-79	1979-80	1978-79	1979-80
Physics/ App. Physics	16.70	18.09	14.69	16.27
Chemistry/ App. Chem.	23.61	24.98	20.45	21.19
Mathematics/ App. Maths.	18.70	21.05	25.96	15.68
Statistics/ App. Stats.	18.57	19.79	16.81	12.91
Biological Sciences	34.95	31.56	21.67	26.13
Botany	38.65	33.49	31.11	28.05
Zoology	40.69	35.38	26.63	26.45
Geology/ Geo-Physics	4.62	32.35	11.89	4.33
Geography	34.80	—	25.45	39.22
Home Science	98.00	100.	96.52	95.52
Micro Biology	40.28	37.95	25.00	27.94
Anthropology	45.29	43.26	49.96	50.08
Bio Sciences	40.08	37.00	27.05	32.66
Others*	33.92	25.28	21.53	20.35
Total	26.64	27.19	23.21	22.13

Source: India: 1981b

The enrollment figures in Table III indicate that at the M.Sc. level only 26.4% (1978-79) and 27.19% (1979-80) are women. A disproportionate number are in Home Science: 98% (1978-79) and 100% in (1979-80). The research enrollment figures not surprisingly, are very similar.

The distribution of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) Fellowships in 1981 indicate that 30% were held by women, although their percentage at the junior category (36%) was larger than in the senior category (25%). Females show a preference for Bio-Chemistry, Biology and Medicine and less interest in Engineering, Earth Sciences and Physics.

Urban/rural disparities remain very high. In addition to attitudinal problems, structural problems such as hostel facilities for women become significant constraints for them to pursue science and technology courses away from home. In 1978-79 there were estimated to be 12,731 women's hostels as compared to 65,364 for men (India, 1981).

Enrollment figures (Chitnis, 1981) in the 356 Industrial Training Institutes in the country in 1977 show that in the 32 engineering trades (such as draughtsman, electrician, mechanic etc.) there were 597 wo-

men as compared to 134,313 men. In non-engineering trades (such as manufacture of utensils, sports goods, footwear etc.) there were 5,093 women and 11,346 men. The total figure for women is boosted because of high enrollments in tailoring and stenography.

In the apprenticeship training scheme there were 3,092 women and 101,923 men. Differences in where females finally end up in the educational system and training as a result of the many cultural, social and structural barriers they face culminate in the manifestation of yet another form of sexism — masculine and feminine employment ghettos.

4. Does the system of ideas relating to female education and female roles and behaviour developed through the educational system have special social and economic consequences? Better education of women generally results in increased life options such as marriage choices, increased sharing of authority within the family, lower fertility patterns, greater participation in social and political activities and increase in economic power (Ghosh, 1980). Economic power is usually accepted as a most influential factor in determining power and privilege. So the overall impact of inequalities in, and barriers to education are differences in economic potential which is eventually a difference in the status of men and women. Sex-segregation in the work force is a universal phenomenon, and even countries with egalitarian philosophies have not done away with relegating women to lower levels of pay, lower positions and to a marginal status of reserve labour.

Only 11.87% of the total female population of 15-59 years is in the work force as compared to 52.51% of men in the same age group. Census figures show that in 1971 94% of women workers were in the unorganized sector — over 80% in agriculture and the rest in non-agricultural occupations. Being in the unorganized sector means being outside the reach of laws, little job protection and the worst working conditions. They are subject to exploitation, and with little or no education they lack confidence and are unaware of their rights. The number of women in the organized sector is increasing rapidly and has jumped from 241,000 in 1965 to 1,370,000 in 1975.

With modernization and industrialization increased mechanization displaces female labour because they demand sophisticated skills which need education and training and which are generally available to males. The demand for unskilled women's labour is shrinking but the range of jobs open to educated women has widened in both public and private spheres. The emphasis on women's equality was expressed in the post independence period among the middle and upper classes in the sphere of higher education, in employment requiring higher education including non-traditional fields, and in politics (India, 1974).

An analysis of women scientists at CSIR in 1980 indicates that they constituted 30% of the total at category A (the lowest), 40% at category B and 20% at category C. Seventy percent women belonged to A and B although 50% of the total were in these two categories. Representation at the senior levels is very low — 4% of women held senior posts as compared to 14% of all scientists. At ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) representation of women in the scientific and technology staff increased from 2.6% of total in 1976 to 4.5% in 1980 (India, 1981b).

Women have competed for civil service jobs since Independence. Table IV indicates that while women's representation in the civil service and administration is increasing their proportionate participation is very low indeed. The proportion of women in higher ranks is also low. Educated women workers tend to be concentrated in the professions of teaching and medicine, but the majority occupy the low status positions: 19% doctors (high status) but 95% of nurses (low status) are female, 26% school teachers (mostly primary) but 17% at the collegiate level (colleges and universities). Women lawyers are not usually appointed as judges. A very small number of women who come from the upper-middle class are succeeding in management positions such as advertising, public relations and market research. Non-professional women with some education concentrate in clerical services.

More than half the women degree-holders and technical personnel are in teaching and their percentage goes down as the level of education progresses. UGC figures for 1981-82 indicate that only 12.5% of University faculty are women and they are concentrated in the lower ranks. A study done in 1983 (Ghosh, 1983) indicates that at the University level, while there are a few women in senior positions who are academically very successful and productive, the majority of women are on the periphery. The women indicate that their primary role is that of wife and mother, and teaching is for them a second income. Their satisfaction is derived from their primary role and they do not feel the need to publish or excel in research. They do not compete for rewards and do not perceive any inequalities vis-à-vis men. A very small minority who view themselves as being active in the academic milieu, have a strong consciousness of women's issues and perceive many subtle forms of discrimination (such as being overlooked for committee memberships). But for the majority equal rights with men is not an issue, either because their careers have less value in the hierarchy of roles or because they lack awareness of differential treatment. Although their pay scales are the same, women end up in

TABLE IV

	Indian Administrative Service						Personnel Indian Foreign Service						Indian Police Service					
	M	F	SCM	SCF	STM	STF	M	F	SCM	SCF	STM	STF	M	F	SCM	SCF	STM	STF
1972	1762	115	170	4	63	3	365	19	20	0	8	3	1347	0	179	0	12	0
1977	2338	218	273	8	111	5	371	38	38	1	13	4	1907	10	148	2	59	0
	Indian Forest Service						Central Information Service						Indian Economic Society					
1972	781	0	30	0	19	1	792	29	61	1	9	0	368	19	16	0	0	0
1977	1098	0	51	0	33	0	709	33	62	1	63	9	426	22	22	0	9	0

Source: Women in India, 1978.

SCM - Scheduled Caste Male
 SCF - Scheduled Caste Female
 STM - Scheduled Tribe Male
 STF - Scheduled Tribe Female

the lower rungs. A study of Indian women scientists supports these findings (Raj, 1982).

Women's presence in politics actually indicates a decline. In 1957, 1,474 males and 45 females contested Lok Sabha seats and 467 males and 27 females got elected. In 1977, the figures are 2,369 males and 70 females contested while 523 males and 19 females got elected. Although more females contested, their number in parliament dropped from 27 to 19. This is even more obvious in the State Legislative Assemblies where in 1957, 193 females got elected as compared to only 28 in 1974-77. (India, 1978).

While economic necessity, especially in the urban middle-class has changed social attitudes towards women's wage employment, there continues to be discrimination in recruitment and further advancement, and subtle obstacles to the utilization of women's education.

Conclusion

Disparities in the proportion of men and women at different levels of responsibility are important indicators of the unequal employment status and opportunity for men and women which are the direct result of a combination of factors, i.e. the educational system, training, job-orientation and culture conditioning. (India, 1974: p. 214).

While there are no visible constraints to educational access, and there is little direct evidence of inequality in employment, the above discussion indicates the following picture in contemporary India.

(a) The gap in the educational enrollment of boys and girls at all levels is very wide. The disparity in male and female literacy rates is phenomenal.

(b) Women concentrate in "female" fields of study and still have very low enrollment in technical and engineering schools and professions.

(c) Consequently, women are in sex-segregated employment ghettos. This occupational Balkanization means first, that women are concentrated in lower status, lower paying jobs, and this is a glaring manifestation of sexism in education and society. Second, in a transitional society like India's where modernization is making rapid changes, the impact of the application of technology on women's employment is severe. Not only are their present economic roles threatened by technology, but new technological methods do not include them, and retraining overlooks women. So, females are hardest hit by a patriarchal system of technology. Moreover, technological change has other far-reaching consequences for women. Lack of education in technological fields effectively cuts women off from the increasing number of technical jobs in a modernizing nation. The

urgency for development requires flexibility and adaptability in all workers. Low levels of education and literacy makes this less feasible for women.

Studies examining women's entry into the labour force indicate problems of role conflict and discrimination (overt or covert) in employment (Chiplin & Sloane, 1976; Schonberger, 1971; Myrdal & Klien, 1956).

Those who utilize their education in the workforce share the universal burden of double work for women. Even reproductive technologies which affect the lives and bodies of women most dramatically are proving to be not so liberating because of women's lack of decision-making power. But familial roles are seen as giving intrinsic rewards and satisfaction, and the higher priority given to them obviates the need for competitive rewards at work, thus minimizing role conflict. Education in science and technology must lead towards reducing the dudgery in what is now women's work. The utilization of scientific and technological knowledge should make it possible for all workers to enjoy more leisure.

The majority of women do not have a group consciousness of denial of opportunities and societal rewards. Socialization, through education and society, limits their aspirations, and they are either not aware of being discriminated against or they accept the differential treatment.

Indian women have paid terribly for our insensitivity, but they have also extracted a heavy toll from a society which has not yet learnt to live with all aspects of womanhood. In that respect theirs is not, what Rollo May would call, a case of "authentic innocence" but that of "pseudo innocence." This innocence leads one to participate in a structurally violent system because of the unawareness of one's power to intervene in the real world and because of the indirect psycho-social benefits of being a victim. (Nanda, 1976: p. 160).

The nature of society's attitude, both men and women's, regarding women's roles and behaviours contributes significantly towards preventing women from action and innovation. What is most important is the way women view themselves and their capabilities. Nehru reminded women ". . . that no people, no group, no community, no country, has ever got rid of its disabilities by the generosity of the oppressor. . . the women of India will not attain their full rights by the mere generosity of the men of India. They will have to fight for them . . ." (Gopal, 1972: p. 362). Education is known to bring greater confidence, but to the vast majority of women who do not exercise this right, and to those who are subjected to unequal opportunity in the educational process, fighting for rights is as distant as is equality in

their status. For the minority who have higher levels of education, it is used to improve their social position in the present structure, not change it. So, women continue to play their traditional roles, and take on the additional occupational role. It follows therefore, that they should go in such large numbers to teaching, because teaching, particularly at the lower levels, is an extension of their traditional roles. Crossing the frontier by taking up paid employment did not violate women's traditional image, rather it was a happy compromise of the domestic and occupational spheres.

The position of Indian women is generally believed to have shifted dramatically through the ages. In Vedic times they are said to have had considerable freedom. But their condition deteriorated over time and they were worst off on the eve of the colonial era. They continued to be subjected to the many disabilities they suffered during the greater part of British rule. But social reformers in the 19th and 20th centuries, mostly men but also women, achieved great success in questioning and eradicating some social customs which debilitated women. Education of women was given great predominance as the most significant instrument for changing their subjugated position. A dramatic change in women's status occurred when Gandhi underscored the importance of women's participation in the civil disobedience movement, and women from various sections in urban and rural areas responded to the call to fight for independence. Nehru wholeheartedly supported women's involvement in the freedom movement and believed that "In a national war, there is no question of either sex or community" (Gopal, 1972: p. 236-7). The impetus for women's education was given great emphasis in the wake of social and economic reconstruction initiated after Independence.

Given the socio-cultural and political disabilities of women at the end of the colonial era women's progress in literacy, educational enrollment, employment and status has been remarkable. But there is sufficient evidence that women are not effectively deriving the full benefit of the human rights principles guaranteed to them by the Constitution. Despite the commitment made by the Indian government through human rights legislation and many committees, equal opportunity is not realised by males and females alike. Social, economic, regional, religious and cultural factors combine in denying them full participation in educational opportunities. The effects of this have at least two dimensions because they impose limits on women's capacities, first, by restricting the range of options, and second, by decreasing possibilities of influencing others' attitudes and behaviours towards them (Ghosh, 1981a: p. 414).

It is evident that the question of equality cannot be limited to a legal approach concerned with fundamental liberties and human rights. While legislation is undoubtedly an important factor in the elimination of inequalities and discriminations, there is need for a dynamic orientation whereby women's position is viewed in terms of full participation in social, political, cultural and economic aspects, and by their integration in national development. While India's political revolution may be said to have been adequate, its social revolution is incomplete. Failure to implement a national educational policy at Independence has resulted in political development paradoxically retarding social change. A general level of education is imperative for democratic socialism which implies social justice because education not only means political awareness, but also consciousness of civic and fundamental rights. Values cannot be legislated and progressive legislation is not much use to the majority of women who are not aware of their rights and who, because of differential socialization of males and females, do not perceive discrimination and inequality. Education is viewed as a force capable of generating new life options by socializing men and women for a modern society. Paradoxically, education often contributes to the maintenance of existing situations.

The real beneficiaries of education and equality legislation have been urban middle-class women who constitute a small minority. The majority of women do not, or cannot, exercise their rights in education and society because social and structural changes produced by modernization, and an egalitarian ideology since independence, have not been accompanied by parallel changes in values and attitudes towards women.

Political revolution is important and economic revolution is still more important, but the most important of all is the social revolution in the people ... Women play the most important part in the social revolution.

Jawaharlal Nehru (Gopal, 1964: p. 424).

There are many inequalities to be dealt with. And there are no magic solutions. But if women are ever going to achieve equality of opportunity and status, the function of education in the next few years is crucial. The role of education is not only to provide schooling but to stimulate the minds of both females and males to ask why inequalities exist, and how they can be changed.

NOTES

1. The demand that Indians have a right to shape their political destiny was expressed by Mahatma Gandhi: "Swaraj will not be a free gift of the British Parliament: it will be a declaration of India's full self-expression." (Basu, 1976: p. 14).
2. This was done regardless of British opinion against the inclusion of written rights in a Constitution. The Constitution of England is unwritten, and therefore there is no code of Fundamental Rights as exists in the Constitution of the U.S., Canada and other written Constitutions. This does not mean, of course, that there is no recognition of fundamental rights in England. But the foundation of individual rights is negative and individual liberty is secured by the judiciary. (Basu, 1976: p. 70).
3. The above prohibitions against discrimination would not preclude the State from making special provision for women because they are seen as requiring special protection in view of their existing position in Indian society (Basu, 1976: p. 80.). In addition, Article 1 states in section (a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, and in section (d) that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
4. The State governments provide free education to all children at least up to Class V, and at the upper elementary and through the secondary levels free education is given to girls in all States, even when, in a few States, it is not given to boys.
5. The separation of roles into "public" and "private" spheres has generally meant asymmetrical roles and differential participation of males and females in the two structurally opposed spheres of activity (Ghosh, 1981: p. 413).
6. The text books in the sample of this study had an annual readership of more than 1.3 million students in five areas of North and North Western India.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, Karuna, 1979, "Equity and Women's Higher Education," *Journal of Higher Education*, New Delhi: Monsoon, 1979, pp. 33-49.
- 1982. *The Social Context of Women's Education in India, 1921-81. Tentative Formulations. Occasional Papers on History & Society, No. 6.* Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi.
- Basu, Durga Das, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, Sixth Edition New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 1976.
- Chiplin, B. and P.J. Sloane, 1976, *Sex Discrimination in the Labour Market*. London: McMillan.
- Chitnis, S., 1981, "Dimensions of Discrimination in the Employment of Women — Legal Protection and Education for Equity." Paper presented at the Seminar on Sex Discrimination in Gainful Employment, Indian Institute of Education, Pune.
- Das, M.N., *The Political Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru*. London: George Allen & University, 1961.
- Finn, J.D., J. Reis and L. Dulberg, 1982, "Sex Differences in Educational Attainment: The Process" in Kelly, G.P. and Elliott, C.M. (eds.) *Women's Education in the Third World: Comparative Perspectives*. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 107-126.
- Ghosh, Ratna, 1981a, "A Minority Within A Minority: On Being South Asian and Female in Canada," in Kurian, G. and R. Ghosh (eds.) *Women in the Family and the Economy: An International Comparative Survey*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- 1983, *General Job Satisfaction and Perceptions of Academic Roles: A Study of Male and Female Academics in India*. Report to the Shastri India-Canadian Institute, Montreal.
- 1981b "Introduction" in Kurian G. and R. Ghosh (eds.) *Women in the Family and the An Economy: International Comparative Survey*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Gopal, K. and Madhav, S. "Patterns of City Literacy" *Economic and Political Weekly* IX: 20, May 18, 1974.
- Gopal, S. (ed.), 1972, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- India Govt. of, 1951, *First Five Year Plan*, Government of India, 1951.

- 1953, *Report of the Secondary Education Commission*, 1953.
- India, Govt. of, 1959, Report of the National Committee on Women's Education, Ministry of Education, New Delhi.
- 1966, *Report of the Education Commission 1964-65*, Ministry of Education, New Delhi.
- 1974, Committee on the Status of Women in India Report: *Towards Equality*, Dept. of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, New Delhi.
- 1978, *Women in India: A Statistical Profile*, Ministry of Social Welfare, New Delhi.
- 1981a, *Education in India, 1970-71*, Ministry of Education & Social Welfare, New Delhi.
- 1981b, Report of the Working Group on Personnel Policies for Bringing Greater Involvement of Women in Science and Technology, Ministry of Social Welfare, New Delhi.
- Kalia, N.N., 1982, "Images of Men and Women in Indian Textbooks," in Kelly, G.P. and Elliott, C.M. (eds.) *Women's Education in the third World: Comparative Perspectives*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 173-187.
- Mies, Maria, 1980, *Indian Women & Patriarchy*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co.
- Myrdal, A. and V. Klien, 1956, *Women's Two Roles, Home and Work*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Nanda, B.R., 1976, *Indian Women from Purdah to Modernity*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing.
- Pappu, S.S. Rama Rao, 1983, "Human Rights and Human Obligations: An East-West Perspectives" Mimeographed, Dept. of Philosophy, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.