

Khategaon

Local Education Report

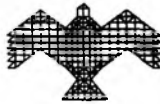
**MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES
AND
DYSFUNCTIONAL SCHOOLS**



**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES
BANGALORE**

*Marginalised Communities and
Dysfunctional Schools*

*Local Education Report
Khategaon, Madhya Pradesh*



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

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The Controller
National Institute of Advanced Studies
Indian Institute of Science Campus
Bangalore 560 012
Phone : 080-3604351
Email : mgp@hamsadvani.serc.iisc.ernet.in

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This brief report is part of a study on primary education conducted by the Sociology and Social Anthropology Unit at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. Field research was conducted between October 1999 and November 2001 in the following six areas: Jaunpur Block (Uttaranchal), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Khategaon Block (Madhya Pradesh), Bangalore (Karnataka), Tanjavur (Tamil Nadu), and Chirala (Andhra Pradesh). A composite report on all the sites will be available separately.

The objectives of this Local Education Report (LER) are to share the findings of the study with members of the communities in which this research was conducted and to disseminate the study widely. We hope that in each area members of the community, teachers, elected representatives, parents, education department personnel and others interested in promoting elementary education will find the report useful.

EKLAVYA has helped in conducting the field study in Khategaon block, Dewas district, Madhya Pradesh. Dhuleshwar Raut was the field researcher in this area and special thanks to him for his hard work

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and commitment. Dr. R. N. Syag and Dr. Anwar Jafri closely supervised the field research and Anjali Noronha helped initiate this collaborative research. Dr. Archana Mehendale and Sarita Tukaram helped compile the data and this report and Kala Sunder edited the report. I thank them all for their interest and support. Special thanks to all those who participated in the study - the children, both students and those out of school, principals, teachers, parents and other community members – for their time, patience and inputs.

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March 2002

A. R. Vasavi
NIAS, Bangalore

MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES AND DYSFUNCTIONAL SCHOOLS

“Shiksha mein dam nahi hai (Education does not have much substance)

“Today, the schools are useless”.

“People don’t even attend the 26th January function.”

“Our children are poor ... why would teachers come here to enroll them?”

“Sikhathe nahi, kuch bhi nahi (They don’t teach, nothing at all)”.

“Why will they attend schools and study? They come here because the government gives them free grains and goods”.

This is how some of the parents, children and teachers assess the state of primary education in three villages of Khategaon block, Dewas district, Madhya Pradesh. These words indicate that parents regard the schools as unsatisfactory, children are unhappy with their poor

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functioning and the lack of actual teaching and learning, and teachers are resentful of the new policies that seek to encourage poor children and those from low-ranked castes. Such a situation is doubly tragic because there has, recently, been a thrust for elementary education and more children than ever before in the history of the region are now attending school. A large number of people want their children to be educated and see education as a necessity. But the schools in the block leave much to be desired, despite recent improvements such as the construction of schools in most habitations, the introduction of decentralised administration of schools, the provision of incentives for attending school, and the introduction of several new programmes. Such a situation has arisen not because the people here are culturally disinclined towards education, but because of the poor functioning of the school system and the inability of the people to assert their rights to a quality education system. There is a wide gap between the State's new attempts to provide mass education and the people's need to be educated on the one hand, and the actual functioning of the schools, on the other. The end result is all-round frustration among the people over the conditions prevailing in the schools.

The situation is symptomatic of the severe crisis in the schools and schooling system of the region and there is an urgent need to understand the causes. This study focuses on identifying the patterns of functioning of schools and on understanding related problems¹.

¹ Dhuleshwar Raut conducted field research in the area for August 1999 to April 2000. He used participant observation, interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions to elicit people's views and experiences of elementary schools. He also observed classrooms in the three villages and interviewed teachers and members of the education administration in the Block.

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Three villages, Badiyali, Motipur and Kamlipur (all pseudonyms) of Khategaon block, were selected for intensive study. Motipur is 26 kilometres from Khategaon, the block headquarters, and is primarily an Adivasi settlement. Badiyali is a roadside village 6 kilometres from Khategaon and has a significant proportion of Scheduled Caste households. Kamlipur is 20 kilometres from Khategaon and is a multi-caste village with a significant number of Scheduled Tribe households, primarily Bhil and Gond, with a few Korku households. The conditions prevailing in these villages largely reflect the general conditions prevailing in the block as a whole.

Khategaon Block: As part of the Malwa plateau, Khategaon and its environs are predominantly hilly with far-flung settlements most of which are not connected by all-weather roads. Out of a total of 171 habitations only 16 are connected by all-weather roads². Most large villages have cultivable and irrigated lands owned predominantly by agricultural castes such as the Jat, Gujjar, Patidar and Yadav caste groups who are from the neighbouring states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Caste groups such as the Balayi, Mahatar and Charmakar come under the SC category and form 14.58 per cent of the population of the block³. They work mainly as agricultural labourers while some own small pieces of land. Artisans and service castes such as Badai (Carpenter), Kumavat (Potter) and Nai (Barber) also reside in the larger villages.

² Data compiled by EKLAVYA (Khategaon centre) from official Block and District data. 2001.

³ Ibid

Adivasis, or tribal people, account for 21 per cent of the total population of the block. The majority of the Adivasis (47 per cent) are Bhils, followed by the Gond (18 per cent), Korku (5 per cent) and a number of Bhilala⁴. Unlike most caste Hindu groups, the Adivasis own very little irrigated land and work as agricultural labourers. Many are also bonded labourers (*Hali*) of landowners in the area. Adivasi settlements within or in the vicinity of large, multi-caste villages are typically located on the periphery of the villages. In the forest settlements however, where Adivasis are predominant, their houses are not located on the periphery.

The economic divide between caste groups and Adivasis is matched by a socio-cultural divide. There are few or no social transactions between the groups and although Adivasis are not subject to direct untouchability, they are not allowed to enter some temples. Untouchability, however, is still widely practised by both the upper and middle-ranking caste groups against the Balayi and Charmakar *jatis*. Food touched by these communities is not consumed and is either thrown away or fed to cattle. Balayi and Charmakar are also not permitted to enter temples such as the Shiv mandir of the upper caste. It is not uncommon to find adult members of the community subjecting teachers from low-ranked castes to pollution rules and to practices of untouchability.

The literacy level for the block was 38 per cent in 1991, which was lower than the state average of 44.67 per cent and the district average

⁴ Ibid

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of 44.08 per cent. Of this, literacy among SCs was 30 per cent and of STs 15 per cent⁵. The decadal change from 1991 to 2001 has been significant with the district recording a 61.04 per cent general literacy level, 76.07 per cent for males and 44.90 per cent for females. While the gender gap is significant and persists, the rise in literacy rates for females (from 25.57 in 1991 to 44.90 in 2001) is higher than that for men.

Although the recent drive to establish a school in every settlement has led to all the settlements having a school, and to even the small ones in remote areas having an EGS (Education Guarantee Scheme) school, the ratio of teachers to schools and teachers to children remains low. For example, on an average, there are only 2.78 teachers per school and the student-teacher ratio is 103:1⁶. Recent data for Khategaon block indicates that 61 per cent of all school-aged children are enrolled, the dropout rate is 13 per cent, of which 18 per cent are SCs and 17 per cent are STs. However the highest dropout rate of 40 per cent is among ST girls⁷. In addition to these figures, it is the functioning of the schools and the people's assessment of the education system that require attention.

The low literacy levels and the problems related to the functioning of the basic education system in the block can be attributed to the absence of any significant public or mass thrust for building up educational institutions and to the low overall economic development of the area.

⁵ Census, 1991. Government of India.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Block Education Data, Block Education Office, Khategaon. 2000.

Compounding such factors is the fact that the society continues to be hierarchical and segmented with very little alteration in its caste-based functioning and allocation of resources. Based on our study of the three villages, the following were identified as the key issues that hamper the functioning of basic education institutions in the area.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

CONDITION OF SCHOOLS

While government records indicate that all the 171 habitations in the block have schools, the data does not indicate the condition of the schools, their functioning, and whether the children are learning. Our study, however, indicates that in all three villages, the schools were dysfunctional to varying extents and there was much scope for improving the condition of the schools. In Motipur, the two-room school was built by the Panchayat in 1978 on a quarter acre of land donated by a person from the Meena community. Only one teacher is assigned to teach the five standards in the school and according to the people most teachers have been irregular and uninterested in teaching. In Badiyali, the primary school functions out of a two-room building and the Panchayat office doubles up as a classroom. In Kamlipur, the two-room building was constructed in 1947 and has seen little or no maintenance since then. The flooring is chipped and the roof is on the verge of collapsing.

More significantly, the schools function in a sporadic manner and it is left to the whims and fancies of the teachers to either conduct classes

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or close the school. The researcher, Dhuleshwar Raut, noted that schools do not function regularly and are marked by high student and teacher absenteeism, periodic and unofficial closure, and inadequate teaching-learning practices. One significant indicator of the dysfunctionality of schools is the extent to which enrolment data itself are exaggerated and do not reflect the actual number of students present. For example, in all three villages, random and unannounced visits by the researcher revealed the following:

Kamlipur: 13 January 2000

Teachers arrive at 11:15 to open the school (the official school timings are 10:30 to 4:30). Classes are held until 1:15 when the school is closed for lunch. The post-lunch session starts at 2:30 and closes at 3:30. The total amount of time spent in teaching is only 2 hours and 45 minutes in a whole day. While the total number of children enrolled is 189, only 88 children are present but the number noted in the register is 150. Actual attendance is only 46 per cent. Three students and the headmaster spend much of the school time procuring wheat from the ration shop.

15 January 2000

Only one lady teacher comes to school and opens the rooms at 11:25. At 12 noon, only 46 students (24 per cent) are present. High absenteeism is attributed to Makara Shankaranthi on the previous day. At 12:15 the lady teacher requests the headmaster to close the school. The headmaster refuses but closes the school at 1 p.m. Though only 24 per cent of the students were present, the headmaster notes in the register that 147 students were present in the school.

23 February, 2000

School starts at 11:20 and only 8 girls and 25 boys are present, that is only 17 per cent of the children have come to school. Only two of the four teachers are present. Citing low student attendance, the headmaster closes the school at 2 p.m.

24 February, 2000

The bus from Khategaon does not arrive and three teachers are absent. One lady teacher opens the school rooms and waits with the children. The children wait till 12 noon and then leave. The school is then closed for a number of days for the following official reasons:

25 February, 2000	- Mandal Election
26 February, 2000	- “
28 February, 2000	- Pulse Polio
29 February, 2000	- “

As these details about the functioning of this school for part of February indicate, the school is closed for a variety of reasons and the actual number of teaching-learning hours is minimal. It is little wonder that such sporadic functioning of schools is the reason why many parents do not consider it worthwhile to have their children in school.

BADIYALI

The school in Badiyali functions similarly, although the village is on the highway and teachers do not have problems in commuting to the school from the township where most of them live.

15 November 1999

Only 61 (35 per cent) of the 173 children enrolled and only two of the four teachers are present. The headmaster enters the attendance as 131 children.

16 November 1999

Two teachers continue to be absent and only 74 (42 per cent) of the 173 children enrolled are present. On being questioned about the low enrolment, the teachers note that it is the harvest season and hence many of the older children have been taken to the fields by their parents.

17 November 1999

Again only 61 children (35 per cent) are present but the number of children present is registered as 126.

18 November 1999

Only 52 children (30 per cent) are present but 119 are noted as present.

Such a pattern of functioning, marked by low teaching-learning transactions and high teacher and student absenteeism accounts for the fact that many parents consider it futile to send their children to school, although they recognise the importance of education. The misrepresentation of student attendance in the register gets carried over to the block and district level data, indicating high student enrolment and attendance levels. Teachers, however, see this as a way to ensure that children receive the attendance required for them to be eligible for the monthly quota of grains.

That a diligent teacher can function well with the same facilities and perform her or his responsibilities is seen in the case of a SC teacher in Motipur village.

December 15, 1999

Motipur school is a single-teacher school. The master arrives and opens the doors and windows. He rings the bell and starts taking classes on time at 10:30. Since he is the only teacher, he divides his time between teaching and writing and is able to keep all the students engaged. He takes classes until 4:30. His register indicates that 59 of the 62 students enrolled were present.

However, this teacher was transferred by mid-2000 to another village school, though some parents protested and even made a representation to the Sarpanch. Another teacher was posted to the school at the beginning of the year, but he rarely came to the school. As a result, by September-October 2000 the school was completely dysfunctional; it was closed a good deal of the time, and even when it was open, attendance was thin and very little teaching and learning took place.

Box 1: If we were to build a school ...

“School will not be like this. It will have good walls and a strong roof. Mats for all. Desks only after Standard VIII. Boys and girls will have separate schools. There will be a proper board. Teachers will be nice and teach us. They can beat us when we don’t study.”

- Hemant, Mukesh, Suresh, Jawhar, Vithosh, Jamlesh (boys of Stds. V and VI, Kamlipur village, GPS.)

COMMUNITY-SCHOOL RELATIONS

The role, contribution and attitude of a community greatly influence the levels and conditions of education. In many of the villages in Khategaon, as in the villages studied in detail, generations of low-ranked caste groups and Adivasis have not been to school. Historically, this was due to caste-based economic and educational exclusion, but a certain cultural hesitation and a collective diffidence towards education continues to prevail even today. Many members from low-ranked caste groups considered education to be “meant only for the *seth-sabukar*”. Several parents questioned the value of sending their children to school when the chances of their securing formal employment were minimal. But thanks to the relatively intensive literacy campaigns and the activities of some NGOs in the area, such attitudes are no longer widely prevalent. Instead, there is a strong impetus for education which many parents feel can change lives.

Yet, a combination of factors places non-literate and economically and politically marginal parents in a situation where they are unable to ensure the adequate functioning of schools. For one, many non-literate parents are not accustomed to having any role in the management and functioning of schools. Many expressed the view that schools are the responsibility of teachers and not of parents.

“Ours is a tribal (Darbayi) settlement. People don’t understand things like education.”

“Teaching and schools are the responsibility of the Panditji – why should I check on it?”

Despite the introduction of the Panchayat system as a form of decentralised administration and as a way of challenging hereditary caste and land-based power structures, power continues to rest with the dominant landed caste groups. In Motipur, a predominantly Adivasi settlement, a person from the Meena caste was the Patel, and he continued to wield power in the village. The elected Sarpanch, an Adivasi, was not accorded high status and was not considered to be effective. Panchayat members did not regard education as an important issue and though it is the responsibility of the Sarpanch to call Shiksha Samiti meetings, they are rarely held.

Though many parents have sought to have their children educated, they are disheartened by the dismal state of schools which function irregularly and teach the children nothing. They see no way in which their inputs can improve the schools. They are critical of teachers who they feel receive high salaries for little or no work. As a result, village schools have gained the reputation of being dysfunctional.

Adivasi parents see schools as institutions with no positive role to play in their lives. In fact, many stressed that schools rendered their children useless, fit for neither the house nor for work, "*na ghar ka, na kaam ka*". This does not mean that they devalue education per se. It is rather a reflection of the extent to which the system is slack and does not do justice to the full human potential. In a culture where work and skill in multiple tasks are important, people see dysfunctional schools as only encouraging laxity in children.

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In Motipur, people were conscious of the extent to which individual teachers make a difference to the functioning of schools. They noted that two teachers, out of the six in the past ten years, had played positive roles. In 1999-2000, a teacher who rarely came to the school, was criticised by many of the parents. Yet, none of the parents had taken the initiative to complain about the teacher or to initiate any action against him. In all three villages, parents did not exhibit any sense of responsibility and did not exercise their rights with respect to the functioning of schools. The inability of parents to address school-related issues is also clear from the following:

1. Parents had not lodged complaints with the BEO's office though they had several grievances against the teachers and the poor functioning of schools.
2. The Sarpanch had not been asked to convene meetings to discuss issues relating to education or the functioning of schools.
3. Most parents did not know about the Shiksha Samiti.
4. Teachers were not questioned about their absenteeism or their reasons for asking children not to attend school.
5. Parents rarely visited the school.
6. The contribution of the Panchayats to the schools was minimal.

The Panchayats did not see education as a central issue that they should address. In Badiyali, the Panchayat was headed by a SC woman and the focus was on housing schemes and supply of drinking water. Many did not know about the Shiksha Samiti. No discussions were held about out-of-school children and although there was a *Padna- Badna*⁸

⁸ The Adult Literacy programme initiated by the Government of Madhya Pradesh.

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meeting in October 2000 there was no discussion about the school and its poor functioning.

In Kamlipur the Shiksha Samiti consists of 12 members and is headed by a Panch who holds a B.A. degree and owns a shop and some lands. The Shiksha Samiti met only three times in the whole of 2000. It met on September 1, 1999, with only four members present and discussed the purchase of furniture. Though the Panch visits the schools, he does not check on student enrolment and attendance.

Motipur's Panchayat is indifferent towards the school although one of the teachers had been able to persuade the Panchayat to repair the school building. Of the 12 Shiksha Samiti members, six are illiterate, four have primary education, one has completed Class 6 and the other Class 8. According to the teacher, even when meetings are called, the members do not attend, and ask the teacher to fill in whatever he pleases in the register after which they simply place their thumbprints to ratify the records.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Laxity in the administration of schools is evident at several levels. The introduction of new schemes such as the DPEP and EGS has enabled most settlements⁹ to have at least one room that can be called a "school". But the functioning of these schools and the use of proper teaching-learning practices are not assured. Though with the

⁹ The number of primary schools in the block has increased from 165 to 180.

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introduction of the DPEP scheme an academic co-ordinator, called a *Jan Shikshak*, has replaced the school inspector, there is little or no improvement in the overall supervision of the functioning of schools and the teaching practices. Schools are rarely inspected and the lack of supervision accounts for the high teacher absenteeism in most of the villages. In all the three villages studied, neither the BEO nor personnel from the education department visited the schools. The lack of supervision means that even the investments made in teacher training are wasted. For example, although many of the teachers had been trained in the new DPEP and “joyful learning” programmes, which have been welcomed by some teachers, most of the teachers in the schools that were studied did not put their new training into practice. Unsupervised, they relapsed into the old, conventional teaching methods. Similarly, teaching aids were not utilised and even the functioning of the school, such as regular opening, punctuality, etc. were not satisfactory. As our data on registers indicated, the exaggerated attendance rates and enrolment figures were also a result of poor administration and little or no accountability of teachers to the local community.

Perhaps what is singularly striking about the school administration is the fact that it continues to be hierarchical with regimented relations between the headmaster and the teachers and between the administrators and the teachers. Among the teachers, there is little team work or collaborative effort. At best, they collaborate to arrive at a consensus on when to go on leave. There is little evidence of a sense of collective responsibility for the functioning of the school and the quality of education.

SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION PROBLEMS IN SCHOOLS

While all SC and ST children are entitled to receive free textbooks, the supply is both inadequate and delayed. In Badiyali in 1999, only 50 sets of textbooks were received for 100 children. In Kamlipur, only 136 out of 183 children received textbooks. In Motipur, only six sets of uniforms were sent though there were about 60 children enrolled.

Inadequate supplies of school materials pose several problems for students, teachers and parents. Teachers have to select students who they think are the poorest and distribute books to them. Parents see this as discriminatory and many refuse to purchase textbooks though the school may be well into the academic year. While teachers regard this as an indication of the parents' indifference to education and their over-dependency on the government, parents assert that they are unable to afford the books. Such problems also lead to tensions between teachers and parents.

Though teachers are not permitted to prevent children from attending school when they do not have textbooks, we met two children, who were asked by their teachers not to come to school. One of them, a young girl of about eight years, continued to stand outside the class, though she had been asked not to attend school.

All SC and ST children in Stds. III to V are also entitled to receive Rs.150/- per year. This is seen by other parents as an example of how SC and ST groups are favoured by the government. Many teachers

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also grudge the children this amount. While the grain scheme which enables every child who has more than 80 per cent attendance to receive 3 kg of wheat is supposedly implemented, the supply is not regular.

TEACHERS

Problems of teachers: It would be easy to single out teachers as the key agents of the education system and lay much of the blame for the poor functioning of schools on them. Yet, teachers themselves face several problems and are often caught between poor working conditions, the stipulations laid down by the education administration, and inadequate teacher training and orientation.

The general working conditions of teachers are dismal. Facilities in schools are poor. All the schools that we studied had leaking roofs, uneven floors, unwashed buildings, and inadequate board-space. Teachers complained about these infrastructure problems, and pointed out that conditions such as a roof that was in danger of collapsing posed a threat to their lives. Such conditions reinforce their marginality in the system and do not make for a positive atmosphere. As many teachers noted, overcrowded classrooms housing more than thrice their capacity, hampered their work. Conducting multi-grade teaching in such crowded classes was a Herculean task because the teacher had to cope not only with limited space but also manage young and active children. While commuting to the villages was not only time consuming, and near impossible in the monsoons when the roads were impassable, residing in the villages was difficult. Not only were

houses unavailable, but the poor facilities also made it difficult for teachers to live there with their families.

Perhaps one of the biggest complaints among teachers was about what they saw as the excessive non-teaching work. As one of them put it, "Teachers are treated like cattle and burdened with work". They are expected to carry out a range of additional non-teaching duties which sidetrack them from their regular teaching schedules. Some of these duties are:

1. Dak work (taking enrolment and registration details to the BEO)
2. Census
3. BPL survey
4. Election duty
5. Animal husbandry census
6. Enrolment drives
7. Pulse Polio drives
8. Filling in the grain allotment cards for the children.

Four days of every month are spent on *dak* work. Such non-teaching duties are particularly distracting for teachers in single-teacher schools. Unable to manage the school and cope with the extra duties, teachers close the school. This results in a high rate of school closure.

TEACHERS AND THEIR SOCIAL BACKGROUND

While these are some of the logistical problems in the functioning of schools, the social background of the teachers also influences their relations with the community as a whole and the children in particular.

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Though a majority of children in these villages are from the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste groups, most teachers come from other relatively higher-ranked caste backgrounds. The social background of teachers in the block is largely reflective of that of teachers in the district. For example, in 1999, the caste background of the teachers was as follows: 47 per cent General Caste, 25 per cent Other Backward Caste, 17 per cent Scheduled Caste, 9 per cent Scheduled Tribe. In addition, only 25 per cent of the teachers were women. These caste differences influence the teachers' assessment of the capability or educability of children, and their eligibility to receive material support from the government. Caste considerations also impact interaction between teachers and children. Although untouchability is practised in the village, it was not observed in the schools. However, many of the teachers, and not just those belonging to high-ranked castes, expressed negative views and assessments about the capabilities of the children.

Many teachers are resentful of the incentive schemes initiated by the government to induce children to attend school. They expressed opinions such as, "They receive grains, free textbooks, uniforms ... and yet they don't come to school". A male, upper-caste teacher was of the opinion that compelling parents was the only way to ensure that children attended school. "Education in schools will improve only if schooling is made compulsory. Parents receive many things free - ration, sugar, wheat and it must all be linked to children being enrolled. But, we are a democracy - how can compulsion be made possible?" The upper-caste headmaster of the Kamlipur school noted, "Earlier, education used to be good. Only select students used to come. They

were sharp and intelligent. Now, the government's target children come after enrolment drives. They are forced to come though they are not interested”.

While such opinions indicate the extent of resentment against children of the low-ranked castes, there is also a class bias in the way children are evaluated. An upper-caste, middle-class woman teacher, who lives in Khategaon town and sends her two children to a private school, complained about the lack of discipline among children studying in government schools. “I tell these children, ‘Look, my daughter comes home and does all her homework before playing’. But these children never do their homework”. A male Korku teacher, who lives in the village, considered village children dull compared to urban children. He himself was educated in a town and considered the inability of village children to pronounce words correctly as indicative of their limited ability to learn. He also observed that since village children were irregular in attending school, they tended to “forget what was taught”.

Lack of empathy for the living conditions of working/labouring parents and resentment against the education incentive programmes provided by the government are evident in all these statements. Rather than assessing their own inputs and attitudes and their own role in the functioning of schools, teachers seek to lay the blame on parents, their apathy and what they consider the inability of rural, low-ranked caste children to learn. It is primarily such attitudes that account for the fact that teachers do not take their responsibilities in school and the teaching-learning practices seriously. While their own grievances,

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of excessive non-teaching work loads, difficult and not very congenial work conditions, etc. are genuine, their reluctance to improve the situation has led to a further decline of schools.

That attitude determines the impact of the teacher is clearly expressed by Shri Goyal, a SC teacher of Motipur, who says, "Most children come from families where there is inadequate economic support. Older children look after younger ones. It is for us to contact parents and bring children to school". It was his understanding of the condition of these families and the plight of children there that led him to personally contact parents and encourage students to attend school. By being regular, and by actually teaching the children, he was able to sustain a functional school. His attitude and efforts help him run a successful and effective school, despite the limitations of infrastructure and despite having to teach multi-grade classes.

Shri Goyal's Class in Motipur

Shri Goyal opens the premises fifteen minutes before school starts. Requests students to sweep the floor and ring the bell. Stands outside the school and calls students in. Organises classes by giving a writing assignment to one class while explaining a lesson to another. Uses Gondi to explain some of the words and concepts in the book. Has a one-hour games period for the children. Closes school at the specified time.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Classroom organisation and teaching-learning practices: Most of the classes that were observed under this study lacked organisation. Most teachers often came late and many a time no prayer or assembly was conducted and no attendance taken. Delayed opening and early closure of school were observed in two villages. Few teachers took classes for an hour at a stretch and in many cases most children were not fully engaged in class work.

Teaching-learning practices also leave much to be desired. The researcher observed the following in most of the classes in all the schools:

1. The rote teaching method, or repeating after the teacher, was the predominant mode of teaching for all the non-mathematical subjects. Of the nine teachers who were observed closely for a year, only two explained issues or themes/ideas to the children.
2. Children were often told to copy from the board or from the textbooks while the teachers were preoccupied with other work.
3. Children were given little or no independent attention and very often mistakes made by the children in their notebooks went uncorrected. Most teachers resorted to casual and mechanical ticking while reviewing children's work. As a result they failed to detect errors and bring them to the children's notice.
4. Children were expected to know answers to all questions and were often reprimanded or ridiculed when they could not answer a question.
5. Although most teachers had been trained in the new methods of teaching under the DPEP programme, only two of the nine teachers

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actually used the new methods. Most of them dismissed the new child-centred methods of teaching as irrelevant, impossible or unnecessary. Most of them also did not use the teaching aids supplied by the DPEP.

Modes of Control

Corporal punishment - slapping, beating, caning - was the dominant way of controlling classes and children. Children were beaten both individually and collectively for a variety of reasons which included not maintaining silence in class, fighting, failure to take permission for absence, poor maintenance of notebooks and textbooks, etc.

Teacher-student relations

That a hierarchical relationship between students and teachers predominates is seen in the fact that children refer to teachers as "Sir" and "Madam" and rarely interact with them in a casual and free manner. In addition, language and actions always identify the student as an inferior. Ridiculing children is also common. Children are even encouraged to ridicule each other and others. Such a hierarchical and formal relationship between teachers and students means that children fear teachers but disobey them as they obviously do not respect them.

A Day in School

At 11.20 a.m. a lady teacher arrives by bus and opens the two-room school. Seven students of Standard IV enter the school with her. They pick up brooms and sweep the two rooms. At 11.45 about 25 children gather and two of them are sent back home to put on their sweaters. More children trickle in and take their places. The teacher keeps repeating, "Remove and keep your slippers outside. Don't make noise," as she takes the attendance. She calls a boy from Standard IV and reprimands him for leaving school early the previous day. He is caned ten times on his palm. At 12, she sends a boy to call the headmaster. After 15 minutes the headmaster arrives, in a disheveled state. He and the lady teacher discuss whether they should close the school, as it is cold. As they debate this, the children talk and play among themselves. As the noise level rises, the headmaster says, "*Arre*, can't you stay quiet? All of you sit down, study the questions and answers and do some addition." The children are quiet for a while and then the noise increases again. From 12.30-1.30, children show their notebooks and whatever they have written to the teachers. No teaching is conducted. At 1.30 the lady teacher prepares to leave saying that she has to catch a bus. At 2 the headmaster tells the children that the school is closed for the day. The children leave, excited.

GROWTH OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The decline of government schools, compounded by the increase in the number of children and lax administration, has led to the mushrooming of private schools in the block. Since 1996, a private school catering primarily to children from landed and upper-caste families has been functioning in Kamlipur village. Parents consider this school to be functional and adequate in comparison to the government primary school in the village. Since the school functions regularly, homework is given and checked, and exams are held periodically, the school is considered to be organised. Although there is no parent-teacher association and the four teachers are paid salaries of Rs.500-700 per month, parents consider the teachers to be more reliable and dedicated. Another attraction for parents is that the school claims to teach English from Std. I, which gives it an edge over the government school. The monthly fees are Rs. 30 for Stds. 1-3, Rs.40 for Stds. 4-5 and Rs.50 for Stds. 6-8. Not all parents are able to afford the fees and many pay only after the soya bean and cotton harvest. Average annual expenditure on a student in the private school worked out to about Rs.1500.

Some parents assume that since they pay fees, they have the right to indicate which class their child is capable of studying in, and accordingly insist on placing their child in that class. The headmaster identified two children in the school who were only four and six years old but were forced by their parents to study in Stds. II and III, respectively.

Local Education Report - Khategaon

The establishment of the private school in this village has several ramifications for the educational opportunities of children and for the development of the education system. For one, such schools cater primarily to the children of parents who are relatively better-off economically and who also wield more clout in the villages. When such parents withdraw their children from government schools, they also withdraw administrative and management support for the schools, made possible by the new associations and structures such as the Shiksha Samiti. A class- and caste-based divide among children is thus enhanced in these schools. For example, in Kamlipur, when the government school was started in 1941, the caste background of the 41 students was:

Upper castes	56%
Backward castes	27%
ST	12%
SC	5%

By 1999, the composition had changed. The caste-wise breakup of the 183 students was as follows:

Upper castes (GC);	6%
OBC	25%
ST	28%
SC	39%

And more significantly, in 2000, only one student from a general caste background had enrolled in Std. I, while a majority of the new entrants were from ST and SC families. While the data does indicate higher enrolment figures for SC and ST children, the decline in the enrolment

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of upper-caste children indicates the growth of a divided school system. Children of the upper and middle castes are now attending the private school while children from the lower-ranked castes and the Adivasi children are attending the government school.

In addition to the caste- and class-based divide that private schools encourage, a gender-based differentiation in educational opportunities has also set in. As the private school's record for 1999 indicates, girls constitute only 34 percent of the total number of enrolled children, while in the government school, girls account for about 50 percent of the total. Clearly, families opt to send their male children to the private schools, incurring expenses, while the government school is considered good enough for girls. The absolute figures for the village as a whole were not available, but we found that one of the most well-to-do Rajput families in the village sent the daughter to the government school and the two sons to the private one. Such attitudes will only enhance the gender-based differences in educational opportunities.

Such differences in the schooling opportunities mean a loss of the opportunity to use schools and schooling as ways in which to bridge the social gap between different caste and class groups. Under such conditions, not only will the children of these villages not have a commonly shared institutional experience but the differences in their social and class backgrounds will be reproduced and reinforced with their differences in educational qualifications and orientations.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

That the schools in the block were dysfunctional was evident from the fact that in the three villages combined, there were 189 children between the ages of 6 and 11 who were out of school. While a range of factors accounted for their being out of school, a significant fact was that 58% of the out-of-school children had never enrolled in a school, despite the enrolment drives and the widespread publicity given to the education schemes in the area and the state. That such a sizeable number of children remained out of school indicates that the problem of education deprivation persists in the area. While typically, poverty and a general lack of awareness about education are considered to be the factors for such education deprivation, our study identified the following reasons for the widespread non-enrolment.

PROCESSES OF EDUCATION EXCLUSION AND ELIMINATION

NEVER-ENROLLED CHILDREN

Non-enrolment in schools was highest among the Scheduled Tribe families and the single most important reason was that these families had no information on how to enrol or have their children attend schools. Many adults, especially among the Bhil and Bhilala families in the multi-caste and Adivasi villages, cited lack of encouragement as the reason for not sending their children to school. "We have not attended schools and we do not know how to do so. The teachers came once and took down the children's names, but never re-visited

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us. We waited to hear from them about when and how to send our children to school. But now we hear that it is many months since the school has started and our children have not attended school". They also speak with pain and anguish about the indifference of the teachers towards their children, who remain out of school. Teachers and also members of the VEC and the Panchayat do not take it upon themselves to share and disseminate information about the school. Engrossed in their everyday world of labour and daily chores, many Adivasi parents do not know the procedure for enrolling children in school. This lack of information about matters related to the school combined with a feeling of intimidation makes it difficult for parents from low-ranked castes and Adivasi groups to enrol their children.

In addition, many observers expect the Adivasi to have reservations about the medium of instruction, which is Hindi, and which is very different from their languages, Korku, Bhil and Bhilala. And one expects this to be the reason for the hesitation and refusal to send their children to school. Yet, language was not cited as a problem and many parents believed that education meant learning Hindi and learning in Hindi.

DROPOUT CHILDREN The ways in which children are eliminated from school are as significant as the ways in which they are excluded from schooling. Data from the three villages indicated that 42 per cent of the out-of-school children had dropped out of school. Such elimination patterns reflect largely on the functioning of schools and in this case 38 per cent of the children cited boredom with school as the reason for dropping out. Disorganised classes, frequent closure of schools, and poor teaching-learning methods had all contributed to making

schools a bore for many children. And a serious issue was the fact that 25 per cent of the children cited ill-treatment by teachers as the reason for dropping out.

These factors combine to ensure that children of the most marginalised groups, in this case the Adivasi, are excluded and eliminated from the school system. Enrolment and dropout data for five years (1995-1999) indicate the following trends in the three village schools. In Kamlipur, in 1999 only five children were in Std. V of the 10 who were enrolled in 1995 in Standard I. Even in Motipur, a predominantly Adivasi village, none of the 14 children who had enrolled in Std. I in 1995 were in Std. IV in 1999. In Badiyali, only eight children had reached Std. V though 16 had enrolled. Enrolment, attendance, and retention levels were higher for SC children than for Adivasi children. Schools in both Kamlipur and Badiyali witnessed a steady increase in enrolment over the years and there was stable enrolment in Motipur village. On an average, SC children constituted 30 to 40 per cent. The recent surge in enrolment and attendance levels among SC children can be linked to the fact that SC parents more than Adivasis see education as a way out of their current situation. Job reservations, which have enabled some adults to get jobs, are seen as a positive factor and have encouraged SC children to pursue education despite tremendous economic and social hardships. As a result, in all the three villages, enrolment figures for children from Scheduled Caste households were higher than that of Scheduled Tribe households, despite the fact that SCs were a numerically smaller group in the village.

Gender and Schooling: Though there has been a tremendous improvement in the enrolment and attendance rates for girls, they continue to be excluded from school at a rate higher than that for boys. In our research survey, 58 per cent of the out-of-school children were girls between the ages of 6 and 11 years. Compared to boys, girls had both a higher rate of non-enrolment and a higher rate of withdrawal. The latter is important to note as it indicates the extent to which education exclusion on gender lines persists. More specifically, while fewer girls choose to drop out, more girls are actually withdrawn by parents for a range of reasons. These are well-known: taking care of siblings, performing household chores and taking part in the family's economic activities. While some parents do cite financial problems, they also note the indispensability of a girl's contribution to the household's economic activities and to its maintenance.

The chores and responsibilities of Adivasi girls seemed to be particularly heavy. This is reflected in the high withdrawal rates for Adivasi girls. For example in Kamlipur, between 1995 and 1999, not a single Adivasi girl had reached Std. V. Std. III was the highest level that a significant proportion of Adivasi girls reached.

THE LIFE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Despite the fact that a sizeable number of children were out of school, not many were formally employed. In the three villages combined, 23 per cent of the children were in different forms of wage employment, as agricultural helpers, cowherds, or domestic workers. A number of these children, especially those from the Adivasi families, were bonded

as cowherds to landowners. Known as *bali parkiya*, these children, mostly boys, performed chores such as herding and grazing cattle or goats and cleaning the cowsheds. Their parents were paid for their labour either annually or bi-annually. The wages of these children were mostly used to supplement the family's income and a small proportion used the wages to repay family loans:

A day in the life of Dinesh, bonded cowherd (*Hali-Parkiya*) of Badiyali village

Dinesh is a Korku, who dropped out of school in Std. II. The eldest of six children, he is now a *bali -parkiya* (bonded child worker) for a blacksmith's family where his parents are also bonded agricultural workers. His daily routine consists of:

- getting up and going to the master's house at 8 a.m.
- taking cattle to the jungle to graze
- climbing trees, singing film songs, swimming and playing with other cowherds
- returning at dusk with the cattle and penning them in the owner's shed
- returning home around 7 p.m.
- playing with siblings, having dinner and going to sleep by 9 p.m.

CHILDREN AND LABOUR

The largest proportion of children, 42 per cent of the out-of-school children, worked at home and for the family. They performed a range of tasks such as taking care of siblings, collecting water, firewood and *gobar*, processing grains, herding cattle, sweeping and cleaning the house, and assisting the parents in their own fields. Adivasi children also went in groups or with their parents to pick *tendu* leaves, thereby supplementing the family income. Girls, particularly, spent long hours doing household chores, some spending as much as an average of eight hours per day on such chores.

But a fairly significant number of children, that is about 34 per cent of the out-of-school children, were neither in conditions of wage labour nor were they engaged in domestic or family labour. Such children spent their time loitering around, playing with friends and siblings. The failure of schools to engage with the larger community and make schooling an attractive proposition for all children is evident in these children. Many of them observed that they would have liked to be in school but had either not been enrolled or had dropped out within the first two years.

CONCLUSION

Historical, social, economic and political factors are responsible for the lack of growth of educational institutions in the area. But even though there is now a demand for education among these people, there are both institutional and agency hurdles in their path. On the

one hand, the education system is largely insensitive to the needs of the people and unaccountable to them. On the other hand, the continued economic and political marginalisation of people prevents them from engaging more with the education system and reproduces education deprivation. As a result, disadvantaged and marginalised communities receive a dysfunctional education system. The task now is to initiate a 'people-oriented' programme which will function in a manner that will enable all the people, including the most marginalised, to realise their right to elementary education. For such a programme to be implemented there has to be initiative at both levels: people will have to engage with and contribute to the structures and processes relating to education and the functioning of schools; and the system, consisting of teachers, administrators and support personnel must see elementary education as the most fundamental factor in both development and democracy, and enable it to become people-oriented.

SUGGESTIONS

I. Enhancing the State's Role in Primary Education

To establish schools as central institutions in a community or society and ensure their stable and effective functioning, it is important to integrate the efforts of the State, society and teachers. No longer can schools and schooling be considered the sole responsibility of either the State or society. A negotiated approach towards mass primary education must include both. Not only must the State allocate more funds for schools, it must also pay more attention to the administration of schools. It is imperative for the State to view education, especially elementary education, as the foundation for more broad-based and durable development. It is important for the State to continue to be a key player in the primary education sector and not consider the market as a viable alternative provider of mass elementary education.

II. Strengthening the Decentralised School Administration Structures

There is an urgent need for decentralised structures, such as the Panchayats and the Gram Shiksha Samitis, to be active in issues related to primary education. Training for such structures should be imparted to all members and must include the dissemination of information regarding their right to call for meetings (and not wait for the headmistress or headmaster to do so), to review records, to hold the teachers accountable, etc. Members should be trained to play their roles effectively and not restrict themselves to organising school

programmes on Independence Day and Republic Day. The right of members to inspect and maintain the infrastructure of the school such as the classroom, compound wall, toilets, drinking water, etc. should be highlighted. In addition, members need to be re-oriented more strongly about the need for all members of the community to contribute to the development of the school. Members should also be made aware of children's rights and of socio-economic and cultural practices within the community, such as child labour and child marriage, that may keep children out of school. In addition, members and teachers should be trained to lodge complaints and initiate follow-up on issues related to the supply of school items such as textbooks, grains, and teaching aids. Such training should also provide them with examples of successful models adopted by other schools or areas for stemming the problem of dropouts and for devising practical and feasible solutions.

III. School-Community Calendar

Since the ecological, agricultural, work, and ritual activities of the communities often clash with the school schedule, there is the need to allow for a region-specific school schedule that will fit in with the community's schedule of activities. Children should be allowed to participate in the activities and work of the community and such activities should be seen as enabling the retention of local knowledge forms and identities. To develop such community-specific school calendars, flexibility can be devolved to the block level and block- or district-specific school calendars can be drawn up with the minimum and maximum number of school days specified. Such a community-

based schedule will not only prevent high student absenteeism but will also help bridge the gulf between school and community knowledge and work.

IV. Re-orienting Teacher Training

There is an urgent need to revise teacher training and recruitment policies. Measures and programmes for making the school an attractive place need to focus on enabling teachers to be proactive agents in the education system. Teachers must be made conscious of the need to have a better understanding of the social and cultural backgrounds of parents and children. While teachers are insensitive to the culture and problems of non-literate parents, they seek to be tolerant and understanding of practices such as child marriage, untouchability, bonded labour, etc. which affect the educational opportunities of children. Both training and policies must seek to alter this contradictory attitude of teachers. The importance of being sensitive and tolerant towards the culture and personality of parents must be integrated into the teacher training programmes. At the same time, training must emphasise the importance of teachers not accepting as legitimate and excusable the cultural factors of early marriage, gender bias and parental neglect of schooling and viewing them as personal factors which they cannot address.

A range of new pedagogies and orientation in teacher-student dynamics must be introduced. Ideas such as the superiority of the teacher and the lower standing of students, the need to curb and control children, and corporal punishment are some of the issues which need to be

addressed. The recruitment policy can be altered to enhance accountability of teachers to the community and to ensure that communities receive teachers whom they can trust and respect. Some of the local people suggested that the education department could send probationary teachers to communities for a period of a year. The probationary teacher's appointment to the community school would be validated and regularised at the end of this period only if the community's school committee voted for that person.

V. Local Knowledge and Curriculum Development

The curriculum should provide for the integration of local knowledge and for the greater participation of parents and children in the dissemination of such local knowledge. Several parents are well-versed in a range of local knowledge forms such as forestry, agriculture, folk medicine, smiths etc. They can be invited as occasional teachers, and the work and life patterns of the people can be integrated into the curriculum.

VI. Improving Supervision and Review of Schools

The education department needs to play a more proactive and vigilant role. The private and NGO schools were not inspected regularly. The education department must regularly inspect the infrastructure of schools, the attendance and activities of teachers, the maintenance of registers and records, and the general functioning of schools. In addition, the department must assess and guide all schools, government and private, on teaching-learning methods, use of new syllabi, treatment of children, and encourage community-school interaction.

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The education department needs to develop a mechanism by which the non-delivery of goods and materials meant for schools can be checked by members of the local elected bodies.

More specifically, in the context of decentralisation of general administration including the devolution of some powers to local elected bodies, the administration must seek to be continually involved in the functioning of schools and not adopt an indifferent attitude towards the condition of schools.

VII. Children's Crisis Fund

Many children are withdrawn from school when a parent, especially the father, dies or when there is a crisis in the family. Assistance, especially monetary and in kind, should be given to such children to ensure their continued attendance in school. A child-in-distress fund should be available to which all Gram Panchayat members, education committee members, and teachers can apply.

VIII. Block Awards for Schools

One way to sustain standards and quality in schools is to initiate awards for schools at the ward/zonal levels. Schools can be evaluated for their functioning, attendance levels, maintenance of infrastructure, teachers' performance and children's achievement levels. News about these awards can be publicised and they can act as mechanisms for establishing quality and standards in schools.

IX. Decentralised Data Collection

Data and information regarding schools, such as accessibility, functioning, infrastructure needs, and dropouts need to be stored and held at decentralised levels, such as the block. Allocation of resources, supervision and other support services to the neediest and most deprived areas can be prioritised through these measures. Data on low enrolment and attendance should include details about the socio-economic background of the schools, reasons for low performance, etc. The data can be updated through six-monthly reviews and inputs from headmasters/headmistresses and from the decentralised administrative structures. Such data should also be available at the school and local levels.

This report is based on field research conducted in Khategaon, Madhya Pradesh and is part of a study conducted by NIAS in six different states in India. The conditions of schools and experiences of elementary education deprivation among the poor are highlighted in this report.

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