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## Schooling in India: Effects of Gender and Caste

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### Abstract

Despite India's free and compulsory education plan for all children up to the age of 14, a significant percentage of rural Indian children do not complete school. A great majority of these unschooled children are girls. This article explores possible political, social, and economic explanations for the Asian Indian girl-child's non-participation in formal schooling through immigrants' narratives, educational reports, and firsthand observation in an Indian rural primary school. Analysis of data indicates class, caste, and gender socialization each contribute to the issue explored. The authors compare schooling issues faced by Asian Indian females to those experienced by American females, and suggest Asian Indian females may benefit from access to privately sponsored schools designed with needs of the local population in mind.

### Introduction

At 16, Lalita is the only educated girl in her northern India community. Fourteen-year-old Akhari is the first literate female in a 44-village area of southern India. Thirteen-year-old Manju brings shame to her family in Andhra Pradesh when she chooses to attend school rather than enter into an arranged marriage (UNICEF, 1998; UNICEF, 2005).

In a country where a democratic government and constitution guarantee free education for all, how can this be? School districts in the nation of India document widely varying levels of achievement. Kerala, for example, boasts an almost 90 percent literacy rate while rural areas with high populations of Scheduled Castes or Tribes report literacy rates below 45 percent. The most recent national literacy estimate (2003) is 59.5 percent, or 70.2 percent for males and 48.3 percent for females (<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/in.html#People>). In all Indian states, females score lower

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on literacy measures than males. Gender differences on literacy measures are even more pronounced in villages because girls are less likely to be enrolled in school (Sekhon, 2000, p. 107).

The disproportionate percentage of unschooled girls is an ongoing challenge to India's progress toward a literate population. Some progress has been made, but statistics continue to show startling trends. In some Indian states fewer than 30 percent of girls are enrolled in secondary schools, compared to 61 percent worldwide. Girls born in India are less likely to survive infancy: the 1991 Indian gender population distribution statistics (most recent available) show 20 million more males than females in rural areas, and 12.2 million more males than females in urban areas. Current statistics on school enrollment place Indian girls' school participation at 44.1 percent (primary), 41.8 percent (middle), and 39.5 percent (secondary). School participation rates for girls are considerably lower in many rural areas. Forty-five districts in India report female literacy rates of below 30 percent (Mohanty & Nandakumar, 2005).

Fewer than 40 of every 100 girls who enroll in school in rural India reach the U.S. equivalent of fourth grade, 18 will reach eighth grade, nine will reach ninth grade, and only one in 100 girls who enroll in school will make it to grade 12 (Noronha, 2003). By contrast, girls living in the United States are now more likely than boys to complete high school. According to the most recent data, among U.S. males and females aged 25 and older, 80 percent of males and 81 percent of females have graduated from high school (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000). Public schools are provided tuition-free to all U.S. families, and students living in the United States are obligated to attend school until at least age 16. A strong ideology of equality across socio-economic and gender lines has been linked with high male and female graduation rates in the United States (Scott-Jones, 2002).

What is it, then, that prevents Indian girls from going to school — or from staying in school once they enroll? India's Constitution, established after the nation gained freedom from British rule in 1947, guarantees "free and compulsory education of a satisfactory quality for all children below 14 years" (Rao, Cheno, & Narain, 2003, p. 153). Like children in the United States, India's children are constitutionally guaranteed the opportunity to attend school. Sixty years after India's constitutional guarantee of compulsory education, however, Indian girls' access to formal schooling continues to be a concern (Gupta, 2001).

Critics of India's government say constitutional allowances for free and compulsory schooling without substantive financial backing or proper enforcement results in ongoing inequities (Mohanty & Nandakumar, 2005). Economists cite theories demonstrating that, as unemployment is addressed and the economy of a region grows, the years its citizens spend in formal schooling grow as well (Acharya, Baru, & Nambissan, 2001).

International experts in child development, however, believe interventions from outside organizations are needed before real change in India's schooling will be effected (UNESCO, 2004; UNICEF, 2005). Reacting to information provided by outside organizations, the United Nations created its Millennium Plan and set a 2005 deadline for international gender parity in primary education (UNICEF, 2005). In November 2005 it was revealed that 46 countries — including India — failed to meet the United Nations' gender parity goals. Clearly, economic difficulties are not the only obstacle to equal schooling opportunities for India's young female population.

What factors contribute to gender differences in Indian schooling? What progress, if any, has been made toward girls' schooling in Indian villages and rural areas in the 60 years since India's independence? In this article, we use collaborative efforts to explore these questions, to provide an intrinsic case study of one rural Indian school, and to compare American female students' experiences with educational issues faced by Asian Indian female students. In the process, we offer information illuminating gender issues in education for India and other developing countries, as well as provide comparative data regarding schooling practices in U.S. and Indian schools.

## The Study

Both authors are interested in schooling in India: Mary Stratton as a teacher and graduate student who has traveled in India, and Gail Hickey as a teacher educator who studies the educational experiences and socialization of Asian Indian immigrants. A small group of Indiana artists and educators (including Stratton) spent two weeks visiting several schools<sup>1</sup> in eastern India during 2002. At approximately the same time, Hickey was involved in initial analysis of an oral history project conducted with Asian Indian immigrants residing in the Midwestern United States. Stratton was pursuing a graduate teacher education degree from a Midwestern university in 2002, and Hickey is a professor in the teacher education program there. We decided to embark on a heuristic phenomenological (Moustakas, 1996) exploration of contemporary schooling in India and related issues.

Initially, we were interested in comparisons of Indian primary school and U.S. elementary school curricula. (In India, elementary schools are referred to as "primary" schools.) As the study progressed, however, other factors worthy of investigation were illuminated, including gender equity in schooling in both India and the United States, and public vs. private sector involvement in Indian education. This often happens with the approach we selected for our qualitative study. The heuristic phenomenological approach permits researchers to employ both descriptive and comparative strategies for investigation. Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem for which the researcher seeks understanding or illumination. Our question was "What

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factors contribute to gender differences in Indian school enrollment?” In the heuristic approach, as the researcher seeks to fully understand the phenomenon under exploration, s/he invites other participants with related experiences to share in the investigative journey. For this phenomenological heuristic journey, Hickey invited Stratton, Stratton invited the founder of a private school in India, the founder invited the school’s principal, and the principal invited the teachers who joined us as our investigative journey continued. Finally, we supplemented the heuristic phenomenological approach with an intrinsic case study (Creswell, 2005) in order to provide specific information about schooling at a particular institution in rural India. Since each intrinsic case study is selected because “it is unusual and has merit in and of itself” (Creswell, 2005, p. 139), we felt the selection of a private rural school in India would provide comparative data unlikely to be available from other sources.

Our database initially included firsthand observation of student-teacher interaction at six schools in eastern India; more intensive observation of student-teacher interaction at one of the six schools (a private primary school in rural India); two interviews with the rural school’s founder; two interviews and several e-mail exchanges with the rural school principal; informal interviews and conversations with four teachers at the rural school and ten teachers from other data resulting from the school visits; and demographic data such as that available from school administrators, the India Census, and encyclopedia Web sites. Observational data were reported in the form of a narrative, while interview data were reported through journal entries, e-mails with school administrators, transcribed field notes, and e-mailed lists of grade-specific instructional topics. Subsequently, we added a review of the literature on gender issues in schooling for both India and the United States and, where descriptive information or clarification of an issue was warranted, relevant excerpts from 90 oral history interviews conducted with Asian Indian immigrants in Indiana (see Hickey, 2006, for a broad description of the immigrant oral histories). The database has been updated and expanded over time.

### India: An Overview

Readers will benefit from some basic information on the nation of India and its people. India gained its political independence from Great Britain in 1947. The nation has been referred to as “the world’s most populous democracy” (Helweg & Helweg, 1990, p. 21). India has a very large population, low individual income levels, and low literacy rates. According to the 2001 India Census, 1,027,015,247 people live within the nation’s 25 states and seven united territories. The sex ratio is 933 females to 1000 males. Average life expectancy is 64 years. India totals only 2.4 percent of the world’s land mass, yet 16 percent of the world’s population resides there (Government of India Statistics, 2001).

Modern India presents two faces to the world: pre-industrial and postmodern (Raina & Dhand, 2000). Some larger cities, such as Bangalore and Hyderabad, have been called the Silicon Valley of India, while much of the rural population lives in undeveloped villages and earns its living through agriculture. A sociological complexity of Indian life is the population's caste consciousness. Despite legislation designed to lessen the impact of one's social status on equitable treatment, social inequality continues to be widespread — including examples of caste-based discrimination in schools and classrooms. According to Rao, Cheno, & Narain (2003), middle-class Indians' belief that "lower castes are not deserving of education is...deeply rooted [and] has hampered the universalisation of primary education" (p. 173).

Some discussion of *class* and *caste* in India may be helpful here. *Class* refers primarily to economic class and, as such, is similarly conceived in both India and the United States. The phrases "middle class" and "upper class" tend to be associated with employment status and income. Sahni's (1999) explanation of *class* in India connects middle class status with persons who hold office jobs, government positions, or teaching positions, while lower or backward class status is connected with persons who work as laborers, domestic servants, artisans, or who are "unemployed slum dwellers" (p. 135). Class in India is birth related insofar as one's inheritance determines future opportunities. Movement from one class to another within one's lifetime sometimes occurs. On the other hand, in India one is born into a *caste*, and possibility of movement from one caste to another does not exist. The caste system is quite complex, but a simplified explanation of Hindu castes will be sufficient for this article. There are four broad Hindu castes: Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra (see Sahni, 1999, and Devi, 1998, for more detailed descriptions of the caste system). The Brahmins are the learned caste of scholars and priests; the Kshatriyas are the warrior and ruler caste; the Vaishyas are the commercial caste; and the Shudras make up the menial caste. The first three of these are considered "upward castes," while the fourth is considered the "backward caste." There are degrees of "backwardness" within the Shudra caste; traditionally, the Shudras were considered "untouchable" and were prevented from seeking formal education. Recent government legislation reserved seats in government jobs and places in institutions of higher education for Shudras, but at the local level these former untouchables continue to be shunned. In villages, for instance, lower caste persons may not draw water from the same well as others; eat, drink, or take food from the hands of members of upper castes; nor may they marry into an upper caste family. Where caste interacts with social status, one's opportunities are limited even further. As Sahni (1999, p. 135) reports, "One can go no lower in the social order than to be lower caste, poor, rural, and female."

Throughout India, girls are less likely than boys to complete formal schooling. The most recent State of the World's Children Report (2003) notes the third lowest rate of

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secondary school enrollment for girls is recorded in India; only Afghanistan and Bhutan have fewer numbers of girls in school. Some Indian states report female literacy rates as low as 30 percent. India's most recent literacy measure is 65 percent for all adults (2001 India Census) and 56 percent for women, at a time when the literacy rate worldwide for persons 15 years of age and above is 79 percent (UNESCO, 2002). The 65 percent literacy rate for India is a significant improvement over past measures: the 1991 India census reported a literacy rate of 54 percent, and 60 years ago only 18 percent of the population was literate.

### Diverse Ethnicity, Similar Values

India is a nation of diverse cultures, composed of three major racial groups (Indo-Aryan 72 percent, Dravidian 25 percent, Mongolian 3 percent), four prominent religious communities (Hindu 82.72 percent, Muslim 11.21 percent, Christian 2.6 percent, Sikh 1.89 percent), and 16 language categories (including English). Hindu values and belief systems provide an overarching unity of ideological principles for South Asia in general, and India in particular (Helweg, 2002). Despite such ideological unity, almost 60 years after independence India still struggles to balance democracy with an ever-present diversity that pulls the nation in profoundly different directions (Ward, 1997).

Interdependence, rather than individual independence, is valued most highly in Indian society (Lamb, 2000). A priority for commitment and subservience to the interests of extended family is deeply impressed upon children from infancy onward (O'Kelly & Carney, 1986).

Preference for male children also is a dominant value (Dastider & Gupta, 1996). Informal learning plays an important part in a youngster's development; older children (particularly siblings and cousins) as well as adults teach youngsters about their culture through song, dance, play, and conversation. Indian parents emphasize most often the virtues of obedience, politeness, and peaceableness (Mehra, 2004).

A considerable body of research demonstrates that education is valued highly among all classes, castes, and religious groups in India (see, for example, Jayachandran, 2002; Sahni, 1998; PROBE Team, 1995). These studies verify a common perspective of schooling as a tool to "greater awareness, more access to information...higher status workplaces" (Sahni, 1999, p. 135). Education is viewed as a status symbol, both for the individual and for the extended family. Despite continued high levels of unemployment, education also is viewed as the family's primary path toward financial solvency (Sahni, 1999).

In middle- and upper-class Indian families, parents expect to guide their children's educational experiences and career preparation (Mediratta, 1999). Children consult their parents on such matters as educational majors, selection of university, and degree programs (Mehra, 2004). Parents at all class and caste levels expect their children to consult them regarding mate selection. In lower-income families, parents often arrange

marriages for their daughters while the girls are very young because married daughters are no longer a drain on the family's finances.

Indian parents stress high educational achievement while their children are enrolled in school. Mothers especially spend much time assisting children with schoolwork (Devi, 1998). Children are admonished to study hard, follow school rules and behaviors that lead to outstanding academic performance, and avoid distractions that may interfere with achievement and result in family dishonor. Indian parents of middle and upper socioeconomic standing consider providing one's children with a "good education" (usually defined as earning at least a graduate degree) an important parental duty. When their children perform well in school, the Asian Indian family's prestige and status is enhanced (Mehra, 2004; Ahmed, 1999; Gibson, 1988). Gently guiding one's child toward preferred occupations, such as becoming a doctor or an engineer, helps the student eventually bring honor to the entire extended family. Ilora says, "It's very common in Indian family, you know, just to guide the children to a certain profession." Nina adds, "I've noticed if you ask Indian kids in med school 'Well, why did you go into medicine?' they'll say, 'My parents wanted me to.'" Vipul recalls, "[My] choices for career from the end of elementary school were medicine, medicine, or medicine."

## Gender Issues

In India, gender-based discrimination and exploitation including "female infanticide, dowry deaths, unequal wages, high levels of female illiteracy and morbidity" are widespread (Ghose, 2004, p. 21). Researchers cite the inverse relationship between low literacy rates, high fertility levels, and women's low status (see, for example, Samanta, 2004).

As a consequence of Indian women's low status, education for daughters of the family is not always given the same emphasis as sons' education. Informants in Margaret A. Gibson's (1988) landmark study entitled *Accommodation without Assimilation: Sikh Immigrants in an American High School* admitted they took great pleasure in their sons' educational accomplishments but "with daughters it is different" (p. 111). Sons are valued for the status and wealth they eventually contribute to the family and for the likelihood they will care for parents in their elder years.

Manjula's 84-year-old father "will never be placed in a retirement home." "The sons have to take care of the parents," Manjula says. Whatever happens, "[an elder son] cannot throw the parents out." Pramod agrees, adding, "In India, parents live with the son when they get old. There are no nursing homes." While Gibson's (1988) Punjabi informants felt pride in their sons' education, however, parents tend to want their daughters to have only enough education "to obtain a 'clean' and secure job" (Gibson, 1988, p. 111). Ahmed's (1999) review of the research on gender socialization in Indian families supports perspectives communicated by Gibson's (1988) and our immigrant informants:



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Boys are perceived to be the future caretakers of parents in their old age and prized as such. Girls, on the other hand, are understood to be temporary members of their own families — their primary roles and responsibilities will be as wives, daughters-in-law, and mothers in the families that they are married into (p. 40).

Prior to their marriage, daughters living in rural areas have many home-based responsibilities. Women from rural areas are more likely to take salaried jobs to supplement the family income than their urban counterparts, and are less likely to have access to extended family networks for child care. Most working women in villages “have to leave their children at home, unattended, for the entire day” (Ghose, 2004, p. 22). When this happens, elder daughters assume responsibility for childcare and household management. This unpaid, home-based labor frequently prevents rural girls from attending school. Daughters of all ages and abilities routinely care for younger siblings and perform household chores such as cooking and laundry — often without electricity or labor-saving devices (Rao, Cheno, & Narain, 2003). Rural daughters also may be sent out to work to supplement the family’s income.

Legislation prohibiting child labor in India exists but rarely is enforced, a situation further contributing to low rates of school participation. Family indebtedness can result in daughters being sold into bondage or prostitution (Women’s Coalition for Peace and Development, 2006). Parents resist governmental mandates and even pleas from outside sources to send their daughters to school, believing the family finances will suffer irreparably in the girls’ absence (Ramachandran, 2001). Girls in many parts of rural India who attend school for even brief periods often are withdrawn at adolescence as a way of ensuring their purity and of maintaining their reputations prior to marriage (O’Kelly & Carney, 1986).

In India’s big cities, a larger percentage of middle class Indian women than ever before are completing college degrees and professional graduate programs (Yao, 1989). Comparatively few, however, use their training to pursue full-time careers. In Gibson’s study of Punjabi Sikh immigrants’ schooling experiences in California, adolescent daughters revealed their parents would not support their dreams of completing a college degree. The parents, these girls believed, would not permit them to go away to college. Moreover, the girls felt they would not be allowed even to attend college classes locally while continuing to live at home under their parents’ supervision, especially if their family determined the daughter’s behavior had deviated from that considered proper (1988, p. 134).

Our data support the tradition that upper-caste daughters with advanced education improve their parents’ chances of arranging a successful marriage. (In this context, a successful match usually is defined as finding a willing male from the same caste who has a promising financial future.) Details of a young woman’s education often appear in classified advertisements placed by parents seeking a husband for their daughters (see, for

example, JeevanSathi.com). When an arranged marriage occurs after the young woman earns her college degree, however, the new wife may not be permitted to work outside the home — particularly in Muslim and upper caste Hindu families. An immigrant from a Muslim family who recently returned from a visit to India talks about her cousin's advanced education, and her subsequent opportunities to pursue a career:

She has a degree in economics. She is very intelligent. If she is allowed to, she will have a job. Over there, it is still not her decision. Her relatives, her husband, will have a lot to say in it. Over here, if a woman has a job, she doesn't care what others say. She is a lot more aggressive about what she wants.

"My mother had a degree in sociology," Meera states, "but she did not work. She just went to school, got married, and didn't work." Meera herself got married while in graduate school and "did not pursue anything [for pay] after that." When asked about her motivation for acquiring an advanced degree as a young woman in India, Preema said, "I didn't have a motivation. That's what [girls] did." Pramod reflects on his life before emigration and concludes that, in India, "girls didn't work."

In India, according to our data, young educated women who belong to higher castes (and usually higher socioeconomic groups) are less likely to work for pay after marriage. Researchers have found that young educated women from lower socioeconomic groups in the United States, by contrast, are less likely to work outside the home than are their middle-class counterparts (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2005).

In India, an upper caste woman who works for pay may be perceived as having brought shame upon her entire family. An Indian woman's behavior can negatively affect her family's status even after marriage. Manjula, a Hindu Indian, has lived in the United States for many years. When she visited India at the turn of the 21st century, male relatives insisted she revert to preferred female behaviors. If she behaved like an American woman while in India, her brothers told Manjula, she would bring dishonor upon her family's status in the community and even spoil her nieces' chances of making good marriages. Manjula explains, "My brother won't let me get out from the house. The car comes, I stand on the porch, and then I get out of the house [with my brother as chaperone]."

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India may be a young democracy, but it is a nation with ancient roots. Formal education in India originally was limited to males of the Brahmin caste. All females, and males of the other castes, were expected to learn all they needed to know at home (Pattnaik, 1996). Under Muslim rule in later centuries, education was offered to males of all upper castes; females continued to be excluded from schooling.

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British authorities who ruled during India's Colonial period altered the traditional schooling structure to better suit the needs of the British empire. That is, British-style schools provided education to local populations, who would then fill lower-level administrative positions within the colonial governance structure (Raina & Dhand, 2000). Since British authorities considered males from upper-caste families most qualified to hold administrative positions, all females and those males from lower castes continued to be denied access to formal education during the early Colonial era (Sekhon, 2000). Shortly after, upper-caste families began to value schooling as a way to help daughters prepare for their roles as wives of administrators and mothers of administrators' children. Illiteracy continued to be widespread among all persons of lower castes.

The British began to build a foundation for India's new system of formal education with the emergence of three affiliated universities in 1857. Existing primary schools were to be integrated and incorporated into a uniform system, which would channel students from primary to secondary schools and then on to university. Indian primary schools had originated as vehicles to prepare local populations for caste-mandated occupations, however, and the primary schools' curriculum had never been intended to prepare students for secondary school. This situation posed a conflict, since indigenous cultural content existed conjointly (and often in competition) with reading and writing skills instruction. As Indian higher education became more firmly established toward the end of the 19th century, greater emphasis was placed upon reading and writing skills, with particular attention toward students' English language competence (as, under British rule, English was the language of business). Locally valued curriculum gave way to reading and writing skills that would benefit colonial administration. Raina and Dhand (2000) contend that, at this time in India's history, "[Local] Educational policies were dictated by the requirements of running the empire rather than the welfare of the colonized masses." Even now, India can be proud of its colleges and universities, but "a vast number of its primary schools are ill-equipped" (Maheshwari & Raina, 1998, p. 88).

Once India became independent of British rule in 1947, more changes occurred in educational policies and curriculum. Individual Indian states held authority over educational policies between 1947 and 1976. A 1976 constitutional amendment transferred authority for educational policies from individual states to the central government. Today, the central government of India establishes broad education policies for curriculum development and for district/building-level management practices. These policies serve as guidelines for the states (UNESCO, 1996). Two policies provided landmark legislation leading to current schooling structure in India: the 10+2 curriculum pattern introduced in 1975, and the National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education of 1988. The 10+2 policy refers to the recommendation students complete eight years of elementary education (five years of primary school and three years at the

upper primary/middle level), plus two years of general secondary schooling. Students whose centralized examination scores permit entry into the competitive upper secondary level are able to complete an additional two years of upper-level secondary schooling referred to as “general education,” while the final two years of secondary school are known as the “diversified curriculum” (Yao, 1989). As Indian educational policy states, “The national curriculum envisages the first 10 years of school as the period of general education and that the diversified curriculum should be introduced at the end of general education” (Government of India, 1998).

In the six decades since the Indian Constitution was adopted, children’s access to primary-level education has increased dramatically. One goal from the World Conference Education for All (1990) was to increase rural children’s access to schools. The 1993 Sixth All India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1993) reported 94.45 percent of India’s rural population had access to some form of primary school within one kilometer of their village. Government representatives who met in 2000 to evaluate progress toward Education for All goals, however, proposed as a new goal that schooling facilities be “provided to girls nearer to their place of residence” and that free transportation to school be provided to girls “if [the school] is situated more than 1 kilometer from their homes” (Dhanarajan, 2001, p. 2). The management of India’s primary schools, however, depends upon a large number of agencies, both government and non-government. Establishment of a national curriculum for all levels of pre-collegiate schooling means the central government of India develops and provides curricula, syllabi, and instructional materials (including textbooks) for all schools; the location of school buildings and issues such as free transportation fall under the purview of individual states.

The greatest challenge faced by the Indian education system is the nation’s continuing high rates of illiteracy. The nation’s uneven progress in educating its population is an ongoing concern. Traditionalists explain India’s persistent literacy problem as a two-pronged dilemma: financial resources to cope with the nation’s dramatic population increase are lacking, and parents tend to withdraw children from school to assist with family needs (Tharoor, 1997). Critical theorists view the ongoing literacy problem as a situation fraught with complexity: many schools lack appropriate facilities, playgrounds, toilets, blackboards, commercial teaching materials, libraries, toys for younger children, and perhaps most startling of all, access to drinking water (PROBE, 1999). In fact, Delhi Education Minister Raj Kumar Chauhan recently told a group of parents that in many schools “students learn in dilapidated classrooms with creaky furniture, stationary fans, and aged blackboards,” and noted educational standards in India’s government-run schools were falling “due to the authorities’ lack of interest and response” (Ghosh, 2002, September 20 news report).

Even parents who are motivated to send their daughters to the free government-run schools may be reluctant to do so. Not only are government-run schools limited

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in their resources, as described above, they also tend to be built in or near cities. Girls, particularly those from rural villages who must travel or walk alone to reach the nearest school, may be kept at home as a means of ensuring their safety and chastity (Agarwal, 1991). Many Indian parents are opposed to coeducational settings where their preadolescent and/or adolescent daughters are obliged to learn side by side with males (Gibson, 1988). Sometimes it is not only the instructional setting these parents fear, but also the unstructured and unchaperoned environment occasioned by absent teachers. A description of a typical day at a public primary school located in an Indian village will suggest to readers the type of schooling experience most poor rural children can expect to receive:

The Meos (local community in Mewat) want schools that function, and are properly equipped. Instead one finds broken chairs, peeling plaster...no toilets or drinking water. The schools are usually empty, with a few idling teachers who tell you the Meos do not value education. The villagers tell a different story: teachers arrive [late] for classes that are supposed to begin at 7:30 a.m. Children come to school, play, then go away. Parents do not want children to idle around... Though initial enrollment is high, retention rates after the lower primary levels are low. About 85 percent of girls are withdrawn after the lower primary level (PROBE Team 1999, 49).

Three types of schools currently exist in India: government-run schools, government schools run by voluntary organizations, and private schools (Evans 2000, Pattnaik 1996). Administration and funding of individual schools may vary, but all schools have several characteristics in common such as expectations for teacher training, high student-teacher ratio, reliance on standardized examinations, and similarity of curriculum (Government of India, 1998). Private schools run by the Catholic Church grew in popularity during the Colonial period. Families who are financially able to do so send their children to Catholic-run private schools. Private schools are more likely to provide appropriate facilities, some instructional materials, toilets and drinking water, lower student-teacher ratios, and curriculum suited to the needs of the local population. In addition, because private schools often are established to fulfill specific community needs, these schools are more likely to be located in or near villages rather than in city centers. Finally, those parents who plan to prepare their children for careers or specialized training believe the only acceptable primary and secondary education is available through competitive private schools, since these schools serve as stepping stones to the elite universities (Lessinger, 1995).

## An Intrinsic Case Study

Clearly, major sociological and economic obstacles prevent many girls in rural India from participating fully in formal educational opportunities. Private schools located within or near villages, and offering appropriate physical as well as instructional facilities, fill the real and perceived needs of many local families. In doing so, these private schools help create opportunities for girls as well as boys to attend school. St. Xavier English School, a Catholic-sponsored institution located in rural eastern India, was established with the needs of the local population in mind.

As was mentioned in an earlier section of this article, we decided to conduct an “intrinsic case study” of St. Xavier’s English School to provide specific information about schooling at a particular institution in rural India (Creswell, 2005, p. 139). St. Xavier’s English School is in Chiabasa, a small village in Jamshedpur located in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand. While the Diocese of Jamshedpur was established in 1962, the Catholic Church has been active in the area for hundreds of years. The Bengal Jesuits of Calcutta initiated the first Chiabasa church in 1868.

The state of Jharkhand lies within the Chota Nagpur plateau and upland Santhal Parganas regions of South Bihar, and includes West Bengal, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh. The state’s population of 26.90 million (13.86 million males, 13.04 million females) is composed of 28 percent Scheduled Tribes and 12 percent Scheduled Castes (<http://www.Britannica.com>). In some of the districts of Jharkhand, the tribal population is the predominate one. The average population per square kilometer is 274 persons, varying from a low of 148 to as many as 1,167 per square kilometer.

Jharkhand is part of a geographical region previously known as Bihar. The Bihar region is the poorest area in all India. Poverty and malnutrition heavily affect tribal groups and Scheduled Castes. Agriculture is the primary occupation for most of Jharkhand’s villagers, yet the average family land holding is less than five acres (Jewitt, 2000). Bihar’s literacy rate, at 46.94 percent, is the lowest in the nation, with male literacy at 60.32 percent and female literacy at 33.57 percent. Whereas 74 percent of Indian girls ages 6–14 nationwide attend school, only 54 percent of girls in Bihar attend school (India Census, 2001).

Chiabasa, a village in the district of Jamshedpur, as has been mentioned, is the site of our case study. Jamshedpur encompasses 21,003 square kilometers, or about 13,051 miles, and has a population of approximately 1.6 million people. Jamshedpur’s urban population fluctuates as a result of India’s first private iron and steel mill, which is located there. Hindi and English are the predominant Jamshedpur languages, but in tribal villages such as Chiabasa the people speak Ho, Mundari, or Santhali. One college, a business school, enrolls 75 students. Seven senior secondary schools enroll 2,146 students. Seven high schools serve 14,920 students, and 43 primary schools serve a

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total 16,560 students. Nine of the 43 primary schools were established by the Catholic Church. Together, these schools comprise the Jamshedpur school district (<http://www.cbcisite.com/Jamshedpur.htm>).

In the city itself, life is comfortable due to 24-hour a day running water and access to electricity. A large portion of the population, however, lives in tribal villages some distance from the city center. These villages belong to Hos, Mundas, and Santhal tribes. Chiabasa's population is largely of the Ho tribe. In these outlying villages, intermittent power outages, water shortages, and poor roads are common, and governmental response is virtually nonexistent. This is the setting for St. Xavier's English School, with a 2002 enrollment of 692 students in standards 1–6.

Mary Stratton, one of the authors, kept a journal while visiting six schools in eastern India during 2002. She wrote, “[The schools we visited] were always either boys’ or girls’ schools, with the exception of the English school — but even those classes were separated [by gender].” Stratton’s recent visit to India confirms many gender issues identified in the literature are still very relevant to Indian women and girls today, such as families sending their young daughters out to work, other families keeping their school-aged daughters at home to maintain their chastity (in spite of India’s compulsory education laws applicable to students aged 6–14), the strong influence of a traditionally patriarchal social system, and the status attached to caste or tribal membership. Additional comments about these gender issues are found in the following excerpts from Stratton’s writings (below). Stratton states:

We visited a woman that ... used to go to the English school. She was friends with the priests [who established the English school]. She invited us to [her home for] dinner. There was a little girl [of] about 12 [years old] who worked and lived there, and prepared the meal. We were told she was sent by her family to work there...

We heard that some families keep their daughters at home to protect them [rather than permitting them to attend school]...

We [the women in the group] were taken care of while we were there, and decisions were made for us which I believe is customary in the Indian culture. Most of these decisions were made for our safety, which we could not understand at the time.

We visited a tribe on the hillside. They live in the forest, and did not want to conform or learn a trade [for profit]. Their women were fair game to be raped because of their caste...



*Welcome parade to St. Xavier's Hindi School*



*Marching review at St. Xavier's Boy's School*

One school Stratton and her colleagues visited in spring 2002 was St. Xavier's English School, the school on which our intrinsic case study is based and the English school referred to in the excerpts above. Stratton's field notes and journal from that time provide a snapshot of her first impressions of the visit to St. Xavier's English School:

The children greeted us with the traditional Ho tribal welcome. This involved parades as we entered the school grounds, washing our hands or our feet, and showering us with flower leis. They then entertained us with music, dancing, marching, and acting. This was only a sampling of the gracious Indian hospitality I was privileged to enjoy while visiting this community and its schools. I have gained a high respect for the people and their customs.

At St. Xavier's English School, the minimum student-teacher ratio is 50:1. Any fewer students than that, Stratton notes, would cause the school to lose a teacher. On average, Indian primary schools have 2.8 teachers per 200 students (Maheshwari & Raina, 1998). "Sixty would be an average number of students found in a classroom we visited," Stratton explains. While St. Xavier's student-teacher ratio may seem high to U.S. educators, it still is considerably lower than the ratio at most other primary schools in India.

Student behavioral referrals are rare at St. Xavier's. The teachers feel that the students want to come to school, and students' parents teach them to respect teachers as authority figures. These opinions were confirmed by another educator who visited India's private schools (Gupta, 2001), who noted behavioral referrals are low in Indian schools because "teachers, parents, and students are all part of a village family. Children are encouraged as well as reprimanded when needed by any adult member of the community" (p. 21). Teachers at St. Xavier's feel free to leave their classrooms and chat with visitors. Stratton, who teaches in a U.S. school, is not comfortable leaving her students while she chats with colleagues. Her field notes state:



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We met with the faculty. I asked them where their students were. Totally unaware why the question was [being] asked, the answer was that they were in their classrooms and this teaches them responsibility. Our observation was, that in classes of about 60 students, [Indian students] were quietly sitting in their seats, waiting for their teachers to return. It was incredible!



*St. Xavier's Girl's School*

Immigrants who attended school in India before arriving in the United States agree with teachers interviewed that Indian students demonstrate greater levels of respect for their teachers than students in U.S. schools. Amy recalls that, during the time she attended school in India:

We called all our professors “sir”...and you always said “Good morning, sir.” They may be six years older than you [but still you treated them with respect]. Power came with the position. It was so formal. When your teacher walked into the class, you stood up and wished them “Good morning,” even in medical school.

Coming to grad school [in the United States], it was a total different way of life, way of learning. That was very shocking to me that you could just go and say [to your professor], “How do you do this problem?,” that you could put your feet up [on the desk] in the classroom, [that you could] take tape recorders to class. It was just casual — you could come in and leave as you please.

Students’ respectful behavior toward their teachers and each other is not the only difference between U.S. and Indian schooling. There are differences in the instructional decision-making process, and some different subjects are taught in Indian schools. In India the curriculum is set by a central Education Department within the national government, while in the United States (within certain parameters) individual school districts are free to develop curricula for various grade levels. The subjects currently taught in standards one through six are English, Hindi, math, science, social studies, general knowledge, values education, crafts, and computer science. The levels are called “standards,” rather than “grades.” At St. Xavier’s, reading, writing, and speaking both

Hindi and English are stressed at the primary level (equivalent to elementary grades one through six). Because of multilinguality in India, educators have the challenge of selecting a language for teaching. During the early childhood years, the language of choice is usually the official state language (Pattnaik, 1996).

The teachers interviewed for this study told us Indian private schools, like the government-sponsored public schools, follow a centrally established curriculum. Teachers and principal alike told Stratton a Central Education Commission sets the school's curriculum, or syllabus. The teachers and principal decide together on the material and books before presenting the curriculum to the students. At the beginning of the school term, teachers sit down together with the books and the curriculum and work together. For instance, all teachers teaching English in standards one through six would work together to see that the English curriculum is met. The data on government control of curriculum in Indian schools is supported by other researchers, who verify that curriculum is set centrally although teachers and administrators may choose the textbooks they prefer (Gupta, 2001; Sahni, 1999). Indian parents are responsible for the cost of each student's textbooks. Stratton's field notes on school curriculum also explain that

the [Indian] government does not interfere with the schools with the exception of following the proscribed syllabus. Most of the private schools are missionary schools, and are considered the best schools. St. Xavier's English School is well known as being an exceptional school [locally].

St. Xavier's school principal and teachers interviewed confirm the curriculum is almost identical throughout the entire region. Certain textbook content, however, may differ. Children around India could be studying different curricula and items of interest to their own locale. Jamshedpur schools adopt the same syllabus and textbooks throughout the district because, as parents and school leaders agree, competition between and among students should be encouraged to promote high levels of achievement. The local schools provide competitions for many school subjects and activities. All primary schools in the Jamshedpur district — private as well as government-run — buy textbooks and have instructional materials printed together as a group to cut down on costs.

Classes in Indian primary schools are not self-contained as is the normal practice in the United States. Bells signal the end of each 35-minute period, when teachers rather than students change classes. Each teacher has a subject specialty and also may teach another subject during the afternoon class periods. Teachers specialize in this fashion because it is more efficient, and easier for the teacher to prepare materials and lectures. Each teacher, then, has the concentration and focus of only one subject to master in the primary grades. All lesson plans are submitted to the principal for his or her approval before the lessons are taught to the children.

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Researchers have noted that, in many government-run schools in rural India, teachers arrive late or not at all (PROBE Team, 1999). Teachers at St. Xavier's, on the other hand, arrive before 7:30 a.m. in order to begin the 15-minute daily assembly promptly at 7:40 a.m. The rest of the St. Xavier school day is structured in the following fashion:

- 8:00 a.m. First period
- 8:40 a.m. Second period
- 9:20 a.m. Third period
- 10:00 a.m. Recess
- 10:25 a.m. Fourth period
- 11:05 a.m. Fifth period
- 11:45 a.m. Second recess
- 12:05 p.m. Sixth period
- 12:50 p.m. Seventh period
- 1:30 p.m. Classroom cleaning
- 1:40 p.m. Dismissal assembly

The above schedule is in keeping with schedules outlined in other studies on schooling in India. These studies show the average school day in India begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 2 p.m. (Gupta, 2001; Sahni, 1999). As Stratton's field notes attest, "Students go to school Monday through Saturday. The school year begins in June and ends in April. It is scheduled in this manner to avoid the scarcity of water, extreme heat, and other difficulties posed by the dry season. There are 62 holidays during the school year in which the students do not attend school." Many of the 62 holidays mentioned in Stratton's field notes are holy days celebrated by one or more of the religious groups in the region.

At St. Xavier's, subjects taught during the seven periods of the school day include English, Hindi, mathematics, science, social studies, general knowledge, values education, crafts, and computer science. These subjects are taught throughout the six grades, or standards. Teachers in India's primary schools are expected to stress reading, writing, and speaking in both English and Hindi. Because English, Hindi, and mathematics are considered the most important classes, students are exposed to these subjects during the first three periods of the day. After recess, subjects such as geography, history, and physical or life science might be taught, with variations found within each standard or grade. Following the second recess of the day, subjects considered to be of lesser importance (acting, music, crafts, art, ethnic games) are taught during the afternoon.

Unlike teachers and students in many public schools in India, those at St. Xavier's English School have access to a variety of teaching supplies and instructional aides. These include maps, a globe, teacher-made charts (to explain various points, such as the lifestyle of early man, historical and technological developments, historical events, mountains,

portraits, etc.), an atlas, and models. Televisions and VCRs are rare; a few classrooms might come together in one large room to be able to use these teaching tools. Electrical power is not always available or reliable, according to teachers interviewed. The lack of dependable electricity causes problems when teachers plan to use televisions or show films in the classroom. Field trips are a common way for students to travel locally and learn about many different things from their region.

Educators and parents in India perceive the process of assessment of subject area learning differently from those in the United States. Student progress at St. Xavier's is assessed through an examination system. Three standardized unit tests and three standardized terminal examinations are conducted regularly per student. Report cards show unit and terminal examination scores for each subject, along with the grade for that subject and a grade for behavior.

Schools in India, like those in Great Britain, are examination driven. Each student is tested rigorously over content multiple times each school year, and must pass a standardized examination annually. Students who do not pass these annual exams do not progress on to the next standard, or level. Examination scores determine students' career paths beyond the 10th standard; exams also determine to which university students may eventually apply. According to Raina & Dhand (2000), the annual examination — a practice left over from the Colonial period — determines the curriculum set by central government, which in turn “encourages rote learning in the students and discourages teachers from trying new ideas or pedagogies” (p. 88). Pressure to achieve high examination scores motivates students to memorize huge bodies of information without understanding it or being able to apply what they have learned (Raina & Dhand, 2000). In the United States standardized testing is commonly used to assess students' progress in the elementary grades; however, U.S. students are not currently placed into career tracks or admitted to universities based solely upon these early test scores. Sunit, an immigrant from India, explains the place of examinations in Indian students' schooling experiences from his perspective as a student in a private boarding school for males:

It was highly competitive. At the sixth grade, we took [an exam] from Cambridge University in England. And then we were ranked according to it, and right there in the sixth grade we were broken up into three different departments: the group called a pure science group, the group that was called technical, and the group that was called the humanities. So they channeled me into what's called a pure science group because of my scoring on that very competitive test. Now that carries on right up to the ninth grade, where they start to channel you again on the basis of another competitive test, to see if you're able to continue your performance.

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Aside from the examination-driven career tracking model, other major differences between U.S. and Indian schooling include fierce competitiveness for university admission in India, the high degree of respect shown Indian teachers, teacher-directed instruction (India) rather than discussion or group activities (United States), and the Indian practice of separating extracurricular activities from the school itself. Educators from the United States who have spent time observing in Indian schools confirm these differences (see, for example, Evans, 2000; Raina & Dhand, 2000).

Despite government calls for teachers to “adopt child-centered, activity-based teaching and learning experiences at the primary level” (Maheshwari & Raina, 1998, 88), research shows the majority of teachers in India continue to favor a teacher-directed, lecture-dominated approach. In one study, 86 percent of teachers studied used lecture exclusively. Some authorities attribute teachers’ reliance on lecture to the permanence of tenure in government-funded schools (teachers in India are employed for life), and the lack of teacher-accountability systems (Raina, 1999).

Our data indicate that many of St. Xavier’s teachers subscribe to a child-centered instructional model. Most of St. Xavier’s teachers incorporate an activities-based approach to learning. According to Father Fernandes, St. Xavier’s founder, schooling at St. Xavier’s English School today differs from his own Indian schooling experiences in the following ways: “[When I went to school] the teacher would read from the book and then explain the material. Things have changed since then. There are more activities involved with student learning [now]. Today’s education is better.”

The principal at St. Xavier’s English School, Sister Corona, also commented on how Indian schooling has changed in recent years, saying, “The school is different in many ways compared to [times past].” Changes noted include the interaction of teachers and students, which Sister Corona believes, “has become friendlier. This helps the students perform well in their studies and helps [them better understand] different subjects.” St. Xavier’s principal and teachers also mentioned other changes in Indian schooling they have observed, such as the inclusion of extracurricular activities on the school grounds, the addition of computer science to the curriculum, and having a library and computer laboratory at the school. “I believe these changes are positive,” reasoned Sister Corona, “because it helps the students to acquire all-round development of their personality rather than acquiring only bookish knowledge.”

Interview and anecdotal data about teacher training in India support data found in the literature (Maheshwari & Raina, 1998). Stratton summarized St. Xavier teachers’ comments in her journal:

To become an elementary teacher in India, the required training would be the teacher’s training course (TTC), and for high school teaching you would get a B.Ed. This requirement is the same all around India.

A precise look at [Indian teachers'] educational requirements would show a completion of one to six for elementary. They would next go to middle school with standards seven and eight and then high school with standards nine and ten. At 10th grade, they would have to pass the final exam to be able to graduate. They would attend a junior college, which we [in the United States] might call grades 11 and 12. At this time they would select a specialization, which they study for three years. We might call this grades 13, 14, and 15 to help compare this to American school years. (Remember, even elementary students receive specialized teachers for every subject.) The final schooling involves two [additional] years for the master's in education. Each teacher is required to graduate with a master's in education before they begin teaching. If American teachers needed to earn their master's degree prior to teaching, the years of schooling required for teacher preparation would be the same in both India and in the United States.

Teachers and school leaders at St. Xavier's English School discussed educational reforms from the past several years in India, and offered their opinions about whether these reforms have been successful. While their comments do not specifically address gender concerns, we believe these educators' perspectives supply information not available elsewhere. Some examples of comments on educational reform from our informants include:

Educational reforms take place from time to time in India. Changes to the syllabus [curriculum] are made that are appropriate to the local situation or to findings from examination scores. A major change we have observed involves the move from academic education to whole-child education. In the past, for example, the schools provided only curriculum-based, or academic, education. Today we see all-round development of the student stressed. Some resulting changes include celebrations of important national and religious holidays, the addition of values education and health/hygiene education. Also, a hands-on learning method is emphasized now rather than a strict lecture approach.

Going farther back, the inclusion of English language learning in the curriculum of all schools is now viewed as an important educational reform. Whereas 20 or 25 years ago English language learning began at the fifth standard, it is now required from the first day of school.

"There are Indians living in the United States today who have benefited from receiving background in English from their schools," Father Fernandes explained. "I did

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not have the opportunity to learn English until I began to study for the priesthood.” Stratton observed preschool children speaking English during her 2002 visit. “They were taught nursery rhymes and songs to prepare them for formal English instruction,” she noted.

As has been mentioned, St. Xavier’s 2002 enrollment was 692. Five years later, enrollment at the school has increased to 1,187. Boys continue to outnumber girls



*Pre-kindergarten school in Jamshedpur*

at St. Xavier’s, with 717 boys to 470 girls. These figures represent a 30 percent increase in female student enrollment during the past five years, say school leaders. According to Father Fernandes and Sister Corona, 93 percent of the 470 girls currently enrolled can be expected to complete six years of formal schooling at St. Xavier’s. A recent survey of staff and students indicates 92 percent of girls completing standard 6 at St. Xavier’s intend to go on to middle school. School administrators and teachers credit several circumstances with these positive changes in school attendance by girls in the past five years; specifically, Sister Corona and St. Xavier’s teachers say the following have helped to create positive change for the Indian girl-child:

Awareness and motivational classes created through guidance seminars conducted for the parents and guardians [of girl students].

The continuous infusion of values systems inoculated through motivational seminars and classes [for girl students].

More and ample chances given to girls for developing their talents and leadership skills.

When asked to describe what they believe to be the greatest obstacles to girls’ formal schooling in Chaibasa, St. Xavier’s teachers emphasized the “lack of willingness and awareness among parents about girls’-children education.” Finally, in late 2006 St. Xavier’s educators noted major obstacles to the girl-child’s formal schooling in eastern India include parents’ beliefs concerning “girls [being] subject to men,” and society’s acceptance that “girls [are] meant to be at home taking care of the children and family needs.”

## Conclusion

This study adds personal Asian Indian educators’ narratives to the research base on multicultural and comparative education. These narratives, combined with oral history

narratives by Asian Indian immigrants in the United States and an intrinsic case study of a rural school in eastern India, permit us to illuminate issues and circumstances affecting Asian Indian females' educational experiences. Through classroom observations, interviews, e-mail exchanges, and informal conversations with school administrators and teachers in private schools in eastern India, through targeted observations and interactions with school administrators and teachers at St. Xavier's English School in rural India, and through oral history interviews with Asian Indian immigrants to the United States, we allow readers to hear individual Asian Indian voices, hopes, and dreams against a backdrop of class, caste, and gender stratification. By so doing, we provide readers with an opportunity to view the concepts of schooling and gender socialization through a different cultural lens, to compare Asian Indian and American educational experiences, and encourage educators to think about education from a global perspective.

Like their counterparts in the United States, both boys and girls in India have access to formal schooling and are legally obligated to attend school. The Indian Constitution now includes the expectation that all children will attend school, yet the government has not provided funds to build schools sufficient to accommodate all students. In the United States, 81 percent of girls graduate from high school, compared with 80 percent of boys. Females from lower socioeconomic groups in the United States are less likely to be actively engaged in the workforce, while higher-caste females in India are less likely than those from lower castes to be engaged in the workforce. Literacy is directly linked to formal schooling. In 2002, when the latest figures became available, 86 percent of U.S. males and 75 percent of U.S. females were literate ([http://www.earthtrends.wri.org/pdf\\_library/country\\_profiles/Pop\\_cou\\_840.pdf](http://www.earthtrends.wri.org/pdf_library/country_profiles/Pop_cou_840.pdf), retrieved on January 15, 2007). In India, current literacy rates are 70.2 percent for males and 48.3 percent for females. In some of India's rural areas, only one girl in 100 can expect to graduate from high school.

Sister Corona, the principal of St. Xavier's English School and one of the informants in this study, says while India has many schools, there still are children in India who have never seen a school and have never learned to read or write. This, Sister Corona believes, is due to pervasive poverty and to certain social customs found in India. Based on our review of the literature, careful consideration of recent educational reports from India as well as from international organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF, and on supporting documentation by recently arrived Asian Indian immigrants to the United States, we agree with Sister Corona's observations. Moreover, we are convinced Indian girls' access to formal school and their motivation to complete the formal schooling process will be enhanced through continued establishment of privately funded schools in rural areas — especially when regional needs are taken into consideration.

The Indian government has taken steps intended to improve girls' access to schooling, including guaranteeing free and compulsory education for all persons under the age of



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14 in its Constitution. At the state and local level, as Sister Corona indicates, change is not as evident. She and others at St. Xavier's believe social forces as well as political agendas continue to circumvent Asian Indian girls' access to schooling. "There is a lack of willingness and awareness among parents about the girl-child's education," Father Fernandes explains. "The parents have an attitude that, in the future, a girl-child will not be earning [money] for her parental family — so why waste money on her [education]?" Other informants agree with Father Fernandes' explanation. "The attitude among parents [is that] girls [are] subject to men," one of St. Xavier's teachers adds. "[Society teaches that] girls are meant to be at home," another states. These statements made by our informants in 2006 are in agreement with our literature review. For example, Mohanty and Nandakumar (2005) write that parents from each Asian Indian socioeconomic class frequently voice the sentiment "Why educate girls? They will be married" (<http://www.edjournal.net/000001.html>). Other researchers note that because Asian Indian daughters leave their natal families upon marriage and become human capital for their husbands' families, parents are reluctant to invest resources toward a daughter's formal schooling (Rao, Cheno, & Narain, 2003; Tharoor, 1997; Gibson, 1988).

In the absence of wider structural change, such as enforcement for compulsory education legislation in India, current measures alone are insufficient to empower girls and women. At the time of this writing, Indian legislation fails to address socially imposed causes of male-female discrepancies. The deep socio-cultural and political structures that restrict females' mobility and access to knowledge must be examined and understood as powerful obstacles to women's development in a developing democracy. Without such critical consideration, the education of women and girls in many parts of the world will continue to suffer.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Schools visited, in chronological order, include St. Xavier's Boy's Middle School (80 percent tribal), St. Xavier's Girl's School (80 percent tribal), St. Xavier's English School (coeducational, with special emphasis on English language), Jen Vikas Kendra People Development Center Cheshire Home for the Orphaned Handicapped, a preparatory preschool (no name given — prepares 4- and 5-year-olds from elite families for acceptance into the most competitive primary schools), and St. Robert's School. All school locations were within a two-hour drive of Jamshedpur.

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