

GENDERING OF THE EDUCATION

The literacy ratio among males and females is an important indicator to determine socialization, development and disparities in gender relations of human beings, specially of the status of women in a society. In India the literacy level of women is much lower than that of men. According to the Census Reports the literacy ratio for males and females that was 18% and 8% respectively in 1951 is now 76% and 54% in 2001 (Government of India). The figures show a significant improvement in the overall literacy ratio, on the one hand, and an increasing gap of literacy between the males and the females in India, on the other. In the matter of literacy and education the women are no doubt progressing but are constantly lagging farther behind the men whereas they constitute almost half of the total population of India.

This chapter attempts to analyse and explain the gendering of education and the status of women in Dewan by focussing specially on the tendency among girl children for school going, dropping out of school and taking up of domestic responsibilities. In spite of the fact that there are

three schools in Dewan the overall literacy level of population is quite low and the literacy level of women is much lower than that of men.

Educational Level

In Dewan excluding the child population below 6 years (10.94% of the total population) the illiterates constitute 60.55% of the total villagers, 50.17% of the males and 71.36% of the females. The data show that the women are educationally more backward than their counterpart men among the backward people of the village. Therefore, to understand the disparities between the sexes and the generations the educational levels of the respondents and their counterpart males and children are discussed here.

The respondents are broadly distributed over three categories; namely, the illiterates, the literates and the educated. The educated are sub-divided into various educational levels. The distribution of the respondents into the categories and the educational levels is shown in the Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Distribution of the Respondents into the Levels of Education by Community, Religion and Caste

Levels of Education	Community, Religion and Caste																		
	Hindustani																		
	Bengali			Bhojpuri Hindu			Bhojpuri Muslim	Hindi Speaking			Hindustani Total			Oriya	Santal	Grand Total			
	OBC's	SC's	Total	OBC's	SC's	Total	OBC's	OBC's	SC's	Total	OBC's	SC's	Total	OBC's	ST's	OBC's	SC's	ST's	Total
Illiterate	8	2	10 (76.92)	13	6	19 (76%)	2 (100)	1	1	2 (66.66)	16 (72.72)	7 (87.5)	23 (76.66)	5 (100%)	2 (100%)	29 (76.31)	9 (90%)	2 (100%)	40 (80%)
Literate	1	-	1 (7.70)	1	-	1 (4%)	-	-	-	-	1 (4.54)	-	1 (3.33)	-	-	2 (5.26)	-	-	2 (4%)
Primary	1	-	1 (7.70)	-	1	1 (4%)	-	1	-	1 (33.33)	1 (4.54)	1 (12.5)	2 (6.66)	-	-	2 (5.26)	1 (10%)	-	3 (6%)
Middle School	1	-	1 (7.70)	2	-	2 (8%)	-	-	-	-	2 (9.09)	-	2 (6.66)	-	-	3 (7.89)	-	-	3 (6%)
HSLC	-	-	-	2	-	2 (8%)	-	-	-	-	2 (9.09)	-	2 (6.66)	-	-	2 (5.26)	-	-	2 (4%)
Total	11	2	13 (100)	18	7	25 (100)	2	2	1	3 (100)	22 (100)	8 (100)	30 (100)	5 (100)	2 (100)	38 (100)	10 (100)	2 (100)	50 (100)

The data reveal that of the total respondents 80% are illiterate, 4% literates and 16% educated.

By their linguistic community, 77% of the Bengali, 76.66% of the Hindustani (76% of the Bhojpuri Hindu, 100% of the Bhojpuri Muslim, 66.66% of the Hindi Speaking), and 100% each of the Oriya and Santal respondents are illiterate.

By their caste 76.31% of the OBCs, 90% of the SCs and 100% of the STs are illiterate. The rest are distributed in a proportion from 4% to 6% in the four categories; viz; literate, primary, middle school and HSLC. The Hindustani respondents are distributed all over the levels, the Bengali up to the middle school (from fifth to seventh standard) and the rest up to the primary school level (fourth standard). Thus, the ratio and level of education both are low among the respondents.

From the observations of the data one further finds a corresponding relationship between the illiteracy and the small community size (Oriya and Santal), religious minority (Bhojpuri Muslim) and low caste/tribe status (STs subsequently followed by SCs and OBCs) of the women in the larger society. The overall literacy ratio (total number of literates and educated) of the respondents is found near about the ratio of literacy that prevailed among the men in India in general at the time of Independence.

This brings a point to the fore that the progress of literacy rate among the women of the village very slow.. But, still, the literacy rate does not provide any indication of the quality of literacy among the women whereas the latter is an important indicator of gender disparity in a society. When the data on the educational levels are observed one finds that the women are distributed into only four literacy levels; namely, literacy, primary school, middle school and high school. Among these 4% women (literate) have generally no schooling whereas those who have had schooling are 6% each primary and middle/upper primary school and 4% high school pass.

It means that only 16% of the respondents have had formal schooling for their education and the highest educational level among the women is only high school. The fact that the literates constitute one fourth of those having literacy and education indicates the lack of opportunities for informal literacy of women in the families. Moreover, barring a few of the high school pass

respondents the majority of these have the schooling up to primary level only. As is the matter of the type of their school, one finds that all of these respondents have had their education in vernacular (Bengali medium) government or private schools. It is a fact that the English medium private (public) schools have a lot of advantages over the vernacular government and private schools in the matter of the standard of teaching learning, quality of education, infrastructural facilities, expenditures and career opportunities.

Briefly, not only the literacy rate is low but also the quality of literacy is also poor among the women. No doubt, the analysis displays the low status of the women at the literacy front.

But this does not indicate any gender disparity until the literacy of their male counterparts is examined. The gender disparities in the population may be explained if the respondents' (women's) literacy level is compared with the literacy level of their male counterparts in family.

The counterparts of the respondents (women) are their husbands who are distributed into the categories and levels of education to determine the male literacy in the respondents' families. Therefore, the educational/literacy level of their male counterparts is shown here in the Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Distribution of Male Counterparts of the Respondents into the Levels of Education by Community, Religion and Caste

Level s of Educ ation	Community, Religion and Caste															Grand Total			
	Bengali			Hindustani										Oriya Total	Santal Total				
				Bhojpur Hindu			Bhojpur Muslim	Hindi			Hindustani Total								
	OBCs	SCs	Total	OBCs	SCs	Total	OBCs	OBC	SC	Total	OBCs	SCs	Total	OBCs	STs	OBC	SC	ST	Total
Illiterate	7	1	8 (61.53)	6	5	11 (44%)	1 (50%)	1	1	2	8 (66.66)	6 (36.36)	14 (75%)	4 (46.66)	2 (80%)	19 (50.0)	7 (78.0)	2 (100%)	28 (56.0)
Literate	2	-	2 (15.38)	3	1	4 (16%)	1 (50%)	-	-	-	4 (18.18)	1 (12.5)	5 (16.66)	-	-	6 (15.78)	1 (10.0)	-	7 (14.0)
Primary	-	1	1 (7.70)	3	-	3 (12%)	-	1	-	1	4 (33.33)	18 (18.18)	4 (13.33)	1 (20.0)	-	5 (13.15)	1 (10.0)	-	6 (12.0)
Middle School	1	-	1 (7.70)	3	-	3 (12%)	-	-	-	-	3 (13.63)	-	3 (10%)	-	-	4 (10.52)	-	-	4 (8.0)
H.S.L.C.	-	-	-	3	-	3 (12%)	-	-	-	-	3 (13.63)	-	3 (10%)	-	-	3 (7.89)	-	-	3 (6.0)
H.S.	-	-	-	-	1	1 (4%)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (12.5)	1 (3.33)	-	-	-	1 (10.0)	-	1 (2.0)
B.A.	1	-	1 (7.70)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 (2.63)	-	-	1 (2.0)
Total	11	2	13	18	7	25	2	2	1	3	22	8	30	5	2	38	10	2	50
(%)			(100)			(100)	(100)			(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

The data show that of the male counterparts of the respondents 56% are the illiterate, 14% literate and 30% educated. The educated are distributed over six educational levels ranging from the primary school to the degree of Bachelor of Arts (B. A.). Most of the educated are concentrated up to the level of High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) and they constitute 26% of the total number. Of the total respondents' male counterparts 4% are distributed into the levels of Higher Secondary (H.S.) and B.A. (2%each). The literates constitute about half of the total number of the educated male counterparts of respondents. This indicates that the males have the opportunities available for informal learning of letters.

The Bengali counterparts are distributed up to B. A., the Hindustani up to H.S. and the Oriya up to primary school whereas the Santhal are all illiterates.

By their caste category 50% of the OBC, 70% of the SC and 100% of the ST counterparts are illiterate. The OBCs are distributed over all the levels, the SCs up to H.S. and the STs are illiterates.

The data show that the literacy rate of the male counterparts of the respondents is below average and the illiteracy is a little dominating one. The educated are distributed over a sufficient number of educational levels but mostly concentrated up to the high school level. Only the OBC Bengali and Hindustani are distributed over the various categories of the educational levels and they significantly partake of the literacy rate of the total number of male counterparts of the respondents.

When compared with the educational level of the respondents (women) one finds a wide disparity with regards to literacy rate, number of illiterates, number of the educated and educational levels between the female respondents and their male counterparts. The females' literacy rate is about two and a half time less than that of their counterparts; education is limited up to high school level only whereas the males' education is stretched up to graduate level and the males have far greater availability of opportunities for informal learning of letters (literacy).

The foregoing analysis of the literacy and gender disparity which is quite apparent further invokes one's interest to know whether the disparity persists in the younger generation of these people. If it persists then what are the patterns of its persistence? The question therefore leads to probe into the children's education.

Educational Level of the Children of the Respondents

An attempt has been made to find out the educational level of younger generation in Dewan. The literacy rate of the children of the respondents is given in the Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Distribution of the Children of the Respondents into the Levels of Education by Community, Religion and Sex

Levels of Education	Community, Religion and Sex																								
	Bengali						Hindustani						Oriya (OBCs)				Santal (STs)				Grand Total				
	Bhojpur Hindu			Bhojpur Muslim			Hindi Speaking			Hindustani Total			M		F		Total		M		F		Total		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	
Illiterate include above 6 year	3	6	9	10	10	20	-	2	2	4	3	7	14	15	29	2	4	6	-	2	2	2	19	27	46
	(23.07)	(40.0)	(32.14)	(30.30)	(52.63)	(38.46)	(66.66)	(75%)	(70%)	(34.14)	(55.55)	(42.64)	(50%)	(40%)	(42.85)	(66.66)	(50%)	(50%)	(32.20)	(49.9)	(40.36)				
Literate	3	2	5	2	2	4	-	-	-	1	1	2	3	5	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	6	8	14	
	(23.07)	(13.33)	(17.85)	(6.06)	(10.52)	(7.69)	(66.66)	(25.0)	(10%)	(4.87)	(11.11)	(7.35)	(20%)	(20%)	(14.28)	(33.33)	(50%)	(50%)	(10.18)	(14.54)	(12.28)				
Primary School	4	5	9	10	2	12	1	2	3	2	2	13	4	17	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	17	10	27	
	(30.76)	(33.33)	(32.14)	(30.30)	(10.52)	(23.07)	(33.33)	(20%)	(20%)	(31.70)	(14.81)	(25%)	(10%)	(7.14)	(28.81)	(18.18)	(23.68)								
Middle School	3	1	4	4	4	8	-	-	-	4	4	8	4	8	1	3	4	4	-	-	-	8	8	16	
	(23.07)	(6.66)	(14.28)	(12.12)	(21.05)	(15.38)	(66.66)	(25.0)	(10%)	(9.75)	(14.81)	(11.76)	(30%)	(28.57)	(13.55)	(14.54)	(14.03)								
H.S.I.C.	-	1	1	4	1	5	1	-	1	5	1	6	1	6	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	6	2	8	
	(6.66)	(3.57)	(3.57)	(12.12)	(5.26)	(9.61)	(50%)	(16.66)	(12.19)	(3.70)	(8.82)	(25%)	(7.14)												
H.S.	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	
	(6.66)	(3.03)	(1.92)	(3.03)	(1.92)		(2.43)	(1.47)														(1.69)	(0.88)		
B.A.	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	
	(6.06)	(3.84)		(6.06)	(3.84)		(4.87)	(2.94)														(3.38)	(1.75)		
Total	13	15	28	33	19	52	2	4	6	6	4	10	41	27	68	4	10	14	1	3	4	59	55	114	
	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

The data show that of the children of the respondents 40.36% are illiterate, 12.28% literate and 47.36% educated. Of the children 23.68% have attained education up to primary school, 14.03% up to middle school, 7.01% up to HSLC and 0.88% up to H.S. and 1.75% up to B. A. Therefore, three fifths of the children are literates including the educated. The literates constitute about a one-fourth of the educated. The educated are distributed from primary school to B. A., but most of these are concentrated up to high school.

The children of the Hindustani respondents are distributed all over the levels; those of the Bengali and the Oriya up to HSLC and those of the Santal are only literate.

Sex wise, 32.20% of the males and 49.9% of the females are illiterate, 10.18% males and 14.54% females are literate, 57.62% males and 35.86% females are educated, 28.81% males and 18.18% females educated up to primary level, 13.55% males and 14.54% females up to middle school level, 10.18% males and 3.63% females up to high school level and 1.69% and 3.38% only males educated up to H.S. and graduate level respectively. Therefore, the males are distributed over all the levels but concentrated up to HSLC only whereas the females are distributed over the levels up to HSLC and mostly concentrated up to the middle school, i. e., upper primary. It is only the male and female children of the Hindustani, who are distributed over all the educational levels and the Santal children are distributed only between the two levels of illiterates and literates.

Therefore, patterns of the gender discrimination in literacy or education have persisted in the new generation of both the sexes across the communities/castes, i. e., the girls lag behind the boys in respect of the overall literacy rate and educational level. However, the incident of illiteracy is much more among the adults than among the younger generation. At the intergenerational level, the female children have a higher literacy rate than their mothers. But when the literacy rate of the male children is compared with the female children it appears that the male children of the respondents have a higher literacy rate than their female counterparts.

This clearly shows that the villagers are now no doubt recognizing the educational importance in life as the children from the village are educationally better equipped than their parents in view of the upcoming educational infrastructure, improving socio-economic conditions of the families and growing consciousness.

In the above analysis the gender disparity remains unexplained until the gap of the literacy rate between the boys and the girls is not discussed in terms of its magnitude and reasons. The gap provokes a few questions: What is the magnitude of the gender disparity at the time of registration of the children in school? What patterns of gender disparity are observed in the incidence of the children's dropout from school? What are reasons for different magnitudes of the dropouts in the two sexes? And what do the children, specially the girls do after they have dropped out of school?

To probe these questions one has to discuss the gender aspect of the incidence of the children dropping out of school in terms of its ramifications. Here, an attempt is being made to understand the gender differences and their logic.

Dropouts from School

Though the economic condition of the people in Dewan is poor in general and it is difficult for them to afford children's education, the parents try to send at least one of their sons to school. Combined with the economic conditions is their social set up and culture that determine preference of education for the boys and that of domestic tasks and marriage for the girls. Therefore, out of the socio-economic conditions they have formed gendered stereotypes. Generally the boys are considered economic assets to the family for survival and the girls as those who will go to some other family. Coming out of the stereotypes means their salvage from the socio-economic condition that is not yet perceived among these people. In the given situation it is common practice to sacrifice the girls for the sake of the boys in the matter of the education of children in family. Rather, the girls are considered to facilitate the education of the boys by taking domestic responsibilities with their

parents for earning livelihood or by contributing to the income of the family and to the education of the boys.

Therefore, the dropout rate of the girls from school is shocking. This fact comes out from the nature and reasons of dropping out of school among the literate respondents (women). Of the respondents, in all, 10 respondents are the literates including the educated ones. They have all dropped out of school. The Table 7.4 exhibits reasons for dropping out of school.

Table 7.4: Distribution of the Literate Respondents into the Reasons for Dropping out of School by Community, Religion and Caste

Reasons for Dropping out of School	Community and Caste																							
	Bengali			Hindustani										Oriya	Santal	Grand Total								
	OBCs	SCs	Total	Bhojpuri Hindu			Bhojpuri Muslim			Hindi Speaking			Hindustani Total			OBCs	STs	OBC	SC	ST	Grand Total			
				OBCs	SCs	Total	OBCs	OBC	SC	Total	OBCs	SCs	Total	OBCs	SCs							Total		
Poverty	1	-	1 (33.33)	2	1	3 (50%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3 (33.33)	1	3 (100)	42.85	-	-	3	1	4 (100%)	4 (40%)
Looking after Younger Siblings	1	-	1 (33.33)	1	-	1 (16.66)	-	1	-	1	-	1 (100%)	2	-	2 (33.33)	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3 (33.33)	3 (30%)
Marriage	-	-	-	1	-	1 (16.66)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1 (16.66)	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1 (11.11)	1 (10%)
Inability to Pass Examination	1	-	1 (33.33)	1	-	1 (16.66)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1 (16.66)	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2 (22.22)	2 (20%)
Total (%)	3	-	3 (100)	5	1	6 (100)	-	1	-	1 (100)	6	1	7 (100)	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	1	10 (100)	10 (100)	

The data show that 40% of the literate respondents dropped out of school as their parents could not afford the expenditure on education, on the one hand, and they needed extra hand to eke out the two times' meal; 30% of these had to give up education to look after their younger siblings

when their both the parents are at some work for livelihood; 10% were got married and their schooling was discontinued as with the marriage the parents' liability was over, on the one hand, and the in-laws took them fit only for domestic and economic activities; and 20% of these dropped when they could not pass examination as neither the parents could afford the economic burden nor did they sustain their interest in study.

Community wise, 33.33% of the Bengali and 42.85% of the Hindustani (50% of the Bhojpuri Hindu) drop-outs were due to poverty; 33% each of the Bengali community dropped out of school in view of the need for looking after younger siblings and due to the inability to pass an examination; 28.57% of the Hindustani gave up their education to take care of younger siblings whereas 14.28% each of the Hindustani discontinued schooling due to marriage and inability to pass examination. The pattern of dropouts among the communities almost coincides with the general pattern of dropouts.

Therefore, poverty is the main obstacle in education of the people in general and specially in female education as the female education occupies the last place in their priorities. The priorities are determined by socio-cultural factors. The entire family has to depend upon minimal cash income. It is impossible for the parents to send all children to school at a time. Generally, they prefer boys rather than girls to send school. Not only poverty and associated factors but also the domestic responsibilities like taking care of younger siblings leads to girls, withdrawal from school. Soon after giving birth to a child, the labour women face the problem of caring for their babies during the working hours outside home. Then, a girl of the family has to take care of her younger siblings. Dropout of girls from school also occurs due to early marriage as parents consider the marriage of a girl more important than education. They always fear that their girls may abscond with the boys from other castes. So, they want to marry their daughters early. The dropout rate also rises as they are unable to pass examination due to their occupancy with the domestic affairs and paucity of time and resources around. The respondent women said that their parents were not able to provide them

with books, pencils, etc. They are not able to go to school regularly because of domestic works. As a result they could not pass the examination and finally stopped studies. The girls are seen to be useful hands assisting in domestic works, collecting firewood, earning from minor manual labour and looking after younger siblings.

In sum, the educational indicator reveals that the literacy level of the village is quite low but in comparison of the males, the females are discriminated against. However, in the younger generation, there is a better appreciation of the education but still there prevails the gender discrimination regarding the rate and level of education.