

Status Of Elementary Education In Assam At The Dawn Of Independence

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Abstract: Elementary education is the base / foundation on which all sorts of further education depend. It is compared with the life, without which life become meaningless. During the preceding years of independence, there existed a wide disparity in educational attainment between the different sections of population e.g. Boys and Girls, Rural and Urban, High and low caste, educated and uneducated parents, among different religious groups etc. The funding in the fields of education was very meager and insufficient from Government side; the private entrepreneurship was also limited. Therefore, to have a thorough understanding of the field and to study the position of elementary education in Assam at the dawn of independence, the present study has been conducted.

Keywords: Education; caste; religion; gender; Assam; Barak valley

Education in Assam, as in the rest of India in ancient times was too much restricted to the priestly classes and upper castes. Epigraphic and literary evidences clearly prove the existence of *Gurugrihas* and Sanskrit *Tols* patronized by the rulers for the promotion of learning in this region of India. In these centers, instructions in various branches of studies, including the religious lore, was imparted by competent teachers who were very keen in discharging their duties. Learning was confined to the higher classes, especially among the Brahmins and the Priestly classes. The pupils having thirst for knowledge flocked to them, and occasionally teachers also invited pupils from different parts of the country, and accordingly the Brahmin teachers (*Gurus*) in homely atmosphere of *Tols* and priestly classes in the serene atmosphere of temples imparted instructions to their pupils (Barpujari, 1990).

Following the Neo-Vaishnavite movement under Sri Sankar Deva, the great Vaishnavite reformer of the Sixteenth century in Assam, another type of quasi religious schools where non-Brahmins were also admitted existed in important villages and it trained up the youth in the knowledge of Sanskrit literature and Science namely the *Satra*. The *Satra*, literally meaning "holy areas" each headed by a Guru (teacher) designated as the *Satradhikar*. The *Namghar*, actually evolved as an offshoot, an extended wing or a miniature replica of the *Satra* institutions. The *Kirtanghar* (prayer hall) was the nerve centre of the entire place. There was no idol in the altar, but only a book, generally the

Bhagavata Gita, symbolizing God. In addition to prayers and cultural functions, religious discourses were also held in the *Kirtanghar*.

In addition to these religious and quasi-religious institutions, the respectable gentry employed private teachers to instruct their sons and daughters at home. The village *kakatis* and scribes were generally selected for this purpose, but a Brahmin was always preferred to instruct the children in a Brahmin family. Since instructor had to be remunerated, this system was confined to those parents who were comparatively in affluent circumstances. In medieval period with the arrival of the Muslims, opened up a new system of education which was so organized, planned and aimed to prepare a man fit to live in this world and the world hereafter. It was very much liberal and opens for all. Religious instruction comprised the most significant aspects of this education and was imparted in *Maktabs* generally attached to the mosque and *Madrasas*—the institutions meant for primary and secondary education respectively. *Quran* and *Hadith* were the main sources of Islamic education. In *Madrasas*, with the religious instructions some practical subjects were also taught (Debi, 1972).

Modern education in Assam is of comparatively recent origin. Towards the close of the 18th century, when the neighboring state of Bengal had already been familiar with the system of Western education, Assam was still in the midst of political confusion created by civil wars, insurrections and repeated invasions by the Burmese. The endeavor of modern

education in Assam, at the initial stage starts with some individual efforts made by some enlightened scholars.

David Scott, the agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, encouraged the indigenous schools by land grant. The educational institutions which survived the Burmese ravages, continues to be controlled by the priestly classes who had also exercised considerable influence over the masses. He realized that the introduction of any scheme for secular education affecting their monopoly would be productive of great dissatisfaction and resentment which might be prejudicial to the interests of the British Government. He, therefore, left the indigenous system of education undisturbed and continued to make grant of lands to these educational institutions. In early 1826, with the approval of the Government of Bengal, he made additional grants for the establishment of several indigenous schools in upper and lower Assam. Accordingly, in September-1826, eleven schools were established in lower and upper Assam. Of these, two were at Nineduars and one in each station of Gauhati, Nilachal, Darrang, Hajo, Bijali, Silcahr, Biswanath, Nowgong and Desh-Darang. Within a few months the number of schools rose to sixteen by the addition of schools at Gauhati, Behanjee, Dharmapore, Pattee Darang, and Boreegoge.

The efforts made by David Scott, John Mathei, Robbinson and others for the spread of education in Assam as administrators, the benevolent work of missionaries like-Carrey, Ward, Marshman (Serempur Trio), the recommendations of Charles Woods Dispatch, the Indian Education Commission, Lord Curzons' initiative, the passing of famous Assam Compulsory Primary Education 1926, all are the milestones for the development of education in Assam during modern time (Chakraborty, 1971). Having examined the progress of education in Assam from ancient times through the medieval period and having highlighted how the modern western type of education emerged, it is time to review the status of elementary education at the dawn of independence because having got freedom from the colonial rule; the government of free India had to begin from there. Table no's 1 to 7 below summaries the status of elementary education in Assam at the time of independence. Table 1 shows that in Assam, during 1946-47, there were total 10,748 elementary schools, which includes 8,420 Primary schools for Male and 1,464 primary schools for Female; 750 Middle schools for Male and 114 Middle schools for Female. Altogether, there were 9,170 (85.31%) Elementary Schools for Male only and 1,578 (14.69%) Elementary schools for Female only.

Types of institutions	No. of institutions		No. of scholars		Total
	Males	Female	Males	Female	
Primary	8420	1464	449058 (88.74)	56998 (11.26)	506056 (83.98)
Middle	750	114	84499 (87.51)	12058 (12.49)	96557 (16.02)
Total	9170	1578	533557 (88.54)	69056 (11.46)	602613 (100)
Grand Total	10,748		6,02,613		

Table: 1: No. of Elementary Schools and Scholars in Assam, 1946-47

Figures in the parenthesis indicates %.

Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47

During the year 1946-47 there were a total of 6, 02,163 pupils among whom 5, 33,557 (88.54 %) were male and 69,056 (11.46 %) only were female. And out of 6, 02,163 pupils, 5, 06,056 (83.98 %) were at the Primary stage while 96,557 (16.02 %) were at the Middle stage. Among the 5, 06,056 pupils at the Primary stage 4, 49,058 (88.74 %) were male and 56,998 (11.26 %) were female while among 96,557 pupils at the Middle stage 84,499 (87.51 %) were male and 12,058 (12.49 %) were female. The figures shows that the relative proportion of boys declined from Primary to Middle stage to a greater extent than that of girls or in other words a little larger proportion of girls continued at the Middle stage after Primary school than that of boys.

Table 2 gives the details of the types and management of elementary schools in Assam in 1946-47. It shows that the total number of schools was 9,170 for male out of which 445 (4.85%) were Middle English Schools, 305 (3.33%) were Middle Vernacular Schools, and 8,420 (91.82%) were Primary Schools. The data shows that, out of the total 9,170 elementary schools 7,131 (77.76%) were publicly funded, 1,020 (11.12%) were Aided and 1,019 (11.11%) were Un-aided schools. Out of 445 Middle English Schools 18 (4.04%) were publicly funded, 335 (75.28%) were Aided and 92 (20.67%) were Un-aided schools. Among the 305 Middle Vernacular schools 259 (84.91%) were publicly managed, 46 (13.08%) were Aided and there were no Unaided Middle Vernacular schools. Of the 8420 Primary schools 6854 (81.40%) were publicly funded, 639 (7.59%) were Aided and 929 (11%) were Un-aided schools.

Recognized institutions/ types	For Males				For Females			
	Total	Publicly funded	Aided	Un-aided	Total	Publicly funded	Aided	Un-aided
Middle English Schools	445 (100)	18 (4.04)	335 (75.28)	92 (20.67)	66 (100)	6 (9.09)	50 (75.76)	10 (15.15)
Middle Vernacular Schools	305 (100)	259 (84.92)	46 (13.08)	-	48 (100)	41 (85.42)	6 (12.5)	1 (2.08)
Primary Schools	8420 (100)	6854 (81.40)	639 (7.59)	927 (11)	1464 (100)	1082 (73.91)	138 (9.43)	244 (16.67)
Total	9170 (100)	7131 (77.76)	1020 (11.12)	1019 (11.11)	1578 (100)	1129 (71.55)	194 (12.30)	255 (16.16)

Table: 2: Distribution of Elementary Schools by Their Types and Management in Assam, 1946-47

(The figures in the parenthesis indicates the percentage %)

Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47

The data shows that, out of the total 9,170 elementary schools 7,131 (77.76%) were publicly funded, 1,020 (11.12%) were Aided and 1,019 (11.11%) were Un-aided schools. Out of 445 Middle English Schools 18 (4.04%) were publicly funded, 335 (75.28%) were Aided and 92 (20.67%) were Un-aided schools. Among the 305 Middle Vernacular schools 259 (84.91%) were publicly managed, 46 (13.08%) were Aided and there were no Unaided Middle Vernacular schools. Of the 8420 Primary schools 6854 (81.40%) were publicly funded, 639 (7.59%) were Aided and 929 (11%) were Un-aided schools. The number of female schools was 1,578 only, out of

which 66 (4.18%) Middle English Schools, 48 (3.04%) Middle Vernacular School, 1,464 (92.78%) were Primary schools. Of the total 1,578, 1129 (71.55%) were publicly managed, 194 (12.30%) were Aided and 255 (16.16%) were Un-aided schools for female. Among the 66 Middle English schools 6 (9.09%) were publicly managed, 50 (75.76%) were Aided and 10 (15.15%) were Un-aided.

Out of 48 Middle Vernacular schools, 41 (85.42%) were publicly managed, 6 (12.5%) were Aided and 1 (2.08%) were Un-aided. Among the 1464 Primary schools, 1,082 (73.91%) were publicly managed, 138 (9.43%) were Aided and 244 (16.67%) were Un-aided schools. This data shows that the number of elementary schools for girls were about 1/17 of the number for boys, implying thereby that the society and the state discriminated against the girls in access to elementary education. This data also shows that the state funding for Vernacular medium schools was much greater in extent than the English medium schools for both boys and girls. The voluntary effort in elementary education was very limited as shown by the proportion of aided and un-aided schools both for boys and girls. This implies that, although the state propagates vernacular education for the masses, the English medium education for the elite was supported mainly by the private effort. Table-3, gives the distribution of boys in elementary schools by religion (race) and classes attended. A perusal of this table shows that out of a total of 4,89,389 pupils 121 (0.02%) were Anglo-Indians & Europeans, 29,313 (6%) were Indian Christian, 2,64,140 (53.97%) were Hindu, 1,41,128 (28.84%) were Muslims, 431 (0.09%) were Buddhist, 177 (0.04%) were Sikhs, 54,079 (11%) were belonging to Others which include tribal and other minor religions.

the pupils in the elementary schools. While Buddhists and Sikhs proportions were the same as in the population, the Muslims were highly under represented forming only about 29% of the elementary school enrolment while they were about 34% in total population of the province. Others which included tribals and minor religions who formed about 24% of the population were grossly underrepresented at the elementary stage as they formed only 11% of the enrolment. Historically, among the Hindus, more than 60% population has been those of Lower Castes, but the data on elementary school enrolments show that only about 17% of all Hindu boys were from the Lower Castes while 83% of the boys came from among the Brahmins and other Caste Hindus.

Types/ classes	Anglo-Indians & Europeans	Indian Christians	Hindus			All Hindus	Muslims	Buddhist	Sikhs	Others	Total	No. of pupils from rural areas
			Brahmins	Non-Brahmins Caste Hindus	Exterior Caste Hindus							
Total population	1288 (0.03)	17825 (0.37)	1952352 (40.45)			1626866 (33.74)	3594 (0.07)	1221 (0.02)	1218792 (25.28)	4821938 (100)	-	
Primary Class I	3	7698	3763	26161	7708	37632	19229	213	-	7547	72283	62323
Class II	2	3620	2430	12730	2584	17744	6199	23	-	2301	29889	24504
Class III	21	2526	2095	9290	1834	13219	4114	16	-	1535	21432	17307
Class IV	20	1763	1778	6488	967	9233	2550	8	3	814	14391	10953
Class V	12	1201	1587	5486	727	7800	2056	3	-	585	11657	8447
Middle Class VI	21	380	644	2057	210	2911	475	-	-	193	4182	2255
Class VII	16	436	526	1724	129	2379	345	-	-	164	3340	1689
Class VIII	12	337	451	1300	128	1879	206	-	-	115	2549	1340
Total	107	18161	13276 (14.31)	65191 (70.28)	14287 (15.40)	92754 (100)	35174	263	3	13254	159723	128818
%	(0.07)	(11.37)	(58.07)			(22.02)	(0.16)	-	(0.30)	(100)	(80.65)	

Table 4: Distribution of Scholars in Elementary Stage by Race and Class attended in Assam (FEMALE), 1946-47 (The figures in the parenthesis indicates the percentage) Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47

Types/ classes	Anglo-Indians & Europeans	Indian Christians	Hindus			All Hindus	Muslims	Buddhist	Sikhs	Others	Total	No. of pupils from rural areas
			Brahmins	Non-Brahmins Caste Hindus	Exterior Caste Hindus							
Total population	1772 (0.03)	19925 (0.37)	2260871 (42)			1815613 (33.73)	4550 (0.08)	22243 (0.04)	1277819 (23.74)	5382795 (100)	-	
Primary Class I	1	9799	4234	57082	18422	79738	57533	127	35	24443	171676	101059
Class II	-	5680	3487	32807	8893	45187	25353	57	24	9666	85913	74055
Class III	18	4064	3377	28109	6397	37883	18473	69	35	7377	67919	58913
Class IV	30	3195	3205	21313	1133	25651	12967	54	23	4848	49768	41893
Class V	15	2948	3935	22015	3390	29340	12528	55	21	4190	49127	41539
Middle Class VI	19	1540	2427	11845	1429	15701	5935	32	16	1466	24709	20093
Class VII	18	1218	2592	11631	1285	15508	4722	20	12	1217	22715	17980
Class VIII	20	869	2306	8959	891	12156	3617	17	11	872	17562	9454
Total	121	29313	25563 (9.68)	193791 (73.37)	44786 (16.96)	264140 (100)	141128	431	177	54079	489389	364986
%	(0.02)	(6)	(53.97)			(28.84)	(0.09)	(0.04)	(11)	(100)	(74.58)	

Table 3: Distribution of Elementary School Scholars by Race and Class attended (MALE), 1946-47 (The figures in the parenthesis indicates the percentage) Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47

Comparing the proportions of boys from various religious communities with their respective proportions in the population it is noticed that Hindus who formed only 42 % of the population significantly over represented as they occupied about 54% of the berths in the elementary schools, and again the Indian Christians who formed only 0.37% of the total population were also over represented as they formed 6% of

While comparing the proportion (25.42%) of Urban pupils with (74.58%) of Rural pupils, it appears that in absolute terms a vast majority of the pupils at this stage came from rural areas, but considering the extent of urbanization at this time the Urban population would not have been more than 7-8%. Thus, rural population in real terms also was at a disadvantage. The table 4 gives the distribution of female pupils in elementary schools by religion (race) and classes they attended in Assam in 1946-47. This table shows that out of the total of 1,59,723 pupils 107 (0.07%) were Anglo-Indians & Europeans, 18,161 (11.37%) were Indian Christian, 92,754 (58.07%) were Hindus, 35,174 (22.02%) were Muslims, 263 (0.16%) were Buddhists, 3 (0.001%) were Sikhs, 13,254 (8.30%) were belonged to Others which include tribal and other minor religions. Comparing the proportions of girls from various religious communities with their respective proportions in the population it is notice that Hindus who formed only 40.45 % of the population significantly over represented as they occupied about 58.07% of the berths in the elementary school, and again the Indian Christians who formed only 0.37% of the total population were also over represented as they formed 11.37% of the pupils in the elementary schools. While Buddhists were slightly over represented with 0.16% enrolment, while they represent only 0.07% in the population, the proportion of Sikh in this category are almost nil, but they formed 0.03% in population.

The Muslims were highly under represented forming only about 22% of the elementary school enrolment while they

were about 34% in total population of the province. Others which included tribals and minor religions who formed about 25% of the population were grossly underrepresented at the elementary stage as they formed only 8.30% of the female enrolment. As has been said above that among the Hindus, more than 60% population has been those of Lower Castes, but the data on elementary school enrolments among the girls show that only about 15% of Hindu girls were from the Lower Castes while 85% of the girls came from among the Brahmins and other Caste Hindus. While comparing the proportions (19.35%) of Urban pupils with (80.65%) of Rural pupils, it appears that in absolute terms a vast majority of the girls at this stage came from rural areas, but considering the extent of Urbanization at this time the Urban population would not have been more than 7-8%. Thus, rural population in real terms also was at a disadvantage. Comparing the data on boys' enrolments by castes with those of the girls, it is seen that girls in general were at a disadvantage and those belonging to weaker sections of Lower Castes and Muslims were at a greater disadvantage than their male counterparts. It appears that rural girls were at a little lesser disadvantage than the rural boys.

The table 5 below gives the distribution of male teachers by their Academic qualifications and training. This table shows that the total number of male teachers at elementary stage was 14,588, out of which 11,204 (76.80%) were in Primary schools and 3,384 (23.20%) were in Middle schools. Of the total 11,204 primary teachers 9,471 (84.53%) were in public schools with 2,275 (24.02%) trained and 7,196 (77.98%) were untrained. There were 767 (6.85%) teachers in Aided primary schools of them 62 (8.08%) were trained and 705 (91.92%) were untrained, 966 (8.62%) teachers were in unaided primary schools with 41 (4.24%) trained and 925 (95.81%) were untrained teachers. In the Middle stage, the total number of male teachers were 3,384, out of them 1,407 (41.58%) were in public schools with 735 (52.24%) trained and 672 (47.76%) untrained teachers. In Aided Middle schools the number of teachers were 1,595 (47.13%), of which 204 (12.79%) were trained and 1,391 (87.21%) were untrained. In Un-aided Middle schools, there were 382 (11.29%) teachers of which 42 (11%) were trained and 340 (89%) were Untrained male teachers.

Types of institutions	Trained teachers with the following educational qualifications :					Untrained teachers		Total teacher	Total trained teachers	Total un-trained teachers
	A Degree	Passed Matric or School Final	Passed Middle School	Passed Primary schools	Lower Qualifications	Possessing a Degree	Possessing no Degree			
PRIMARY : publicly funded	-	32	2197	464	-	-	7200	9471 (84.53)	2275 (24.02)	7196 (77.98)
Aided	-	-	56	6	-	-	705	767 (8.85)	62 (8.08)	705 (91.92)
Un-aided	-	6	29	-	6	-	925	966 (8.62)	41 (4.24)	925 (95.86)
Primary total	-	38	2282	52	6	-	8405	11204 (100)	2378 (21.22)	7901 (78.78)
MIDDLE: publicly funded	3	94	638	-	-	10	662	1407 (41.58)	735 (52.24)	672 (47.76)
Aided	3	41	157	3	-	52	1339	1595 (47.13)	204 (12.79)	1391 (87.21)
Un-aided	3	21	18	-	-	30	310	382 (11.29)	42 (11)	340 (89)
Middle Total	9	156	813	3	-	92	2311	3384 (100)	981 (29)	2403 (69)
Elementary Total	9	194	3095	55	6	92	11141	14588 (100)	3359 (23.02)	10923 (76.98)

Table 5: Distribution of Elementary school teachers (Male) by their qualifications and training (1946-47) (The figures in the parenthesis indicates the percentage %) Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47

Also the data reveals that out of 14,588 male teachers in elementary stage very few 3,451 were having formal

educational degrees only and the majorities 11,141 were having no formal educational degree. Table 6 gives the distribution of elementary school teachers (Female) by their qualifications and training (1946-47). The table shows that there were total 2,015 female teachers, out of which 1,566 (77.71%) were in Primary schools and 449 (22.29%) were in Middle schools. Of the total 1,566 primary teachers 1,086 (69.35%) were in public schools with 153 (14.09%) trained and 933 (85.91%) were untrained. There were 158 (10.09%) teachers in Aided primary schools of them 20 (12.66%) were trained and 138 (87.34%) were untrained, 322 (20.56%) teachers were in unaided primary schools with 6 (1.86%) trained and 316 (98.14%) were untrained teachers. In the Middle stage, the total number of female teachers were 449, out of them 171 (38.08%) were in public schools with 61 (35.67%) trained and 110 (64.33%) untrained teachers. In Aided Middle schools the number of teachers were 200 (44.54%), of which 59 (29.5%) were trained and 141 (70.5%) were untrained.

Types of institutions	Trained teachers with the following educational qualifications :					Untrained teachers				Total teacher	Total trained teacher	Total un-trained teachers
	A Degree	Passed Matric or School Final	Passed Middle School	Passed Primary schools	Lower Qualifications	Possessing a Degree		Possessing no Degree				
						Certificated	Un-certificated	Certificated	Un-certificated			
PRIMARY: Publicly Funded	-	5	118	30	-	-	-	14	919	1086 (69.35)	153 (14.09)	933 (85.91)
Aided	-	1	19	-	-	-	-	1	137	158 (10.09)	20 (12.66)	138 (87.34)
Un-aided	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	316	322 (20.56)	6 (1.86)	316 (98.14)
Total Primary	-	6	143	30	-	-	-	15	1341	1566 (100)	179 (11.43)	1387 (88.57)
MIDDLE: Publicly Funded	1	5	52	3	-	1	1	5	103	171 (38.08)	61 (35.67)	110 (64.33)
Aided	4	9	40	6	-	-	5	5	131	200 (44.54)	59 (29.5)	141 (70.5)
Un-aided	1	2	7	-	-	1	3	3	61	78 (17.37)	10 (12.82)	68 (87.18)
Total Middle	6	16	99	9	-	2	9	13	295	449 (100)	130 (28.95)	319 (71.05)
Total	6	22	242	39	-	2	9	28	1667	2015 (100)	309 (15.33)	1706 (84.77)

Table 6: Distribution of Elementary school teachers (Female) by their qualifications and training (1946-47) (The figures in the parenthesis indicates the percentage %) Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47

In Un-aided Middle schools, there were 78 (17.37%) teachers of which 10 (12.82%) were trained and 68 (87.18%) were Untrained female teachers. Also the data shows that out of 2,015 female teachers in elementary stage very few 348 were having formal educational degrees only and the majorities 1,667 were having no formal educational degree. Table 7 detailed the expenditure in elementary education in Assam during 1946-47. It shows that the total expenditure for elementary education in Assam were Rs. 8080932, out of which Rs. 27,73,799 (34.33%) were expended for administrative affairs, Rs. 46,43,304 (57.46%) were expended for Male elementary education and Rs. 6,63,829 (8.21%) were spent for female elementary education. Out of the total of Rs. 80,80,932 spent, 58.78% came from Government funds, 14.48% from Local funds, 10% from fees and 17.01% from other sources. The data shows that 69.43% of expenditure utilized for administrative affairs was spent from public fund and 11.48% from fees and 19.09% from other sources. The expenditure for male, 76% were meted from public fund, 13.18% from fees and 10.83% from other sources.

Expenditure for female elementary education, 74.33% was meted from public fund, only 5.36% from fees and 20.31% from other sources.

Areas of expenditure	Total Expenditure (In Rs)	% of Expenditure From			
		Govt. Funds	Local Funds	Fees	Other Sources
Directions & inspections	7,44,330	100	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	20,29,469	4.59	8.63	15.69	26.09
Total	27,73,799 (34.33)	63.12	6.31	11.48	19.09
(MALE)Middle schools	13,50,518	33.33	21.78	32.47	12.42
Primary schools	28,94,410	69.52	22.00	0.06	8.42
Special schools	3,98,376	75.79	5.56	7.00	11.65
Total	46,43,304 (57.46)	59.55	16.45	13.18	10.83
(FEMALE)Middle schools	2,39,518	37.80	22.22	13.79	26.19
Primary schools	3,84,319	65.19	28.32	0.04	5.73
Special schools	29,992	57.23	11.50	2.25	29.02
Total	6,63,829 (8.21)	53.65	20.68	5.36	20.31
Grand totals	80,80,932 (100)	58.78	14.48	10.00	17.01

Table: 7: Expenditure on Elementary Education in Assam, 1946-47

Source: *Quinquennial Review of the progress of Education in Assam during 1942-47*

The data also shows that while for boys' schools 76% funding came from the government and local funds, for girls schools only 74.33% came from this sources. In the girls education fees constitute only 5.36% of the total funding in the case of boys it was 13.18%. Other sources of expenditure on girls' education formed 20.31% compared to 10.83% on boys' education. This shows that a large proportion of funding for girls education came from voluntary funding.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the aforesaid discussion leads us to conclude the status of elementary education in Barak Valley during the preceding years of independence. One major finding of this study is that the numbers of elementary schools for girls were about 1/17 of the number for boys, implying thereby that the society and the state discriminated against the girls in access to elementary education. The relative proportion of boys declined from Primary to Middle stage to a greater extent than that of girls or in other words a little larger proportion of girls continued at the Middle stage after Primary school than that of boys.

The state funding for Vernacular medium schools was much greater in extent than the English medium schools for both boys and girls. The voluntary effort in elementary education was very limited as shown by the proportion of aided and un-aided schools both for boys and girls and although the state propagates vernacular education for the masses, the English medium education for the elite was supported mainly by the private effort. Historically, among the Hindus residing in Barak valley, more than 60% population has been those of lower castes, but the data on elementary school enrolments show that only about 17% of all Hindu boys were from the lower castes while 83% of the boys came from among the Brahmins and other caste Hindus. This implies that education opportunities for the lower caste Hindus in this region have been largely limited. Similarly, among the girl students belonging to Hindu community enrolled at schools, it shows that only about 15% of them were from the lower castes while 85% of the girls came from among the Brahmins and other caste Hindus.

While comparing the proportion of urban boy pupils (25.42%) with rural boy pupils (74.58%), it appears that in absolute terms a vast majority of the pupils at this stage came from rural areas, but considering the extent of urbanization at this time the urban population would not have been more than 7 to 8%. Thus, rural families in real terms were the main contributors to the school going population. While comparing the proportions of urban girl pupils (19.35%) with that of rural girl pupils (80.65%), it appears that in absolute terms a vast majority of the girls at this stage came from rural areas, but considering the extent of urbanization as observed before, such findings are inevitable. Coming to the picture for the Muslim segment, the Muslims were highly under represented forming only about 22% of the elementary school enrolment while they were about 34% in total population of the province. Others which included tribal and minor religions who formed about 25% of the population were also grossly underrepresented at the elementary stage as they formed only 8.30% of the enrolment. Comparing the data on boys' enrolments by castes with those of the girls, it is seen that girls in general were at a disadvantage and those belonging to weaker sections of lower castes and Muslims were at a greater disadvantage than their male counterparts. However, it also appears that girls from rural backgrounds were at a little lesser disadvantage than the rural boys. Another important revelation of the analysis was the fact that out of 14,588 male teachers in elementary stage very few- 3,451 male teachers (23.66%) were having formal educational degrees only and the majority- 11,141 male teachers (76.34%) were having no formal educational degree. The data also shows that out of 2,015 female teachers in elementary stage very few 348 (17.27%) were having formal educational degrees only and the majority of female teachers- 1,667 (82.73%) were having no formal educational degree.

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