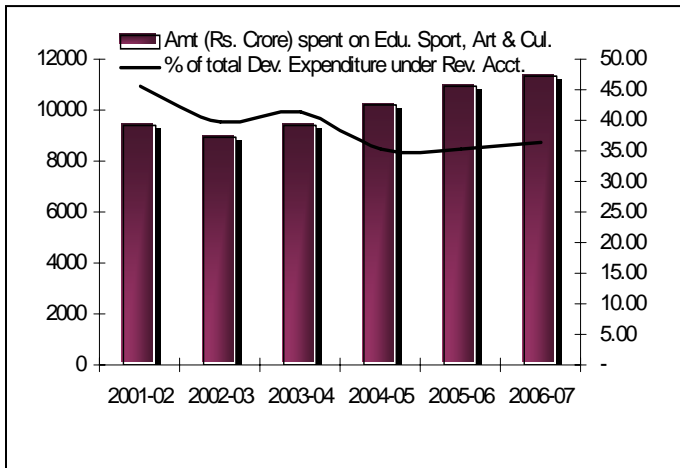


## MAHARASHTRA AT 7-7-7: EDUCATION IN MAHARASHTRA

With a literacy rate of 77.6% (recorded in the National Family Health Survey-2005-06), Maharashtra is perceived as one of the more advanced states in the field of education. In a statewide survey carried out in 2006, an estimated 81.9% of the population aged 7 and above were found to be literate<sup>1</sup>.

Under the heading of 'Development Expenditure', the State of Maharashtra has been consistently spending amounts in excess of Rs. 8,000 crore, each year, for the last six years.



Interestingly, the amount being spent on education in the State as a percentage of development expenditure on the revenue account has experienced a reduction during the period 2001-02 to 2005-06, before increasing slightly during the last year.

Be that as it may, one cannot mask the fact that the field of education has been highly politicized for decades leading to severe backwardness and poverty within regions of Maharashtra.

A glaring example in this regard is the ways in which recommendations of Development Boards to be implemented vide Governors Decisions have been shown the dustbin.

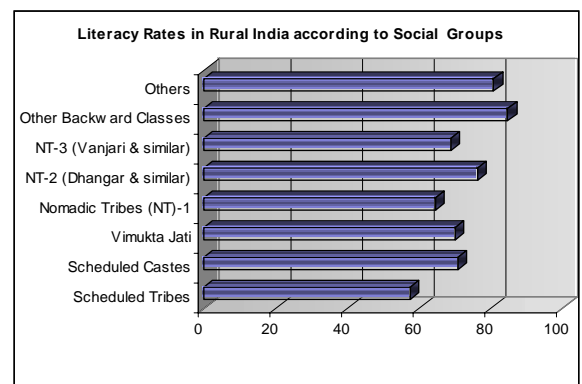
Under Article 371 (2) of the Constitution of India, separate Development Boards (Boards) for Vidarbha, Marathwada and the Rest of Maharashtra were constituted on April 30, 1994. The Governor, on the recommendations of the Boards and subject to the requirements of the State as a whole, directed the Government to allocate funds equitably for developmental expenditure over the areas of Development Board.

*The CAG Civil Audit Report for the year ending March 31, 2006 (Pg. 31) shows that not a single penny was allocated in the budget nor was spent on general education in Marathwada and Vidarbha, in spite of allocative orders of the Governor to spend Rs. 12.66 crore and Rs. 13.58 crore respectively.* Out of the Rs. 93.44 crore allocated by the Governor to Vidarbha for technical education, only Rs. 10.34 crore have been allocated and spent. In case of Marathwada only Rs. 9.28 crore, out of the amount of Rs. 65.02 crore, has been allocated and spent for technical education.

### Distributive injustice and "Education Poverty" in Maharashtra

It is therefore not surprising to see disturbing disparities in educational attainment of the population based on regional, gender and caste inequalities. According to Paranjpe (2007)<sup>2</sup>:

1. the distribution of education is extremely skewed, particularly in the rural regions and specially, among the socially backward sections;



<sup>1</sup> Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2006-07, Pg. 269

<sup>2</sup> Paranjpe, M. (2007); "Uneven Distribution of Education in Maharashtra: Rural-Urban, Gender and Caste Inequalities"; January 20; Pgs. 213 – 216

2. the inequality in spread of education as measured by Gini index is much higher among females than males in both, rural and urban regions;
3. the caste-based inequality is more pronounced in rural areas; and
4. rural females show the highest disparity in educational attainment.

### **Case Study of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan<sup>3</sup>**

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA), a centrally sponsored scheme, was launched in January 2001 with the primary objective of universalisation of elementary education for all children in the age group six to 14 years by 2010, with the active participation of the community.

*The case study of SSA has been chosen as it is designed to subsume all other major educational interventions by the Government.* All existing schemes of elementary education of the Central Government are to converge with SSA from April 2002. In Maharashtra, the programme was introduced from January 2002.

The Project Approval Board (PAB) approved a total outlay of Rs 2,155.87 crore during the years 2001-2005. The MPSP, however, received only Rs 911.37 crore (42 per cent) from Central and State Governments. Thus, there was an overall shortfall of Rs 1,244.50 crore in release of funds during 2001-2005. Of

SSA stipulated provision of drinking water, toilets for boys and girls, boundary wall, play ground and black board etc., in the schools. It was, however, observed that a large number of schools did not have the basic facilities.

Poor infrastructure facilities in the schools adversely impacted the enrolment, retention and also quality of education to children. Beneficiary survey by Social and Rural Research Institute (SRI) disclosed that about 3.4% of primary schools, 3.5% of upper primary schools and 5.2% of high schools with upper primary sections were operating in *kuccha* structures, which are basically not structurally stable and hence not suitable for running an institution like a school. In 25.3% of primary schools, 12.6% of upper primary schools and 12.5% of high schools with upper primary sections, the structures were *semi-Pucca*. Interestingly, 0.4% of primary schools and 0.9% of upper primary schools did not have any building at all.

### **People's Views**

The following are views of parents and students on the quality of education being imparted in schools and on the educational infrastructure being made available to students.

1. Name of the Parent: Kartik Mahadeo Meshram

Village: Shirasghat Taluka & District: Bhandara

He has four daughters and they go to the Primary School under the auspices of Zilla Parishad. He believes that education will enlighten his daughters and will impart them with knowledge that will make them aware about their rights. He believes that name of the government school is immaterial if it is in a position to impart qualitative education.

He complains that the Gram Shikshan Samiti which runs the administration of the school wherein his daughter is admitted is not efficient and can be easily politicized. The frequent politicization has compelled him to rethink about his daughter's future in this school.

He gave an example to prove his complaint: His daughter had topped the Science Competition in the entire Zilla. But she was not allowed to represent the district on the grounds that she is not eloquent and will not be in a position to speak.

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<sup>3</sup> Information drawn from the CAG Report for the year ending March 31, 2006

His major grouse is that in spite of good salaries being offered to teachers, the school is not in a position to find teachers that can be sustained in the school. Hence at times students are left without a teacher for a month. He finds that the facilities such as the laboratories are not properly utilized in order to benefit the students.

Suggestions: To ensure the proper functioning of the school, the Gram Shikshan Samiti needs to regularly review the functioning of the school and make necessary suggestions to the Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti. He wants the real needy and not anybody to benefit from the schemes being implemented by the State for the upliftment of the masses.

2. Name of the Parent: Radhika Ghanashyam Bhure

Village: Ganeshpur; Taluka & District: Bhandara

She has a son and daughter who study at the Zilla Parishad High School at Ganeshpur. She is quite happy with the efforts being taken by teachers to teach her children. According to her teachers are regular in their attendance at the school. The information required to be known by the students is displayed properly.

Unfortunately, the school does not have a laboratory, does not have sports equipments. She finds that the teachers do not take into consideration the suggestions made by the Gram Shikshan Samiti.

Suggestion: Schools should impart practical training to their students rather than only exposing them only to bookish knowledge. Parents –teachers meeting are currently conducted only once. The frequency of such a meeting must be increased and they should be held every quarter. The Panchayat Samiti must recommend to the Zilla Parishad about opening of semi-English divisions after satisfying all nr

3. Name of the Parent: Nisha Dattaram Bansod

Village: Ganeshpur; Taluka & District: Bhandara

She has one son and a daughter. One of her daughter's studies in Jakatdar School whereas her second daughter studies at the Gandhi High School being run by the Nagar Parishad. She is very much convinced about the contribution, education can make in terms of ensuring a bright future for her daughters.

She is happy with the quality of education being imparted to her daughters in both the schools. According to her, the school has a good laboratory which the students are allowed to use. The quality of other school infrastructures such as benches, blackboard is also good. She believes that her daughters are secure in the schools they study and that these schools will ensure a good future for her daughters.

She has not heard about any schemes which her daughters can take advantage of.

Suggestions: According to her the schools besides imparting "bookish" knowledge need to impart some lessons to students on dealing with practical situations.

4. Name of the Student: Nikita Dhoke

Village: Bid Ganeshpur; Taluka: Hingna District: Nagpur

Nikita Dhoke studies in the Zilla Parishad High School and is in fifth standard. She wants to become a doctor. At present their schools do not have a library and computers. For students studying kindergarten to standard six, only mattresses are provided to sit. Tables and chairs are provided to

students only after they reach standard seven. At times the school organizes classes for any standard in the nearby temple without providing notice or reason for doing the same.

Teachers are both males and females. They come to school regularly but at times give class work to students and go out and chit chat amongst themselves. Importantly, when the teacher is not present, especially in the case of primary divisions, the students are asked to go home. Even in these circumstances the Principal of the School does not teach.

The following are some of the major issues which students face in this school:

1. The school does not have a peon or an employee who is in charge of cleaning the classrooms. Hence the students end up cleaning their classrooms.
2. Some of the teachers in the school ask students to wash their lunch boxes after these teachers consume lunch in the school.
3. Teachers many times compel students to make tea and ask them to wash their cups.
4. Students are made to clean the school once the village functions organized in the school are over.
5. During the rainy season, the class room becomes wet and so do the students due to bad windows and ventilation.

Suggestions: School must have a clean toilet, clean drinking water facilities, fans, a playground, a garden and a gate. The toilets for girls must have a roof and a proper door which can be locked from inside. The teacher must be considerate and must not take unnecessarily stern actions against erring students. They must be in a position to explain the subject to students properly.

#### 5. Name of the Student: Laxmi Raju Chavare

Location: Shantinagar; Nagpur city; District: Nagpur

Laxmi is a student of Shantinagar Higher Primary School located at Shantinagar in Nagpur city.

She is very perturbed about the state of toilets in her school. Given that her home is near the school she generally visits her home for the purpose of urination. She feels sorry for her friends who have to go to the back of the school in order to urinate.

The blackboard in her class is visible to her and her friends and she believes that the benches are also in good condition. The school has a big playground and students are allowed to play the games they want on this playground. Unfortunately during rains the playground is filled with muck and wet mud.

The drinking water facility in the school is in the form of a drum which is filled with water and kept outside.

Even though she grades her class teacher as a good teacher, she finds that many times her teacher in spite of being in school does not come and teach the class. According to her, the teacher has not taught the class the course in English which she is supposed to teach them and has only taught music.

### **In Conclusion**

Although the literacy rate being recorded by Maharashtra may be high in comparison to most states in India, one cannot deny the fact that there exists “education poverty”<sup>4</sup> in many districts in the state. Unfortunately, socially backward groupings are getting exposed to this phenomenon of “education poverty”. If the issue of

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<sup>4</sup> A term coined by Jandhyala Tilak (leading researcher on macro education issues)

“education poverty” within socially backward groupings is not addressed, the services revolution in the state that demands basic levels of literacy to be a part of it, will bypass socially backward communities. Such communities will therefore continue to be a part of the neglected agricultural sector and will be exposed to income standards that will be much lower than average per capita income standards of the State.

Maharashtra indeed stands tall on the number of programmes it runs to increase literacy in the state. But there is very little attention paid and very few reviews conducted to enhance the efficiency and productivity of the programmes. The CAG review of SSA clearly shows this deficiency.

This deficiency is also reflected in the interviews, wherein parents seem to be happy with the institution but are not generally happy with the way in which reviews of educational institutions are undertaken in order to improve the performance of the institution.

Students on the other hand, seem to have a lot more grouses about the amenities (especially toilets and drinking water) being provided at the school. It is indeed very shameful that we are not being able to provide these basic amenities to our students in spite of being one of the most prosperous states in India.

### **Suggestion**

1. Very focused education initiatives need to be undertaken for socially backward groupings, especially women in these communities to help them participate in the services sector. For example, the State can work out a programme with the Life Insurance Corporation wherein women from socially backward communities are provided with a focused training programme on reaching out to farmer families with insurance schemes. There will be twin benefits arising from such a programme. The women will start earning income and farmers will get insured.