

ASPIRATIONS OF DECISION-MAKERS FOR THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS, BIHAR, 1980-81

TARA KANITKAR

Education of women is an important variable affecting demographic behaviour, such as age at marriage, reproduction, infant and child mortality, migration and labour force participation. The 1981 census data, however, reveals that the situation regarding the education of women is not encouraging in various states, especially in Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. A very high degree of sustained motivation is required on the part of parents to send the girls to school and retain them in the school. In this context, an attempt has been made to study the aspirations of parents/decision-makers in the family regarding the least amount of education to be given to girls in Bihar. The study has brought out that the education aspired for the girls was invariably lower than that of the boys in rural as well as urban areas of Bihar. About 23 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that girls should be given only the barest education, i.e., to make them just literate.

The author works at the International Institute for Population Sciences, Deonar, Bombay 400 088.

Role of Women's Education in Demographic Behaviour

One of the most important variables of social development of any society is the level of literacy and educational attainment of its men and women. Education is an important variable affecting demographic behaviour, such as marriage, reproduction, mortality, migration and labour force participation. Time and again, national and cross-national studies have established that education and literacy had come out as prime determinants of differential demographic behaviour. Several research studies on fertility differentials in India and in a number of developing countries, have indicated a clear-cut, negative relationship between fertility and literacy and educational attainment, especially that of the women. In fact it was asserted by McGreevy and Birdsall (1974) that the inverse relationship of education to completed family size is one of the most clear-cut observations found in the literature. Caldwell (1979) has stated that historical data support the thesis that the onset of sustained fertility decline is associated with attainment of mass education. In a fertility and family planning survey conducted in Greater Bombay, in 1966, Rele and Kanitkar (1981) observed a very sharp and clear-cut negative relationship between fertility and educational attainment of the women. Similar observations were made by Asha A. Bhende and G. Rama Rao (1970) in a fertility study conducted in Panaji in 1969, and by Roy and G. Rama Rao (1985) in 1984. More recently the Baseline Surveys conducted in Rajasthan (1981), Bihar (1980), Orissa (1982), Gujarat (1983) and Maharashtra (1983) have brought out the fact that the number of children born was higher for illiterate women compared with literate women even after controlling for age. Thus, there is ample evidence to conclude that education of women is an important determinant of fertility and it affects fertility in a negative way. Again a large number of studies in the past, and some more recent studies have shown a clear-cut positive relationship between education of women and acceptance of the small family norm and practice of family planning methods. For example, in Bihar and Rajasthan it was observed that the acceptance rate of family planning methods per 100 currently married women, was much higher among literate women compared to illiterate women.

Table 1
INFANT MORTALITY BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF WOMEN

	<i>Rural</i>		<i>Urban</i>	
	<i>Illiterate</i>	<i>Literate</i>	<i>Illiterate</i>	<i>Literate</i>
India	145	90	88	50
Andhra Pradesh	128	75	70	46
Assam	126	116	124	75
Bihar	104	65	58	20
Gujarat	138	101	89	81
Haryana	122	94	79	42
Himachal Pradesh	134	23	61	73
Jammu & Kashmir	81	41	33	23
Karnataka	90	73	90	28
Kerala	55	37	29	25
Madhya Pradesh	145	140	107	71
Maharashtra	89	73	73	40
North-Eastern Region	102	56	99	31
Orissa	141	107	99	49
Punjab	128	61	95	45
Rajasthan	142	84	71	51
Tamil Nadu	128	76	85	44
Uttar Pradesh	188	132	125	86
West-Bengal	84	76	84	67

Source: Office of the Registrar General India, New Delhi, *Survey on Infant and Child Mortality*, 1979

Maternal education has also affected infant and child mortality in an important manner. In a study conducted by the Registrar General in 1979, it was found that infant mortality rates were highest for illiterate mothers and declined systematically with increase in educational attainment of mothers. This was observed for all the major states, as can be seen in Table 1. Babu Santosh Kumar (1986) after analysing the results of the 1981 census, found that the percentages of children dying have decreased with educational attainment of the mothers, both in urban as well as rural areas. The study of the effects of parental education on child nutrition and child mortality by Susan Cochrane (1980) has indicated that maternal education is closely related to child health, whether measured by nutritional status or the infant child mortality. The significance of the relationship was found to be unequivocal. Kanitkar and Murthy (1984), in the study of infant mortality in Orissa and Rajasthan (two states with high infant mortality), observed lower infant mortality for literate mothers. Kanitkar and Sinha (1984) also found that a higher percentage of literate women have antenatal check-up and thus take care of the unborn during pregnancy. According to UNESCO (1983) women who receive even a minimal basic education are generally more aware of the need to utilise available resources for the improvement of nutritional status for themselves and their families, as compared with those who are illiterate.

Several studies, again at the national and cross-national levels have brought out the direct relationship between the age at marriage of girls and their education. Delaying marriage contributes to raising the status of women.

Importance of Women's Education

Apart from favourable effects of women's education on demographic variables, education by itself is something good and desirable and to have an access to education is the right of every girl. In fact, education of women is by far the most important indicator of her position in society. Education gives the women protection against several ills in society. It helps the women to participate in developmental activities or in the socio-economic transformation of the society and also enables her to share its benefits. The question now arises, as to how far this right to education is granted to the women of India, especially to those belonging to the socio-economically backward states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

School Attendance Among Girls, 1981

A glance at the data of 1981 census on the percentage of boys and girls attending school in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, reveals that education or school-going in general, is a neglected area in all these states, especially that of the girls in the rural areas. It can be observed from Table 2 that in the age group of 5 to 9 the percentages of girls attending schools were 9.7, 13.0, 14.8 and 15.4 in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, respectively. The same percentages in the age group of 10 to 14 were 10.4, 15.6, 18.6 and 19.4 in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, respectively. Thus it is very clear that the situation regarding the education of girls is very disappointing. In other states also, except Kerala and to some extent Punjab, the situation is not encouraging.

Table 2

PROPORTION (PER CENT) OF PERSONS ATTENDING SCHOOL/COLLEGE IN THE AGE GROUPS 5-9, 10-14 by sex, 1981

Sr. No.	India State	Rural Urban	Age Group			
			5-9		10-14	
			Males	Females	Males	Females
	India	Rural	39.63	25.83	57.75	29.18
		Urban	61.65	55.55	77.00	65.60
1.	Bihar	Rural	30.00	14.79	52.62	19.44
		Urban	56.07	46.10	75.00	60.27
2.	Kerala	Rural	74.24	74.27	87.57	83.12
		Urban	79.30	78.79	89.40	87.89
3.	Madhya Pradesh	Rural	33.01	15.39	49.40	15.57
		Urban	59.23	51.17	79.19	63.70
4.	Punjab	Rural	50.42	43.88	66.88	49.31
		Urban	65.29	63.53	76.13	73.72
5.	Rajasthan	Rural	32.57	9.73	54.16	10.44
		Urban	44.87	42.93	77.51	51.40
6.	Tamil Nadu	Rural	60.00	48.11	60.22	34.39
		Urban	72.13	68.00	77.44	65.45
7.	Uttar Pradesh	Rural	29.27	13.03	56.92	18.61
		Urban	46.41	39.35	65.67	53.00

Source: Census of India, 1981, Series 1, India, Paper 2 of 1983, *Key Population Statistics Based on 5 per cent Sample Data*, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, p. 25.

It is, however, observed that a lot of efforts are being made by planners and policy makers to promote universal primary education among girls. It is clear that two of the main thrusts of the Planning Commission (1985) in the Seventh Five Year Plan, 1985-90, regarding education, are (i) the achievement of universal primary education and (ii) the eradication of illiteracy in the age group of 15 to 35. For the achievement of universal primary education by 1990, it is essential that both boys and girls should be enrolled in the schools. This will be achieved only if the decision-makers/parents in the households understand the importance of the education of boys and girls, and enrol them in the schools and have sustained motivation to retain them till they complete primary education. Special motivation of a very high degree is required for enrolling and retaining girls in schools. At present, three-fourths of the out-of-school children are girls. Unless the parents or the guardians, or the decision-makers in the family, realise the importance of the literacy and education of the girls, the education among the girls may not advance and the aim of universal literacy might not be achieved. In this context, it is worthwhile to know the aspirations of decision-makers/parents in the households regarding the least amount of education to be given to girls and boys. An attempt has been made here to see if the aspirations of the parents for the education of their children are the same or different for boys and girls.

There is one additional dimension which may add some more importance to the study of aspirations regarding education to be given to children, more specifically to girls. Formerly that is during the first two plan periods, an adequate number of primary schools were not provided. However, at present, at least one primary school is present in practically every village. Still the enrolment rates are ridiculously small and drop-out rates are high even in the primary schools. It seems that though the supply side is sufficiently strong, the demand for female education and effective use of schools provided is constrained, especially in the northern states in India. This situation demands that we should know about the aspirations of parents so that some remedial steps can be taken. The aspirations regarding the least amount of education to be given to boys and girls are available for Bihar and they are analysed in the present paper.

Objectives

The main issues addressed in the present paper are:

- (1) Whether in Bihar the aspiration of parents regarding the least amount of education to be given to girls, were different from those expressed for the boys.
- (2) Whether there are socio-economic and regional differences in the educational aspirations of parents for girls and boys in Bihar.

Data

The Government of India and Bihar with the help of UNFPA, have launched a large scale action programme in selected districts of Bihar with a view to improving and strengthening infrastructural facilities and to delivery of rural health and family welfare services. Implementation of such an intensive area programme needed benchmark data on several aspects of the population. Hence, during 1980-81, a large scale sample survey covering 10,721 households was conducted in Bihar. The survey was undertaken primarily to provide baseline estimates of fertility, mortality, morbidity, family planning practices, and the extent of utilisation of health services

against which any changes in these parameters due to the action programme, could be measured. The survey covered the six project Districts, namely, Munger, Bhagalpur, Santhal Pargana, Purnia, Saharsha and Kathihar, and four control districts, namely, Madhubani, East Champaran, Gaya and Ranchi. The present study is based on the data provided by this Baseline Survey, conducted in Bihar.

Deborah Freedman and Eva Mueller had suggested the collection of information on parental aspirations for education of children, in the economic module for use in Fertility Surveys in Less Developed countries. Such information, according to them, would provide, indirectly, the parental perception of the cost of providing educational opportunities for children. Thus, the data on educational aspirations for children, it was thought, would provide data on "maintenance cost" of children or one of the two types of important and manageable child costs. A set of questions was prepared accordingly, and was meant to be asked of the wife.

In the Baseline Survey which was neither a fertility survey nor a survey of the value of child study, the main objective in collecting information was to know about the aspirations of the heads of the households who were important decision-makers. Their views were obtained regarding the least amount of education to be given to the boys and girls, in the rural and urban areas of Bihar, which is characterised by low literacy and low educational attainment even in modern times.

During the course of the survey, the information on the aspirations regarding the minimum education to be given to the boys and girls was collected by asking one question which was worded as follows. "In your opinion, what is the least amount of education that should be given now-a-days to boys and girls?"

The question was easily understood and did not pose any problems either to the respondent or to the interviewer. At the outset it should be mentioned that comparatively very few respondents came out with the answer, "can't say." About five per cent in the rural areas and about one per cent in the urban areas, could not tell about the least amount of education to be given to boys and girls. The answers received were both qualitative, (such as, "as much as possible", "upto the level which would help in securing a job", "no necessity to give education specially to girls" or "as much as would enable them to read and write"), and quantitative (in the sense that the answers contained the exact level of education such as primary, up to matriculation, and post-graduate). It should be mentioned here that the qualitative answers from the respondents were not unexpected and, as such, they in no way indicate the inability of the respondent to comprehend the question asked. In reality, the qualitative answers tell more about the thinking and opinions regarding the educational aspirations prevailing in the community. The qualitative as well as quantitative answers obtained are analysed in this paper.

Respondents

The respondents were mostly the heads of the households. In case the head was not available or was unable to respond, the responses were obtained from some responsible member of the household. In all 8,726 and 1,994 responses had been analysed for the rural and urban areas respectively. Of all the rural respondents, 82.6 per cent were males and of all the urban respondents, 69.7 per cent were males. About 80 per cent of the rural respondents belonged to the age bracket of 20 to 59,

and 65 per cent were of the age group of 20 to 49. In the urban areas, 69 per cent of the respondents belonged to the age group of 20 to 49 and 80 per cent to the age group of 20 to 59.

The information thus obtained was analysed separately for rural and urban areas of Bihar and within each area, the aspirations were obtained for caste, and religion, literacy and educational attainment of the respondent. Some of the important points emerging from the analysis are discussed in the following sections. In Table 3, the responses obtained are presented in two categories (1) qualitative and (2) quantitative.

Table 3

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES REGARDING ASPIRATIONS FOR LEAST AMOUNT OF EDUCATION TO BE GIVEN TO BOYS AND GIRLS, RURAL, URBAN, BIHAR, 1980-81

	<i>Rural</i>		<i>Urban</i>	
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Not necessary	0.4	3.1	0.2	0.6
Able to read and write	7.7	23.3	2.8	9.6
As much as possible	1.7	1.5	0.8	0.5
As much which can get job	0.1			
Cannot say	4.7	5.0	0.9	1.3
All qualitative responses	14.6	32.9	4.7	12.0
Some educational level mentioned	85.4	67.1	95.3	88.0
Average level	11.4	9.7	12.9	11.7
Number of respondents	8,726		1,995	

It can be observed from Table 3, that as expected, the average level of education in terms of years of schooling* aspired for boys and girls was higher in the urban areas (about 13 and 12 years for boys and girls respectively) compared with the rural areas (about 11 and 10 years for boys and girls respectively). Similarly, in both the areas, the aspirations for the educational levels of boys were higher than that of the girls. The difference between the aspired levels of education (in terms of years of schooling) for boys and girls was of about 2 years in the rural areas and around 1 year in the urban areas.

Girls/Women should be less educated than boys/men is so much embedded in our culture, that practically each respondent expressed a lower level of aspiration for girl's education as compared with the education of boys. If a respondent has stated that the least amount of education to be given to the boy is the B.A. degree, the same respondent has stated that the amount of education to be given to the girl is the matriculation; if it is the matriculation for the boy, then it is middle school for the girl; if it is stated that boys should be made literate then for the girl the answer is that there is no need for her to be educated. Some respondents answered that the girl may be educated till her marriage is fixed; and marriage is fixed at an early age, in Bihar.

The majority of the respondents aspired that boys should be educated upto matriculate and girls upto the middle school. In the urban areas, as expected, the

* The levels of education aspired were: Primary School; Middle School; High School/Matriculate; College; Graduate; Technical Certificate/Diploma; Technical Degree; Post-Graduate. These levels were converted into number of years of schooling. For example, if the level of education was aspired as primary, the years of schooling was taken as 4, for middle school 8, for high school/matriculate 11, for college 13, for graduate 15. The average level of schooling, in terms of average years of schooling was then computed, and used in the analysis.

average level of education aspired for boys and girls was higher compared to the rural areas, about 13 years for boys and 12 years for girls. Still the aspired level of education for girls was lower than that for the boys.

The qualitative responses very clearly indicated that a sizeable number of the respondents in the rural areas of Bihar had placed a very low value on the education of girls, by saying that there is no need to educate the girls. A small percentage (less than one per cent) has stated that there is no need to give education to boys. However, responses saying that education is not necessary for girls are eight times (3.1 per cent) those observed for boys (0.4 per cent) in the rural areas of Bihar. In urban too, there are gender-related differences in the category of "education not necessary". When we are making preparations for the 21st century, the revelation that about 270 persons in rural Bihar said that there was no need to educate the girls is enough to cause despair. This is more so when the aim is to achieve universal elementary education by 1990.

Another striking finding which again is more pronounced in rural Bihar, is the response that the girls should be given minimum education which would enable them to read and write only. Such answers formed 23 per cent in rural and about 10 per cent in urban areas, of Bihar. Some sample responses:

- 1) A girl may be educated till her marriage (and age at marriage is low in Bihar).
- 2) Some amount of education is to be given to the girl.
- 3) Cannot tell but some education is needed for a girl too.
- 4) A little education may be given to the girl.
- 5) Only give that much education to the girl which would make her read the Koran, and read the Namaj.
- 6) Make her literate only.

Aspirations by Caste and Religion

When responses concerning aspirations for education for boys and girls were considered by religious affiliations, it was observed (as can be seen in Table 4), that some four per cent of the Muslim respondents shared the view that there was no need of educating the girls. About 6 per cent of the Scheduled Caste respondents, and about five per cent of the Scheduled Tribes respondents, did not find it necessary to educate the girls.

The average level of schooling for boys in terms of average years of schooling aspired by Hindus and Muslims in rural Bihar was 11.7 and 11.4 years respectively. The average level of schooling aspired for girls in rural Bihar was 9.8 and 9.5 for upper class Hindus and Muslims respectively. In the urban areas, the levels of aspiration were higher for both boys and girls though the differences in the levels of education aspired for boys and girls by respondents of different castes and religions still persisted. Nearly one-third of the Muslim respondents (31 per cent) in rural

Table 4

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY ASPIRATIONS REGARDING LEAST AMOUNT OF EDUCATION
TO BE GIVEN TO BOYS AND GIRLS BY CASTE AND RELIGION, RURAL, BIHAR, 1980-81.**

<i>Aspirations</i>	<i>Aspirations for Boys</i>					<i>Aspirations for Girls</i>				
	<i>Hindu (S.C.)</i>	<i>Hindu (S.T.)</i>	<i>Other Hindu</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Hindu (S.C.)</i>	<i>Hindu (S.T.)</i>	<i>Other Hindu</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>All</i>
Not necessary	0.6	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.4	5.8	4.8	1.7	3.9	3.1
Able to read and write	11.1	11.5	4.4	12.6	7.7	29.2	23.5	19.7	31.3	23.3
As much as possible	4.0	0.5	1.5	0.6	1.7	3.5	0.6	1.4	0.4	1.5
Sufficient to get a job	0.2	—	0.1	—	0.1	—	—	—	—	—
Cannot say	7.6	6.3	3.8	3.6	4.7	8.3	6.9	3.9	3.9	5.0
All Qualitative responses	23.5	19.2	10.1	17.0	14.6	46.8	35.8	27.7	39.5	32.9
Some educational level mentioned	76.5	80.8	89.9	83.0	85.4	53.2	64.2	72.3	60.5	67.1
Average level of education aspired	10.8	10.2	11.7	11.4	11.4	9.0	9.4	9.8	9.5	9.7
Number of respondents	1379	1108	4546	1475	8726*	1379	1108	4546	1475	8726*
Per cent	15.9	12.8	52.0	16.8	100.0*	15.9	12.8	52.0	16.8	100.0

*Data for Christians and others comprising 2.5 per cent of all the respondents are not presented.

Table 5

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY ASPIRATIONS REGARDING LEAST AMOUNT OF EDUCATION
TO BE GIVEN TO BOYS AND GIRLS BY CASTE AND RELIGION, URBAN, BIHAR, 1980-81.

Aspirations	Aspirations for Boys					Aspirations for Girls				
	Hindu (S.C.)	Hindu (S.T.)	Other Hindu	Muslim	All	Hindu (S.C.)	Hindu (S.T.)	Other Hindu	Muslim	All
Not necessary	0.6	—	0.2	—	0.2	1.7	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.6
Able to read and write	4.9	2.4	1.7	5.3	2.8	15.1	5.0	6.1	20.8	9.6
As much as possible	1.1	3.2	0.5	0.9	0.8	0.2	3.2	0.2	0.9	0.5
Sufficient to get a job	—	—	—	0.1	0.0	—	—	—	0.1	—
Cannot say	3.1	—	0.7	0.3	0.9	—	—	1.1	1.1	1.3
All Qualitative responses	9.7	3.6	3.1	6.6	4.7	20.0	9.0	7.9	23.3	12.0
Some educational level mentioned	90.3	94.4	96.9	93.4	95.3	80.0	91.0	92.1	76.7	88.0
Average level of education	11.7	12.2	13.2	12.4	12.9*	100.3	11.2	11.6	10.8	11.7*
Number of respondents	235	86	1293	343	1995*	235	86	1293	343	1995*
Per cent	11.8	4.3	64.8	17.2	100.0	—	—	—	—	—

*Data for Christians and others comprising 1.9 per cent of all the respondents are not presented.

Table 6

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY ASPIRATIONS REGARDING LEAST AMOUNT OF EDUCATION
TO BE GIVEN TO BOYS AND GIRLS AND LITERACY STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS, RURAL, BIHAR, 1980-81.**

<i>Aspirations</i>	<i>Aspirations for Boys</i>				<i>Aspirations for Girls</i>			
	<i>Literacy of Educational Attainment</i>				<i>Literacy of Educational Attainment</i>			
	<i>Illiterate and literate without formal education</i>	<i>1-9 Std.</i>	<i>10+ Std.</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Illiterate and literate without formal education</i>	<i>1-9 Std.</i>	<i>10+ Std.</i>	<i>All</i>
Not necessary	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.4	3.8	0.8	0.3	3.1
Able to read and write	9.4	0.9	0.7	7.7	27.5	9.3	3.8	23.3
As much as possible	1.9	0.8	0.9	1.7	1.7	0.8	0.7	1.5
Sufficient to get a job	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.1	—	—	0.1	0.0
All qualitative responses	17.7	2.2	2.3	14.6	39.2	11.2	5.1	32.9
Some educational level mentioned	82.3	97.8	97.7	85.4	60.8	88.8	94.9	67.1
Average of education	11.1	12.1	12.9	11.4	9.1	10.0	11.0	9.7
Number of respondents	6965	915	846	8726	6965	915	847	8726
Per cent	79.8	10.5	9.7	100.0	79.8	10.5	9.7	100.0

Bihar, were of the opinion that girls should be given minimum education so as to make them just literate. The percentages of respondents having similar views were about 29 and 24 among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respondents, respectively. When it came to the aspirations for education of boys, it can be observed from Table 3 that the picture was different. Educating boys was thought necessary by almost every respondent among all categories. The details can be observed in Tables 4 and 5.

The finding that in rural as well as urban Bihar, the levels of education aspired for boys and girls by respondents of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, was lower than those of other caste. Hindus, was also not unexpected.

Aspirations by Literacy and Educational Attainment of the Respondents

It can be seen from Tables 6 and 7 that the proportion of respondents saying that there is no need to give education to girls decreased with the increase in the educational level of the respondents. This is observed in both the rural and the urban areas. Similarly, the proportion of those saying that girls should be given only that much education which would enable them only to read and write, also decreased with the increase in the educational attainment of the respondent. The same trend was observed in the case of responses for the educational aspirations for boys. The average level of education aspired for boys and girls increased with the increase in the educational level of the respondent, both on rural and urban areas. But greater related differences still remained. The average level of education aspired for boys is invariably higher for every increasing level of educational attainment of the respondents. For example in the rural areas, the average level of schooling aspiration expressed by the respondents, educated upto matric and above, was 11 years for girls and 12.9 years for boys. Similarly, in the urban areas too the figures were 12.3 for girls and 13.9 for the boys. However, even for the educated respondents, the aspirations for the girls' education were lower than those for the education of boys.

Four important findings stand out very prominently from the foregoing analysis.

- (1) Very striking difference between the educational aspirations for boys and girls in Bihar, in rural as well as urban areas—but more pronounced in the rural areas—were noticed, the aspirations for girls being invariably lower.
- (2) There were still some men and women who were of the opinion that there is no need to educate children. But the responses indicating no education for girls were eight times higher than those indicating no education for the boys.
- (3) There were a sizeable number of respondents (about 23 per cent in the rural areas and about 10 per cent in the urban areas) who were of the opinion that the girls should be given only the barest minimum education which would make them just 'literate'.
- (4) On the whole, though aspirations regarding minimum education to be given to girls and boys were directly related to the educational attainments of the respondents, the level of education aspired for girls was lower than that for boys, for every level of educational attainment of the respondent.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The education of children in general, and that of girls in particular in the rural areas of Bihar, is still a neglected area. The parents or the responsible members in the family are not convinced about the utility and the importance of education for the girls. It is an irony of fate that in Bihar, which was once a seat of learning and where Nalanda University, which is considered to be the first organised centre of higher learning in India, is situated, there should be so much apathy for the education of boys and girls.

The job of motivating the parents for sending the boys and girls to school, and retaining them till they complete at least primary education, can be done through the inputs in the adult education classes. Education should be given priority in any development scheme.

One comes across a hackneyed argument that children are assets to rural parents as they help them with agriculture and related work, and hence, parents do not send them to school.

In one study, in a part of Maharashtra it was observed that the children did not contribute substantially to the household economy, and yet they did not go to school. The study's main finding is that there is a need to dispel the popular belief that in agricultural societies children are always assets²¹. That the children work on the farms and therefore, cannot be sent to school, is a myth.

REFERENCES

- Bhende, Asha A., Kulkarni M. G. "Baseline Survey on Fertility, Mortality an Related Factors in Maharashtra", International Institute for Population Sciences, (Mimeographed) P. 24.
Kuldate, Sudha
1985
- Bhende, Asha A., Kanitkar, Tara "Principles of Population Studies", Bombay: Himalaya Publishers, 1984, 3rd edition, P. 268.
- Caldwell, J. C. "Education as a Factor in Mortality Decline", Population Studies 33(3) Pp. 395-423.
1979
- Cochrane, Susan H. "The Effects of Education on Health", World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 405, Washington D.C. P. 92.
1980
- Freedman, Deboral, Mueller, Eve "Economic Module for use of Fertility Surveys in the less developed countries", occasional papers, No. 12, World Fertility Survey P. 10.
1974
- Government of India "Planning Commission", *Seventh Five Year Plan*, Vol. II P. 235.
1985-1981
- Jejeebhoy, Shireen, Kulkarni, Sumati "Economic Value of Children and Fertility Behaviour: A Cross Sectional Analysis in Maharashtra" FPAI and UPS, Bombay.
- Kanitkar, Tara, Sinha, R. K. "Utilisation of Maternal and Child Health Services in Bihar, Rajasthan, Orissa, Maharashtra and Gujarat: Findings from Baseline Surveys" (Typed).
1986
- Kanitkar, Tara, Verma, Ravi; Gandotra, M. M., Das Narayan "Baseline Survey on Fertility; Mortality and Related Factors in Rural Gujarat", International Institute for Population Science (Mimeographed) P. 132.
1985
- Mcgreevy, W., Birdsall N. "The Policy Relevance of Recent Social Research on Fertility", *Interdisciplinary Communications Program*, Washington.
1974

