ATE one evening I met with a class of twenty five girls in a one room school house in a village thirty kilometres from Pune (India)

They were all daughters of ex-uritouchables and lowcaste families who spent their days at home doing household work, and their evenings in a non-formal education programme. The children, ages nine to thirteen, were in the class from seven to nine in the evening. They play and sing. are taught reading and numeracy. and are given some instructions in basic health and science. The children showed me a simple scientific experiment they had learned and answered my questions about germs. The teacher, a local woman, was paid by the Institute of Education in Pune. a non-governmental research and training organization. which also provided the class with some rudimentary educational materials. The class was one of several experimental programmes run by the Institute headed by Chitra Naik, a well known educator.

One by one each of the girls answered my questions. What was their name and age? What did they do during the day? What did their parents do? Had they ever been to school and for how long? The children were remarkably articulate. Half of the children had been to school for one year or less. A few had completed two years of school. Only one girl completed the third standard. None was literate before coming to the nonformal education classes, including the one girl who had completed the third standard. A few of the children worked for wages, but most were at home helping their mothers. They, looked after their younger siblings - almost all were the eldest daughters. They fetched water and firewood and cared for the cattle. Since their mothers often work, many of the children prepared the meals for the entire family.

Keenness to Learn I asked the class whether they would have liked to remain in school. All but two girls raised their hands. The two explained that they had done so badly learning to read that they did not want to remain in school, but the others said they left school at the request of their mothers. I asked the girls if they would keep their own daughters in school. All of them raised their hands. "But what would you do", I asked, "if you had to work and needed your eldest daughter to take care of your younger children?"

Politics of primary education

If not now, when?

by Myron Weiner

would send my babies to my mother-in-law," said one girl. "We could have a creche," said another, "and we could have someone watch over all the children." "Who would take care of the cattle?" I asked. "We could bring the cattle together." another girl replied, 'and hire someone to look after them." The girls clearly did not regard their parents' decision about their schooling as choiceless.

Laws without Effect These girls had a clearer vision of what was best for themselves and what was possible in their own lives than I had heard expressed by India's policy but do not require local authorities to introduce compulsory

In fact, to ensure that local authorities did not zealously introduce compulsion into an area that was not ready, these laws require that two-thirds of those present or at least one half of the total number of members of the local authority have to approve, and that the state government also has to give its approval. The acts also specify procedures for making education compulsory: the preparation of a census of nonattending children, the issue of

No one need have been concerned with overzealous local bodies, for as it turned out, almost none of them made education compulsory. Before Independence very little money was spent on primary education. There were few schools in rural areas, the school dropout rate was high, and the national literacy rate was low. When the Indian National Congress took power in seven provinces in 1937. Mahatma Gandhi proposed his famous scheme of Basic Education. He wanted a system of education that would emphasize the teaching of

handicrafts, and through the

sale of these handicrafts he be-

lieved education could be made

self-supporting. There was no

mention of making education

compulsory for, as J P Naik

wrote, "the idea of compulsion

in any form was repugnant to

Many of India's post-inde-

pendence educators continued

to believe that much of the re-

sources for the expansion of

education could come from the

Basic Education scheme pro-

posed by Gandhi under which

REE and compulsory pri

Gandhian philosophy.

Putting the Poor to Work Child labour in India is not the underside of early industrialisation and capitalism, but is pre-industrial and pre-capital ist. While in 19th century England and the United States. children were employed by large factories, in India children are in the small scale sector and in agriculture. Child labour is not a new phenomenon but a continuation of the traditional role of the child as a worker for or with the family and as a source of family income.

Moreover, most child work ers in India are illiterate while in 19th century England and the United States child workers were able to read and write since they were generally in school for six years, the period of compulsory education. But in India most child workers have never attended school or have dropped out before completing four years of schooling. the minimum needed to acquire literacy. In fact, children in India work at all ages. I have seen a child as young as age three assisting her eight year old sister stack match boxes in a cottage industry workshop in the south Indian town of Sivakasi where an estimated 50,000 children are employed. I have spoken to an eight year old bonded labourer who tended cattle for the owner of a local diary. Young children work alongside their parents in the tea plantations, picking the leaves to add to their mother's basket. Since schooling is not compulsory for any age group there are not restrictions as to when children can enter the labour force

schools would raise enough

money from the sale of crafts

produced by children to pay for

the cost of teachers. Basic

Education was seen by some

educators not simply as an ed-

ucational programme but as a

financial programme to make

schools partially self-support-

India does have a Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act approved by the Indian parliament in 1987. It has provisions intended to protect working children from be-

ing employed in hazardous occupations. Critics of the legislation said that the government had legalised child labour. The law does precisely that. The new act imposes no age limit on the employment of children. It simply specifies that children are prohibited from being employed in certain hazardous occupations and processes. Even these restrictions are carefully circumscribed since the act does not apply to so-called fam-ily-run workshops, including. for example, workshops that employ children in making matches.

Why have the state and central governments in India been unwilling to make education compulsory and to impose ban on the employment of children? How are we to understand these policies in a country whose government elites for many years professed to be socialist and pro-poor, and most of whose bureaucrats, politicians, and intellectuals have been advocates of an intrusive state? India government officials

politicians of the major political parties, members of Rajty Gandhi's educational reform commission (which did not recommend making education compulsory). Gandhian and other local level activists in nongovernmental organisations have argued that child labour is the result of widespread poverty which forces families to send their children into the workforce rather than to school. According to this argument the employment of children is parent- driven, a matter of economic necessity. It will end as the wages of the poor increase and parents, no longer in need of their children's labour and wages, will then see the advantages of schooling. Meanwhile. child labour should be seen as a "harsh reality".

So long as education is not compulsory, India will continue to have a high incidence of child labour, a high illiteracy rate, a high fertility rate associated with low female literacy, and a poor quality labour force. The benefits of compulsory education are clear: the education of girls and the removal of chil dren from the labour force would lead to a reduction in fer-

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community participation for the

study is to have a global out-

look in order to construct an

Integrated Approach where each

and every element are equally

are three important dimensions

of Universal Primary Education.

They are: 1. universal provision

·2. universal enrollment 3. uni-

versal retention. First one as-

sumes the establishment of

primary schools with easy reach

of every school-age child.

Second one requires an effort

to bring every child to school by

making the population educa-

tion minded, providing adequate

incentives for education, and

The last one calls for

progress in eliminating wastage

by preventing children from

dropping-out before completing

the primary course and avoid-

ing stagnance by providing school environment which en-

able children to learn and to

progress from grade to grade. If we have a look at the drop-out rate of 1988 and 1990 we see

that the rate has decreased very

much insignificantly. So the last

one is perhaps the greatest un-

solved problem and unfortu-

nately it will remain so, if the

central point of effort is not fo-

not mean that all children in

the eligible age group are in

school; indeed, the schools

Compulsory attendance does

cussed correctly.

enforcing compulsion.

According to UNESCO, there

The objective of our present

expansion.

important.

Adult Education It's Never too Late by Raffat Binte Rashid MENA Khatun, a parttime housemaid, is a wife of a rickshawpuller

and a mother of three sons. She lives in a small shabby hut in front of a school from where everyday she hears the children read out the alphabets, she never had the chance to learn. This makes her all the more encouraged and determined to take her children to school.

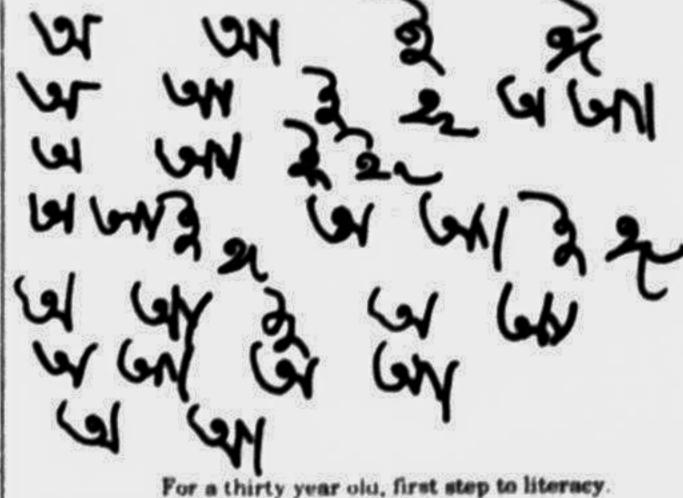
Amena's life is dull and uneventful a usual story of her lot with no laughter, no hopes and no promises. Each dawn, she wakes up reluctantly, knowing that no matter how hard she works, she will always remain poor, she will never have enough to eat or wear.

But Amena strongly feels the urge to try and change her luck, and thus in her early thirties she is now able to break away from the chain of fear and shame and educate herself. She is a student of Pre Primary school in Wahab colony in Bashaboo, Dhaka. This is a school for the slum children in

herself was another story altogether. She passed her matriculation from Muslim Girls High School in the British era when all Muslim girls were in purdha. Her husband was a medical worker in the Dhaka Medical College. At present, Saleha even at her age, is very enthusiastic about teaching specially since it means giving the suppressed a chance. She answered to an advertisement in the newspaper and got the post as a teacher here. Hamida recalls that it was because of Saleha's encouragement that she has joined the school and is now able to sign her name.

Saleha is a happy women but her only diappointment is the attendance, "they come in alright, but to continue, for them is something that deserves credit: I have been here for a long time but every year the attendance remains as frustratingly small as ever."

Khaleda Sabet, Chairman **Education Committee of WVA** for the last six years feels that



that area and for adults who understand the need for education. The school which is a WVA (Women's Voluntary Associa tion) programme, is upto class IV and was established in 1963. It has however, not been very successful where adult literacy is concerned. In the morning shift there are about 200 or more children but the afternoon class, which is for the adult students, have an enrollment of about 20 to 25 adult students but their total number o attendance is very low, 12 and

sometimes even one. Families, in laws and husbands not to mention the neighbours who pose as hurdles to cross before the Amena's and Hamida's can even walk across the street and go to school. "My husband does not know that I come to school, I am afraid he wouldn't like the idea much, if he knew", said Amena. Sakina's husband however, is different He has agreed to her studies provided that it is nothing that will teach her to talk back or make her understand the things a woman isn't supposed to know. Sakina's husband oc-cassionally comes and checks on her in school. Sakina considers herself lucky that she can now write her name and read the Quran. Actually all her

maids themselves or wives of rickshaw pullers, the panwallas etc. This school is for women only, even the teachers are women - a criteria that must be filled, before the male chavinists of our society will allow their wives a chance.

classmates are either house-

These enthusiastic women are instructed by Saleha Khatun an elderly women in her seventies "I've been teaching in this school for the last 20 years now" she informs. Educating the slightest trace of discipline will just back fire and they won't come anymore. The school small and shabby, and with only 3 rooms, has high aims and goals but their project for the adults has never been a success story.

The instructors teach them Bangla, sums Arabic and a bit of English too. At the end of every semester they have to sit for exams to pass and get promoted to the next class. Hamida is one of Saleha's bright students," she knows how to multiply, read and write" said Saleha proudly. She even teaches them to pray in the school. This religious ed ucation boosts up the morale and ultimately helps the teachers and the students to make a solid ground for school educa-

T believe Food for Education or Work for Education are positive steps that could definitely bring good response and we are now trying to introduce these methods", said Khaleda Sabet Books, pens and paper are all free. For the adult students these are no longer attractive for them everything; ultimately

boils down to food and work. Adult literacy is a big step with a lot of potential but is something that cannot be a success overnight. This small project of WVA is a burning example. Thirty years and nothing significant to mention.

Adult education is now being introduced by many NGO's and voluntary organization including the Inner Wheel Club of Dhaka, and Greater Dhaka and others are coming up with it

Their success, however, requires patience and will power to motivate people to become active participants in the adultliteracy movement.

changed to this day." School Doors Closed to Many Indian Kids

makers. While they all thought

it possible to attend school if

their parents would send them,

the government of India has

been unprepared to make edu-

cation compulsory. The Indian

government is officially commit

ted to the establishment of

compulsory education and the

principle of compulsory educa-

tion is written into most state

laws and in Article 45 of the

1950 Constitution. But state

government elementary educa-

tion acts, mostly passed before

Independence, merely permit

by Prakash Chandra

OR want of a birth certifi the problem is aggravated as cate, some 270,000 chilauthorities do not recognise the dren reaching school age traditional Indian method of dating births according to horoin India are being denied admission to school. scope. These dates are not legally valid.

Some analysts even estimate the numbers to run into the Another problem concerns millions, mostly children in the children of prostitutes who slums and surrounding areas live in red light districts. An adwhose parents have not bothdress in the district is itself a ered to register the births, or stigma, and for a single mother who were unaware that they doubly so. In fact it is almost should do so. impossible for the children to get admitted anywhere, even if This flies in the face of brave they were able to present birth assertions by the Indian

certificates. Government that universal education will be achieved by the School officials have deyear 2000 - a tall order confended their schools' go-by-thebook policy. Birth certificates sidering that 1985 figures from are a must for admission to our the United Nations Educational, schools. We run 25 per cent of Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) show our schools in the labour there were 263.6 million illiterslums. These (certificates) are ates, 61 per cent of them feimportant to obtain caste cer-

ment of fees procedures which are very complex - processes which people from the slums cannot be expected to be able to follow.

But a birth affidavit is acceptable in lieu of a birth certificate, says Mr Hamid Arfi. Director of Education of the Delhi Municipal Corporation.

notices to parents, hearings to

consider exemptions, a report

from the school headmaster,

persuasion of parents by teach-

ers and attendance officers, an-

other hearing with the parents.

and, only as a last resort, pros-

ecution. Describing these laws,

J P Naik, India's distinguished

educator, wrote that "the early

legislators were more anxious to

prevent harassment to parents

than to increase attendance and

.... these early views on the

subject have continued un-

Indeed, it is an option, says social worker Lalitha of the Joint Women's Programme in Delhi which runs some schools in Old Delhi's slums. The affidavit costs about Rs 25 to Rs 50 per head.

Yet it is not easy to obtain. Social workers have to go with the slum people to the magistrate's court and persuade them to sign an affidavit, she says.

Some schools are not unresponsive. The Harijan Buniyadi

Sangh has 138 students, all

from the slums. Beena Das, a

teacher, says that the same

problem of lack of birth certifi-

cate is encountered during ad-

mission. But we often guide the

parents on how to procure one

even if it is quite late.' School

headmistress Chandravati Das

even helps the parents fill up

the necessary forms.

No proof of birth, no education. This go-by-the-book attitude of Indian school authorities is depriving thousands — some say millions — of children of the schooling they need.

male.

The registration of births and deaths is mandatory all over the country in line with. census requirement. But many parents, often themselves illiterate, do not know about this.

A typical reaction is that of Ahmed Ali. 'Does it mean that my daughter Rashida was not born in Delhi because we did not register bor birth with the Municipal Corporation? It is a clear case of discrimination against the poor, he says an-

In places such as Rajasthan.

most children are born in hospi-Ramaben Shelat, an adminis-Municipal Corporation.

often ends up not being regis-Corporation has its own procedure and has fines and pay-



Innerwheel Club of Dhaka Cosmopolitan runs a literacy project for the under priviledged children at Siddiswari.

tificates and ration cards. As tals, these certificates are not difficult to obtain,' says Ms trator of the Ahmedabad

She also points out, however, that the old custom of not naming a baby soon after birth creates problems and the child tered. Registration procedures can also differ. For example, the Ahmedabad Municipal

Some children who fail to get admitted into neighbourhood primary schools find a place in alternative or experimental schools run by private groups. One such school is Khazana in the Gobindpuri slums of South Delhi which, says school coordinator Ms Saraswati, has about 500 children. Some receive formal education, others informal. Among the latter is 15-year-old Reeta whose efforts to enter the formal school system have been persistently turned down. At Khazana she has trained in various skills like

Also adding to illiteracy among slum dwellers is the hesitation of parents themselves in sending their children to school. A study conducted by Jayanta Sharma, of Guwahati City's Cotton College, says only 20 per cent of them - mostly daily wage workers, housemaids, rickshaw pullers and sweepers - are literate, and

sewing, embroidery, tailoring

and repairing clothes.

Compulsion for Compulsory Education

by Monira Hossain

mary education has been guaranteed in the article of the Constitution of Bangladesh. It made its first effective step with the take-over of 36,105 existing managed, aided and non-aided schools, under the provision of Acquisition of Primary School in 1974. From then on many theoretical planning, quite a few effective practical steps have been taken to make the way

According to recent statistics, 6-10 years age group children stand at 1 crore 78 lakhs 88 thousand and only 16 per cent of them are or were attending primary school upto recently. Average number of the students registered per school is 200 and the numbers of school structure stand at only

smoother day by day.

Apart from the major step taken by the last government: exemption of tuition fees for the girl students of outside Municipal area upto class VIII Percentage of

drop-out year: 198865.5%56.9%1990

the milestone was placed by the present Govt in 1990: The Primary Education (Compulsory) Act, 1990 (Act No 27 dated 13.02.90). The provisions of this law are as follows: The government, by gazette notification, can make primary education compulsory in any

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	T	1	3	I	I	
1988	25-6	16.5	24-2	18-5	09 6	
1983	13.5	09.20	18.5	12:70	14 25	
1990	19.8	12.0	16.6	15.60	11.0	
	Repair	n and	as in 1	•7)		
كدما	6.3	6 · 2	7:3	6.8	6.8	
Gials	5.1	5.5	7.4	. 7·8	6.9	
T. M	6.4	5.2	7.3	7.2	6.8	

50 per cent of the total demand before it was made compulsory. Teacher-student ratio was 1:50. Among the physical facilities provided, the one to get highest plus point will get a free book printed, with financial assistance from UNICEF.

prefer that their children work rather than study.

This was also pointed out at the second regional meeting for UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) held in Bangkok in 1990. Among the major stumbling blocks to literacy identifled by the India report is that 'the society does not value and prize literacy and learning." especially by adults.

The report also noted that although it is education which is expected to liberate women from their very limited roles as mother and housewife, 'the very forces of obscurantism do not always make education possible for the vast majority of girls or

area of the country from any time it desires. The guardians of the children shall have to admit

The present Govt made primary education compulsory in 68 thanas of 64 districts in 1992. 11,591 schools were brought under the umbrella with 6,890 govt, 2,042 non-Govt and 2.659 Ibtedai Madrasha's the target group's were 6,02,971 children of age 6+ and 28,98,100 children of age between 6+ and 10. Official report says that rate of admission has gone upto 65.071.

The government has made primary education compulsory in all the the thanas of the country from the current academic session. To achieve the objectives of "Education for All by the Year 2000"; steps initiated by the Directorate of Primary Education include: steps for raising enrollment of school age group children, reduction of drop out rate, provision for expansion of physical facilities of schools, the distribution of books free of cost, the

probably cannot accommodate more than half of those who are their children in the nearest legally supposed to attend. In primary schools. reality, full primary schooling is as easily available to children in the larger towns and cities but are not in the rural areas. Specially, the attendance of girl students thins out in monsoon season etc. Repetition constitute a large fraction of those attending the lower grades. Unlike an educator, a sociologist is interested in focussing his attention at the child in the home during the preschool years. Here the initial and most crucial learning takes place in an educational atmosphere. But that is almost totally absent in

> cause of illiteracy on the part of parents. Family role is vital for "Pull and push forces" of successful retention. As we know, need is related to drive, response, goal, and achievements. Family role is most essential in this model of motivation which plays an important part in education.

rural areas of our country be-

Teach your Kids to be Kind and Good



How strange it is that there isn't a science of peace. There's a science of war. Nothing comparable to the science of armaments and strategy. There are colleges of war but why can't we study and have a science of peace?

Peace starts with children. We teach them to hate. We teach them intolerance and racism and all of that. Children, if you leave them alone, they'll play with each other, regardless what colour, creed or anything.

Audrey Hepburn 1929-1993 Courtesy: Future