

**A MATTER OF QUALITY:
A STUDY OF PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND
EXPECTATIONS FROM SCHOOLING IN RURAL
AND URBAN AREAS OF UTTARAKHAND**

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Executive Summary of the Major Findings

- Parents not only expected the children to imbibe values and ethics, but they also expected schools to teach them to do so. Parents of all categories felt that education must help the child to develop into 'good' human beings.
- Parents, especially from the illiterate and low-income groups and rural women defined values positively in terms of ethics, non-violence, responsibility, faith, and self-esteem, while the urban, literate group defined ethics in negative terms (what shouldn't be) such as not stealing, not breaking locks, not cheating, not lying, not being greedy, not being selfish, not getting angry, not being in bad company, not indulging in vices like smoking, drinking, and gambling etc.
- Rural illiterate women made a distinction between internalizing values and external behavior. They differentiated between quality (*guna*) and internalizing the quality (*gunana*). The stress was on 'being' (*hona*) rather than 'appearance' (*dikhana*). More women than men laid emphasis on developing the inner qualities of character.
- Rural parents and low-income groups stressed more on livelihoods i.e. going back to their traditional occupations like farming, animal husbandry, etc. In contrast the urban parents wanted their children to get good jobs, and do 'well' in life, which means to enjoy a higher standard of living than their own.
- Children from an American international school expected a good school to help a child discover his identity and were concerned with the low self-esteem of Indian children. On the other hand children from a private missionary school following the Indian syllabus, voiced no such concern and expected a good school to help a child succeed in migrating to the United States of America.
- All rural parents felt that the teacher should be a role model for the student. They also feel that a good teacher is one who loves the children so that the children are keen to go to school. While most of the literate, urban parents expected teachers to help the child get through class, competitive examinations, etc.
- Learning by understanding rather than rote learning was preferred.
- One main demand of rural parents was that schools should be closer to the village and that local teachers should be recruited.
- Absenteeism of teachers was a major complaint of the rural parents, while in urban areas, private tuition was the major problem.
- Most parents felt that school must bestow a sense of discipline and obedience among students. But, all parents rejected beating to discipline the child.
- Phrases like *barbad ho gaye* (our children have been ruined) in rural areas and *bigad gaye* (our children have become spoilt) in urban areas kept recurring all the time when parents referred to their children or present-day youth.
- All parents felt that the present day education system alienates children from their belief system, which leads to indifference towards land, family, and customs.
- It was felt that the literate has more information, can read and write, but his knowledge is restricted to books, and the illiterate has more practical knowledge, and an expertise in some particular skill.
- The illiterate person has no shame in doing any kind of manual work while the literate person is choosy about the kind of work he does. The literate person is physically more weak, and less capable. They are more ashamed of doing manual labour than the illiterate person. The literate person does less work at home, likes to roam around, dislikes physical labour, are lazy, prefer to earn a lot of money without putting in enough effort, and they like a lot of rest and leisure.
- The inability of the educated to do manual work was a prime concern for all categories of respondents. It was also stated by most that education increases the feeling of inferiority towards working with hands.
- The youth also differentiated between superior and inferior work and feel that superior work is that which is done as far from the house or village as possible, and also one in which direct transaction of money was involved. Working with machines is considered superior work while working with hands, whether in the fields or in a craft, is considered inferior work.
- The literate is less responsible and lacks discipline, whereas the illiterate person is more responsible towards elders and family. The literate have less respect for the elderly, answer rudely, do what pleases them, orders people older than him/her, and uses more abusive language.

- The literate person is selfish and greedy and wants good things (food, clothes and lifestyle). He/she aspires for consumer items and imitates the West. The literate person is more prone to individualism. The literate people have a greater tendency to drink, smoke, gamble, see films and generally spend a lot of money on entertainment.
- The responses as a whole indicate that in rural areas literacy had a major impact on the responses while in urban areas it was the income factor which influenced responses.

Preface

For the past ten years SIDH, a voluntary organisation, has been involved in providing educational opportunities to those deprived of it, in the rural areas of Tehri Garhwal district in Central Himalayas. SIDH started its first school in Jaunpur block of Tehri district, as a direct response to the needs of the community. As a result of its responsiveness to the community many changes have taken place which are reflected in SIDH's programmes. Over the years, SIDH has grown from one to 18 primary and pre-primary schools (in villages where there are no government schools).

During the course of SIDH's work it was observed that most parents were unhappy with the impact of the present education system upon their children. SIDH gradually began focussing on issues of quality and relevance and exploring the links between micro and macro issues — between education and the larger socio-political, cultural and historical context within which it operated. Today SIDH attempts to identify the assumptions underlying the current system of education in the country and is experimenting with alternatives to formal education.

The present study hopes to gain an insight into the relevance of the present education system in the country by examining people's perceptions regarding education. It has been a tremendous learning experience for the research team. During the research we realised that perhaps our colonial past forced us to be servile for so long, that we have forgotten to speak out what we really think or feel. Instead we speak what we presume others would want to hear. Our aspirations are moulded by the dominant classes and instead of challenging them to change their ways we tend to imitate them. Therefore it is difficult to find out the real needs. A question asked one way may give a certain kind of response, while the same question asked in a different manner may evoke a response quite contrary to the previous one. These contradictions and conflicts need to be examined sensitively, keeping in mind the historical reasons for such behaviour. This study not only examines the contradictions and conflicts but also throws light on how aspirations and attitudes are moulded by modern education. If the responses are examined deeply then the sharp contrast between the responses of urban, rural; male, female; and illiterate, literate reveals many significant issues.

The idea of the research project was to find out what people thought about education. So the obvious area of exploration was their definition of a good school and other questions along similar lines. We had discussions with varied groups from both rural and urban areas along these lines. The initial responses were not unexpected. They have been recorded by other research projects that have restricted themselves to matters of access like enrolment and dropout rates (and their reasons); infrastructure needs etc. Had we also left it at that, even then, it would still have been a valid research project. Our findings and recommendations, in that case, would have been restricted to the problem of access. But we probed further and in the course of this pursuit we stumbled upon the contradictions which is perhaps the lot of a society mesmerised into imitating without questioning. These conflicts and contradictions reveal that it is not access but relevance, which is a major concern of the people. It is quite possible that the problem of access will be resolved to a large extent if we make necessary changes according to the real needs of the people. This is possible only if the people are heard sensitively keeping in mind the fact that Indians, by and large, have a different way of responding. They are not as forthright as their western counterparts. If deeper examination is not done the conclusions could be quite contrary to what is actually being said.

For us this study was a very humbling experience, because our findings in a way only confirmed what Gandhiji knew without having undertaken such elaborate exercises more than 80—90 years ago. The heartening thing was that our so-called 'uneducated' women and men still speak the

language of Gandhiji. This study brings out the clarity of thought and lack of dilemmas among the rural, low income, and illiterate groups, compared to the urban, high-income, literate groups. Perhaps, the sentiments of the people or 'community' need to be taken seriously by our policymakers.

In considering the findings of this study, it is clear that people are not happy with the present education system in India and its exclusive focus on imparting information. They want a value-based and economically relevant system just like Gandhiji did; one which will be a means toward making their children responsible and useful members of society. Yet, as the study indicates, there is immense social pressure to continue sending children to schools, regardless of the quality of education received. Why have Gandhiji's ideas on education be given so little attention and not seriously implemented in independent India? Why is it that most parents failed to make a connection between the results of education that they desire to see in their children and the kind of schools which are going to lead them there? Significantly, there was little comment on the qualitative aspects of schools such as the curriculum and pedagogy. People agreed on the need for change yet they did not have any positive suggestions on how to improve the system.

Gandhiji often talked about the difficulties of trying to change the system of which one is a product, as well as of the paralyzing effects of modern education and State-domination on the ability to envision alternatives. The close links between dominant ideologies of 'development', 'progress', market economics and modern education 'makes it very difficult to defy conventions and work toward alternatives. In fact, the dominant system is so pervasive that the alternatives that exist are isolated and can never become the norm. Yet, as Gandhiji believed, it is still the responsibility of individuals who have a sense of perspective and are able to see the larger picture, even if they are a part of it, to continue to fight the tide and provide examples of the possibility of alternatives.

We fought and overthrew foreign domination but it remains in a different garb. Physical domination is no longer necessary - the control of the mind and sophistication in technology make it possible to exert even greater influence without physically dominating the country. Education plays a vital role in influencing the mind, which is confirmed by this research. The contrast between the answers of women and men on the one hand and the 'illiterates' and the 'literate' on the other are most revealing. Professor U. R. Ananthmurthy had once said, "Thank God for illiterates of my country. It is they who have kept India still intact and alive." We could also say so after this experience. Perhaps it is good that we have a high rate of illiteracy; not only because we will then have less people, in Prof. Saran's words, to be 'exorcised of false learnings' but also because we will have more resources to learn from. The highlights of this study are some profound and simply articulated suggestions by rural illiterate women.

We feel there is a flaw in the design of most research studies: the researcher tends to exclude his/her own class from the research sample. This could be because of the focus on 'objectivity' in the western scientific paradigm or because of our colonial past which excluded the elite from the majority. It is normally the more advantaged people like us, who conduct most of the research and it is not surprising that their findings and recommendations are very much in alignment with the world view of the powers-that-be. Perhaps this is because we who conduct these studies have false notions of our own superiority and a superficial self-confidence, and are not aware or willing to examine our own biases and our past. Hence the research often leads to conclusions which collaborate the views of the ruling elite. In this study we often had this problem. Our own guilt and prejudices kept creeping in unnoticed and only an honest self examination, which was both disturbing and painful, helped us overcome the hurdle. We are indebted to Dharampalji

whose books and essays helped us to constantly introspect, which was essential for gaining the insight, which we have tried to bring out in this study.

It is generally believed that the issue of access is more important than quality; but the two are entirely different issues. On a journey, it is more important to check whether we are going in the right direction, before we start counting the number of miles we have covered. If the direction is wrong then we will surely end up perpetuating our initial mistake. Therefore the issue of quality and relevance must be given priority. It is in this context that SIDH decided to make a systematic inquiry about the perception of the community about the present education system and also their expectations. This would enable SIDH to work towards making education a tool for social transformation.

Many of the findings in this study challenge the inherent assumptions behind the 18 core indicators identified under the Education for All 2000 Assessment exercise being carried out globally. The country reports are to be presented in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000. This study hopes to draw the attention of the policy makers to the issue of relevance in education instead of only focussing on the quantitative aspects of education.

Survey Methodology

Phase 1: Plan and Design of the Research

After 10 years of experience SIDH felt the need to study community perspectives regarding education, both to improve SIDH's school programme and to forcefully communicate the voices of the marginalised majority to those in power. As a result SIDH set up a research and advocacy wing – Sanshodhan – to conduct studies which could be used as an advocacy tool. This study was conceived by Pawan K. Gupta and Anuradha Joshi as a result of their experience with SIDH schools and frequent interactions with the community. When the study was conceived the idea was to study conditions of success for a primary school (to compare NGO-run schools and government schools) and also to study the impact of education on social values and behaviour (a village-level perspective).

The subject of the study was then shared with field team members and it was decided not to engage in a comparative study between government schools and NGO schools as it would be an exercise in futility. After intense discussion the broad objectives were finalized as:

- Identification of the parameters of a good school
- Identification of the parameters of a successful school
- The differences and similarities between the two and any significant patterns in the perception of people according to sex, income and urbanisation.

The objectives at this stage were based upon the assumption that people have different perceptions about the real and the ideal – a good school and a successful school – and that the study would help to identify the gaps and similarities between the two. It was decided to have three kinds of respondents: parents, teachers and children, both from rural and urban areas. It was felt necessary to include the perspectives of elite schools as well. The respondents would be categorised on the basis of income, gender and rural/urban. The villages of Jaunpur block comprised the rural sample (See Appendix 1 for details of Jaunpur) while the towns of Mussoorie and Dehradun comprised the urban sample. It was decided that qualitative methods, namely FGDs (Focus Group Discussions) and Interviews would be largely used. Three field research assistants Jagmohan, Siya and Jaipal were selected to work under the guidance of Anuradha.

Phase 2: Mobilising the Research Team

i) Orientation

An orientation session for the research team was conducted by Anuradha. The need and the objectives of the study and its relevance in today's social and political climate as an advocacy tool were discussed. The need for this research became the basis of the introductory address in the field before an interview or a FGD. The target group and its details (See section on sampling and also Appendix 2) were discussed, and parameters for selecting the high income group (HIG), and low income group (LIG) in both rural and urban areas decided. The importance of team spirit was underlined.

ii) Training

All three team members had been trained in qualitative research methods and had prior experience of data collection in the field. However a refresher course was conducted in qualitative research methods, with special emphasis on listening skills, open-ended questions and probing techniques. There was need for additional training in recording and analysing the raw data and so a workshop in analysis of data was conducted. At this juncture we got some timely

suggestions from Amod Khanna, an expert in applied research in education, and Glynnis George an anthropologist from Canada engaged in post-doctoral research. Both gave invaluable suggestions about operationalising the objectives, through simple yet effective methods.

iii) Management of raw data

Techniques of recording the raw data of interviews and FGDs was shared with the team. They were asked to work in pairs and always have a de-briefing session after each session to record their personal observations, non-verbal signals of participants, feelings or insights gained. Meticulous records were kept, and wherever possible an audio recorder was used during interviews and FGDs.

iv) Review and Supervision

As the process documentation was important the team was asked to keep records of their problems, suggestions and learning at the end of each day. As Jagmohan had the maximum research experience, he was asked to hold review sessions for the rural area and Anuradha for the urban area, where problems and difficulties were discussed and sorted out.

Phase 3: Pre-test and Subsequent Changes

As a result of further discussions within the research team the objectives were re-formulated and questions re-stated to fulfil the objectives. An exercise to convert the questions into simple everyday language (based on the profile of the target group) was conducted. At this stage it was decided to drop Dehradun and concentrate only on Mussoorie. After a presentation to senior SIDH members, a topic guide was prepared and a tentative schedule for a pre-test was finalised. A pilot survey was conducted before the actual survey so as to sensitise the investigators to problems, to help them develop interview skills and guide them on how to do in-depth probing.

A pre-test was conducted to test the topic guide. After the test, a de-briefing with senior team members led to the identification of gaps and consequent modifications. Most of the responses indicated that the people rejected the assumption underlying the original objectives. People made no distinction between good and successful schools, as they perceived a cause-effect relationship between a good and successful school. A good school was successful and vice versa. Hence the aim of the research was re-defined as exploring peoples' perceptions about a good school and its relevance, and impact upon children. The objectives of the study were then limited to studying the impact of education on social values and behaviour, and expectations of people from schools and children. It was also found that literacy and age played a significant role in affecting the responses. So these two variables were added to the list of variables: income, urbanisation and gender. The pre-test also revealed that it was necessary to define a middle income group. Accordingly the parameters of the income groups were modified.

Phase 4: Development of Field Strategy

As the survey was qualitative in nature, five open-ended questions were selected (See Appendix 3). A topic guide was designed to help the facilitators. The facilitators were asked to be alert towards all judgmental responses, and probe these in greater depth. The questionnaire had space for reporting the personal comments of the facilitator on verbal and non-verbal responses of the participants. Demographic data of the participants (name, age, sex, number of members in the household, number of children, children going to school, income from various sources, etc.) were also recorded.

It was decided to have an unstructured format with open-ended questions. This was done so that the differences in response could emerge spontaneously, and prevent stereotyped and cryptic responses that are often given to leading/structured questions. This method helped us to collect rich, qualitative data which revealed the differences in perceptions and priorities of the people in the different categories.

Details of the field strategy, like selection of the target group, venue, preparation of the site etc. were discussed. It was decided to start with the rural area and have a mid-term review before continuing with the urban area. Both FGDs and interviews were used for collecting qualitative information. The research team consisted of a reporter who noted down the entire information ad verbatim, and a facilitator who led the discussions. The discussions were also recorded on audio except when the participants objected to the use of the audio system.

The sequence of activities at this stage was as follows:

1. Preparing a Topic guide for FGDs, for the different sections of the target group.
2. Identifying and listing the participants for the FGDs, and asking their preference of time and place of FGDs.
3. Preparing the site, time and material for the FGDs as far as possible.
4. Informing the participants about the time and venue of the FGDs, and getting their confirmation.
5. Conducting the FGDs

The data collection took place between November 1998 to March 1999. The interviews were conducted either at home or at school. The FGDs were conducted at SIDH's training centre at Kempt. The target groups were informed about the purpose of the visit, followed by the FGD and interview session. At the end of every month a presentation was given to senior SIDH members and the feedback received was incorporated.

Phase 5: Analysis of Data and Report Writing

The raw data was analysed according to majority and minority responses and then compiled. Responses of each group according to age, literacy, gender, income and urban/rural area were compared within the group and with other groups. Representative quotes were collected. Some patterns were identified and the insights gained as a result of identifying the conflicts and dilemmas within peoples' responses were recorded. An 8-day workshop was held for analysing the data, which was then presented in a 1-day workshop to senior team members. Based on the feedback received the team members visited the field again for three days to fill the gaps. Another 8-day workshop was held to complete the analysis. After the analysis was complete the report was written out. The raw data reports (interviews and FGDs) are available separately.

Sampling

The sample included parents, children and teachers from both rural and urban areas. The total number of respondents was 168 (For details see Appendix 2). They were divided into the following categories:

Parents:
HIG Urban
MIG Urban
LIG Urban
HIG Rural
MIG Rural

LIG Rural

Teachers: From Urban elite schools
 From Urban govt schools
 From Rural govt schools
 From Rural NGO schools

Notes From the Field

At the end of the research the team reviewed their work and made the following suggestions for those who would like to have a follow-up or would like to replicate this study.

The crucial issue for the field researchers was to extract the true feelings of the respondents. The difficulties faced were:

- Women are always hard-pressed for time and could not spare much time for discussions.
- Since the researcher was a local person a lot of things were taken for granted. Also, feeling comfortable with the researcher they would go off the point and get involved in local gossip or arguments unrelated to the topic being discussed.
- In FGDs one person would dominate the group and the others would keep silent either out of respect for the other person or because they had not thought about the issue themselves.
- Sometimes the respondents, specially rural government teachers, would get defensive and not give honest answers.

The suggestions of the team were:

- Use the interview method for people who do not open up in group discussions.
- Respondents who get defensive must be handled sympathetically.
- The use of an audio recorder distracts the respondents. Hence if the equipment is kept out of sight it eases the flow of conversation.
- For interviews it helps if the place and time are communicated to the respondents beforehand.
- The relevance of the research must be clearly communicated to the group and they must be convinced of the relevance. This will result in honest and fruitful discussions.
- It is important for the researcher to be highly motivated.

Objectives

The following were the objectives of this study:

- To study the impact of the current system of education on social values and behaviour in urban and rural areas of Uttarakhand.
- To identify the gaps between the parents' expectations from schools and the reality.
- To identify the gaps between the expectations of parents and teachers from their children and the reality.
- To identify the dilemmas and pressures of parents regarding schooling of their children.
- To make a set of recommendations for planners and policy makers of elementary education in the country to make the present-day schooling more relevant.

Major Findings

The research was originally designed only to explore people's perception about the current system of education, and how it varied across factors like literacy, income, gender, age and urbanisation. It was found that literacy had the major influence on the responses followed by the urbanisation factor. The findings of the study went well beyond the original objectives. A significant finding was the identification of several contradictions in the views of the people.

- Contradiction regarding the role of education, (is it about getting a job or being a good person?) Though they expected their children to be honest, committed, kind, considerate, helpful, etc. they were sending their children to school in the expectation that the children would get jobs, specially government jobs.
- Contradiction between their perception of a literate person and their desire to send children to school. The majority responses showed that the perception of a literate person was one who remains unemployed, cannot do manual work, lacks ethics/morality, becomes self-centered, and starts subscribing to the consumer culture. Yet they wanted to send their children to school.
- Contradiction between jobs and livelihoods. In rural areas although the people knew that 'one harvest of matar (green peas) could fetch more money than a person's annual salary', yet their priority was a government job for their children.
- Contradiction in the attitude to manual labour. The people regretted that their literate children did not like to do manual labour, yet they said that they were sending their children to school so that 'they will not have to cut grass and pick up gobar like us'.
- Contradiction between their expectations from children and their expectations from schools. Though they expected their children to imbibe humanitarian values, their expectations from school were largely about infrastructure and management issues (See sections A and B).

SECTION A: EXPECTATIONS FROM CHILDREN

“Hona sikhao, dikhana nahin” (Teach them ‘to be’ not ‘to appear’)

Though the study did not specifically probe the aspect of values in education it is very surprising that imbining values emerged as an important expectation of all categories of parents. Parents felt that the children must develop into ‘good’ human beings. Parents not only expected the children to imbibe values and ethics, but they also expected schools to teach them to do so. There was a significant difference in the manner of expression by the rural, illiterate and in particular the women in these categories on one side and the urban educated on the other side.

A majority of the parents, especially from the illiterate, low-income groups and rural women felt that attention needed to be paid to teaching values and ethics in schools. They defined values positively in terms of ethics, non-violence, responsibility, faith, and self-esteem. Ethics was defined as honesty, justice, truthfulness, integrity and ‘*shudhta*’ (clean body, mind and soul). Responsibility was defined as determination, duty and commitment. Rural women spoke much more about integrity and commitment than their urban counterparts. Of particular interest was the distinction they made between internalising the values and the external behaviour. They differentiated between quality (*guna*) and internalising the quality (*gunana*). They were more concerned about internalising qualities of good character (*gunana*) and the stress was on ‘being’ (*hona*) rather than ‘appearance’ (*dikhana*). More women than men laid emphasis on developing the inner qualities of character. Parents expected the schools to teach children about values, ethics, responsibility etc. “Teach them how to internalise good teachings not merely to read” (*padhna nahin unhe gunana sikhao*); “teach them to distinguish between appearing and being” (*unhe dikhane aur hone mein fark sikhao*) were some of their expectations from schools. Illiterate women said, “It is not enough that children read books, it is important that they are able to distinguish between the right and the wrong kind of books.” It is significant when they say, “Goodness must be within oneself, otherwise my defects would be the cause of my ruin” (*guna andar hone chahiye nahin to mera avguna mujhe khayega*).

Only rural HIG women mentioned qualities of love and non-violence. But a loose operational definition was given by all rural parents, teachers and children as treating older people with respect, showing hospitality, speaking gently, not fighting with each other, with a lot of emphasis on strong family bonds, “If homes are happy there is happiness outside too” (*Ghar shudh bahar bhi shudh*).

Parents also expected that education should change the attitude of the children towards working with hands.

The urban, literate group defined ethics in negative terms (what shouldn’t be) such as not stealing, not breaking locks, not cheating, not lying, not being greedy, not being selfish, not getting angry, not being in bad company, not indulging in vices like smoking, drinking, and gambling etc. And when they positively defined ethics it was defined in terms of good behaviour like politeness, showing respect to parents, etc. It is significant that this group (urban) laid stress on ‘appearance’ and ‘behaviour’. They did not make any distinction between ‘*hona*’ and ‘*dikhana*’. Significantly, the urban LIG group did not speak about values.

Literacy, much more than income, affected the responses between rural and urban responses. The lower the literacy, the higher was the priority given to inner qualities or character. Even the illiterate HIG men in rural areas, gave priority to good character rather than a job. HIG men did not want their sons to become drivers, because according to them bus drivers and conductors go to ‘strange places where they drink and womanise.’ They also expected their children to return to

farming after guidance in school, though they spoke of cash crops and increase of income by modernising agricultural techniques. The literate HIG did not give any priority to farming but expected their children to come first in class, get jobs and did not want their children to have tobacco or waste their money. It seems clear that literate rural people were more involved with economic issues while the illiterate people were concerned with issues like ethics, values, etc.

Faith: Rural women and elite children have articulated the concept of faith in different ways. Faith was defined by rural women in terms of absolute faith in some higher power who listens to them if they have integrity. They felt it was important to teach children about commitment and integrity and importance of having credibility with others. They felt that children must be taught the importance of honouring one's word (*vachan*) and the power it gives to the self. One can get a glimpse of the source of this strength, when an illiterate rural woman says with great confidence that whatever she says has to happen (*meri baat puri hogi*). They also talk a lot about *dharma* and how everything works out for those who follow *dharma*. "*Dharmi ki jar hari hari*," (one who follows the path of *dharma* remains happy) or *dharmi ka bhala* or *kar bhala ho bhala* (if one does good, one is rewarded). *Dharma*, in the way it is meant here, is not religion. It is more to do with the 'law of nature' or 'ethical living', or 'a code of conduct to live by'. Great faith is expressed in following the path of *dharma*. The belief is that in the ultimate analysis one who follows the path of *dharma* tends to gain and this faith must be inculcated in children.

Significantly, the only other group who spoke of generating faith, joy and power within oneself, self-esteem and developing the voice of conscience to distinguish between the right and wrong were elite school children belonging to an international school in Mussoorie.

"Naukri ki jad pathar par" (A job has no roots)

Education has generally been perceived as a tool to get a job. Here a distinction between the rural and urban definition of a job must be understood. In rural areas of the mountain regions, where job opportunities are non-existent, the only job is a '*sarkari naukri*' (government job), whereas for the urban people a job also includes jobs in the private sector. However, the most coveted job, according to all categories, is a government job, because it means less work, job security and one can also expect '*upar ki amdani*' (bribes). Both rural and urban people consider a job, specially a government job, as their goal in life. The difference between the rural and urban people lies in the degree of hope of getting a job. Whereas the urban people still see a job as the only alternative, the rural lot have given up all hope.

A rural, urban and low income, high income divide was seen in the responses. Rural parents and low-income groups stressed more on traditional occupations as compared to urban parents and high-income groups. Rural illiterate women and rural LIG had expectations that their children would earn their livelihood from traditional occupations. With them a job did not enjoy a high priority. "*Naukari ki jad pathar par*" (a job has shallow roots implying that a job does not have security) was mentioned by many. They elaborated on this by saying that a person dependent on a job is subject to the vagaries of market conditions and inflation, while a person depending mostly on traditional activities like farming etc. was less prone to external factors. They spoke about the hidden costs attached to a paid job (usually in urban centres) like renting a room, transportation and other useless (*faltu*) expenses e.g., going to a film etc.

The resentment is more acute among rural people who view present-day education as more destructive rather than constructive. For instance, Pulmo Devi, from village Bel Talla says: "I do not know how many opportunities the present system opens up for our children, but it has certainly closed one door for them, that of returning to their fields." "Even graduates cannot get jobs." Most parents consider rising unemployment as resulting in a feeling of hopelessness among

the youth. The rural MIG and HIG groups expressed hopelessness regarding getting a job, especially where government jobs were concerned: “*Umeed to yahi hai ki DM, Patwari bane, par puri kahan hoti hai*” (we hope that our children could become the DM or patwari but how can it happen). It is this sense of despondency, which now makes them wish that their children should rather take up traditional livelihoods as an alternative to a job. The rural parents hope that children should not roam about aimlessly (*faltu na ghume*). HIG rural men also felt that if their young literate sons could be ‘guided’ back to their farms, they could earn more from one harvest of cash crops, like peas, than from their annual salary from jobs.

Even among rural children jobs were definitely preferred but they spoke of non-traditional jobs like motor mechanic rather than farming (or other traditional occupations) as the latter was considered to be inferior.

In contrast to the rural parents, the urban parents wanted their children to get ‘standard’ jobs, and do ‘well’ in life which meant to enjoy a higher standard of living than their own. Urban children