



The Emergence of IT in India

45 The spectacular advance of IT in India is due to many factors, some of which are the decision of the Indian leadership to make the country 'computer literate', the opening of the Indian market to foreign (computer) products starting in the early 80s, the financial status of the upper and middle class, which enables them to buy expensive computer equipment, and the English education system.

55 Realizing that the Indian market was a large and promising one, multinational IT companies made huge investments in India, recruiting Indian information technologists on comparatively low salaries. Unsurprisingly, IT specialization has enlivened the domestic market in India, bringing in much-needed foreign exchange. The domestic Indian IT industry has consistently shown the highest growth rates compared to any other industry. Software exports from India have risen from about US \$ 50 million to US \$ 5 billion during the last five years. Recognizing the vast potential of this industry, the Indian government promoted IT services even at administrative levels: in October 1999 the Ministry of Information Technology was constituted in the Central Government with a view to facilitating the fast-paced growth of the

IT industry in the country. By now even most of the Indian state governments have established separate departments of information technology. Moreover, government offices organised training classes to initiate secretarial and administrative staff into information technology. These classes were subsidized by foreign and Indian computer companies.

IT and middle-class students in India

For Indian parents and their children the IT sector has become a gateway to success. School for middle-class Indian children, i.e. reading, writing, counting and doing simple mathematical calculations, begins at the age of three or four. Children at this age have to do tests and are given grades. To be among the best in the class is of great importance, since these children know from their parents that their future and, to some extent, their survival and position in society depend on their performance in school.

In India parents have traditionally arranged for their children to be tutored privately in whatever subjects they consider economically important, such as English, mathematics and, nowadays, computer skills. Added to the numerous subjects already being drilled into them in elite schools and by private tutors, pupils are