

100 now offered courses in programming and other
computer skills. This is arranged after school
(school hours usually end at around four o'clock)
for about two or three hours. Middle-class
parents and big computer industries help
finance these teaching institutions. To the
105 young students, however, a carefree childhood is
denied.

**Bangalore – India's 'silicon valley',
an avenue for the employment of women**

110 The multinational computer industry has
increasingly established branches in India to
make use of the cheap and extremely skilled
labour force. Especially in the south of India a
well-developed infrastructure and a tradition-
ally high-standard system of education led
115 multinational computer companies to settle
down in and around the city of Bangalore,
contributing to its second name: Indian 'silicon
valley'.

120 The need for vast numbers of cheap experts,
with few demands on favourable working
conditions, led especially to the recruitment of
(unmarried) Indian women, between the ages of
around 23 to 30, into positions in the field of
computer programming. These young women,
125 still living with their parents, with no family of
their own to support, place few demands on
their employers in terms of pay, working hours
or working conditions and are therefore at-
tractive candidates for any profit-making
130 company. However, even though these women
only have positions in the field of programming
and not in any management positions, the
involvement of women in this process has had
an unintended positive effect with regard to
135 their position in society: As they are able to
supplement their family's income, they are no
longer as dependent on marriage for status or
income.

**Poverty and information technology –
the digital divide**

140

The growth of the information technology
business in India has, however, increased the
affluence of all members of Indian society. The
population of India has almost reached the one
145 billion mark, yet almost half have remained
illiterate, i.e. 400 million people. Only about
eight million households in India own a
telephone. As for access to PCs, their installed
base is estimated at five million, of which
150 roughly two million are obsolete or dys-
functional. This means that PC penetra-
tion levels are less than five per thousand, a figure
which is among the lowest in the world. (The
USA has 750 PCs per thousand people and even
155 China claims that it has 15 PCs per thousand of its
population.) The present level of access to IT
infrastructure or IT devices is therefore highly
deficient. In addition, neither can be afforded by
the vast number of people in the country. Also to
160 be taken into account is the fact that only the
upper middle class is proficient in English. Since
most of the IT services continue to use English as
the medium of information delivery, the
majority of Indian people are excluded from
165 participation.

The new division created in Indian society by
the growth of the IT industry has been described
as the digital divide – a divide between those
who have access to IT-based services and others
who do not. While the upper and middle classes
170 may enjoy the benefits
of IT in their day-to-day
lives, large sums of pub-
lic and private funds
are diverted from pro-
viding even a basic
system of education for
the majority poor.

