CHAPTER - II
THE PROBLEMS AND RELATED ISSUES

2.1 THE PROBLEM

Calcutta, as a cosmopolitan centre of the eastern region of India attracts the migrants from neighbouring states like Bihar, Orissa, U.P. even from Punjab and other distant states. A large portion of them are illiterate unskilled labours. These working class migrants usually reside in slums of the city. Demographically; it is revealed that almost all the 141 words in Calcutta have slums of varying dimension. Calcutta is now the most dense city in the world. (Chart No.1).

The slum dwellers are of various religious, racial and linguistic groups, and thus form a heterogenous population. These people cannot always integrate themselves with the city's population and as such create tension and problems. Religious and linguistic differences may obstruct their close and easy contact with the rest of the city's population.

The slum people are not always poor by birth and heritage, but deprivation of environmental and educational facilities accounts very much for their inferior show in various fields. They suffer from social maladjustment, behavioural disturbances, low educational achievements, marginal employment and minimal civic participation. They are handicapped not only by depressed social and economic
condition but also by ethnic and cultural class status. All these conditions are the results of their deprivation from all sides (Parbathamma, 1987).

The slums suffer from high rates of illiteracy, low levels of education and possession of few skills which are adaptable to the urban labour market. The environmental deprivation may cause inferior academic achievement, maximum school dropouts, mental retardation and may also contribute to crime, juvenile delinquencies, drug addiction, mental illness and host of other evils, making the cost for the individual and society really staggering. (Majumdar 1977, Desai & Pillai '72).

This is true of the slums of all the cities over the globe. In Calcutta the problem is further aggravated because of the multireligious and multilingual and multiracial character of its dwellers. Illiteracy is a natural outcome of this environment. Problems of education of these slum dwellers is recognised as a crucial input in overall slum development.

Illiteracy is really a problem for the nation as well as for the individual himself. These people cannot contribute successfully and productively towards the society or country. Illiteracy leads towards superstition, anti-social and criminal activities as are found in the local dailies. So literacy is an indispensable component for human resource development. The Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority
(CMDA) has taken up several slum improvement programmes and projects. It has several wings and departments to formulate, execute and implement plans and programmes for the total improvement of the metropolitan area. In recent years this organisation had implemented in some of Calcutta slums, several improvement programmes like construction of new sanitary latrines, sewerage systems, water supply, paving of roads, streets, pathways etc.

The CMDA has no wing nor any programme to improve upon the educational state of the city, particularly the state of primary education of the poor for which the city Corporation (CMC) has some commitment (1.6).

Calcutta Urban Development Project (CUDP III) Health Programme was initiated in 1986 covering 60 lakhs of population of low socio-economic group of people in Calcutta, Howrah and 32 municipalities (CMDA - A perspective Plan for Calcutta': 2011).

Calcutta slum improvement Project (CSIP) has been taken up in 15 wards of CMC and a sum of Rs. 40 crores is estimated for its cost. Financial assistance is coming from Overseas Development Administration of U.K. Govt. Besides, this Calcutta Urban Development Programme have been designed to rehabilitate and augment basic urban infrastructural facilities. It has concentrated largely on sewerage and drainage, bustee improvement, environmental hygiene etc. (Diary C.M.D.A. 1995).
This affirms that Calcutta is an underprivileged city and also a problem ridden city (1.5). CMDA has initiated all those programmes to improve its conditions and concentrated on the improvement of living conditions of the slum dwellers. Other socio-economic and educational conditions have not been given due importance for development.

From this it is clear that CMDA has taken up the programmes to ameliorate the deplorable conditions of the slums by providing them with appropriate civic amenities. Although providing primary education to the slum children within its jurisdiction is a professed duty or responsibility, CMDA did not look into its condition to improve it. Is it that CMDA did not consider the aspect of education an appropriate field to take up for improvement? Because it does not require further improvement? Or is it that CMDA could not pay due attention to this area due to financial inadequacy?

If total slum development is ventured, then it should take up the programme of education as well. While passing through the multireligious and multilingual slum areas to reach her college, where she teaches, the investigator observes every day a large number of school-going age children either playing in idle mood, fighting with each other or doing some jobs which they should not do at their tender age. On enquiry she learnt that they are either never enrolled in schools or are dropouts. It seems to her as a serious problem and
great hindrances in the slum improvement.

CMC has its Department of education to impart primary education to the economically deprived section of the city. In those slum areas CMC has its primary schools. Then, why a large number of slum children remain out of school? What is lacking in those schools because of which children dropout?

It requires to pay due attention to the state of affairs in regard to education of the slum-dwellers before any concrete step be taken up for their improvement. Some relevant questions crop up, like - what is the present state of literacy of the slum areas? What is the state of primary education provided by CMC primary school? What is the rate of attendance and dropout? Why are these dropouts?

This condition which the investigator comes across prompts her to enquire into the state of literacy and education pursued by the slum dwellers, obviously, this condition prompts her to investigate into the state of literacy as well as the schooling of children of these slum areas.

Therefore, the problems are summed up as -

Firstly, to know what is the state of literacy of those deprived slum dwellers? These slum-dwellers are supposed to come from economically and socially deprived classes and as such, may
be educationally indifferent and backward.

So, it is essential to know the rate of literacy of them and compare it with literacy rate of the rest of Calcutta.

Secondly, another problem is to find out the state of primary education in those slums. Calcutta Municipal Corporation is engaged in this task of primary education of slum children and as such whether it can effectively spread education in those slums is to be studied.

Thirdly, the problem is to find out the differences regarding educational facilities given in slum schools and those in non-slum schools of Calcutta Municipal Corporation.
2.2 NEED OF THE STUDY

The rapid urbanisation has changed the nature of the city's problems and called for analysis and intelligent planning if the needs are to be met.

Slums are the by-product of urbanisation. It can be said that, slums are the shadows of sophisticated residents of urban part. They are created, cultured and nurtured by urbans.

In the slum home the scarcity of objects of all kinds, the frequent lack of parental attention, lack of travel experience, the presence of malnutrition, physical negligence - all tend to create a restrictive environment whose effects may be irreversible. It seems, rejected by the environments many of the slum children become school dropouts and contribute to crime, juvenile delinquencies, drug addiction and a host of other evils making the cost for the individual and society really staggering (Majumdar, 1977).

Yet, slums are the essential parts of the city and as such, unless and until the social, educational and civic conditions of the slum dwellers are improved, the city life will suffer terribly and perpetually.

Therefore, a need for two pronged approach of the slum improvement programme is felt.
The first approach should be to develop the deprived, poor and unhygienic living conditions of the slums by providing with necessary civic amenities.

The second approach of the development programme should be related to the socio-educational and cultural life of the dwellers. In this approach literacy and primary education should be taken first into consideration.

Education is an instrument of social change and development. The function of education is to promote social progress. From sociological point of view, education is regarded as the process of continuous behaviour adjustments of the individual to the increasingly complex and rapidly changing social world. Again, education helps the individual to acquire social efficiency. So social perpetuation, stability and progress can be possible through education (Chakraborty, 1995).

That is why, education should be given top priority in every developmental enterprise. The present educational state should prove valuable for future planning. So it is high time to start educational programmes for those poverty stricken multireligious and multilingual slum-dwellers of Calcutta. Before that, obviously, the study of this type is of immense importance and as such the area of study is worth investigating.
There is scarcity of necessary literature on the condition and state of literacy and primary education in the slum of Calcutta. Therefore, an appropriate knowledge about these is essential for formulating any future educational programme for those slum-dwellers of Calcutta. So this sort of information is indispensable. An intensive research work can bring to light the state of literacy and primary education of those slums and postulate a remedial design to solve the teething problem of the slums in the City's dungeons.

2.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The slums of Calcutta with multireligious and multilingual population have some peculiarities. Those slum areas are full of working class people of different religion speaking different languages, thus forming a typical cross-section of population group. A large percentage of them are usually migrants from other states. Those migrated population co-exist with the original local slum dwellers, and form a mixed type of population. These migrated people can not blend into a homogenous whole despite their living in the same slums. So sometimes they fail to adjust themselves in the social milieu and can not integrate with their counterpart.

This may hamper their socio-educational enhancement. Each community values its own culture, rituals mores and ideals. This sometimes creates socio-cultural contradiction which is reflected in their socio-educational life.
Education acts as an important agent of integration as well as development of rational outlook among the people. Illiteracy, ignorance and superstitions are the factors of disintegration. So in order to bring harmony and integration among these heterogeneous population, eradication of illiteracy is essential by formulating effective educational programmes for those slum-dwellers.

There are Corporation Primary Schools for the slum children. Yet the socio-educational condition is rather low. So an Investigative study is needed to ascertain a true picture of the situation so that corrective measures can be adopted. The purposes of the study broadly are -

(a) To examine the state of literacy in multireligious and multilingual slums of Calcutta.

(b) To assess the nature of primary education imparted through Calcutta Municipal Corporation Schools.

2.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present investigation probes into the state of literacy in the multireligious and multilingual slum areas of Calcutta. It also studies the conditions of primary education in those areas imparted mainly through Calcutta Municipal Corporation Schools. Calcutta Municipal Corporation operates primary schools in both slum and non-slum areas of Calcutta. So a comparative study between slum and non-slum CMC Schools should be conducted to reveal important and
relevant features for the investigator.

So keeping all those points in mind the objectives of the study have been taken up broadly as below:

(1) To find the state of literacy among multireligious and multilingual slum dwellers of Calcutta.

(2) To study the difference between the literacy rate of those areas and the rest of Calcutta.

(3) To find the state of Primary education in the Calcutta Corporation School in those slum areas in regard to:
   (a) Educational facilities
   (b) drop out (in respect of religion)
   (c) drop out (in respect of medium of instruction)

(4) To make a comparative study of primary education between slum and non-slum areas in Calcutta Corporation Schools regarding:
   (a) educational facilities
   (b) drop out (in respect of religions)
   (c) drop out (in respect of languages)

2.5 Delimitation

There are slums in almost all 141 wards of Calcutta Municipal Corporation. A few of them are multireligious and multilingual in character. The present study is limited to only two particular slum
areas of Calcutta which are predominately multireligious and
multilingual in character. Other slum areas have not been included in
the study. These two seem to represent other multilingual and
multireligious slums.

At the same time, there are private primary schools along
with Calcutta Municipal Corporation Schools in those slum areas.
Calcutta Municipal Corporation Schools which are engaged in the task
of imparting education mainly to the economically backward children,
are to be investigated only. Other types of primary schools are not
been included in the study.

2.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this investigation will be significant in
respect of urban development, improvement of primary education in
urban slums, minimising the percentage of dropout and also in respect
of introducing non-formal education to remove illiteracy.

The valuable information and findings can bring to light the
true nature of the problem and condition of literacy and primary
education of those slums.

Moreover, the findings have their social and academic
significance. Illiteracy is a social curse. It completely hinders the
socio-cultural development of the country. It brings disintegration and
other problems in social life like anti-social activities and others. For the solution of the social problems of the areas illiteracy should be removed, so a study of this type is essential to know the condition and state of literacy before formulating any effective planning.

From the academic point of view, those authorities who are engaged in the task of educating the slum children can be helped by this study. The valuable findings can reveal the pitfalls and drawbacks of the educative procedure or system implemented in the slum schools. They are important for the slum school authorities for improving their modes of teaching, the learning environment, and maintenance of discipline in the schools. So, this study is valuable to bring in to light the educational problems of the slums and is a significant study for slum development.

From personal point of view, the study is significant. The investigator is engaged in teaching in a college where multireligious and multilingual slum dwellers are found. She felt curious for the large number of school going age children who are deprived of primary education. At the same time she found the presence of adult illiteracy among the slum-dwellers. This study can satisfy her inquisition about the rate of literacy and condition of primary education imparted through slum schools. So, this study is of great importance and valuable from personal point.