CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

India is a vast country, continental in size, extending over an area of 32,87263 Sq. Km. From the snow covered Himalayan heights to tropical rain forest of south. With a population of over one hundred crores, India ranks as the world’s second most populace country after China. The climatic conditions of India vary from region to region. Owing to the largest expanse of the county, its interior part become very hot during summer, during rainy season some parts of the country receive heavy rainfall causing floods. In winter months hill regions above 1500 metres, receive heavy snowfall and many of the settlements remain snowbound for about 4-8 months of the year and thus remain cut off from the rest of the country.

The varied geographical conditions give rise to wide diversity, influencing the socio-economic, cultural characteristic and educational opportunities of the people. While there are fertile plains and mighty rivers, there are also drought prone areas, deserts and arid zones, barren of any vegetation. Flood havoc have always brought miseries to the millions of the people, particularly in the rural and the tribal areas.

The teeming millions of the country belong to different racial, caste and religious groups, speaking different languages, having several dialects. The wide diversities have given rise to various groups with several disadvantages with respect to gender, caste, tribe, religion, poverty, habitation and physique.
1.1 DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Disadvantaged is an omnibus category. It includes the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women. It also includes the socio-economically deprived backward (class), castes, slum dwellers, and minority groups. The physically challenged, the children with visual, hearing and speech impairments, and mentally challenged also fall in this category.

1.1.1 Scheduled Castes

The scheduled castes constitute about 15.7% of India's population. The spatial distribution of the scheduled caste population reveals that it is fairly widespread across all states of the country. For most of the districts the share of scheduled caste population to the total population ranges from 5% to 25%. The distribution of the scheduled caste population has its large concentration in rural as compared to urban areas. The multi-religious plural society in India has a further complexity in shape of a rigid social stratification based on a hierarchical caste system. While discrimination based on caste is publically denied by all, caste consideration continue to play a dominant role in many spheres of the polity. The situation is particularly oppressive in rural areas as the scheduled castes and other backward communities continue to be marginal farmers, and agricultural labourers.

Although untouchability was declared a sin against man and God by Gandhiji, and has been abolished by Law, it is unfortunately practised in villages in different degrees. The social discrimination which these caste groups suffer from, in addition to economic deprivation, presents a more difficult barrier in obtaining benefits of any developmental efforts, including educational opportunities. Scheduled caste children, because of their socio-economic conditions find it hard
to be in schools. Though this group comprises about 15% of the country's total population, their proportion among the poverty groups is much higher.

Most of these people survive below the poverty line. This grinding poverty force their children into job market or engage them in jobs they themselves are doing. Girls in such families are usually entrusted with the work of looking after young siblings, while their parents are away at work. All these circumstances have forced these children to remain out of school.

1.1.2 Scheduled Tribes

India has the single largest tribal population in the world compared to any other country with a population of 67.71 millions (1991 census). The tribal communities in the country constitute 8.1 percent of the population with as many as 450 different tribes spread all over the county. They are one of the most disadvantaged group in terms of educational development. They have different degree of exposure to the modernity and social change. In Indian context, tribals are the earliest settlers of the land if not autochthonous. A tribe may be defined as a community which has a name, endogenous in nature, lives in a common territory, has a common traditional culture with an unwritten language. One of the distinguishing feature is that majority of them live in scattered habitations located in interior, remote and inaccessible, hilly and forest areas of the country.

The tribal groups have their own distinct tradition, social organisation, pattern of economic activities, customs, code of conduct and value system. While there are tribal communities which continue to depend on hunting, fishing, and food gathering, there are nomadic tribes who are dependent on cattle rearing and continue their pastoral life; some tribes practise shifting cultivation despite attempts to wean
them away from this; some are settled agriculturists; and some are also industrial labourers working in the industrial and mining establishment created in some of the tribal areas.

A common characteristic of tribe is that normally the habitations are small in size. The scheduled tribes generally live in inhospitable terrain where the productivity of the soil is low and their economic involvement is also diverse and multiple. The tribal population in India suffers from the double disadvantage of spatial and socio-economic constraints with regard to overall development as well as education. The tribal areas are the unreached areas in terms of infrastructure facilities including education. It is in this context that Indian Constitution identifies for special consideration certain ethnic minority groups, traditionally referred to as tribes or tribals, as scheduled tribes. Scheduled tribes have their own unique culture, but they remained cut off from the mainstream for long time. They have in fact, different needs and educational problems.

1.1.3 Girls

Gender disparity is a significant factor characterising the Indian society. Even though the women play a very important role in agriculture, handicrafts, and many other economic activities, they enjoy an unequal status in the family as well as the society. While there are several deprived sections in the Indian society, within these groups women happen to be doubly disadvantaged. Thus, this situation, combined with numerous complex socio-cultural and economic factors have made women the most deprived group as far as education is concerned. Despite facilities for education easily available for boys and girls, there is a significantly lower level of utilisation of facilities by the girls and women. While this issue has started receiving serious attention of the society, a lot has to be done to enable women to
achieve equality and play their legitimate role in the process of socio-economic development. It is widely recognised that a change in the situation of the women hold the key to social transformation, including educational development in India.

Most of the groups subjected to social discrimination also suffer from serious economic deprivation. Children of these poor families join the work force at a very early age in order to supplement the income of the family. The problem of the child labour is of a very large dimension. According to an estimate, there are about 40 million child labourers in the country. This is particularly true to the girl child who is required to do a variety of household chores such as looking after young siblings, fetching water, fuel and fodder. The families below the poverty line and the working children pose a serious challenge to the educational planners. Adults as well as children of these families are not in a position to make use of the educational opportunities for various reasons.

1.1.4 Economically Backward Groups

The rapid population growth when considered alongwith other background characteristics of various regions/groups of population shows a typical convergence of deprivations. These deprivations taken together constitute the vicious circle of under development in which each factor sustains the other and in turn gets sustained. There is enough evidence to show to suggest that low income regions are not only economically poor but also suffer from a variety of other disadvantages. The dependency ratio is high, the work force is largely engaged in primary and extractive activities, there is high incidence of child labour, agriculture is primitive, illiteracy is high, infant mortality and crude birth rate are both high, there is little access to health care and safe drinking water is not available, malnutrition and undernutrition are
prevalent, and road and communication linkages are either poor or nonexistent. The larger the number of the common factors of derivations in a region, the poorer is the quality of life index. It is this large scale convergence which poses a serious challenge to development planners in general and to educational planners in particular.

1.1.5 Minority Groups

Minorities in all countries consider themselves disadvantaged. India has numerous languages. Many major languages have several dialects which differ considerably from the standard language. There are a number of tribal languages with rich folk literature which continue to be maintained through the oral tradition of numerous languages in the country. Fifteen languages find mention in the constitution as national languages while English and Hindi are recognised as official languages. The national policy is to promote all languages. The question of languages is important both from the point of view of education and of fair competition in social and economic opportunities. Further, the division of the country into states based on linguistic considerations has combined the issue with questions of regional identity and cultural tradition and made it a complex emotional issue. A related issue is that of linguistic minority groups living in different parts of the country who are likely to be at a disadvantage in several ways.

All the major religions of the world have their followers in India while the bulk of people are Hindus, those following Islam, Sikkism, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism also constitute a large number. India is a secular country, it has no official religion. The constitution of the country has unequivocally declared that there can be no discrimination on the ground of the religion (as also of
race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth or residence). The constitution of India also guarantees the right of minorities, whether linguistic or religious, to follow their language, script, and culture and to establish and administer educational institutions for this purpose. While there is no discrimination in admission to educational institutions and in job opportunities, on account of various other socio-economic and historical factors, some religious and linguistic minorities still continue to remain disadvantaged due to educationally backwardness.

1.1.6 Physically and Mentally Challenged

There are over 12 million physically and mentally challenged persons in the country. These are the individuals who have special learning needs which arise out of sensory, intellectual, psychological or socio-cultural deficits. For example, persons with visual, hearing or neuromuscular impairment have learning problems. So have persons with a low level of intellectual functioning and those with disorders in psychological processes. Emotionally disturbed persons have learning problems of their own. These conditions, impairments or disabilities, impede the normal development of individuals-intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically.

1.2 EDUCATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Education is directly related to the development of the country. Efforts are being made both by the union government as well as state governments to provide numerous facilities to the disadvantaged groups with a view to bring them at par with the various advantaged groups. Opening of schools in habitations with a higher concentration of disadvantaged population, free education, merit scholarships, attendance scholarships and providing coaching classes to the needy children are some of the interventions which have helped in increasing
the enrolment and retention of disadvantaged children in schools. Besides the government there are various welfare and non-governmental organisations that have also put in significant efforts to raise the educational level of the disadvantaged population.

Article 46 of the Indian Constitutions provides for the promotion of the educational interests of scheduled tribes and scheduled castes and for their protection against social injustice and exploitation. Education provides a shield against such injustice and exploitation. Enormous amount has been spent to speed up the educational progress of the weaker sections of the society. The government has made serious efforts to encourage the economic development of the scheduled tribes areas through special plans and programmes. In the field of education, infrastructural and various incentives are given to motivate them to avail of the facilities. Post matric scholarships are given to all scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students for general and technical higher education and they also enjoy reservations in all higher educational institutions/courses and job reservations and reservations in legislatures. As the result of the protective discrimination policies under the constitutional provisions, the enrolment of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children has considerably improved but their drop-out rate are still considerably higher than those for the non-scheduled groups in elementary education both at the primary and the middle stages, i.e., from classes I-VIII.

Enrolment is also an important indicator for measuring the educational development of various groups in a society. The enrolment ratio for the scheduled caste in the past ten years shows that there has been a considerable improvement in their enrolment. The ratio for scheduled caste girls shows an increasing trend. The total enrolment ratio for scheduled caste boys and girls for the years 1993-94 was 123.33 and 91.15 respectively, for classes I to V and 74.21 and 25.01
respectively for classes VI-VIII. The educational development of various sub-groups of scheduled castes has taken place at a varied pace. This difference could be seen in inter state and intra state sub-castes groups.

In view of the socio-economic backwardness, geographical isolation and marginalisation, the Constitution of India had incorporated specific provisions for promoting and safeguarding the interest of the tribals. Specifically the Article 46 of the Constitution provides for the protection of the scheduled tribes from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

In a bid to improve the pace of educational growth, many programme and approaches are undertaken at the states and central levels. The result of these efforts showed the growth in the literacy rate. The rate of literacy since 1971-2001 has gone up from a low of 11.30 per cent in 1971 to 68.51 per cent in 2001 for scheduled tribes. The problem of dropping out of scheduled tribes children from the school has been fully recognised by the planners and several measures have been initiated in this regard. It is well documented that poverty is one of the major reasons for children for dropping out of the school. All states have also been implementing a number of incentives schemes such as free text books, uniforms, and attendance scholarship for children from socio-economically deprived sections.

Special attention is given to education of girls. Innovative efforts are being made to meet the socio-economic and educational needs of the girls. It is noted that cultural factors also come in the way of higher participation of girls in schooling. Keeping this in view, state and central governments have opened separate girls’ schools wherever necessary; special scholarships are provided to girls; in several states education of girls is free at all levels, including university education. Also teacher recruitment procedure in almost all the states envisages that at least
fifty percent posts are filled by women teachers. Sometime back, a central scheme for non-formal education for out-of-school children in the age group 6-14 years was also launched. Under this scheme, states and UTs get 60 per cent support for educational centres, 90 per cent for girls’ centres. Voluntary agencies get 100 per cent support for organising such NPE centres. In order to give a boost to universalisation of elementary education more emphasis is laid to improve enrolment, retention and attendance of the children.

The programmes of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, popularly known as the ‘mid-day-meal scheme,’ was launched in August 1995 on a nation-wide basis. The programme intend to boost universalisation of primary education by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance of children especially from disadvantaged groups and to improve their nutritional status of children in primary classes.

In the traditional framework for providing class-rooms and teachers, number of students had been the main determining factor. Under this, small schools located in remote areas and invariably serving marginalised groups suffer from serious inadequacies. Breaking away from this framework, following the recommendations of the NPE (1986), a national programme called ‘Operation Black Board’ was launched around 1990 to equip every school with certain basic infrastructure and human resources. As part of this programme, every school was to have a minimum of two teachers and two class-rooms and certain other basic teaching-learning materials and other school equipment. Government of India has spent on an average about Rs. 400 millions per year during the last decade on this scheme. Besides, 42,000 posts of teachers have been sanctioned to add third teacher to primary schools with more than 100 enrolment.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, brought to the forefront the need for focusing not only on quantitative aspects but also
on quality in terms of achievement levels. The basic competencies to be achieved by all children at the primary stage in the forms of Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs) in selected subjects such as language, mathematics, and environmental studies across the country. Under this scheme, financial assistance is being provided to the state governments for a wide range of activities which include preparation of competency based text books, training of teachers, preparation of teaching learning materials, orientation of education personal and conducting benchmark surveys.

Annual Report of Human Resource Development Ministry (HRD), Government of India, shows that the number of primary schools have increased from 223,000 in 1950-51 to 795,000 in 1997-98. The enrolment figures for primary education have not only have gone up from 9.155 million to 108.7 millions but even the enrolment ratio has gone up from 42.60 per cent to 80.70 per cent in 1950-51 and 1997-98 respectively. Even for upper primary stage the enrolment ratio has gone up from 12.70 per cent to 58.70 per cent in 1950-51 and 1997-98 respectively.

Educational for All (EFA) is no doubt a Herculean task. But as the popular saying goes, a task well begun is half done. We have begun with a visible political commitment of the central and state governments. Enhanced allocations have been provided to elementary education. The problems of non-enrolment, dropping out and the resulting setbacks are being contained by actions on various fronts. Improvement in quality of schooling is expected to keep the children in school, while non-formal education will assist the non-enrolled and drop-outs to gain entry in the school even at a later stage. Those who remain illiterate would come into the purview of adult literacy programmes. Partnership of the non-governmental organisations and the community itself is sought in fulfilling the massive task ahead. The
efforts of EFA and primary education projects initiated several alternative strategies and innovations for improving quantitative and qualitative aspects of primary education keeping in view the needs of girls, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children.

1.3 REVIEW OF THE RELATED STUDIES

Education of the disadvantaged groups including girls, in the country has been studied by researchers in terms of equitable distributions among various population groups since independence and also the achievement of students as related to socio-demographic characteristics and personality factors alongwith school factors. The review of some of the pertinent studies has been made which is reported as under:

1.3.1 Educational Development : A Critique

Sreedharaswamy (1980) while reviewing comprehensive access to primary education in Orissa, observes the economic backwardness and low per capita income of parents do not leave any alternative to them but to press their children into work force, leading to wastage and stagnation and developing unfavourable attitude towards schools.

Jain (1981) in the study of regional imbalances in education in India found that Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat had poor enrolment at Primary level. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Bihar were backward in percentage enrolment at the middle high and higher secondary levels.

Kumar (1983) in his study revealed that enrolment and dropout rates were higher among boys than girls. The enrolment rate was higher among the scheduled castes. Income greatly affected the rate of
enrolment and dropouts. Child education very significantly correlated with the educational status of parents. The study further revealed that the rate of dropout was more heavy at the primary stage than at the middle stage. Those who were irregular in attending schools were the potential drop-outs.

Krishnamurthy (1985) in his study found that poverty of parents and their feeling that education would not help in meeting the needs of life were important. Measure taken for enrolment of children included visiting the homes of non-enrolled children, serving mid-day-meals, supply of uniform, text books and cash grant to scheduled tribe students which may facilitate the educability of child.

A study conducted by NIEPA (1986) concluded that utilisation of inputs, to an effective level was possible only when the community was duly sensitized and involved in the progress of enrolment and retention with emphasis on integration theory with practice so that learning may be concretized more meaningfully, with the help of work situations existing in the immediate environment.

Verma (1986) while studying the development of education found that factors like literacy and poverty of parents. Inadequate teaching staff, single teacher school and lack of accommodation were responsible for low enrolment at elementary stage in the tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh. The study suggested that there should be provisions of co-curricular activities in every district, scholarship, free textbooks, mid-day-meal etc. which would lead to high enrolment at elementary stage.

Grover (1988) while reviewing trends in enrolment at primary stage in rural setting in Haryana reported that: (i) enrolment of boys was of higher magnitude; (ii) boys and children of high caste had better enrolment chances; and (iii) percentage of girls continuing primary
education had been fairly small, especially in case of those belonging to low caste household.

Premi (1989) observed that the achievement of universal elementary education largely depends on the extent to which the educational system is able to control and retain children from the disadvantaged sections. He has pointed out that universalisation of elementary education consists of four components: 'universal provision of facilities', 'universal enrolment', 'universal attendance and retention', and 'universal attainment'.

Abraham and Sudhama (1990) determined status of enrolment of school children in Kerala and found that comparatively higher percentage of boys were enrolled in the secondary schools with equally greater number of repeaters and dropouts as compared to girls.

Kumar (1990) in the analysis of certain disparities in the educational development of Himachal Pradesh in terms of literacy status and enrolment at elementary level has concluded that the improvement of literacy of rural and urban population over the period 1971-81 has remained same in magnitude with inequities in the male and female population groups remaining same and also inequities in enrolment at elementary stage, thereby reflecting the unsatisfactory gains in universal literacy in the near future.

Raza et al. (1990) have concluded that the female enrolment and literacy rate remain lower than those for the males in all the states across rural and urban areas and social class groups.

Parkash (1992) observed that universalisation of elementary education has been one of the top priority programmes of Government of India for even four decades. The number of primary schools and the enrolment at the primary level is increasing tremendously, but the retention of children still remains a serious problem. He has
emphasized that laying down of standard of learning (quality), which must be ensured and should be achieved by all children (equity).

Suman (1992) in a study on "certain disparities in enrolment of children at elementary stage in Himachal Pradesh" found that: (i) the status quo in enrolment ratio of male and female children at primary stage in the age group 6-11 over the period 1978-1986 is indicative of the fact that there remain nearly one fourth of child population non-enrolled and there is marked improvement of enrolment of female children at primary stage as compared to upper primary stage; and (ii) the disparity in male and female literacy status of Himachal Pradesh has been found to be at same magnitude from 1971 to 1981 to 1991 in terms of nearly same increase in percentage literacy.

Ambasht (1993) focuses on the reasons for non-enrolment of tribal female child i.e. her pre-occupational economic pursuits', non-relevance of the learning experience in the present day school to the needs, modern education acting as decultursing agent for alienating force in the tribal areas etc.

Thakur (1995) in his study on pattern of "enrolment and retention of girls students at primary stage" found that there has been significant improvement in girls education in terms of enrolment at primary stage over the period of 1966-67 to 1991-92. The gap between girls share in enrolment for scheduled castes and tribe population in comparison to general population has narrowed down over the period under study.

Varghese (1995) studied the school facilities and learning achievement in primary schools. He classified the school factors into three sets: facilities in the school, teachers quality and teaching learning process. He while analyzing the impact of school facilities on learner achievement focused on the availability of instructional material like textbooks, and reading material.
Tilak (1996) has critically examined the enrolment of children. According to official statistics nearly every one in the age group 11-14 are enrolled in the schools, but according to the statistics of the national sample survey organisation (NSSO) in 1986-87, there were about 60 million in age group 6-11, who were never enrolled in schools, and it is further revealed that the level of retention of children in schools is also limited i.e. only 57 out of 100 children enrolled in grade-I, seem to reach grade V and only 42 reach grade VIII, according to MHRD estimates (1991-92).

1.3.2 Learner Achievement in Relation to Socio-Demographic Variables

Gender Differences

Katiyar (1979) showed that there was no significant difference in average scores of boys and girls studying advanced mathematics as measured on the achievement test. He further suggested that numerical reasoning and numerical ability occupied prominent place among the fire cognitive functions. The regression equations were found to be helpful in predicting scores of advanced mathematics for boys and girls.

Hirunval (1980) concluded that boys were academically more motivated than girls. Pupils in rural areas were more academically motivated that those in the urban areas, where as urban pupils had better self concept.

Hirunwal (1980) found that boys were more academically motivated than girls. Furthermore, boys scored better on the self concept scale than girls.

Ansari (1984) in his study on the performance of elementary school child studying in Hindi medium schools, found boys better than that of girls in general science.
Puri (1984) in his study concluded that adolescent boys had significantly better study habits than adolescent girls. Study habits were found to be related to the academic achievement. High achiever adolescent had significantly better study habits than the low achievers. Study habit of adolescent boys and girls differed significantly at different levels of academic achievement and intelligence i.e. high, middle and low.

Ghosh (1985) has reported that high school boys did not show superiority in achievement in chemistry over girls.

Singh (1986) found that sex has no relationship with academic motivation among high school students of Himachal Pradesh as high, achieving and low achieving boys do not differ significantly from their girl counterparts on academic motivation. Further it was found that academic motivation is not significantly related with academic achievement of high school students in the sense that high, average and low achieving students have almost same mean academic motivations cores.

Singh (1987) found that the high school students of Himachal Pradesh do not show significant gender differences, though girls tend to be high achievers than boys, both among high and low creative students, especially at high institution level.

Singh (1995) found that high school adolescent boys are having higher levels of convergent thinking, and higher levels of achievement motivation than girls. On the other hand, adolescent girls have higher academic achievement than adolescents boys. These results are suggestive of the fact that gender differences prevail in ability and performance of high school adolescents.

Thakur (2001) found that there are no significant gender differences among class V students in Hindi and Mathematics.
Rural-Urban Differences

Joshi (1981) found that the results for the urban areas deviated from those of the rural areas in some variables. For the urban areas, there was significant relationship between the achievement scores and the essay performance to indicate that high achievers were also highly creative in urban areas, there was low relationship between the achievement score and creativity score.

Jain (1981) in his study found that the achievement of the pupils from urban areas was better than that of the pupils from rural areas in Gujurati, social studies, science and mathematics. The poor readers of the rural areas (boys) achieved better than the poor readers (boys) from urban areas, and even the poor readers (girls) of rural areas achieved little better than the poor readers (girls) of urban areas. He further suggested that the boys with poor reading comprehension from rural areas were better than those from urban areas in Mathematics, the same was the case with the girls. Even in the case of the normal readers, the girls from rural areas achieved better than the normal readers (girls) from urban areas in mathematics.

Ghosh (1985) in his study found that urban students did not show better performance in the achievement test in chemistry than rural students. There was a positive correlation of the achievement in chemistry with academic motivation. Income of the parents in case of urban students, achievement in chemistry was found to be related with rural students as well as occupation of the parents.

Mishra (1986) found that academic achievement of rural students was lower than the achievement of urban students.

Family Factors and Achievement

Murali (1979) revealed that children with better educational background at home have higher psycho-linguistic performance and
educational aspiration than the children with poor educational background.

Khan (1979) reported that parental deprivation, when the children reside in hostels away from parents, has an adverse effect on the academic achievement of the denotified tribals students of Uttar Pradesh coming from low socio-economic status.

Sreedharaswamy (1980) while reviewing comprehensive access to primary education observes that economic backwardness and low per capita income of parents do not leave any alternative than from pressing their children into workforce, leading to wastage and stagnation.

Burstein (1980) found that males from high socio-economic status families were positively associated with science achievement. Average science achievement of males was higher than that of females. On an average, science achievement of boys was reported to have benefited more from the effects of emphasis on critical thinking.

Jain (1981) found that the socio-economic level of the parents had a great impact on the pupils achievement in Gujarati, social studies and mathematics. The pupils belonging to the upper SES achieved better than the pupils whose parents belonged to the middle and lower socio-economic levels, while the pupils from the middle socio economic levels scored better than those with lower socio-economic status of parents in all subjects.

Chopra (1982) found that socio-economic background was a very important determinant for continuation of education. Significantly a larger number of students from the lower socio-economic status failed in the high school examination and significantly larger number of first class students belonged to higher socio-economic classes. Parents from higher socio-economic classes gave greater help and
encouragement to their children for studies. Home adjustment was closely related to academic achievement than emotional, health and social adjustment, attitude towards education had very high positive correlation with academic achievement.

Krishan (1982) revealed significant difference in school achievement of pupils belonging to high, average and low socio-economic status. The students belonging to high and average socio-economic status differed significantly from their counterparts with low socio-economic status in their school achievement.

Rajput (1984) found that the socio-economic status of the children affected the achievement of the students in mathematics. The high socio-economic status group of students and the average socio-economic groups did not differ significantly on achievement in mathematics. Achievement of high socio-economic status and low socio-economic status students in mathematics differed significantly. Average and low socio-economic groups differed to give significant results on their achievement in mathematics.

Trivedi (1987) found that there was significant relationship between academic achievement, parental attitude and SES. Students belonging to upper SES classes showed better academic achievement than students belonging to lower SES class.

Mehrotra (1986) found that for both boys and girls there was positive relationship between socio-economic status of family and academic achievement.

Madigan (1997) concluded that when groups of students with similar background are compared, students from families with higher socio-economic status out perform students from low socio-economic status families.
Sood (2000) in a study of academic achievement of primary school students of Himachal Pradesh in Hindi in relation to family characteristics concluded that: (i) the learning achievement of class V students belonging to higher educational status of family is higher as compared to students of low educational status of family; and (ii) the students of class V belonging to higher family occupation have significantly higher achievement in Hindi as compared to students belonging to low and average family occupation.

Thakur (2001) found that the family income emerged as a significant predictor of achievement of primary school students in Hindi and Mathematics, thereby meaning that students with better socio-economic status have higher academic achievement.

1.3.3 Personality and Achievement

Agarwal (1975) found that the rural over achievers in comparison to urban achievers were relatively more outgoing, more warm hearted, more easy going, more participating, more trustful, more adaptive and more social. The urban under achievers as compared to rural under achievers were relatively more tense, more driven, more over-wrought and more frustrated. The over achievers had stronger educational, social and humanistic values than the urban under achievers, but the two groups were alike on the remaining three values: materialistic, religious and personal factors.

Tiwari and Rai (1976) studied the differential personality correlates of high and low achievers, significantly in the areas of emotional and educational adjustment but not in the area of social adjustment. High achievers were also found to be high in need achievement than low achievers. Low achievers were found to be below average in intelligence and more anxious than high achievers who were found to be high in intelligence but low in anxiety.
Vajaylakshmi (1980) concluded that the average academic achievement of the high creative was more than the rage low creative students. Socio-economic status had a facilitating effect on the creative ability of the pupils.

Bhargava and Marwaha (1982) founded that deprivation in its social, cultural and economic parameters causes retardation in academic performance of the students.

Chopra (1982) found that study habits were positively related to academic achievement. Students from higher socio-economic classes had higher educational and occupational aspiration than their counterparts with low socio-economic status.

Gandhi (1982) found that high school girls had significantly higher motive to affiliate than high school boys. High School Boys were significantly high on power motive in comparison with high school girls. Achievement motive was significantly and negatively related to affiliation motive. Affiliation motive was significantly and negatively related to academic achievement of high school boys whereas this relationship was not significant in the case of high school girls. High, average and low levels of affiliation motive significantly affected the academic achievement of high school boys, however, it did not affect high school girls’ academic achievement.

Pathy (1982) found that factors like students attitude towards schools, irregular attendance and lack of interest or motivation in learning the subject matter are responsible for drop-out of the rural students in Orissa.

Sarswat (1982) conducted a study of self concept in relation to adjustment, values, academic achievement, socio-economic status and sex of high school students of Delhi and found that only intellectual self-concept was positively and significantly related to academic achievement in both sexes.
Jasuja (1983) showed that frustration and academic achievement were negatively and significantly related among adolescents. Girls achieved higher in academic field and were less frustrated as compared to boys.

Sammnugasum dram (1983) found that high achievers had better study habits, intelligence and higher achievement motivation than low achievers. Low achievers had more manifest anxiety and more adjustment problems than high achievers.

Dixit (1985) in his study found that among class IX students there was no difference in the academic achievement of intellectually very superior and intellectually superior boys and girls. In case of boys there was very high correlation between intelligence test scores and academic achievement whereas average correlation between intelligence test scores and academic achievement at average level of intelligence.

Mitra (1985) concluded that girl underachievers were found to be more shy although they did not show any statistical difference on any of the affective domain variables. The gifted over achiever boys showed a higher score on achievement motivation than the gifted over achieving girl.

Kapoor (1987) found that among both boys and girls the high achievers tended to show a higher level of intelligence as compared to the average and low achievers.

Mehrotra (1986) found that for both boys and girls there was an inverse relationship between level of anxiety and academic achievement. He also mentioned that there was positive relationship between intelligence and academic achievement.
1.3.4 School Factor and Achievement

In a study on the relationships between classroom climate, pupils' academic motivation and academic achievement, Desai (1979) found that boys were higher than girls in the level of classroom climate, pupils' academic motivation and academic achievement. Boys' schools had higher mean score of classroom climate, pupil's motivation and academic achievement than mixed or girls schools.

Vierra (1989) saw no academic advantage/disadvantage in matching the ethnicity of the teachers and pupil. Children in non-tribal schools often achieved higher because of better infrastructure, regularity in class organisation, and clearer understanding of the contents and methods.

Pandhi (1992) found that classroom environment scores of the students correlated positively and significantly with academic achievement and self concept for all the urban, rural and total sample, but classroom environment scores of the students did not correlate with their creativity for any group.

Varghese (1995) has reported that low levels of learning among primary schools children in developing countries can be partly attributed to poor and inadequate facilities in school. Children with classroom desks perform better in reading achievement than those without classroom desks, and students who belonged to schools with sufficient number of classrooms perform better than those who belonged to schools with insufficient number of classrooms. Hence it was concluded that facilities like building, separate classrooms, students' desks, etc. determine the very organisation of teaching learning activities and these factors do influence learner achievement.

Kumar and Kumar (1999) in a series of elementary education in golden anniversary of independence have pointed out that the gloomy
picture of primary school is attributed mainly to the continuing lack of congenial atmosphere because of displayed and unhygienic school buildings, inadequate accommodation, shortage of teachers lack of basic human amenities (sanitation, drinking water, health check up), nonavailability of furniture in the classrooms, short supply of teaching learning material, sub standard quality of mid day meal, indifference to co-curricular activities, unattractive method of teaching and inadequate and delayed supply of text books by the government. There are the potent evidence of deprivation of children reading in these schools. The village children coming mainly from the disadvantaged background, most of whom are the first generation learners, find the situation unattractive and frustrating and the same time traditional method of teaching along with illiteracy of parents make school reading poor among these children, resulting in low achievement in the classrooms which ultimately leads to high rate of drop-out. They have suggested provision of better mobilisation of local resources to enrich the physical condition of the primary schools, active involvement of parents and community leaders with the schools and recruitment of sufficient number of teachers, and compulsory use of teaching skills in the classrooms by the trained teachers.

Yadav (1999) in his study on learning achievement of primary school children has pointed out that the achievement level of class V and II students in both language and mathematics is quite low. The same is the position for drop out students. A significant number of teacher are untrained. There are a number of students who repeated the same grade twice or thrice. He has suggested that district specific intervention could be worked out for improving achievement level and reducing drop-out level among the students. The local specific inservice training package should be provided to the teachers in all districts according to the need.
Tripathy (1990) found factors of low achievement are complex. Some factors inherent in the community (pressure on the child to work, parental illiteracy and apathy, lack of academic support when child needs it, absence of role model, etc.), and in school (Un-exciting curriculum, non-availability of learning materials, uninteresting method of instruction etc.) make child uninvolved in the learning process.

Mayuri and Sunectha (2000) found that majority of the school factors had significantly correlated with high academic achievement of children. So, it is obvious to conclude that school, the second most intimate environment next to home, has fascinating effect on the child’s high performance at school.

1.3.5 Constraints in Education of Disadvantage Groups

The efforts for universalisation of elementary education has not been uniform. The educability of girls, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students remains a problematic area. The researchers have focused on the enrolment patterns at primary and upper-primary stages of elementary education, constraints in educability of these disadvantaged groups as well as the schooling facilities for the said purpose.

Burman (1969) enumerated certain socio-cultural factors which are responsible for the failure of the tribal students belonging to the north eastern, central and western regions of the country.

Chaudhary (1974) studied the drop out and stagnation in the tribal situation in Rajasthan and enumerated that socio-economic and cultural problems cause hindrance in the education of tribal children.

Rath (1976) in the study on the problems of equalization of educational opportunities for the tribal children of Orissa, found that personal adjustment, physical needs, aspirations and cognitive development create some difficulties in the education of the tribal
children. It was also reported that teachers have negative attitude towards the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students irrespective of the fact the some of them are highly talented, and many more have average intelligence and academic achievement.

Digumariti (1983), while discussing the problems of tribal communities, in general, reports that illiterate parents hardly encourage their children for education which may be attributed to the negative attitude and apathy towards education.

Verma (1977) in a comparative study of achievement of tribal and non-tribal children in science at high school level found that tribals have low achievement due to language problem, inacquaintance with the subject mater and irrelevance of the curricula in catering to their own needs and aspirations.

Rathnaiah (1977) while studying structural constraints in tribal education found that socio-economic constraints operate adversely in spread of education in the tribal society as maximum percentage of enrolment at primary and secondary stages is from upper socio-economic status, indicating that the parents from low socio-economic status can not afford to send their wards to schools. It was also revealed in the study that the attitude of tribals towards education is not antagonistic or unfavourable. But most of the schools, being single schools, provide inadequate instructions in the initial stages and thus students face difficulty in English and Mathematics in higher classes. Further, it was pointed out that a large number of students abstain from classes due to lack of interest in education, ill health and lack of persuasion by the parents to their wards to be regular in their studies. It was also found that majority of the parents of the school going children want their wards to study only upto primary level whereas the children themselves want to get education upto matric to seek employment.
Toppo (1979) while studying the development of education among Orian tribals of Bihar found that lack of academic atmosphere at home and lack of continued interests of teachers in the tribal students are responsible for their academic failure.

Rani (1980) found that the scheduled caste student's academic achievement was significantly lower than that of the non-scheduled caste students. Both groups differed significantly with regard to self-esteem and self-concept. However, there was no difference in the scheduled caste and the non-scheduled caste students with respect to the achievement, anxiety and perception of purpose in life.

Aruna (1981) found that academic achievement of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students studying in standard VII was significantly lower than that of general population. It was further revealed that academic achievement of SC and ST students studying in rural schools was inferior to that of their counterparts in urban schools. The academic achievement of ST and SC boys was superior to that of girls.

Srivastava (1982) in a study of sociological problems in tribal education in Madhya Pradesh, found that the factors like family customs and traditions, parents illiteracy, fatalistic approach to the education of their children and behaviour of upper caste people and outsiders living in the tribal areas towards tribal people are major hindrances in the educational progress of tribals.

Sharma (1983) also studied the educational backwardness of the tribal students of Madhya Pradesh and reported that large family size, scarcity of funds and meager means of living make it difficult to look further than their day to day needs, thus being responsible for low literacy among them. The illiteracy provides no academic atmosphere at home, to provide them guidance and coaching, especially in the subject of mathematics and science which they find too difficult. Also,
the tribal student finds himself cut off both from original and adopted social circles while studying and is tempted to leave the studies so as to opt for traditional household works in his community.

Singh (1983) while studying parental support and scholastic achievement of tribal Hindu/Christian and non tribal Hindu children of Bihar, on the basis of the data of three doctoral thesis, reports that parental support is a more powerful correlate of scholastic achievement than socio-economy status and intelligence within an average range, and parental support has also been found compensate for low socio-economic status.

Verma (1985) found that the achievement of scheduled caste students was significantly lower than that of tribal students and students from other castes. However, there was no significant difference in the mean achievement of students belonging to the scheduled tribes and those belonging to other castes. Students from higher castes had a more favourable attitude towards the school and medium of instruction when compared to students from scheduled tribe and scheduled caste students. Though scheduled tribe students had a higher socio-economic status when compared to students from scheduled castes or other castes. The mean school adjustment score of tribal group was significantly poorer than that of the non-tribal group.

Ambasht (1993), in a critical study on the educability of girls in a tribal situation has highlighted the fact that adequate schooling facilities and teacher factor can promote the cause of education in the disadvantaged sections of society.

Singh and Gautam (1996), in the baseline survey of schooling conditions vis-à-vis home characteristics in educationally backward areas of Himachal Pradesh found that school factors such as teacher strength, trained teachers, in-service training of teachers and
availability, and utilisation of teaching aids are significant predictors of learning achievement of primary school students.

In another study (PROBE, 1997), the achievement level of students has been found to be related with educational level of parents as well as school conditions, and better school conditions-infrastructure and teacher factors have been reported to be catalyst in improving the performance of students belonging to poor and illiterate parents.

Koul et al. (2000), in mid-term assessment survey of DPEP districts of Himachal Pradesh have, too revealed that inadequacy of schooling facilities and lack of trained teachers are the potent cause of low level of performance of primary school students.

Kaul (2001), in a study on access to primary education, on a basis of survey of 93 schools in Karnataka, argues that access to primary education and its quality, retention and drop-out rates are ruled by and related to prevailing caste, class and gender divides. She further argues the education of children has to be viewed in terms of the larger social reality, which implies greater power to the marginalised and weaker sections. This can be done through the formulation of need based education practices which can enable the weaker groups to negotiate the unequal world from a position of strength. The prime responsibility for achieving the goal still rests with the democratic state.

Thakur (2001) found that there exists certain caste inequalities in educational attainment of primary school students in Hindi and Mathematics.

De et al. (2002) have highlighted the success story of educational development in Himachal Pradesh, though it has been pointed out that there is “urgency of curriculum reform and teacher training which will integrate the school leaver with opportunities in the society around him” that will further lead to “attainment of goal of
education for health, employment and productivity and a fuller quality of life”.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

No doubt, the successive five years plans and other target specific interventions have yielded significantly positive results in attainment of the goal of universalisation of elementary education. The recently introduced decentralized programme, namely District Primary Education Programmes (DPEP) in educationally backward districts in a number of states including Himachal Pradesh has been able to improve the retention rates, especially of disadvantaged groups as well as improvement in their educational attainment. Moreover, the introduction of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is another, ambitious programme to achieve the goal of universalisation of elementary education by 2010 AD. Himachal Pradesh is, too, in the process of achieving the goal of universalisation of elementary education and is making concerted efforts in this direction. While Kerala is India’s best known star in the literacy firmament, the achievements of Himachal Pradesh, the small hill state of the Western Himalayas, are less well known. Himachal Pradesh today is a state where education is the norm for children. The earlier investment on elementary education is now paying off. It is at a stage now where elementary education is within its reach including in its most difficult pockets. This is an enormous achievement for a state with such a challenging topography. Education is possibly one of the biggest empowering factors in Himachal society today enabling most people to reach a certain minimum level. Over the time it has made the schooling experience easier for Himachali parents; as the first generation became educated they could participate in the schooling of their children. With the functional school systems, in time, total literacy has been progressively enhanced and now it outstrips the national
average. The recent TLC campaign in the nineties seems to have made some contribution as well. One example of the vitality of the TLC campaign comes from DPEP, Sirmaur. Great efforts were made by the Saksharta team and public representatives, social workers, NGO’s, mahila mandals, yuva mandals etc. Of the 7,200 children in the 6-11 age group, some 5,200 children were admitted into primary schools by motivating their parents and arranging textbooks and fees by collecting donations from voluntary organisations. In 1991 the illiteracy rate was 36 per cent for the 7+ age groups, in 1997 it was 23 per cent and could well go down to 18 per cent by 2001, thus meeting the Jomtien target for reducing adult literacy. At the same time as male literacy rates are peaking, the male-female differential is also narrowing. Statistics indicate that Himachal has been attacking and closing the gap between regions and people well-served by the education system. The disadvantaged sections of the community have shown remarkable rise in literacy rates. DPEP conducted a baseline assessment survey of the four ‘difficult’ districts in Himachal Pradesh in 1996. Achievements in these areas were fairly respectable, so also was the quality of infrastructure.

Himachal Pradesh has been moving towards Education For All for quite some time. In that sense the vision of children’s access to education has been shared by the Constitution makers as well as the state of Himachal Pradesh. Progress began in the fifties but the target had not been achieved to any significant degree by the sixties. Himachal has also followed programmes aimed at improving educational achievements. In 1979, it set up the National Adult Education Programme which aimed at providing literacy to the 15-35 age group. To achieve the aims of making all adults literate, the National Literacy Mission set up 2,300 adult education centres and over 300 Jan Shiksha Nilayams in 1990-91. The total literacy campaign was
started in 1992. It was aimed at the 9-45 age group. It planned to make the whole state literate by 1996. Out of school children in the 6-9 age group were to be given top priority by getting them into the formal education system so as to achieve universalisations of Elementary Education. The Department of Welfare started residential schools for the benefit of disabled children. There were special schemes for SC/ST children. Free textbooks were to be provided to SC/ST children in classes 1-10 in all areas in the state. Tribal girls from classes 6-10 were given a scholarship of Rs. 50 per month apart from an annual grant of Rs. 2000. Girls all over Himachal were to be given free education up to university level. Non-formal education centres were to be opened in schools where enrolment was below ten, except in Lahaul & Spiti. More recently, physical education was to be promoted under community auspices. Five hours of extra-curricular activities per week were to be included in the school schedule. The people of Himachal therefore have had enhanced opportunities to live life with dignity.

At the same time there are, it must be admitted, several problems. Access to school, both primary and upper primary, is a tremendous problem in Himachal Pradesh. About 20-25 per cent of children do not have access to schools according to national norms. If we take into account the topography of the region, then the problem is even greater. Himachal’s educational progress has been hampared by the common ills of the Indian education system. One major problem, just as in plains, is school quality. The weight of the curriculum, for example, is an issue which plagues children, rich or poor, all over the country including Himachal Pradesh.

The research studies conducted by various agencies (PROBE, 1997, De et al. 2002) provide an empirical evidence with regard to educability of children and adult population with special reference to the disadvantaged groups. However, the research studies conducted
in educationally backward districts of the state covered under DPEP (Singh & Gautam, 1996; Koul, et al. 2000) highlight the problems of low achievement syndrome, lack of schooling facilities, inadequacy of inservice teacher education programmes, and low parental socio-economic status prevailing in these districts. The situation in other districts remains more or less same. Since the problems of retention of children for universal elementary education, quality of elementary education and schooling facilities still remain unsolved and call for further exploration, it was thought worthwhile to undertake the research study pertaining to the education of the disadvantaged groups at the elementary stage in Himachal Pradesh which is stated as under:

EDUCATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED GROUPS AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: AN EVALUATIVE STUDY.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The achievement of universal education both quantitatively and qualitatively depends on the extent to which the educational system is able to enroll and retain children of disadvantaged groups, namely, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBCs, physically and mentally challenged and girls. No doubt, efforts at national level as well as in the state of Himachal Pradesh have yielded fruitful results in terms of enrolment and retention of children belonging to these groups at the elementary stage. But the quality issue in the context of learning outcomes of school children drawn from disadvantaged groups as a matter of concern for educational planners and administrators. The research studies conducted in Himachal Pradesh under DPEP (Singh & Gautam, 1996; Koul et al., 2000) are a pointer towards this issue. The low performance of students at primary stage in Hindi language and
mathematics refers to learning deficiencies in basic education, which ultimate lead the students to drop-out before completing elementary education. In case of those, who push up with low performance face more difficulties at secondary stage resulting in mass failure both at matriculation and +2 stages.

Hence, the focus of the present research study, being evaluation of education of disadvantaged groups at elementary stage, is three fold: looking into enrolment trends at primary and upper primary stages with reference to general population, disadvantaged groups of SCs, STs and girls, quality concern in terms of attainment level of elementary school children in Hindi language, Mathematics and Environmental Studies, and views and perceptions of teachers and parents representing community with regard to issues of educability of children in the context of universal elementary education.

The findings of the present study would be useful to educational planners and administrators of the state, in particular and the country in general, to have an empirical evidence at grass root level to determine contextuality of school education so as to make education a felt need of the people of the state, especially in the context of the SCs, STs and girl child. This will strengthen the academic view-point for evolving a better and effective role of DIETs at district level and SCERT at state level that interventions initiated for the cause of universal literacy must have a linkage with the life conditions of the people of the state. Moreover, the findings of the study, would help in identifying the priority areas of development programmes and educability, equality of educational opportunity among all sections of society with emphasis on minimum levels of learning so as to attain the cherished goal of elementary education for all.
1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study enrolment pattern of girls, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children in Himachal Pradesh since 1971.

2. To identify the causes of drop-out and non-enrolment among disadvantaged groups of children for universalisation of elementary education as perceived by school teachers.

3. To identify causes of drop-outs and non-enrolment among children in the age group 6-14 years with special reference to disadvantaged groups, namely, girls, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children as perceived by parents of dropout children.

4. To identify causes of drop-out and non-enrolment among children in the age group 6-14 years with special reference to disadvantaged groups, namely, girls, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children as perceived by parents of school going children.

5. To study the differences in achievement among elementary school students belonging to different disadvantaged groups: girls, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children.

6. To seek suggestions from parents and school teachers to improve status of education of the disadvantaged groups for the purpose of universalisation of elementary education.

1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1. The enrolment pattern at primary and upper-primary stages has been studied on the basis of data available from Directorate of Education, Govt. of H.P. Since 1970-71 (after attainment of the statehood).
2. The achievement level of the students at primary level has been studied in three subjects, namely, Hindi, Mathematics and Environmental Studies.

3. The parents of school going children have been selected using purposive sampling.

4. The parents of drop-out children have been selected using purposive sampling.

1.8 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. The Disadvantaged Groups mean the girls and children belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe groups in the age group 6-14 years who are expected to complete 8 years of schooling for universal elementary education.

* Evaluative study means studying and comparing the disadvantaged and general groups of population in terms of: (i) enrolment and retention of children at primary and upper primary stage for universalisation of elementary education; (ii) socio-demographic correlates of achievement at elementary level; and (iii) causation of non-enrolment and drop-out as perceived by the parents of school going children and school teachers.