ABSTRACT

A slum is an inhabited uninhabitable habitation. A slum is an area of dilapidated houses which are in the act of destruction. Slums exist either in the zone in transition or around factories or in congested districts. Poverty constitutes the main characteristic of slum—dwellers. Multi-family dwelling live in a single room. Self-sustenance and struggle for survival is the main feature of slum life. Basic facilities like adequate air, water, lighting and proper sanitary facilities are wanting. Slum areas are sub-standard housing within a city.

Slums are usually area's of filth and marsh which are the breeding places of disease carrying germs. Slums act as cover for hide-outs for all sorts of crimes and vices like gambling etc. which prevail and live upon the city population. Slums are an area of constant conflicts, family desertions and evictions. A person is left on his own to look after himself. Education and recreation facilities are conspicuous by their absence. Thus, a slum mocks upon all forms of settled life. Juvenile delinquency and mass-socialization of more or less orphan juveniles of the slum society whose parent have not enough in their hands, is a curse of the slum upon city life. Thus a slum is a highly destructed area of worn-out buildings which provides housing facilities to the city's poor and needy. Congestion and lack of privacy are the concomitants of a slum culture.

Slums are a major factor in urban pathology. It affects the physical and mental health of the urban community. It is a constant eyesore and area of social disorganization. Economic differentiation is the chief factor for its development. It is a congested area of poor housing. It prevents both public and private decency. It results in personal and
family disorganization. It is an area which houses the criminals and the delinquents.

Urban pathology is the result of loose social control and the lack of a stable value system. Health hazard remains a typical slum problem. Further, the slum affects the physical and mental health of neighbourhood. It is the reservoir and hiding ground for all urban vices such as gambling, prostitution and so on. It promotes the lawlessness and social disorganization of the city. It is a disorganized residential area.

Slum clearance is a costly affair and faces the fury of slum dwellers when asked to vacate their slums. Slums increase with the increase in size of the city and its population and with the growth of factories. The existence of slums reflects upon the urban community’s inability to provide proper housing to all its inhabitants and poor town planning. However, slum clearance and the creation of a social consciousness among slum-dwellers about the harms of the existence of a slum is a duty of every town.

The present study was necessary for a number of important reasons. As we know, India as a democratic, socialistic republic is wedded to the principle of equality of opportunity in all fields including education. Equal educational opportunity is considered to be the basic instrument to ensure opportunity of every other kind. The country is committed to provide universal primary education to all children in the age group 6-14 and to protecting with special care the educational and other interests of the weaker sections of society. The slum area children come from the most deprived and down trodden sections of the population in urban areas. As such, the country has a special
responsibility for their education and welfare. The study was an attempt to see how far the Srinagar District (J&K State) has progressed in making adequate and suitable provisions for these children and to what extent it has ensured equality of educational opportunity to them.

Although, the disparities in educational provision between the urban and rural areas have been the subject of serious attention for a long time, the disparities within urban areas i.e. between slums and suburbs of poverty areas and middle class areas have not yet come to light. Without ascertaining these differences, however, disparities cannot be removed.

Although, the slum children are not different from other disadvantaged groups in having problems, their problems assume special seriousness when viewed in the context of severe environment deprivation, deterioration and social pathologies that stem from the striking visible contrasts between affluence and poverty. It would not be too much to say that slum residence, by its very nature, accentuates disadvantages which prevents children from taking full advantage of any educational opportunity offered to them. To know the kind of hurdles - physical, social, economic and psychological that hamper educational progress in slum areas would be quite enlightening.

A study of the problems in the way of full and equal opportunity for all its children especially those of the poorest and the most miserable people living in hundreds of its slums would provide an idea of the nature and magnitude of difficulties that beset the realization of equal educational opportunity in all these cities. Moreover, Srinagar District as the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir State should set an example in
the provision of equal educational opportunity which would be worthy of emulation by all other districts of Jammu & Kashmir State.

A real understanding of the educational malaise in slum areas and a deep insight into its genesis, is virtually non-existent. By focusing on the entire spectrum of educational opportunity in the slums which furnish very useful knowledge for making policy decisions and formulating special programmes for the universalisation and equalization of educational opportunity at the primary stage.

The study would in due course of time to avert the growth of juvenile delinquency, youth unrest and adult vice and crime. The huge expenditure needed for police action and social welfare to deal with these unhealthy phenomena in the city would thus be saved along with precious human resources who could be directed into socially useful and productive channels.

Keeping in view what has been said above, the present investigator felt that there is a need to conduct a study on the Educational Opportunities Available to the Slum Areas Children of the Kashmir Valley. Accordingly a problem was framed as under:

“A Study of Educational Opportunities Available to the Slum Areas Children of the Kashmir Valley”.

The study was taken up with the following objectives for the investigation:
1. To identify the schooling facilities in existing slum areas of the Srinagar District;
2. To study the quality of the available infrastructure in the schools;
3. To study the achievement level of the students at various levels of Primary Stage;
4. To study the extent to which the schooling facilities are utilized by the slum-dwellers;
5. To compare the achievement of slum and non-slum areas children with regard to Mathematics and English; and
6. To compare the teaching – learning situations in the slum and non-slum areas.

In order to realize the above objectives the following hypotheses were formulated.
1. There is no significant difference in the availability of schooling facilities in slum and non-slum areas of the Srinagar District;
2. There is no significant difference in existing infrastructure facilities available in slum and non-slum areas;
3. There is no significant difference in the levels of academic achievement of children of slum and non-slum areas; and
4. There is no significant difference in the utilization of schooling facilities by slum and non-slum areas.

The sample of the study consisted of three sub-samples (60 School Heads, 60 Teachers and 500 students) from Class-V of Government Primary / Middle Schools of Srinagar District. The students were within the age of 6-11 years.

In order to collect the data of the selected sample, the following tools were used:
1. The School Questionnaire;
2. The Teacher’s Questionnaire;
3. The Interview Schedule;
4. The Achievement Test in English; and
5. The Achievement Test in Mathematics.

After the statistical treatment of the obtained data and the following results / findings have been emerged:

1. The schooling facilities provided by the Government authorities in Srinagar District are almost adequate for slum children. However, their utilization by slum area children is very much below than the non-slum area children.

2. Although for the great mass of slum area children in Srinagar District, sufficient educational facilities are existing yet the quality of these facilities is very much inferior to those being enjoyed by the non-slum area children. In the matter of school resources i.e. material, physical and human, the slum area schools are not at par with the non-slum area schools. There is much discrepancy between slum and non-slum schools in important school – inputs like the school buildings and equipment, the teacher, the curriculum and the pupils.

3. The physical and material resources of the school are much inferior and inadequate - the curriculum is quite inappropriate for the slum area children’s needs and level of ability, the teachers are less qualified, less interested and less favourably inclined towards their students, and the pupils have not favourable conditions and facilities for studies at home, less parental help and support, less interest and developed ability for studies, and much lower educational aspirations.
4. The differences in school and family - inputs are reflected in the outcomes of education both academic and non-academic. The academic achievement of slum area children is much lower than that of non-slum area children. Educational Opportunity, as judged from educational outcomes, has not been as effective in the case of slum area children as in that of non-slum area children.

5. Thus although apparently the slum area children have free access to Government Schools in Srinagar District and sufficient educational facilities are available to them, educational opportunities for them is far from equal as is evident from highly inequal school and family inputs, unequal academic and non-academic outcomes of learning and a much lower utilization of educational facilities by them. Naturally, much will have to be done at the school, societal and family levels before a reasonable measure of equality can be achieved in the criteria of equality of educational opportunity.

6. The country is committed to ensure equality of opportunity of every kind and in particular, to ensure equality of educational opportunities to the weaker sections of people which include the urban slum-dwellers who are the poor, the lowest and the most vulnerable sections of people in the city and town.