CHAPTER I
(INTRODUCTION)
Education of the masses rather than of a small privileged group is one of the most crucial concerns of democratic, socialistic countries. It is so because of the indispensable nature of education in modern society which is increasingly becoming more scientific and technological. Education through which the standard of living of the people, their prosperity and security can be considerably improved is regarded as a very potent instrument of rapid and effective development of a nation. It furnishes the individual with basic knowledge and technical skills essential for work, productivity and economical survival. It serves as the base for the exercise of all rights and privileges of a citizen as also an absolutely essential precondition for the effective discharge of his duties. As such, it is the very foundation of a democracy. Further, education opens up to the individual the central experiences of a culture. Thus, personal growth, economic advancement and social effectiveness all are appreciably enhanced by education which is indispensable for success in a competitive society. It would not be an exaggeration to say that education has become a sine-qua-non of useful existence in modern technical and democratic societies. Rather, it has become the life-line of both the individual and the society.

India as a democratic, socialist republic is wedded to the ideal of equal opportunity of every kind, and particularly equal educational opportunity for all. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution has enjoined upon the state to provide universal primary education to all children in the age group of 6-14. Article 46 has further directed the state to protect with special care the economic and educational interests of the weaker sections of people. The slum dwellers are the poorest, the most miserable and hence the most highly vulnerable sections of community
in urban areas. The most common denominators of the heterogeneous mass of slum dwellers are sub-standard housing and poverty with their concomitant social, cultural and psychological consequences. Apart from other differences from the dominant group, they have differences, in life-styles, values, child-rearing practices, skills for urban living and educational attainment.

From the point of view of education, the population which sends the lowest number of children to school and whose children exhibit the most severe academic retardation, the highest rate of failures, grade repetition and dropout, and the thinnest transition to upper levels of education. Schools in or near the slums are usually described as having low caste, lower class and retarded children who lack the basic necessities of life, overcrowded, dilapidated or poorly maintained buildings, inadequacy of essential school facilities.

Deficient home environment seems to be the principal reason for under-developed intelligence and low academic achievement of slum area children among whom the range of intellectual potential should be as normal as among other children. Intelligence grows out of experience with objects and people, but lower class homes fail to provide a variety of objects, play things and stimuli to the child sense of sight, hearing, touch, feeling and so on (Hunt, 1961 & 1964)\(^1\). This environmental deprivation in the lower class home results into a depression of cognitive development in the child (Deutsch, 1965)\(^2\). (Bloom, 1965)\(^3\), has shown that more than half the differences in performance on conventional intelligence tests found at the end of high school could be accounted for by differences at the age of 6 i.e. at the beginning of regular schooling. In other words, these differences are there when children first enter the school, and what is more, they go on increasing progressively with the passage of time eventually causing a "cumulative

\(^1\) See the list appended to the chapter at this number for full reference
deficit”. Other scholars like (Basil Bernstein, 1961)⁴ hold that the lower class children’s difficulties in the school stem chiefly from their poor language development due to insufficient and defective verbal communication in the home where parents are uneducated and have little time or ability to develop the necessary language skills among their children through conversation, answering of questions and explanation of various phenomena. When new concepts and transactional terms are to be acquired verbally i.e. by definition and context from speech and reading rather than by abstraction from direct and concrete experience. The lower class child, would suffer from the paucity of abstractions in the every day vocabulary of his elders, from the rarity of stimulating conversation in the home, from the relative absence of books, magazines and newspapers and from the each of example of a reading adult in the family (Ausubel, 1964)⁵.

(Wolf, 1964)⁶ in his study of the effect of parent-child interaction on intellectual development has shown how a home environment rich in the press for language development, the press for achievement motivation and the provision for general learning is able to boost-up cognitive development. The lower class home, however, conspicuously lacks such an environment with obvious results (Rath, 1976)⁷. Still others influenced by David Mc Clelland’s and work on achievement motivation ascribe the scholastic failure of the lower class child to the failure of the lower class culture to develop the complex of attitude which are indispensable for academic achievement attitudes emphasizing a “future orientation”, individual rather than collective mobility personal achievement and a sense of control over one’s destiny. Further, a low self-concept and low educational and occupational aspirations have been cited as one of the major characteristics of the disadvantaged children, (Rath, 1976)⁸. A poor self-image is surely the result of a life of impoverishment, neglect and insignificancies, but gets reinforced in the school by academic failure and retardation. Numerous.
studies have found high relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. The low-self image of the slum area child leads to inferior academic achievement, and low performance in turn reinforces a negative evaluation of the self. Moreover, much of what goes on in the classroom is not continuous with the home experiences, values and orientations of the slum area child. So it further reinforces his feeling of inferiority, depresses his aspirations and dampens his already scanty motivation for achievement.

It may thus be seen that the lower class children lack the necessary cognitive, linguistic and attitudinal preparation for school. Their early experiences in the home, their motivation for present learning and their goals for the future are such as to handicap them in school. Slum living and social isolation further enhances these problems (*Bloom, 1965*). Equality of opportunity has, indeed, provided the goal, slogan and ideology in terms of which educational reform has most commonly been espoused and evaluated over the last century.

The concept of equal opportunity implies equal access to the channels of mobility. In modern society education is one of the necessary channels for achieving bureaucratic position and membership of the professions. While there is no assurance that with education one can always move to higher positions, it is generally unlikely that one can do so without education.

Education can play a role in equalizing opportunities in three important ways:

i) By making it possible for all those who have the ability and the desire to be educated to benefit by that facility;

ii) By developing a content of education which will promote the development of a scientific and objective outlook; and
iii) By creating a social environment in class and non-class activities and in residential halls which will be conducive to development of inter-caste, inter-lingual and inter-religious fellowship. An atmosphere of mutual intolerance whether based on religious or language preference cannot facilitate equalization of opportunity.

In so far as a modern society accepts the legitimacy of providing equality of opportunity to all its younger members, it must seek to provide equal opportunity to them to secure the best education that they would wish to and are capable of. Of course, education is not the only channel to mobility and provision of educational facility does not equalize all opportunities. Parental income, parental education, class and cultural background are important variants which influence opportunities. But since most societies including the communist ones accept the utility of the kin-group and seek to bolster it through appropriate marriage and property regulations, and since most societies, again including the communist ones, also accept the legitimacy of unequal rewards for different jobs, there is really no way in which a society can effectively and completely prevent inequality of opportunity insofar as such inequality arises from the differential economic and cultural backgrounds of individuals. Moreover, not all variations in cultural background are necessarily handicaps. In a very important sense these variations may turn out to be a source of strength for society.

The effort of a society which seeks to equalize opportunity, therefore, largely takes the form of providing services which compensate for the inequality in economic background through socialized community services and through provision of educational facilities. There are, of course, obvious difficulties in the way of providing such services and facilities adequately and universally. Not even the most developed countries would have the resources to provide free education to all those desirous of benefiting by it except at the
primary and secondary stage. And developing countries are often unable to provide it even at the primary level.

Since education cannot be provided free for all at all levels and since developing countries are often not able to provide it free even at the primary or secondary level, an effort is made to provide it free at least to those who are needy. Often the resources available are inadequate even to cover all those who would come under the term 'needy' and a further restriction has to be imposed by limiting free education facilities only to those who are 'needy and meritorious'. This already gives rise to one type of inequality in opportunities. While the children of the needy can have education only if they are meritorious, the children of the well-to-do can go to schools so long as they can pay for it.

Moreover, so long as privately financed schools are allowed to exist simultaneously with the publicly financed schools, it is difficult to achieve comparable quality in both the types of schools. The private schools which are attended by children of the well-to-do offer better remuneration to their teachers, have smaller number of students in each class, provide better equipment and facilities. The publicly financed schools have to compete for funds with other activities of the state and the priority given to education is often not as high as the priority given to irrigation, industry, roads, etc. The publicly financed schools, therefore, often compare unfavourably with the privately financed schools which cater to the upper income groups in society. This again gives rise to inequality in education.

This need not necessarily be interpreted as a plea for the abolition of privately financed schools. It is a most point whether the equality of disadvantage that will follow from such a policy will turn out to be of advantage to the society as a whole. Also, it is possible to argue that the
The total number of children will go to 'private' (i.e. recognized but not aided) schools in the country as a whole is so small that their existence need not be taken serious note of in the framing of educational policy. Further, Government has tried to make better opportunities of some of the exclusive schools available to the children of the lower income groups by providing for a certain number of competitive scholarships where the competition is limited to children of backward classes and low income groups. These scholarships pay for the entire cost of education of the scholar in a given institution. The problem of unequal access to the general system of education is, however, a more serious one and needs further study.

The effort to achieve equality of opportunity is a part of the broader quest for human equality. In modern societies which depend heavily upon new knowledge and techniques and wherein more and more occupations are becoming professionalized, education is one of the main ways of promoting equality in life opportunities. However, provision of equal access to educational opportunities is in itself not as easy as it seems and even where such equal access is provided it does not by itself lead to an equalization of educational opportunity. Much conscious effort is needed to make this constitutional goal of equal opportunity effective in practice.

It is possible to conceive of educational opportunity in two different contexts-individual and societal i.e. larger groups. In both these contexts, equality can be interpreted in a narrow perspective as 'equality within educational institutions' and in a broader perspective where equality is extended to post-school performance in terms of occupations or life-time incomes. The present study is concerned with equality in the first perspective only i.e. equality of educational opportunities within educational institutions and equality within educational institutions in the context of the individual and the society is discussed below.
From the individual point of view, (Husen 1972)\textsuperscript{10} has conceived of equality of educational opportunities as:

a) a starting point;
b) a treatment; and
c) a goal; or as a combination of all the three.

We can think of equality as a starting point when all individuals start their formal school career on an equal footing i.e. nobody is denied admission to an educational institution maintained or aided by the state. However, children at the start of their educational career are different both genetically and in their living conditions. Also they get different treatments from their parents whose genetic equipments are different. Secondly, equality can be thought of as applied to treatment, irrespective of a person’s genetic equipment and social origin. Equality before law, a minimum income or subsistence allowance, a unitary system of preschool or primary education are such instances of equal treatment.

However, such a system has not necessarily led to a complete or even increased equalisation among adults. Even in a communist country like the U.S.S.R., a majority of students at the institutions of higher learning in Moscow came from higher families of bureaucrats or professionals, as well disclosed by Premier Khruschev while introducing the Education Act of 1958 to the Supreme Soviet (Conant, 1959)\textsuperscript{11}. Similarly, in many countries including India, free elementary education coupled with many facilities, ancillary services and different kinds of student support has by no means levelled out the differences in educational participation between the working class and the middle class (CERI, 1971)\textsuperscript{12}.

Finally, educational opportunity can be regarded as a goal or a set of guide-posts in the sense the framing and implementation of educational policy showed introduce means that will contribute to an
increased equalisation, in terms of educational outcomes, economic status, participation in decision-making processes and so on. Of all the three, equality as a goal is considered to be most essential by Coleman, (Coleman 1966)\textsuperscript{13} has raised the question whether equality means equal schools i.e. equal treatment of equal students. "What matters ultimately to the student is not how equal his school is, but rather whether he is equipped at the end of the school to compete on an equal footing with others whatever his social origins. Schools are successful in so far as they reduce the dependence of a child's opportunities upon his social origins. Thus equality of educational opportunities implies not merely 'equal' schools but equally effective schools, whose influences will overcome the differences in the starting point of children from different social groups." (Coleman, et. al., 1966)\textsuperscript{14}. It, therefore, follows that from the point of view of the individuals, equality should be pursued from all three angles i.e. as a starting point, as a treatment and as a goal to which approximations should be continuously be made.

From the social point of view, equality of educational opportunity means that a representative individual of any racial or regional group has the same probability of succeeding as a representative individual of any other racial or regional group. To arrive at this conclusion, the concept of equal educational opportunity has passed through at least four sages viz Equal access, Equal inputs, Equal outcomes and simultaneous social action.

According to the equal access conception, everyone irrespective of his sex, colour, race, religion, caste, place of residence or social origins is to have equal access to education as education is the right of all. Further, the responsibility of educating the people is that of the state which owes it equal to all its members. Efforts are to be made to reduce group disparities in enrolment ratios or transition coefficient at different levels of education for social groups defined with respect to age, sex,
religion, caste, social class, etc. In practice, equal access implies provision of universal, free and compulsory education up to a given level elementary or high school which provides the principal entry point into the labour force. Secondary and higher education are also to be made freely available. At the secondary stage, differential curricula are to be provided for pupils of different abilities and aptitudes. In the institutes of higher learning, all those who have the ability should have access irrespective of social or economic position, or place of residence. Stipends, scholarship and hostel facilities should be provided for all such students. The basic assumption underlying this approach as (Husen 1972)\textsuperscript{15} observes is that ability in large part is inherited and the greatest obstacle to equality of educational opportunity is material poverty which is to be overcome by giving support to the poor but able. Everybody, via his education, should be given the social status to which he is entitled by his inherited aptitudes (talent). Many structural school reforms in Europe during the 20\textsuperscript{th} century have been partly guided by this philosophy. By extending education to more advanced levels, by making the compulsory part of it less differentiated and more single tracked and by making it available to children for all walks of life, it was believed that one could remove handicaps that are inherent in being born poor and giving somewhere for from school. Only one should have the requisite ability as testified by intelligence test scores, achievement test scores, examination grades or any other objective indicator of accomplishment to pass a course of studies or to get selected to one where the number of seats are limited. This replacement of the criteria of birth, wealth and connections by the criterion of tested ability was considered to be a big advance towards the democratisation of education. The ideology of merit is historically democratic in the sense that the rights of merit are set against privileges from birth and fortune. But its effect is to give those on the right side a good conscience while concealing the other side of the problem. This observation by the authors of ‘Learning to Be’ report of the International Commission on
Education (UNESCO 1973), is only one of several criticisms of guaranteeing formal access to education, while learning out all other social conditions unequal. Others are no less severe and strike at the very root of the educational system which is branded as hierarchical, inegalitarian and self-perpetuating in nature.

The operational meeting of equal education opportunities is that all schools whether in slums or suburbs, in rural or urban areas, should have equal per pupil expenditure. Teacher quality, library facilities, school buildings, playgrounds and other physical facilities should be the same in schools attended by different groups. The basic assumption underlying this concept of equal educational opportunity is that the quality of education depends on the amount of money spend and that quality of guaranteed if per pupil expenditure is the same. This conception of equal educational opportunity is very relevant for most countries where it is common experience to find schools for the poor having substandard buildings, poor equipment and most inadequate facilities. In its report entitled ‘Learning to Be’ (UNESCO 1973), the International Commission on Education has rightly remarked. Education systems are not able to eliminate the facts of on inequality, but at least, they should not make them worse. Whatever power education has or has not to alleviate in its own domain inequalities among individuals and groups, a resolute social policy to correct unfair distribution of educational resources and effort is the obvious precondition for any progress in this respect.

However, pupil achievement is not entirely a function of school inputs as measured by certain tangible characteristics of schools. More would depend on how and in what way the school inputs are put to use. Moreover, Coleman has shown in the equal educational opportunities survey that certain intangible characteristics of fellow students and certain teacher attributes are more important and account more for
school differences in achievement. Again, it is not sufficient to know the school inputs only but also what the child brings to the school in terms of his attitudes and interests. In analysing the factors that aid the achievement of equality, the combined effect of both physical and psychological condition at home and in the school should be considered, \( (\text{Husen 1972})^{18} \). Equalising school facilities without a corresponding and equalization of family circumstances community settings would not bring about equality to an appreciable extent.

The first two conceptions of equal educational opportunities have their focus on the equalization of educational inputs i.e. the means of education. The third conception of equal educational opportunity is concerned with the end-product of education, i.e. educational development, equality in which should be the chief criterion of judging the effectiveness of schools with equal inputs. While equality at the input side can be waived by providing extra resources to the educationally deprived, we must insist on equal outcomes for different social groups at the end of a school stage. Thus equal educational opportunities implies no merely equal schools, but equally effective schools whose influences will overcome the differences in the starting point of children from different social groups \( (\text{Coleman, et. al., 1966})^{19} \). In fact, the ends of social justice may demand unequal treatment in favour of socially disadvantaged groups so that equality of results can be ensured.

This has been the philosophy behind the British Plowdon Communities recommendation to designate those schools in England as ‘Educational Priority Areas’ which are attended largely by educationally deprived children and to give extra help to them in terms of better-paid and more experienced teachers, a lower pupil-teacher ratio, more specialist help, better nutrition and health services, better equipment and instructional materials, and so on. The principle already accepted that
special need calls for special help should be given as a new cutting edge. We ask for 'positive discrimination' in favour of such schools and the children in them, going well beyond an attempt to 'equalise resources'. Schools in deprived areas should be given priority in many respects. The justification is that the homes and neighbourhoods from which many of their children come provide little support and stimulus for learning. The schools must supply a compensating environment (Central Advisory Council for Education in England, 1969)\textsuperscript{20}.

The same philosophy lies behind the Head Start, Higher Horizons and scores of other compensatory programmes in the U.S.A. which were instituted to bring the educational standards of socially disadvantaged children at par with those of their more fortunate counterparts. The contention was that the school should not only capitalize on the already developed intelligence of middle class children, but should also help to raise the intellectual capacities of disadvantaged groups which have not reached their ceiling level but remained subdued due to an unfavourable and hostile home environment.

The above concept of equal educational opportunity is based on the assumption that mental ability is in large measure acquired and can be increased by the provision of a proper environment. It has radical implications for schools and the teaching process. The responsibility for scholastic success or failure is not that of the individual, it has rather to be shifted to the school, particularly the way instruction is organised. Whether one follows personalised pedagogy or principles of mastery learning as set forth by Bloom to optimise learning (Block 1971)\textsuperscript{21}, scholastic achievements at the end of a particular stage of schooling must be equal in case of different social groups.

Equal educational opportunities, therefore, does not imply identity of treatment or of educational opportunity. It means that every child should be given optimum opportunity to develop the personal
aspects as they are at the time educational treatment in a public school beings. One should provide “equal opportunity for unequal treatment” so far as socially relevant differences are concerned so that towards the end, educational outcomes are the same for every social group.

(Bloom 1964) has shown that more than half the differences in the intelligence test scores found at the end of high school can be accounted for by differences ascertained at the age of six i.e. at the beginning of regular schooling. Thus most of the differences were already there when children entered elementary school. Hence the need for equalising opportunity both at the pre-school and elementary school levels by providing compensatory and environment programmes. The elementary school as it is, cannot be a prime equaliser by itself.

Moreover, it is not enough to equalise the school environments, the home environments of the children need drastic improvements including those in their parent’s education, income, and employment opportunities. In order to achieve the long-term objective of greater equality in occupational careers and the standard of living, action must be taken in the wider context of the society in which the school functions. Educational reform is no substitute for social reform. A substantial part of the difference in children’s intelligence takes place before the child enters the elementary school.

Both the family and the poor group exercise a strong influence on the development of a child’s intelligence. Educational systems tilt the scales in favour of children whose parents are educated and thus have a good socio-economic background. This disparity found in the school achievement of children from different classes of people is largely determined by highly complex socio-economic-psychological processes and not so much by educational policies. Universal enrolment quotas, expansion of ancillary services and measures student support are more
palliatives unless backed by a determined policy of cultural promotion based on economic and social democracy (UNESCO, 1973)\textsuperscript{23}.

**NEED FOR THE STUDY:**

In educational opportunity report entitled ‘Educational and National Development’ the Education Commission, (1964-66)\textsuperscript{24}, has beautifully summed up the crucial role of education in national life in the very first paragraph.

“The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms. This we believe is no more rhetoric. In a world based on science and technology, it is education that determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people. On the quality and number of persons coming out of our schools and colleges will depend our success in the great enterprise of national reconstruction, the principal objective of which is to raise the standard of living of our people.”

This realisation of the central importance of education for the ultimate well being of the country is not unique to India alone. The concern for and preoccupation with educational development as a powerful instrument of rapid and effective national development is quite widespread and is shared by both developed and developing, socialist and communist, parliamentary and dictatorial countries. It is very much in keeping with the spirit of the U.N. Charter on Human Rights in which it is emphatically said.

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory (Article 26, 11).”

Accordingly, several newly emerging and developing countries have adopted policies and programmes for providing universal primary education of seven or eight years duration. Consequently, there has been
a phenomenal increase in the rate of enrolment, number of schools and number of school teachers in these countries (Shibiny 1971). In developed countries, already education has become indispensable due to the use of science and technology in each and every walk of life. Education is a major determinant of an individual's chances for economic and social success in a competitive society. It has a unique influence on a child's development as a citizen and his participation in social and political life.

According to (Priest 1971), education is perhaps the most important function of state and local Governments in the U.S.A. today. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education in that country reflected singular importance of education to a democratic society. Education is required in the performance of one's most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. It is the principal instrument for awakening the child to cultural values, for preparing him for later professional training, and for helping him to adjust normally to his environment. Any child these days cannot be reasonably expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms. Priest further, feels that society has a compelling interest in affording children an opportunity to attend school. Public interest lies in conserving and developing the resources of young minds. Schools are doorways opening into chambers of science, art and learned professions. Opportunities for securing employment are more or less dependent on one's success in school work. These are rights and privileges which cannot be denied.

Education has thus become the sine qua non of useful existence in the modern technological society. Its pivotal position to success in society and its essential role in opening up to the individual the central
experience of culture lend it an importance that is undeniable. Thus education is the life-time of both the individual and the society.

After its emergence as a free, democratic, socialistic republic some fifty years ago, India was faced with very serious problems and challenges arising out of the colossal poverty, pervasive ignorance and miserable living conditions of its masses. Added to these were the urgent tasks of consolidating a young and tender democracy surrounded by a Welter of sinister and threatening forces endangering its very existence. The Education Commission (1964-66)\(^2\)\(^7\), therefore, regarded education as the one and only instrument of national development which could reach all people. It was the tool for the realisation of national aspirations and for meeting national challenges. Educational opportunity on a wide scale, the commission felt, was urgently needed to accomplish the following broad purposes:

i) To develop knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for gainful employment in tasks of economic development.

ii) To raise the low standard of living of the Indian people by increasing productivity.

iii) To meet the challenges posed by the second industrial revolution of automation and cybernetics.

iv) To strengthen the foundations of the Indian democracy by creating an education electorate and a dedicated leadership.

v) To alter the present hierarchical, stratified and inegalitarian society.

vi) To achieve social and national integration by fostering a feeling of oneness among all religions, cultures and regions.

vii) To provide fullest opportunities to the individual to develop himself as an end, and not as a mere means of social development.
Keeping in full view the key importance of education for the tasks of national reconstruction and strengthening of democracy, the makers of the Indian Constitution had earlier enshrined educational provisions in the Constitution, itself. Thus Article 45 of the Indian Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to provide within ten years of the commencement of the constitution free and compulsory education for all children until they attain the age of fourteen years. Accordingly in the post-independence era, the country has made giant strides in the provision of educational facilities at all levels, especially the primary level.

Simply stated, educational opportunity means provision of adequate educational facilities in schools and colleges and supply of those goods and services which will enable students to attend educational institutions. Since the resources of the country are at best limited, educational opportunity, too, cannot be available to all especially at higher stages. In these circumstances, educational opportunity should not be constructed to mean extended provision for all, but only equal access or equal chances to avail it after satisfying some criterion of ability or social justice or both. Besides, equal access, equality should also extend to the share of resources, facilities or services offered to different groups of children and the treatment meted out to them. Again, educational opportunity should not only be adequate and equal, but also of a good quality so that it can fulfil the basic purposes underlying its provision. Thus to be effective, educational opportunity should fulfil three minimum conditions viz adequacy, equal accessibility and treatment and quality. According to (Naik 1975)\textsuperscript{28}, the educational system in India has been geared right from the beginning to the pursuit of these three major goals of quantity, equality and quality. However, it is extremely difficult to keep a balance between the conflicting demands of all the three. Whereas, an extension of the limited educational resources to all or a much higher number may lead
to a dilution of resources, the achievement of uniform educational standards may result into inappropriate standards for the talented and the retarded. Again, while the pursuit of quality has usually resulted in its being linked with privilege, the ideal of equality has been greatly hampered by the very inequalities in society which it is designed to remove. In this way, the pursuit of quality may lead to a sub-standard education both in its tangible and semi-tangible aspects, the pursuit aspects, the pursuit of quantity in the absence of adequate resources may lead to good schools only for the privileged, and the socio-economic inequalities in the larger society may frustrate all attempts at achieving equality within educational institutions.

The Indian Republic is basically committed to the principles of democracy, social justice and secularism. Equality in one of the cornerstones of its edifice. The preamble to the Indian Constitution speaks of our solemn resolution to secure social, economic and political justice and equal opportunity and states for all the citizens. Accordingly, all adults have been given the right to franchise. The Constitution has made equality before law (Article 14), equality of opportunity in matters of public employment (Article 16), abolition of untouchability (Article 17), prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15), and prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour (Article 23), as 'Fundamental Rights'. The Directive Principles of State Policy further recognise the rights to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of under served social want (Article 47), promise improvement in levels of nutrition, public health and standards of living (Article 47), and direct the state and secure just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Article 42), to guarantee a living wage, full employment and social and cultural opportunities to all workers (Article 43), and to promote the welfare of the people. With regard to education, (Article 45), of the Directive Principles of state policy has enjoined upon the state the duty of
providing universal, free and compulsory primary education of 8 years duration within a period of 10 years ending in 1960. Other constitutional provisions with regard to education are: No individual shall be denied admission to any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or place of birth (Article 29). The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of people and in particular, of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all form of exploitation (Article 46). Lastly, (Article 15 & 16), have been amended to lay down that nothing in these articles shall prevent the state from making any special provisions to the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizen or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Article 15, IV; Article 16, IV).

In keeping with the above provisions of the constitution, there has been a fantastic proliferation educational institutions in the country at all levels. A study of the country’s Five Year Plans and the progress reports of the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India will show that the National Government has not only recognised everybody’s right of free access to education and made adequate provision accordingly, but has also attached great importance to the provision of ancillary services and student support measures like school’s meals, free supply of text books and stationery, provision of school uniforms, institution of stipends and scholarships and provision of hostel facilities at secondary and college stages in order to neutralise the effects or poverty. Besides, it has given special facilities and concession on order to speed education among the educationally backward classes like the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and women. Education has been made free at the primary stage throughout the country and at the secondary and university stages in a few states. For Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes at higher levels, many scholarships are being given. Merit
scholarships are also being given to talented but needy students and special arrangements are being made for their study in selected public schools.

(Naik 1975)\(^2\) observes that despite this conscious and vigorous effort at equalising educational opportunities in the country, the overall picture remains unfortunately that of pervasive inequality. Either poverty, lack of educational background, and a different life style have prevented the poorer and backward classes from taking full benefit of free education facilities at all levels. The principal indices of inequality viz: the uneven enrolment rates for deprived social groups and classes, their low transition ratios at different stages of education, their high attrition or wastage and stagnation rate, their low levels of educational attainment (i.e. number of years of schooling) and academic achievement all go to depict the sorry state of affairs in this regard.

The present study is necessary for a number of important reasons. As already stated, India as a democratic, socialistic republic is wedded to the principle of equal opportunities in all fields including education. Equal educational opportunities are considered to be the basic instrument to ensure opportunity of every other kind. The country is committed to providing universal primary education to all children in the age group of 6-14 and to protecting with special care the educational and other interests of the weaker sections of people. 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 is an attempt to see how far the Srinagar District of Jammu & Kashmir State has progressed in making adequate and suitable provision for these children and to what extent it has ensured equal educational opportunity to all.
Secondly, 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.

Thirdly, although the slum area 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 disadvantage 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.

Fourthly, a study of the problems in the way of full and equal educational opportunities 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 realisation of equal educational opportunities in all these cities. Moreover, Srinagar as the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir State should set an example in the provision of equal educational opportunities which would be worthy of emulation by all their Districts of Jammu & Kashmir State.

Fifthly, a real understanding of the educational malaise in slum areas and a deep insight into its genesis, is virtually non-existent. By focussing on the entire spectrum of educational opportunities in the slums with comparable equal access, equal inputs and equal outcomes,
the study would furnish very useful knowledge for making policy decisions and formulating special programmes for the universalisation and equalisation of educational opportunities at the primary stage.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

The problem under investigation reads as under:

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

**OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS:**

**Educational Opportunity:**

The concept of educational opportunity for this study refers to equal access, equal facilities, equal utilisation and equal outcomes of education both cognitive and non-cognitive.

**SLUM:**

The slum areas for this study refer to the norms fixed by Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs under Census Circular No. 9 (formation and identification of slum enumeration – blocks for slum demography) which reads as under:

A compact area of at least 300 population or about 60-70 households of poorly built congested tenements in un-hygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary drinking water facilities.

For this study slum and non-slum areas of the Srinagar District identified by the Srinagar Municipal Committee (SMC) has been taken for this study.

**DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:**

The present study has been delimited to the Srinagar District of the Kashmir Valley.
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