CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE PROBLEM

Social inequality is a universal phenomenon found in all societies from the simplest to the most complex. Although the inequalities vary considerably in form, nature and extent and function from one society to another. Social inequality refers to the unequal pattern of distribution of something such as wealth, income, occupation and education. It is an objective, descriptive and measurable concept. Inequalities when ranked lead to formation of social strata arranged hierarchically.

All societies arrange their members in terms of superiority, inferiority and equality. The vertical scale of evaluation, which is placing of people in strata or layers, is called stratification. Those in the top stratum have more power, privilege and prestige than those below. Some individuals and groups are rated higher than others on the basis of opportunities and privileges that they enjoy. Indian society has traditionally been stratified on the basis of the purity pollution dimension and as such the traditional Hindu society is divided into four major divisions or varnas of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras with the extent of prestige and social status ranking in that order. Each varna is composed of a large number of jatis or caste groups based on traditional occupations. The castes within each Varna are also arranged hierarchically.

As said earlier a person’s or group’s position in the hierarchy of the strata determines his/her life chances including access to education, a certain type of occupation, and a certain income has been a function of caste in the traditional Indian social structure. There is fifth group, ‘the outcaste’, whose members were known as untouchables.

Each caste is subdivided into jatis or subcastes, which in total number many thousands. Jatis are occupational groups – there are carpenter jatis, goldsmith jatis, potter jatis, and so on. Castes are ranked in terms of ritual purity. The Brahmins or priests, members of the highest caste, personify purity, sanctity and holiness. They are the source of learning, wisdom and truth. Only they can perform the most important religious ceremonies. At the other extreme, untouchables are defined as unclean, base and impure, a status which affects all their social relationships. They must perform
unclean and degrading tasks such as the disposal of dead animals. They must be segregated from members of the caste system and live on the outskirts of villages or in their own communities in the middle of paddy fields.

In modern India, based on the complex inequalities of the caste system, the society is divided into three major social categories for the distribution of educational and social opportunities. These are ‘Scheduled Castes’ (SC’s) comprising all the erstwhile untouchable castes, Other Backward Classes’ (OBC’s) comprising mainly of the ‘touchable sudras’ of Hindu varna system and other socially and economically backward sections among other religious communities, and General Category comprising upper caste Hindus and members of other religious communities other than those considered backward classes. As the Tribal population were not a part of the varna system or the organised religions, all the tribal groups, considered to most backward have group together as one category and listed in the Constitution of India as Scheduled Tribes. For the weaker sections comprising SC’s, ST’s and OBC’s, special provisions, discussed below in this chapter, have been made for their advancement.

Members of a particular stratum have a common identity, like interests and a similar life style. It is possible for social inequality to exist without social stratification.

Inequality in the educational attainments of different groups and regions have been both the cause and the effect of the differentials between their levels of socio-economic development – causality in this case being essentially bi-directional. A proper strategy of human resource development, therefore, called for optimal development as well as full utilisation of capabilities of diverse kinds in all segments of the population. Education was rightly considered to be the crucially important instrument for human resource development along proper lines as well as for the full unfolding of the entire spectrum of human creativity in this vast and ancient land. It had been mistakenly expected in this context that the phenomenal growth in educational facilities since independence would have also led to the levelling up of inequalities in the development of human resource as well. These hopes were, however, based on the native assumption that the social surface of the highly stratified Indian society was even. The reality was otherwise. Contours of the surface showed high anticlines and low synclines. The advancing caravan of Indian Higher education has not been able so far to take care of this marked unevenness to a satisfactory
degree. The expansion of educational facilities has not been, therefore, necessarily accompanied by equalisation of opportunities for either diverse regions of the country or different sections of its people. There are ‘miles to go’ and many a ‘promise to keep’.

The experience of many developing countries has shown that the upper echelons of society tend to corner the lion’s share of the expansion in opportunities as well as spatial diffusion of educational facilities; and, unless deliberate policy interventions in favour of the deprived are resorted to, inter-group and inter-regional disparities tend to get accentuated at least in the first phase of the development process. The Biblical principle tends to be reinvented; and those who have, more is given to them. Expansion without adequate concern for equity has, in most cases, led to the accentuation of the structural disequilibrium. The vicious circle continues to grow at the very vitals of the social organism. The poor do not avail of educational opportunities because they are poor, they continue to remain poor because they are uneducated. The social fervent, which recently rocked the university system to its very foundations in the wake of the acceptance of some recommendation of the Mandal Commission, is a tragic example of the volcanic eruption of smouldering of social discontent chummed by the vicious circle outlined above.

During the medieval times Muslims brought with them the concept of an egalitarian society, as they believe that all human beings are children of God and as such equal. Although the two communities, Hindus and Muslims have been living together for several centuries and exchanging culture and traditions and also adding through this to the already rich cultural heritage of Nation, there has been no significant dent in the system of caste stratification.

Whatever educational development has taken place among the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes, it has remained uneven, several studies have been very unevenly utilised. The spread of education among SC’s and ST’s has remained uneven. Only a few among them have been able to take greater advantage, whereas many of them have not been able to do so. The same situation has arisen between the scheduled groups and the non-scheduled groups with the help of reserved seats in educational institutions and various types of educational assistance, the scheduled groups move forward. But, starting from lower primary level to higher education, though the
number of their students is increasing year by year, they always lay behind the non-scheduled groups.

Although all these historical events and processes brought about a change in the attitudes of Indian people and as a result the values of secularism, democracy, humanism and equality of opportunity have become popular. Despite this, the traditional caste structure of the Hindus has remained the dominant structure and the membership of caste has been determining factor in a person's life chances even in the secular spheres of activity. In fact what has happened is that Indian society is not stratified only in terms of the caste and varna but also in terms of the economic classes. The Indian polity today is also divided into various religious communities and linguistic groups with unequal access to goods and services and the wealth available to the nation.

Our Constitution guarantees/stipulates justice and equality of opportunity to all its citizens. It also recognises that equal opportunity implies competition between equals, and not 'unequal's. Recognising the inequality in our social structure, the makers of the Constitution argued that weaker sections have to be dealt with on a preferential footing by the state. A special responsibility was, thus, placed upon the state to provide protective discrimination under various articles to accelerate the process of building an egalitarian social order. Thus preferential treatment for the depressed class (SCs and STs), including reservation of seats, should not be understood as an act of magnanimity on the part of the political elite at the national level but rather a strategy to give them a share in power in politics and administration and to uplift them socially and economically.

After the transfer of power, the nation adopted a Constitution on November 26, 1949 and enacted the same on January 26, 1950. The Preamble to this Constitution reflects the philosophy that would direct the system of governance in this country. It clearly specifies the goals that the nation would pursue in the course of her development.
This preamble reads as:

**We, The People of India, having solemnly resolved to Constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic and to secure to all its citizens:**

**Justice**, social, economic and political

**Liberty** of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship

**Equality** of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all;

**Fraternity**, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

In our Constituent Assembly this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.

To fulfil these goals, provisions were made to develop India into a vibrant modern democracy where there would be no exploitation and where equality, liberty and justice would be the guiding principles of all the developmental effort. With a view to fulfilling the envisaged goals the Constitution makes various provisions in the form of Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy. Having realised the significance of education in the process of even distribution of power- social, economic and political- special emphasis has placed on its expansion and distribution among the various regions and sections of society.

An important administrative issue dealt within the Constitution refers to the division of educational responsibility between the Government of India the Government of States. Under Article 246, the Schedule 7 lists the functions of the States and the Union. The division of functions between the union and the state governments with regard to education is as follows.

**LIST – I**

**LIST OF UNION FUNCTIONS**

**Entry 63.** The institutions known at the commencement of this Constitution as the Benaras Hindu University, the Aligarh Muslim University and the Delhi University, and any other institution of national importance.
Entry 64. Institutions for Scientific of Technical Education financed by the Government of India wholly or in part and declared by Parliament by law to be institutions of national importance.

Entry 65. Union agencies and institutions for,

a) professional, vocational or technical training, including the training of police officers; or

b) The promotion of special studies or research; or

c) Scientific or technical assistance in the investigation or detection of crime.

Entry 66. Co-ordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions.

LIST – II

LIST OF STATE FUNCTIONS

Entry 32. Education including Universities, subject to the provisions of entries 63, 64, 65 and 66 of List 1 and entry 25 of List III.

LIST –III

LIST OF CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS

Entry 25. Vocational and technical training of labour.

According to J.P.Naik and Syed Nurullah, in order to achieve national goals envisaged in the Preamble to the Constitution, the Nation decided to adopt the three major programmes (Naik and Nurullah 1971):

1. democracy as a way of life;

2. socialistic pattern of society; and

3. industrialization based upon modern science and technology.

In order to ensure the success of the three programmes (mentioned above) to achieve the national objectives envisaged in the Preamble to the Constitution, the founding fathers of the Constitution incorporated the following articles, with regard to education, as education was considered one of the essential inputs in the process of modernization of the Indian tradition and also as an instrument of social engineering.
The provisions of the following Articles of the Constitution provide direction to these programmes.

**Article 14:** guarantees to all, equality before law and equal protection of laws within the territory of India.

**Article 15:** prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth or any of them. Vide the 93rd Amendment 2005 this article was amended to provide reservation in admission for SC’s,ST’s and backward classes in private unaided educational institutions.

**Article 16:** provides for equality of opportunity in the matters of public employment.

**Article 17:** abolishes untouchability and declares its practice as a cognizable offense.

**Article 19:** guarantees freedom of speech, freedom to assemble peacefully without arms, to form associations or unions, to move through the territory of India, to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India, to practice any profession and to carry on any occupation or trade or business.

**Article 21:** guarantees that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

**Article 23:** prohibits traffic in human beings and forced labour.

**Article 24:** prohibits employing children below the age of 14 in any hazardous employment.

**Article 28:** guarantees freedom of religion, it directs that “no religious instructions shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of state funds”.

**Article 29:** guarantees that “any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof, having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same” and it further declares that “no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institutions maintained by the state or receiving aid out of the state funds, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them”.

**Article 30:** declares that “all minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice” and adds that “the state shall not discriminate in granting aid to educational institution on
the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.”

**Article 38:** The Constitution of India enjoins on the state “to strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life”.

**Article 41:** provides for right to work, right to education and right to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement etc.

**Article 46:** “The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation”.

Vide the 86th Constitutional (Amendment) Act 2002 Elementary Education has been made a fundamental Right under Article 21 A which reads:

**Article 21A:** Right to Education: “The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6-14 years in such manner as the State may determine by law”.

The said Amendment also substituted the content of the Article 45 which now reads as:

**Article 45:** Provision for Early Childhood Care and Education to all children below the age of six years: “the state shall endeavour to provide Early Childhood Care and Education for children until they complete the age of six years”.

To make the fundamental right to education under **Article 21A** effective under the same Amendment Act one more fundamental duty was added to the list of fundamental duties under Article 51 A (K) which reads as follows: “Who is a parent or a guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and 14 years”.

**Article 338:** National Commission for Scheduled Castes: “There shall be commission for the Scheduled Castes to be known as the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes with duties to investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes under the Constitution including the matters related
to individual cases. This commission also advises the Planning Commission, the Central and the State Governments on the protection, welfare, development and advancement of the Scheduled Castes”.

**Article 338A**: National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. There shall be a National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes known as the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes with duties to investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safe guards provided for the Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution including the matters related to individual cases. This commission also advises the Planning Commission, the State and the Central Governments on the protection welfare, development and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes.

**Article 339**: provides for the appointment of a commission on the administration of Scheduled Castes, and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes, before the end of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution”.

**Article 340**: further provides for the appointment of a commission to investigate into the conditions of the backward classes and report their findings to the President together with their recommendations if any”.

**Article 341** of Indian Constitution: declares that the President of India “may with respect to any State or Union Territory, where it is a state after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of, or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall for the purpose of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that state or Union Territory as the case may be.”

**Article 343**: declares that Hindi in Devnagri Script (with the international form of Indian numerals) would be the official language of the union. In order to make this transition gradual and acceptable to all shades of opinion, however, it was provided that English shall continue to be used, until 1965, for all official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before the commencement of the Constitution. Hindi is to be first used in addition to English and later on it will replace English gradually in accordance with such programme as the Parliament may decide.

**Article 350-A**: It endeavours “to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups”.

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**Article 350-B:** provides for the appointment of a special officer for linguistic minorities who shall be responsible to the President and who shall investigate into all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution.

(Note: Articles 14 to 35 are all Fundamental rights and Articles 36 to 51 are Directive Principles of State Policy.)

To give effect to the provisions of the Constitution listed above education was considered as a mechanism of social change. It is expected to provide training, besides providing training in the skills required for jobs in the modern industrial occupational structure, to bring about an attitudinal change by fostering the development of critical faculties. Having realized the significance of education in the socio-economic-cultural transformation of the Nation, the government of India, after independence constituted several committees and commissions to suggest measures to reform the educational system, so that it becomes an instrument of national development and therefore to make education accessible to all sections of the Indian society irrespective of differences in terms of religion, caste, language, gender, or class, so that every individual citizen has an equal opportunity for self-development in terms of physical, cultural & economic dimensions and also an equal opportunity to contribute his/her best to the overall development of the Nation as a whole. To fulfil the obligations of the state and to enable the citizens to exercise the various rights granted, the government of India constituted several committees and commissions to revamp education to make it relevant to people’s needs and to make it equally accessible to all. Notable among the commissions and committees for such educational reforms are:

1. University Education Commission, 1948-49
3. National Committee on Women’s Education, 1958-59 (Durgabai Deshmukh Committee)
4. Committee for Differentiation of Curricula for Boys and Girls, 1961 (Hansa Mehta Committee)
5. Committee to look into the Causes for lack of Public support particularly in Rural Areas for Girl’s education and to Enlist Public Co operation, 1963 (Bhaktavatsalam Committee)
6. The Indian Education Commission, 1964–66 (Kothari Commission)
7. Committee on the Status of Women, 1971-74
9. NPE Review Committee: Towards an Enlightened and Humane Society, 1990 (Acharya Ramamurthy Committee)

After independence (1948–49) the first action of a great significance to be taken by the Government of India in the field of education was the appointment of the University Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the report of the Commission is a document of great importance as it has guided the development of University Education in India since independence. The Commission was appointed by the Government of India to report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit present and future requirements of the country. Following are the major recommendation given by this commission,

1. **Aims of Education:**
   (i) To teach that life has a meaning.
   (ii) To awaken the innate ability to live the life of soul by developing wisdom.
   (iii) To acquaint with the social philosophy which should govern all our institutions, educational as well as economic and political.
   (iv) To train for democracy.
   (v) To train for self development.
   (vi) To develop certain values like fearlessness of mind, strength of conscience and integrity of purpose.
   (vii) To acquaint with cultural heritage for its regeneration.
   (viii) To enable to know that education is a lifelong process.
   (ix) To develop understanding of the present as well as of the past.
   (x) To impart vocational and professional training.
2. **Professional Education:**

(i) Agriculture: The study of agriculture in primary, secondary and higher education be given high priority in national economic planning. So far as is feasible, agricultural education be given a rural setting.

(ii) Commerce: A commerce student should be given opportunities for practical work in three or four different kinds of firms.

(iii) Education: The course be remodelled and more time given to school practice and more weight given to practice in assessing the students’ performances.

(iv) Engineering and Technology: The number of engineering schools of different grades be increased particularly for training of grades 4 and 5. In establishment new engineering colleges or institutes there should be fresh, critical inquiry as to the types of engineering service needed in India.

(v) Law: A three year degree course be offered in special legal subjects. Students pursuing degree courses in law shall not be permitted to carry other degree course simultaneously except in a few instances where advanced students have proved their interest and are studying related subjects in law and some other fields.

(vi) Medicine: The maximum number of admission to a medical college be 100, provided the staff and equipment for that number are available.

3. **Women’s Education:**

(i) Women students in general should be helped to see their normal place in a normal society, both as citizens and as women, and to prepare for it. College programmes should be so designed that it will be possible for them to do so.

(ii) Standards of courtesy and social responsibility should be emphasizes on the part of men in mixed colleges.

4. **Rural Universities:** Special attention be paid to the development of higher education in rural areas.

On attaining independence, the government of India, on the recommendations of Kher Committee decided not to wait for 40 years (a recommendation made by Sargent Committee) to complete the process of universal primary or elementary education in ten years as education was conceived as a mechanism of social engineering and because of this conception there was a demand for it from leaders in all walks of life and from all sections of the Indian society and polity. Thus the constituent Assembly
while adopting the Constitution accepted the provision of providing free and compulsory education to all children in the age group six to fourteen years in a period of ten years from the date of adoption of the Constitution. The Committee under the chairmanship of B.G. Kher examined the ways and means of raising the necessary funds required to meet the costs of this gigantic task. These ways included the recommendation of sharing the costs among local bodies, state governments and the central government. It also recommended encouragement of non-government voluntary effort in Education particularly at the elementary level.

Another Committee under the chairmanship of B.G Kher was appointed in 1951 to recommend the relationship between local bodies and the state governments in the control of administration of Primary education. The major recommendations of this Committee are: involvement of local bodies in running the Primary education. Depending upon the level of local bodies the powers could be devolved. For example, village education committees would involve in determining the school hours, duration and timing of vacation and raise some funds locally, the municipalities could have Primary education cells with power of supervision, raising of taxes for primary education. They could also have budgetary allocation for it. It also recommended the organization of District School Boards to oversee the funding of the primary schools. For allocation of funds the Committee felt that besides the state government, the union government should provide grants to states for primary education. The municipalities and village panchayats be empowered to levy educational cess. The most significant recommendation was that not less than sixty percent of the fund allocate for education should be spent on primary education. Even the private and voluntary effort should be encouraged by providing grants to privately managed primary schools.

The involvement of the people through local bodies would help organize the school activities in consonance with the local conditions and create a system of public accountability which would reduce non-enrolment, wastage and stagnation.

The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), popularly known as Mudaliar Commission which emphasized the importance of Secondary Education for national progress and recommended measures for its expansion and improvement of its quality.
Keeping in view, the needs of democratic India, as envisaged in the Constitution, Secondary Education Commission formulated four aims of education.

(i) **Development of Democratic Citizenship:**

According to this commission Secondary Education is the end of formal education for the majority of the citizens. Therefore it must assume the responsibility of providing that type of Education which enable the students develop qualities which are of great importance for them to bear the responsibilities of the Democratic citizenship. The Commission, therefore trust the development of many qualities- intellectual, social and moral through secondary education.

(ii) **Improvement of vocational efficiency:**

The Commission suggested that the second important aim of education system should be to increase the productive or technical and vocational efficiency of our students. Students must acquire a yearning for perfection and learn to take pride in doing everything as thoroughly as they can. Side by side there is need to provide technical skill and efficiency at all stages of education so as to provide trained and efficient personnel to work out schemes of industrial and technological advancement.

(iii) **Development of personality:**

The third main function of secondary education is to release the sources of creative energy in the students so that they may be able to appreciate their cultural heritage, to cultivate rich interest which they can pursue in their leisure and so contribute, in later life, to the development of this heritage. In the past, our schools have left whole areas of the pupils’ personality untouched and unquickened their emotional life, their social impulses, their constructive talents, their artistic tastes.

(iv) **Education for leadership:**

The commission opined that education must train our students for discharging their duties efficiently. They must be trained, in the art of leading and following others. It must train persons to assume the responsibility of leadership in the Social, Political, Industrial or Cultural fields at least in their own small groups of community or locality.
This commission also suggested a new organisational pattern of secondary education to fulfill the aim of education.

1. After 4 or 5 years of primary education, a middle school should be of 3 years and a higher secondary stage which should cover a period of four years.

2. To increase the technical and vocational efficiency of students, multipurpose schools and technical schools were thought necessary and this commission also suggested that an arrangement be made to make it obligatory for the industry to afford apprenticeship training for the students. Although the Commission did not suggest the immediate abolition of so called “Public School” but it emphasized that the pattern of education given in them be brought in to reasonable conformity into general pattern of national education.

3. The commission also suggested the abolition of the distinction made between the education of boys and girls, however they recommended special facilities for a study of Home science to be made available to all girls’ schools and co-education schools.

4. The commission suggested the curriculum for middle school are Language, Social Studies. General Science, Mathematics. Arts and Music, Craft and Physical Education, at the high school and higher secondary stage diversified study courses are suggested. These courses are humanities, sciences, technical subjects, commercial subjects, fine arts and home science. Language, general science, social studies, elementary mathematics and craft were recommended as core subjects common to all students.

Smt Durgabai Deshmukh Committee (1957-59) on education of girls recommended the Constitution of National Commission on Education of girls and women and every state to establish state councils for the purpose. This Committee also recommended that the planning commission set up a permanent machinery to investigate into the requirements of women and make their findings available to the government and the public. Among the other special recommendations it recommended that concession in kind (not in cash) should be given to all girls from low-income families and that government should formulate a scheme for awarding prizes to the villages which show the largest proportional enrolment and average attendance of girls.
The Indian Education Commission (1964-66), popularly known as Kothari Commission after its Chairman Prof. D.S Kothari, concerned itself to bring about an educational revolution within the country as it believed that “The destiny of India is being shaped in her classrooms”. The three major programmes the Commissions thought could bring about this revolution were:

1. Internal transformation so as to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the nation;

2. Qualitative improvement so that the standards achieved are adequate, keep continually rising and, at least in a few sectors, become internationally comparable; and

3. Expansion of educational facilities broadly on the basis of manpower needs and with an accent on equalization of educational opportunities.

One of the major recommendations of this commission was that of establishing a common school system to make education not only an instrument of National Development but also one of national and emotional integration. It would also help in the establishment of an egalitarian society. This school is one:

1. which will be open to all children irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic status or social status;

2. where access to good education will depended, not on wealth or class, but on talent;

3. which will maintain adequate standard in all schools and provide at least a reasonable proportion of quality institutions;

4. in which no tuition fee will no charged; and

5. which would meet the needs of the average parent so that he would not ordinarily feel the need to send his children to expensive school outside the system.

The National Policy on Education 1968, based on the recommendations of the Indian Education Commission 1964-66, laid special emphasis on equalization of Educational Opportunities and recommended:

1. Strenuous efforts should be made to equalize educational opportunity.
2. Regional imbalances in the provision of educational facilities should be corrected and good educational facilities should be provided in rural and other backward areas.

3. To promote social cohesion and national integration the common school system, as recommended by the Education Commission, should be adopted.

4. Efforts should be made to improve the standard of education in general schools.

5. All special schools like public schools should be required to admit students on the basis of merit and also to provide a prescribed proportion of free studentships to prevent segregation of social classes.

6. The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation.

7. More intensive efforts should be made to develop education among the backward classes and especially among the tribal people.

8. Educational facilities for the physically and mentally handicapped children should be expanded and attempts should be made to develop integrated programmes enabling the handicapped children to study in regular schools.

The National Policy of Education 1986 emphasizes the inclusion of the hitherto excluded sections (SC’, ST’, OBC’s) into the main stream of national life and also empowers these sections especially the women.

**Ramamurti Review Committee (1990)**

This Ramamurti Review Committee formed under the chairmanship of Sarvodaya leader Prof. Ram Murti. Some of the important points of this report are

1. Early Childhood Care Education,

2. Removing the disparities in education among the SCs and STs, women, the educationally backward minorities and the handicapped with appropriate budgeting for the same.

3. Empowering the women through education of all on equality of sexes.

4. Right to Education, etc.
REVISED NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (1992)

Presenting the revised National Policy on Education in both Houses of Parliament on May 7, 1992, the Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh stated that the policy formulated in 1986 had stood the test of time but the development during the last few years, had necessitated certain alternations. It may be recalled that the NPE, 1986 had stipulated, “The implementation and parameters of the New Policy must be reviewed every five years.” The implementation was reviewed by two committee-Ram Murti Committee 1990 and the Janardan Committee 1991-1992. Accordingly the NPE, 1986 was revised in 1992.

The first five year plan (1951-56) took note of the Constitutional provisions of Universal elementary education on the one hand and on the other hand, of the recommendations of the University Education Commission (1948-49). It, therefore, emphasised the expansion of elementary education and reforms in higher education.

Another very important problem is the serious overcrowding in most of the colleges, which makes individual attention, so necessary at this stage, simply impossible. We must develop and apply selective tests on a large scale so that nobody is allowed to go up for higher education who is not fit to profit by it.

The second five year plan (1956-61) laid great stress on the basic education. The Assessment Committee on Basic Education (1956) become the basis. In the field of secondary education, the plan programmes were planned on the recommendations of the secondary education commission (1952-53).

The third five year plan (1961- 66) laid stress on reduction of wastage and stagnation in primary education. For the secondary stage a educational and vocational guidance scheme programmes have to be extended to reach as many schools and pupils as possible. A scheme of science talent search is to be introduced with a view to identifying promising talent at the secondary stage and providing opportunities for its development. In addition to the provision in the plan for expansion of facilities for higher education, proposals for evening colleges, correspondence courses and the award of external degrees were under consideration.

In the fourth five year plan (1969 -74) states that, in regard to the age group 11-14, the problem was much more difficult as a majority of the parents in rural areas withdraw their children from schools. A major task in the field of post-elementary education is
to provide a large variety of vocational courses for children who do not intend to continue their general education beyond elementary stage. During this plan, the main emphasis was on consolidation and improvement of higher education through the strengthening of staff and library and laboratory facilities.

The fifth five year plan (1975-79) give more priority to elementary education, especially in the backward areas. For the improvement of higher education facilities through evening colleges, correspondence courses and private study was expanded. Postgraduate education and research continued to be strengthened through the development of centres of advanced study, science service centres, common computer facilities and regional instrumentation workshops.

The sixth five year plan (1980-85) perceived education, broadly as a seamless continuum of lifelong learning and essential for human resource development. The emphasis in the development of education was on the optimum utilisation of existing facilities, qualitative improvement of system and making available the educational services to the socially deprived sections of the society.

The seventh five year plan (1985-90) The development of education during this period was marked by the formulation of the National Policy on Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (1986). The seventh plan provided for the reorientation of the education system so as to prepare the country to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Launching of Operation Blackboard for the improvement of elementary education and opening of Navodaya Vidyalaya at the secondary stage of education in the rural areas were the two important characteristics of the programmes. Vocationalisation of education especially at the senior secondary stage was another thrust area.

The eighth five year plan (1992-97) emphasised the main objectives of this plan are to achieve the targets of universalisation of the elementary education and eradication of illiteracy among the 15-35 age group.

The ninth five year plan (1997-2002) also states on access and equity, and give importance to expansion and development of university and higher education in the country, development of physical infrastructure of the institutions and give importance to increase the women participation in the higher education.
According to the tenth five year plan 2002-2007, only six percent of the estimated population in the 18-23 age groups is enrolled in the University system. Attempts should be made to ensure that the socially, economically and geographically disadvantaged sections are able to access higher education. To encourage greater number of women to pursue higher studies, the number of counseling/study centre, hostels will be increased during the tenth plan. Similar steps will be taken for scheduled caste/scheduled tribe students and minorities. Besides, the activities of distance/open universities will be supported to increase access for the northeastern and other backward areas of the country.

The eleventh five year plan (2007-12) emphasis on reduction in drop-out rate at the elementary level from 52.5% in 2003-04 to 20% by 2011-12, developing minimum standard of attainment in elementary schools to ensure quality of education, increasing literacy rate for persons 7 years or more to 85% by 2011-12, reducing gender gap in literacy to 10% points by 2011-12 and Increasing the percentage of persons going for higher education from 10% to 15% by 2011-12.

All these committees and commissions have made recommendations to make education in India relevant to her social, cultural, economic, political and spiritual needs. They also made recommendations as to how equality of opportunity in education can be ensured. During the last six decades of independence a lot of positive change towards implementation of the principles of equality of opportunity in education and employment has taken place through the operation of the Constitutional provisions and the implementation of the recommendations of the committees and commissions on Education referred to above. Through the implementation of the recommendations of the committees and commissions vigorous developments have taken place since independence.

As far as the provision of schooling facilities are concerned the same have been provided within a walking distance of all children up to the standard V and for 60% of the children up to standard VIII. But even then the children in the eligible age groups do not attend them. The number of secondary and higher secondary schools and colleges has multiplied.
The following statistics give a glimpse of the progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>% LITERATE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>27.16</td>
<td>8.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>28.31</td>
<td>40.46</td>
<td>15.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>34.45</td>
<td>45.95</td>
<td>21.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>43.56</td>
<td>56.38</td>
<td>29.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(41.42)</td>
<td>(53.45)</td>
<td>(28.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>64.13</td>
<td>39.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>65.38</td>
<td>75.85</td>
<td>54.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>74.04</td>
<td>82.14</td>
<td>65.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes:

1. Literacy rate for 1951, 1961 and 1971 related to population aged five years and above. The rates for the years 1981 and 1991 relate to the population aged seven years and above. The literacy of rates for population aged five years and above in 1981 have been shown in brackets.

2. The 1981 rates exclude Assam where the 1981 census could not be conducted. The 1991 census rate exclude Jammu and Kashmir where the 1991 census was not conducted.

The literacy rates have gone up considerably from 18.33% in 1951 to 65.38% in 2001 and 74.04% in 2011. For men it has increased from 27.16% to 75.85% in 2001 and 82.14% in 2011. The table also shows that literacy among women has increased proportionately with men. However, though the progress has been phenomenal, increasing from 18.33% in 1951 to 65.38% in 2001 and 74.04% in 2011, the light of education has not touched the people of all regions, communities, castes, social classes etc., equally.
Proportion of population (of relevant age group) participating in higher education has also been increasing at a very fast pace, as shown in table 2.

**TABLE - 2: ENROLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION SINCE 1950-2000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of students (in lakh)</th>
<th>Percentage there in total population in age group 17-23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Enrolment at the higher education stage increased more than 21 times during the period 1950-51 and 1999-2000. It rose from 3.6 lakhs to 77.3 lakhs. The enrolment percentage to total percentage in the age group increased from 0.8 percent to almost 6 percent during this period.

At present there are nearly 20,000 colleges and more than 8 million students in a decade from 2000-01 to 2010-11. As of 2011, India has 42 central universities, 275 state universities, 130 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the state Act, and 33 institutes of national importance. Other institutions include 33,000 colleges as Government degree colleges and private degree colleges, including 1800 exclusive women’s colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by UGC in 2012. The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning and open education is also feature of the Indian higher education system, and is looked after by the Distance Education Council. Indira Gandhi National open university is the largest university in the world by number of students, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe. Participation of girls at all levels of education improved considerably over the years. At present the proportion of women students to men students in higher education is 1:4. The enrolments have also increased manifolds.
In his essay, “Many Faces of Gender Inequality”, Amartya Sen, highlights seven types of inequality or aspects of inequality that exist between men and women around the world including both the developed and developing societies. These are: (1) Mortality inequality (2) Natality inequality (3) Basic facility inequality (4) Special opportunity inequality (5) Professional inequality (6) Ownership inequality and (7) Household-inequality. One of the results of these inequalities is the inequality in access to education and especially to higher education. Inequality in higher education results in inequality in access to prestigious occupations. Although the facilities of higher education seem to have equalised, the inequality in access to higher education continues to be glaring which prevents women from getting empowered. From the above it is clear that despite the vigorous expansion of educational facilities a sizeable proportion of the Indian population remains illiterate. Similarly, higher education does not appear to be equally accessible to all the sections of the society, although the enrolment figures are impressive.

According to J.C. Aggarwal, it is mainly the upper and the middle classes that are the beneficiaries of this system. 60% of the population (aged 10 and over) which is still illiterate has obviously received none of its benefits. Of every 100 children of 6 years of age, 70 drop out at an early stage, so that only about 30 complete class VIII. 70% of the seats in secondary schools and 80% of the seats in higher education are taken by the top 20% of the income groups.

As the studies reviewed in the following chapter indicate, the facilities of higher education are availed of mainly by the urban, middle class, upper caste, sections of the society. Even among these sections there is a domination of men over women in higher education. Thus the rural, lower class, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward communities and women continue to remain bereft of the facilities of higher education and the prestigious jobs available to university graduates in this country.

It is, therefore, pertinent to study as to what factors of background determine an individual's chances of entering an institution of higher education. In other words it is highly relevant at this point of time to examine how far the constitutional provision of equality of access to higher education has been achieved after about six decades of independence and practice of socialistic principles of the Constitution. It is therefore high time to identify the groups who have benefited from the expansion of the
facilities for higher education. The present study is an attempt in this direction and it is also intended to study the causes of phenomena of inequalities in access to higher education. The study is titled as, “Inequality in Access to Higher Education: A Study of Lakhimpur District, Assam.

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was intended to find out the socio-economic background characteristics of boys and girls who, after passing out from Higher secondary school (+2 stage), go to college. It was also intended to compare the socio-economic characteristics of these persons with those who, after passing out from the higher secondary stage, do not go to college.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Since the study is a social survey, no hypotheses are proposed to be tested. Instead, the study is addressed to seek answers to the following research questions.

1. Do men and women have equal access to higher education?
2. Do rural and urban residents have equal access to higher education?
3. Do different religious communities have equal access to higher education?
4. Do members belonging to different social categories have equal access to higher education?
5. Do children of parents with different educational attainments have equal access to higher education?
6. Do children of parents in different occupations have equal access to higher education?
7. Do children of parents from different income groups have equal access to higher education?

1.4. DELIMITATION

Due to the paucity of time and resources at the disposal of the investigator, the study could not be made on a national or even a state scale and as such is delimited to the examination of a sample from only one district, namely Lakhimpur District of Assam.
1.5. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

**Higher Education**: is defined in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) Handbook as more specialized study normally undertaken after successful completion of a good basic education lasting for at least eleven years. For the present study higher education is taken as any study after Senior secondary school (+2 stage) for which degree is awarded by a University or a deemed University.

**Education**: The term education, for the purpose of this study, is used to refer to formal education and shall imply education provided by the formal agencies like schools and colleges etc. However, functional literacy shall be treated as equivalent to primary education.

**Occupation**: Occupation may be defined as relatively continuous and full time activity that provides workers a livelihood and defined their general social status.

**Income**: Legitimized earnings of individuals are to be considered as income. For example wages and salaries of the workers and earnings of the business groups or agricultural farmers.

**Levels of Education:**

**Illiterate**: Not having gone to school nor being able to read and write any language.

**Primary School**: Having studied up to Class IV or V.

**Middle School**: Formal Education up to class VII or VIII.

**High School**: Formal Education up to class IX or X.

**Higher Secondary School**: Formal Education up to class XI or XII.

**Graduation (Liberal arts)**: First degree level education in liberal-arts above Higher Secondary for which a degree is provided by a University or Deemed University.

**Professional Graduation**: First degree level education in Professional courses like Medicine, Engineering/Technology, Pharmacology, Architecture, Management, Law, B.Ed. etc.

**Post-Graduation**: Masters’ degree level education in liberal-arts as well as professional subjects.

**Research Degree**: M. Phil and Ph. D degree.
**Arts Stream:** It includes History, Economics, Political Science, Geography, Education, Philosophy, Logic, the subjects generally referred as Social sciences and or Arts.

**Commerce Stream:** It includes Commerce subjects such as Business studies, Accountancy, Book keeping, Management, etc.

**Science Stream:** It includes Physics, Chemistry, Computer Science, Information Technology, Mathematics, Biology, Zoology etc.

**Manual Workers:** Unskilled/semiskilled and skilled workers who are engaged in jobs where hands get soiled and also include Homemakers, Village level workers and Class IV employee.

**Non-manual Workers:** Those who are in prestigious occupation such as administration, Professional work, College/University teaching, School teaching, small business, clerical/equivalent work and Village level administrations.

**Homemakers:** Married women who are not employed in any work other than her own homemaking

**Unskilled/semiskilled Workers:** All kinds of casual labour including farm labour.

**Skilled workers:** Masons, carpenters, drivers, workshop mechanics, tailors, electricians, etc.

**Class IV employees:** Peons, bearers, lowest ranks in armed forces and police and equivalent.

**Village Level Workers:** Asha karmi, Anganwadi worker and etc.

**Village Level Administrators:** Village headman, Presiding officers of Panchayat and equivalent.

**Small Business:** Shopkeepers/ Small Contractors etc.

**Clerical/Equivalent Workers:** All non-gazetted employees in government and private offices and equivalent works are included.

**School Teachers:** Teachers of Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary levels.

**Professional Workers:** Engineers, Doctors, Lawyers, College and University teachers teaching at undergraduate and post graduates levels.
Administrators: All gazetted officers other than professionals and College/University teachers, MLA, MP’s etc.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

Gen: Stands for General Category,
SC: for Scheduled Caste;
OBC: for Other Backward Communities;
MOBC: Minorities and Other Backward Classes;
ST: for Scheduled Tribes;
P: stands for Persons;
M: for Male; and
F: for Female.