CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Problem of Research:

Studies on fertility behaviour and its variations in the different countries of world have shown that, although the demographic transition theory broadly defines the socio-economic conditions that have been responsible for the decline in fertility, yet it has demonstrated limited predictability. It has been observed that the socio-economic developmental conditions concomitantly affecting a decline in the fertility level were quite varied in most of the developed countries. Some geographical regions which were culturally similar in terms of language or ethnicity have demonstrated similar fertility patterns, irrespective of their level of socio-economic development. Also, under similar conditions of development, different cultural groups have shown varied fertility behaviour. In the developing countries also, studies have shown that the explanation for the fertility variations and transition does not lie only in socio-economic differences and changes. In all probability these are only facilitating factors, depending on cultural context in which they operate.

In general, evidence appear to indicate that social stratification and cultural groupings are often related to fertility behaviour in ways that have not yet been fully explained by the socio-economic structural factors embedded in the demographic transition theory. In this backdrop, there is a
need to study the fertility behaviour and its transition in the context of socio-economic and cultural differences prevalent in many societies.

The theory of fertility transition dwells on the consideration that, in the process of development, a shift from agricultural to industrial economy gave rise to contrary forces effecting social values and norms and, changes the economic rationality of fertility behaviour. For example, declining mortality particularly the infant mortality, improvement in living standard, reduces the effect of family and kinship ties which are instrumental in maintaining the fertility at a high level. However, the benefits of economic development which brings about these changes may not be equally distributed in all the sections of society (D'Souza, 1981). People or social groups in higher ranges of social hierarchy, benefit more from these lower changes than the people in the lower strata of the society. Differences in the reach of benefits of economic development to different sections of the society, implies that impact on the rationality, norms and values influencing fertility behaviour would also be different. The people from medium and lower strata of the society, not only get fewer benefits of economic development, but their social norms and values are such that they take much longer time to change. In other words, the norms and values determining the fertility behaviour would change relatively earlier for the people in higher socio-economic groups than the
people in the lower classes. As a consequence, the fertility decline would set in earlier in the higher socio-economic strata than in the lower socio-economic sections of the society. Further, in the social and cultural transition, it is very likely that one social group may influence the values of other groups. For example, in a given society, elites may set-in the pattern in many respects, but the change in the behaviour of other groups would be visible only when the impact of developmental changes is felt by that group itself.

This change and response approach view the fertility transition from the social stratification point of view, rather than from the point of view of a nation or an individual. India which is characterised by the widely different cultures embodying religious, ethnic and linguistic groups and associated life-styles provides an ideal setting to examine the influence of social stratification on the fertility differences in different socio-cultural (caste) groups. The caste system is the most important feature of the Indian social structure. It is one of the major institutions, which is woven into entire Indian social fabric and has been the traditional basis of social stratification. The distinguishing features of this system have been:

1. A segmental division of society.
2. Prevalence of different ascribed status to members of different caste groups and therefore, a hierarchical arrangement of status attributed to individuals and groups.
3. Restriction on eating, living and social interaction, which also includes restriction on marriage.
4. Restricted choice of occupation.
Occupation has been the main basis of stratification of Indian society along the caste lines. Every caste was ascribed a status according to the social status of the occupations of its members. With the passage of time, the occupations and the membership to the caste group, became hereditary, determined by birth. Social mobility from one group to another group became restricted. The shape and magnitude of the social inequalities generated by the caste system have more or less remained same over time. However, in recent times, caste as an institution is undergoing changes, through a variety of adaptive mechanism, but there is no break down or dissociation of this system. For example, noticeable changes have taken place in the traditional pattern of relations, known as 'Jajmani' between landowners and tenants. Also, inter-caste marriages, especially in urban areas are on the increase.

In most societies, particularly in the west, economic class has become the main indicator of social differences. However, in the Indian context, caste which is also linked with the occupational status is considered as an important indicator of social stratification. It is therefore indicative of both the economic class as well as dimensions of social statuses. Using caste as the main stratification variable an attempt has been made in the present study to examine the fertility behaviour and its transitional in some selected Indian rural communities.

2. Demographic Transition in the Developed and the Developing Countries:

Population are the product of birth, death and migration rates. With death rates being fairly low and stable and international migration regulated, the birth rate has become a key
A dichotomy has been observed between the fertility levels of countries classified as developed or developing according to their level of socio-economic development. On an average, fertility is almost twice as high in the developing countries as in the developed countries, and the distribution is distinctly bi-modal with relatively few countries at the intermediate level (U.N., 1973). According to an U.S. study (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1983), countries with birth rate above 30 (per 1000 population) are located in Africa, Asia, Middle and Latin America, while the countries with birth rate below that level are located with few exceptions, in the economically more advanced regions including, Europe, North America, Oceania and Soviet Union. The estimated crude birth rate (CBR) of the world as a whole was about 27 - 29 per 1000 population. It was around 15 - 16 in developed region and 31-34 in the developing world.

But, the countries which are currently having low fertility levels, have all moved from a previously much higher level of fertility during the course of their socio-economic development. This fundamental change in the fertility, from a high to a low level, has occurred throughout the developed world during the late nineteenth century. The developing countries however, continued with a high fertility regime till the middle of present century. It is only during the last two decades that some of these countries have shown a declining trend in their fertility levels.
The study of fertility level and its transition both in the developed and developing countries has been on the center-stage of the demographic research for the past few decades. In the past, most demographers have had few doubts about the reasons for decline in the fertility level. The explanation centered around the classical demographic transition theory (Notestein, 1945). The main-stream argument of this theory is that, in the pre-industrial societies, fertility was high primarily because of high mortality, lack of opportunities for the individual advancement and higher economic value of children. The socio-economic development, and changes in the macro development variables such as urbanization, industrialization, literacy and like, resulted in lowering the mortality level. Socio-economic development also led to a shift from major dependence on relatively self contained local institutions to dependence on larger social, political and economic units. Such a shift implies a change in the division of labour from the one in which the family and local community are central, to a larger complex in which the family give-up its functions to a bigger and specialised institution. As the unit of inter-dependence expanded and took over familial functions, the benefits and satisfactions derived from numerous children lessened. Parents also desired fewer children, because the supply of living children had increased due to decline in the mortality level.
Moreover, the rearing cost of children had also increased, partly because the having many children interfered with new non-familial activities and, partly because the improvement in the level of living, educational level and opportunities in the expanded system of interaction led to rising aspirations.

In this classical model, emphasis was on the change in the objective structural development level as the primary reason of fertility decline. The new aspirations, the change in the functions of family and new perception of cost and benefits of children, were seen as necessary and almost identical consequences of developmental changes that led to desire for fewer children.

However, the demographic transition in the developed and developing countries has not proceeded on the same path. Besides the time factor, the phase and magnitude of transition was widely different in the two sets of countries.

A: Fertility Transition in the Developed Countries:

Recent studies on fertility behaviour in western societies raised many doubts about the formulation and application of demographic transition theory. Firstly, in most of the European countries, the pattern of developmental changes actually associated with the fertility decline have turned out to be quite varied. Detailed empirical work has been unable to establish the combinations of developmental variables at specific levels, that were systematically related to the European fertility transition.
European countries which were widely different in terms of industrialization and urbanization, began their fertility decline almost at the same time. Also, examples have been found in which less developed areas began their fertility decline much before than more advanced areas (Coale, 1973; Teitelbaum, 1975). Secondly, detailed studies of European fertility transition have shown that many areas that were culturally similar e.g. in language or ethnicity, also demonstrated a similar pattern of fertility decline irrespective of their level of socio-economic development, which is crucial to the demographic transition theory. It is also observed that even the sub-regions with a common culture tended to have similar patterns of fertility decline even though their levels of development were different. It is possible that cultural differences in familial institutions involving such matters as inheritance, customs and status of women may be differentiating factors (Ronald Freedman, 1983).

A.J. Coale, Barbara Anderson and Erna Harn (1979) have demonstrated that as late as 1970, a number of Asian Soviet Republics with modern macro structural characteristics had high natural fertility level. The explanations offered are on normative and cultural grounds. In general, evidence appears to indicates that consideration of socio-economic developmental changes alone are not sufficient to explain the fertility transition in the developed countries. It also suggests that this phenomenon can be better understood in the framework of cultural groupings.
In studying the factors responsible for the high fertility and its transition in the developing countries, demographers have often found it convenient to compare economic, social and cultural conditions between developing and developed (low fertility) countries. This approach has led to the hypothesis that, for the most part the same factors, which are thought to account for the decline in fertility in developed countries are in reverse sense also responsible for the continued high fertility in the developing countries. It is argued that in the developing countries fertility has failed to decline either because some of operating variables have not adequately changed to influence the people's reproductive behaviour or these variables have evolved in a different way than in the low fertility countries.

However, the fertility level has already declined in a number of developing countries. Now the question arises, under what conditions this decline has occurred. Further, are the factors responsible for the fertility decline in the western countries would also be applicable to the developing countries.

It has been observed that the developing countries which have experienced recent decline in their fertility levels namely, Sri Lanka, Kerala (India), Thailand, China etc., have had only limited developmental changes and their populations were
overwhelmingly rural and poor. The substantive changes which were common in these countries are:

i) Better health and sanitation facilities, a situation that means longer survival of children. It implies that fewer births are needed for the survival of desired number of children.

ii) Higher education for boys and girls, which increases the cost and decreases the benefits, while children are in school. Fewer and better educated children may provide greater satisfaction than more but poorly educated children.

iii) Welfare institutions providing minimum subsistence for the masses, at least for food, which decreases dependence on children.

iv) Communication and transportation facilities capable of providing information, services and goods that produce other changes.

These factors might have influenced the real and perceived cost of children and set-in the fertility transition. Further, as Ronald Freedman (1983) has argued, there is something more than these subjective changes, which might have helped in initiating this fertility decline. With the development of better communication and transportation network, increasing number of people became aware of the alternative to their traditional life styles and aspire for something different, even though their
aspirations were often poorly defined. But this change in the realm of ideas and aspiration had a pace and character quite different from the earlier changes in the west. Freedman (1980) has also observed that the developing countries, as a part of their social environment, the history and the development changes, had access to the new technology and rising standard of living of the west. The influence of these factors might have been either directly through the communication networks or more probably indirectly through local elites. This explanation suggests that:

1) The subset of objective development alternatives on a much smaller scale than that characterised the west, can provide motivation for lower fertility, and

2) Modern conditions, ideas and aspirations for a different life style, transcending what is actually available are important in motivating fertility decline.

The above analysis suggests that much of the argument for demographic transition concepts, depends on the definition of rationality. The term "economically rational" is more frequently used so as to avoid having to judge "social rationality" with the possibility of having to agree that a certain mode of behaviour was rational in a given setting, in that it met the ends of religious beliefs or of community obligations. Even so, the criterion employed are highly ethnocentric and laden with the western values. The fundamental choices are social ones and
economic behaviour is rational only if it fits into the framework established by the social ends. The demographic transition theory has regarded primarily the western social values as rational and followed the economically logical steps to maximise satisfaction (from children) within the given value system.

3. Theoretical Considerations:

The concept of social inequality has been defined in two ways (Sharma, 1985), (1) inequality in social structure and (b) inequality among members of a society. The first one refers to the differences in the social rewards for the roles played by all the members of society at a point of time. This type of inequality is primarily based on the model of these very roles.

The second one refers to the inequality in the ownership of resources among the members of society. However, the two concepts of inequality are closely associated with each other and in principle the second is reducable to first. In other words, it means that the "inequality in resources and wealth among the members of a society ensues fundamentally from inequality in social returns to the whole matrix of roles" (Sharma 1985). However, the inter-relationship between the two is influenced by a number of factors. Among these the institution of
family and inheritance is most important. (Kingsley Davis, 1953). In the context of the present study the focus would primarily be on the second form of inequality. Here attempt would be made to find out how and why existing material conditions are associated with socio-cultural values and influences the human behaviour including reproductive behaviour.

There is a general agreement among social scientists that social inequalities are ubiquitous and no society has ever been completely egalitarian. However, social stratification has no definite form and the nature and degree of social inequalities are highly variable and the mobility from one strata to another has depended on the model of social stratification. According to the Svalastoga (1965), the hierarchy of stratification models in terms of increasing permeability is as follows:

1. Caste model (Zero permeability)
2. Estate model (Very low permeability)
3. Class model (About 40 percent permeability)
4. Continuous model (About 80 percent permeability)
5. Egalitarian model (Perfect permeability)

Among these models, egalitarian model is associated primarily with pre-agrarian societies, the caste and state models with agrarian societies, class model with societies in early stages of industrialization and continuous model with modern
western industrial societies. Caste, class and estate are however, only general terms, and to distinguish adequately between various forms of inequality observed in the societies, many more analytical concepts would be required.

The term caste has been defined in many different ways. British ethnographers have defined caste in terms of its assumed or real functionality to the society and culture in India. The salient features given by them are that a caste has a common name, common descent and the same hereditary calling and communitarian living (Risley, 1969). Ketkar (1909) mentioned hereditary membership and endogamy as the most striking features of the caste system in India. Senart (1930) writes "a caste system is one where a society is divided up into a number of self contained and completely segregated units (castes), the mutual relationship between which are ritually determined in a graded scale". The uniqueness of the system is prominently emphasized in the above definitions of caste system.

Other scholars of Indian society have also reported about the uniqueness of caste system or have compared it with their own society. Marj. (1945) related the (Asiatic) model of production to the stability of caste system in India. H.J.S. Maine (1890) referred to caste as an example of non-contractual status society. Senart (1930), Hocard (1950) and Dumont (1970) have emphasized on ritual criterion and pollution-purity as the basis of Hindu society. Weber (1948) considered caste as a system of status groups based on other worldly doctrine of Hinduism.
The ancient theory of functional division of society which is linked with caste system is traceable to the Rig-vedic period (Ghurye, 1950). This theory states that, the different varnas originated from different parts of body of 'Adi Purush' (God) - the Brahmins from his mouth, Kashatries from his arms, the Vaishyas from his thighs and Shudra from his feet. It was assumed that each group was pre-ordained to perform its ascribed functions by virtue of its peculiar qualities which supposedly correspond with capabilities of the part of the divine body from which it originated. The four varnas constituted a hierarchy of status which correspond with prestige hierarchy of the occupations they followed. The Brahmins' were to study, teach, perform sacrifice, officiate in other sacrificial performance and give and receive gifts. The duties of Kashatrias were to study, performance of sacrifice, giving gifts, military occupations and protection of life. The duties of Vaishyas were to study, performance of sacrifice, giving gifts, agriculture, cattle breeding and trade. The duties of Sudras were the service of other varnas, agriculture, cattle breeding, artisans' and court bard's work. Since the quality of their respective varnas were inherent in them, it was not possible for a person either to change his varna or his occupation. D'Souza (1981) wrote that "it is clear that the traditional theory about the origin and nature of varnas is due to theological and meta-physical world views, which influenced the perception of reality on the part of the people in the past. It was believed that everything was created by the God and that the particular behaviour of an object was due to its inherent peculiarities which are related to the
circumstances of their creation. The traditional theory of varnas is not an explanation but an interpretation of existing reality in categories which are significant to the people of a period.

Ghurye (1950) has identified following main features in the traditional caste system.

(i) Segmental division of society.
(ii) Hierarchy of groups.
(iii) Restriction on eating and social interaction.
(iv) Civil and religious limitations and privileges of different sections.
(v) Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation.
(vi) Restriction on marriage.

However, viewing the dynamics of caste-system, he has observed that, whereas the various features of the caste-system have been undergoing a change, the endogamous character of caste-groups has remained unchanged. He further maintained that endogamy is the essence of the caste system.

On the ritual status as the determinant of caste system, Srinivas (1952) has observed that "caste guarantees autonomy to a community and at the same time it brings that community into relation with numerous other communities all going to form a hierarchy". He further adds that, "the caste hierarchy is an unique one, as it is based on the concept of pollution or ritual
status". This concept is absolutely fundamental to the caste system, and along with concept of 'Karma' and 'Dharma', it contributes to make caste the unique institution it is.

Weber (1967) regards caste as an ideal type of 'status group' which is the source of one of three major types of power namely status honour as distinguished from economical and political power. The caste structure arranges different ethnic groups in a hierarchy of social sub-ordination which results in the acknowledgement of 'more honour' in favour of the privileged groups. But Weber is not clear about the characteristics of the caste (status) group from which its distinctive status honour is derived. However, there is an indication that the status of a caste is derived from its occupation, when he attributes the status hierarchy" to the fact that in caste structure, ethnic distinctions as such have become 'functional' distinctions within the political societalization". This indicates that status honour also has an economic base which contradict Weber's basic distinction between status, honour and economic power.

But according to Berreman (1960), "caste system is a hierarchy of endogamous divisions in which membership is hereditary and permanent". In a later definition (1972) he replaced the term "endogamous division" by "hereditary group". The hierarchy entails differential evaluation, rewards and association.
There is some confusion in the Bereman's proposition which is largely due to his approach to treat people's own interpretation of their situation as a scientific explanation. A similar approach has been adopted by Dumont (1972) also. He makes a distinction between caste and stratification. However, in both, the ideology plays an independent role. This viewpoint is just opposite to the Marx for whom ideology is an aspect of superstructure. Caste is based on the principle of inequality, whereas the stratification is based on that of equality.

Although, both caste and class stratification are examined in the form of hierarchical gradation, there is a fundamental distinction between the two. In caste system, gradation is based on the ideology of pure and impure, whereas the class stratification is based on the variables of economic and political power. Thus, the gradation of caste is designated as hierarchy and that of stratification as power, which are independent of each other, though, under certain conditions one may subsume other. According to Dumont, in the caste system, hierarchy is so important that it subsumes power.

Reviewing the work of these scholars, D'Souza (1981) has observed that Weber, Dumont, Berreman and most other authors on caste have considered caste-status as independent of economic and political power and attributed it (Dumont and Berreman) to purity-impurity or purity-pollution dimensions, which is also termed as ritual status. However, they have not analytically examined the empirical and logical bases for making such assumptions. He further argued that there is no difference
between caste and class, and caste hierarchy is no less due to economic and political power than class hierarchy.

D'Souza professed that the status of any caste group is depended upon the status of its individual members. Arguing that just as in class system, individual gets his status from his attributes, in the caste system the group derives its status from its relevant properties; and the relevant properties of the group are none other than the attributes of its individual members. Therefore, the ranking or social gradation of groups depends upon the evaluation of properties or attribute of individual members. Since the status of the individual, among other things is determined by his occupational prestige, it is to be assumed that the status of a group or caste is also determined by the occupational prestige of its individual members.

Summerizing his argument, D'Souza observed that caste system comprises of independently determined ethnic groups in which membership is hereditary. The groups forming a caste system are drawn together in a socio-economic and political system. They are arranged in a hierarchy of status. The status of a group is determined by the occupational prestige of its individual members. But whether or not the groups are socially graded would depend upon the degree of homogeneity of individual members; when the members with-in groups are fully homogeneous, the groups are graded in a rigid caste system and when the members are entirely heterogenous, the group would remain ungraded in a caste-less society. The ideal typical caste-system
is a perfect mechanism for inter-generational perpetuation of social positions, whereas this tendency would be completely absent from ideal typical caste-less society. In this respect, "the caste is identical with class".

From the foregoing discussion it is obvious that structural and cultural differentiations are most prominent features of caste-system. The structural aspects refer to the determinants of caste which are applicable to all societies (and have economic basis) and cultural aspects refer to the mode of expression of status differences among castes, which is specific to each culture. The mode of expression of behaviour determined by any characteristic, follows the specific cultural idiom. Therefore, it is obvious that the social class and behaviour would be closely associated. In other words, in the contemporary societies, socio-cultural and economic inequalities are the main cause of differences in human behaviour in general and demographic behaviour in particular. It implies that possibility of change in macro level social variables (say behaviour), largely depends on the dynamics of change in the social-economic and cultural values of constituent groups of the society. Figure given below show the nature of relationship between social status and social behaviour.
The style of life is a multi-dimensional expression and embraces all possessions and activities that people own and do. It includes neighbourhood, schooling, clothing, speech, and the vast complex of leisure time pursuits. The social class effects all the components of style of life in many complex ways and symbolizes the totality of style of life and modes of living. A number of empirical studies have shown that the life style is greatly dependent on social class. On the other hand, social class largely determines the child-rearing practices, development of personality, aspirations, socialization and the values and norms. It influences efficacy, modernity value orientation, authority pattern within the family, husband-wife communication and decision making, all of which have theoretical and empirical relationship with the reproductive behaviour.
Although, in the caste system, status of a person is hereditary, it does not mean that the individual members of a social group cannot strive to improve their economic status. This is particularly relevant in today's context, when socially backward classes are given a lot of privileges and benefits to improve their status. The mobility aspirations and achievements also affect the social behaviour. Status enhancement also requires behavioural controls as the mobile person may desire fewer children in order to improve their socio-economic position. Therefore, they may take greater care to avoid unwanted births. However, the relationship between socio-economic mobility and fertility is reciprocal. As Bean and Swicegood (1979) have observed that couples with high fertility may find it difficult to maintain their social status, while the couples with low fertility may find it easier to improve their socio-economic status.

It should be emphasized that all the links shown in the figure are reciprocal and it is difficult to identify the dominant direction of influence. The psychological and physical resources at the disposal of various social groups are inter-twined and it is not possible to analyse their separate effects on social behaviour.

4. Review of Studies:

Inspite of caste being an important social stratification variable, it has seldom been considered in the studies on fertility differentials. A few studies have however, been
conducted in the country, which have shown significant differences in the fertility behaviour of the different caste groups.

Kingsley Davis (1951) in his historical study on 'Population of India and Pakistan' has recorded fertility differentials in the Indian communities on the caste basis. He observed that higher castes such as Brahmin, Bania and Rajput have lower fertility than the untouchable lower castes of Balmiki, Chamr and Ramdasia. Mysore Population study (U.N.1961) has also made similar observations for the Mysore (now Karnataka) state. The study noted that the lower castes had substantially higher fertility than the higher castes. Driver (1963) in his study of Central India has found that the average fertility level of scheduled castes (lower castes) was significantly higher (6.0 live births) than the Brahmins (4.1 live births) or other higher castes. In a survey conducted in rural areas of Banaras (Rele, 1963), the population was divided into 4 groups, the first one consisting of Brahmins and Kshatria castes, the second consisting of intermediate castes, the third consisting of low and scheduled castes and the fourth consisting of non-Hindus. The survey showed that upper caste Hindus had lowest and the Muslims (Non-Hindus) highest fertility level. In another study, Saxena (1965) has found that both, the cumulative fertility in the age group 40-44 years and the average number of births per married woman, were highest for the low castes, lowest for the upper castes and intermediate for the middle castes.
Saxena has also observed that upper caste women had fewer than 7.3 live births by the end of their reproductive period as compared to 8.0 and 8.3 live births of the intermediate and low castes, respectively.

Analysing the data obtained from the Khanna study, Gordon and others (1971) noted moderate fertility differentials (in rural population of Punjab) between numerically dominated caste group namely Jat farmers, who constituted nearly half of the population and Chamars who formed a quarter of the population. Mean number of live births among the Jat women of 45 years and above was 6.78 while among Chamars it was 8.23.

An overview of the above studies indicates that the caste-specific characteristics have a strong bearing on fertility behaviour. Since the nature and magnitude of the inequalities between the caste groups varies from one region to another, their fertility levels also differ accordingly. However, in general the fertility level of high castes was found to be lower than that of the medium and low castes.

Although, some of the studies have attempted to analyse the reasons for the fertility differentials between the different caste-groups, in most instances, only general variables influencing fertility behaviour were identified. For example, Saxena (1965) has emphasised on sexual abstinence among upper caste Hindus.
on festivals and auspicious days. He has also indicated a comparatively higher period of abstinance among the upper caste Hindus, during the lactation period. Mahadevan (1979) has observed that the marriage pattern, income variables, family structure etc., explain the large part of fertility variations between the three caste groups namely 'Gounders' 'Other' and Scheduled Castes.

5. **Objectives:**

In view of the research problem and review of studies, following objectives were chosen for the present study:

1. To examine the demographic and socio-economic differences between the different caste-groups.

2. To analyse the fertility patterns and differentials between the different caste-groups.

3. To find out the reasons for the fertility differentials between the different caste-groups, in the context of socio-economic inequalities observed between them.

4. To delineate the pattern of fertility transition in the different castes groups in the context of socio-economic developmental changes.

6. **Hypothesis of the Study:**

Our main problem of study is to examine the fertility behaviour and its transition in the Indian rural communities, within the framework of socio-cultural stratification based on the
Caste system. From the theoretical considerations and review of other studies, two main hypotheses emerge:

(i) Indian society is stratified into different socio-cultural groups according to hierarchical social status of their respective castes. This stratification system takes into account all the caste groups and is largely synonymous with the economic classification system.

(ii) Different caste groups have different patterns of fertility behaviour, which are largely determined by the differences in their value systems and socio-economic statuses. These fertility differentials generally follow the caste hierarchical pattern, with higher castes showing a lower fertility level and the lower castes demonstrating a higher fertility level.

These hypotheses depict the social relationships, economic hierarchies and behavioural component, particularly the fertility behaviour in the Indian communities, especially in the rural areas.

It is generally observed that (in rural communities) the higher castes such as Brahmin, Jat, Rajput, Bania and Khatri not only have a higher social status but their economic level is also higher. They have better educational level as well as hold better jobs, large land holdings, higher income and living standards. They command more power in the rural society. They tend to be more receptive to new ideas and a better appreciation for the value of children and make more investment in their education. They also have a relatively early and easy access to the socio-economic developmental changes taking place in the community. It has also
been observed that their fertility level is generally lower than that of other caste groups.

On the other hand, the position of lower castes is just opposite to this. Their social status is very low (till the time of independence of country, most of the lower castes were treated as 'untouchables'). They have a little education, almost no or very small land holdings and have lower status jobs. Their economic situation is also miserable. Inspite of persistant efforts by the Government agencies, to improve their socio-economic status, not much change has been witnessed in their statuses. They are less open to new ideas and invariably, a fatalistic approach (resignation to fate) to life is observed among them. Besides they have very little appreciation for the value of children. Due to a long history of poverty conditions, a tendency to produce more children and have more earning hands is noticed among them. Fear of survival of children (most of their children die due to the poor nutritional level and lack of appropriate health care) also encourages them to produce more children. The socio-economic developmental changes reaches to them rather late, and their response to these changes is also slow. Consequently, they tend to have a higher fertility level.

The medium castes occupies an intermediate position. In some respects, they are more close to the higher castes while in other respects, to the lower castes.
In the light of above, the following specific hypotheses are being examined with the support of empirical data collected from these villages communities.

1. Social stratification of the Indian communities on the basis of caste system, is more or less synonymous with the economic classification. In general higher castes have a better socio-economic status which declines with the lowering of hierarchical social status of the caste groups.

2. Different caste-groups, have different patterns of fertility behaviour. These fertility differentials largely follows the caste hierarchy pattern, with higher caste women showing a lower fertility level and the lower caste women demonstrating a higher fertility level.

3. Age at marriage is inversely related with the fertility level. This bond is relatively more stronger in the lower castes and weakens with the rise in the hierarchical status of the caste groups.

4. Infant mortality experience of the respondents is negatively associated with their fertility level. This relationship is more prominent in the lower castes and weakens with the rise in the hierarchical status of the caste groups.

5. Religiousity is positively associated with the fertility behaviour. That is, persons having deeper faith in religious values and teachings have a higher fertility level.
6. Women's educational level has a deeper influence on the fertility behaviour than that of their husbands. This influence is more profound in the higher castes than in the medium and lower castes, declining in that order.

7. Parents investing in their children's education have lower fertility levels than the parents of non-school going children.

8. Modernity value orientation is negatively associated with the fertility level. Fertility response to the modernization is more pronounced in the higher castes and declines in intensity with the hierarchical status of the caste groups.

9. Land holding tend to encourage people to reduce their family size. Since the higher castes have larger land ownership, their fertility level may also be lower than that of the medium and lower castes.

10. Income and fertility levels are negatively associated. Since the higher castes have a higher income level, their fertility level tends to be lower than that of the medium and lower castes.

11. Rise in the economic standing, eventually leads to the fertility decline.

12. Inter-spouse communication about children, helps in encouraging people to limit their family size. Since the level of inter-spouse communication about children is generally higher in the higher castes, their fertility level is lower than that of the other caste groups.
13. Adoption of fertility control measures is positively associated with the caste hierarchy. The higher castes have a greater tendency to limit their family size than the medium and lower castes, declining in that order. Consequently, the fertility control measures are adopted by them, at a relatively lower fertility level than by the medium and lower castes.

14. Transition in the fertility level of different sections of any society, does not begin simultaneously. It largely depends on the socio-economic status or in other words, caste status of the groups (in the social hierarchy) and their reach to socio-economic developmental changes. By virtue of their higher socio-economic status and early access to the benefits of socio-economic developments, higher castes experience an early decline in their fertility level than the medium and lower castes. However, for the fertility transition to begin, it is necessary that the benefits of developmental changes are experienced by the different sections or caste groups in the society.

7: Methodology:

In the present study, caste would be used as the main stratification variable to analyse the fertility behaviour and its differentials in the different segments of Indian society. In the present day context although the impact of caste system on the socio-economic characteristics is diluting, it is still stronger in rural areas than in the urban centres. In the villages, caste status not only influence the norms and values associated with socio-economic parameters, but the peoples' reach to the benefits of socio-economic development also.
The study has been conducted in the rural areas of Haryana and Punjab. Further, as our aim was to study the fertility behaviour of the different communities, ever-married women (who have experienced child-bearing) formed the subjects of our study.

The sampling procedure used for the selection of study area and respondents, study tools and system of caste stratification are described in the following sections.

**Universe of Study:**

As many as 76.7 percent (525 million as per 1981 census) of the India's total population live in villages. Even if one desires, it is very difficult to draw a representative sample for the specific study of the present nature. Moreover, time and resources are other major constraints in drawing a large sample. Therefore, for the present study it was decided that the study villages shall be selected from the adjoining districts (near to Chandigarh) of Haryana and Punjab. The districts so located are Ambala, Ludhiana and Patiala. The main reasons for selecting these districts were, their easy accessibility and operational convenience (from Chandigarh) and cultural homogeneity of the region.

2. **Selection of Study Villages:**

Three large villages (one from each district) were selected from these districts, keeping in view the following criterion:

1) Population size of the village should be large, i.e. more than 2000 (as per 1981 census estimates).
ii) Villages should be located away from the influence of urban culture i.e. situated at a considerable distance from the nearest town and city.

iii) Although the village economy should be predominantly agricultural, it should have attained at least a moderate level of development in terms of agriculture and infrastructural facilities.

iv) There should be adequate representation of the scheduled Caste population.

All the villages from these districts fulfilling above requirements were listed. From among these villages, 3 villages were selected by using simple random sampling procedure. Villages thus selected were: Ugala (Ambala District), Ghagga (Patiala District) and Gudhani Kalan (Ludhiana District).

3. Selection of Respondents and Sample Size:

List of households living in selected villages were obtained from the health workers of the respective villages. Health workers conduct an annual population survey in their areas and their records are by and large complete. The items on which information is collected in these population surveys are; name, age, number of living children, family planning use status etc. Health workers do not collect information on the caste status of the people. Moreover, there is no other source, which could
provide information on the caste-status. Therefore, it was not possible to introduce caste-stratification at the sampling stage.

Thirty-three percent of the households in the study villages were selected by using a systematic random sampling procedure. Independent samples were drawn from every village. All the ever married women in the selected households who have had experienced child-bearing (had at least one live birth) were interviewed for the study.

The total number of households and household surveyed in these villages (as per list of health worker) are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Number of households surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ugala</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghagga</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gudhani Kalan</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, all the surveyed households did not have an ever married women. But the number of such households was very small, being 3, 3 and 6 respectively in Ugala, Ghagga and Gudhani Kalan villages. On the other hand in some households, there were more than one ever married women, which were also included in the sample. The total number of household and ever-married women thus considered for the analysis purposes are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Number of ever married women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ugala</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghagga</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gudhani Kalan</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>693</strong></td>
<td><strong>774</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here it must be noted that only those ever married women have been considered for the analysis, who had experienced child bearing.
The caste-wise break-up of respondents' (ever married women) is given in the following table:

Table 1: Caste-Wise Breakup of Respondents in the Study Villages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>VILLAGES</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ugala</td>
<td>Ghagga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajput</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bania</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khatri</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldsmith</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saini</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamboh</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujjar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labana</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarkhan</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shimba</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bazigar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhobi, kahar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazbi Sikh</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamlasia</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>229</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table indicates a polarization of respondents into two major caste groups of this region, that is Jat, a landowning cultivating caste and Ramdasia who are mainly landless labourers and perform menial work. Other castes who had significant representation in the sample are: Brahmin, Rajput, Bania, Khatri, Tarkhan, Bazigar and Dhobi, Kahar. Importantly, all the major castes in the study villages were represented in the sample.

Due to large number of castes in the sample, it was rather difficult to carry out an independent analysis, for every caste in the sample. Moreover, the number of respondents in some of the caste-groups was very small for making any meaningful generalization. To overcome this problem, the castes were grouped together into three categories, depending upon the social standing of each caste in the caste-hierarchy namely high, medium and low castes. A separate survey experience was conducted to determine the social status of every caste (Details are given in Appendix 'A').

The grouping of castes in the three prestige status categories is as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste Status Category</th>
<th>Representative Castes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Brahmin, Rajput, Jat, Bania, Khatri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Gold smith, Sehni, Kamboh, Gujjar, Labana, Tarkhan, Shimba, Nai, Dhobi/Kahar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Bazigar, Mazbisikh, Ramdasia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the further analysis this caste classification has been used. Data for the three villages were pooled together for generalization purposes. This has been done with a view that
there were marginal differences between the socio-economic and cultural setting of the three study villages.

The distribution of 774 respondents in the three caste categories is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste category</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instrument of Data Collection:

The data were collected with the help of a structured interview schedule. Information was gathered on the following topics.

1. Socio-economic, cultural and demographic characteristics of households and their members.

2. Fertility history of respondents and rate of child survival.
3. Respondents' attitude towards family formation, value of children, ideal family size etc.

4. Inter-spouse communication about the family size and family planning.

5. Family planning practices.

In addition, general information about the village background, history, level of socio-economic development, infra-structure facilities etc. was also collected from the respective village officials, community leaders and other knowledgeable persons in the village.

**Collection of Data and Survey Errors:**

Data are collected by interviewing the women at their place of residence. Initially some difficulties were experienced in seeking the information on fertility level and family planning practices, but it was overcome by explaining the women that the information was collected for research purpose only. Wherever needed, husbands were also involved in the discussion of this issue.

Error of non-response was almost negligible. However, nearly 5 per cent of selected households had to be replaced either because of non-availability of any women in the household or because their women folk were away during the survey period.
Substitutions were made by immediately preceding or successive household in the list of households in the village.

Data collection work took nearly 4 months.

**Plan of Analysis:**

Data analysis has been carried out in three phases. Firstly, general characteristics of the study villages covering their historical development, administration, community living, population growth pattern, economy, infrastructure facilities etc. have been discussed. In the second section, demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents have been analysed in the framework of caste stratification. In the third section, correlates of fertility differential and its transition have been discussed.