

---

# UNIT 7 PROBLEMS OF SC/ST CHILDREN AND GIRLS

---

## Structure

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Objectives
- 7.3 General Problems of Disadvantaged Children
- 7.4 Special Problems of the SC and ST Children
- 7.5 Typical Problems of the Girl Child
- 7.6 Means and Methods to Minimise the Problems of SC/ST Children and the Girl Child.
- 7.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.8 Unit-end Exercises

---

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

---

In this Unit, we will try to study the social origin of deprivations, the problems for the deprived groups and the ways in which these can be minimised or solved.

All Societies all over the world are classified in different groups. This classification can be according to the race, religion, sex, skin colour, occupation or even geographic habitat (according to the place they belong to - Indians, Americans, Germans, etc.). These groups among themselves, share certain characteristics. This commonality gives them a sense of belonging and identity or a 'we' feeling. This can be called **social stratification**.

As societies developed, this stratification tended to form hierarchies, that is, some groups become superior to other groups. This was due to economic, social, intellectual, occupational and even gender (sex) differences. For example, we have some doctors in hospitals who do a certain kind of work and we have also some nurses in the hospitals to do other kind of work. Or we have some rich people who own big houses and farms and some poor people who live in huts and own nothing. These disparities lead to social discrimination that tends to get labelled over the years. Children born in these families get different treatment that they learn to expect and give. This **social grouping is universal**. Think of any country and you will realise that some or other type of class differences exist all over the world. Recall your history or any drama you have read or watched. Look around and you will notice that there are some groups which are privileged and others which are disadvantaged. The less privileged groups are known as the **disadvantaged** or **deprived** groups.

In addition to these social stratifications which are man-made, there are also natural biological differences. If we glance at various societies in this world we find that most of the females are discriminated against and are given inferior status. Moreover, a woman is also endowed with an additional responsibility of pregnancy, motherhood and child-care. The role of bringing up a child prevents her from participating in all the outdoor occupations at par with man. Eventually she has come to acquire inferior social status (even when she had the potential to perform as well as man). Men have become more dominant and aggressive and the woman is subordinate and submissive. In many societies discrimination begins right from birth and girls are treated as inferior. Similarly, children from deprived classes like the scheduled caste/tribes also suffer right from their birth. As most of these deprivations are man made they can be eliminated.

---

## 7.2 OBJECTIVES

---

After going through this Unit you would be able to:

- state the disadvantages children suffer from interactive effects of multiple deprivations;
- analyse the problems of social, economic and educational deprivations of the SC and ST children;
- describe the problems of language and communication which the ST children have;
- describe the problems of parental and communal prejudices and neglect faced by girl child; and
- identify deprivation which lead to emotional and mental problems.

---

## 7.3 GENERAL PROBLEMS OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

---

The term '**disadvantaged**' can be defined as a general condition of being denied certain basic facilities that are otherwise available to most other members. The denial of these facilities can cause problems and create barriers/difficulties for those children in achieving success in their life. There are different kinds of disadvantages such as physical, social, familial, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, environmental, economic and sex.

Many children suffer from one or the other disadvantage. But there are some who suffer from multiple disadvantages. The damage caused by any one of these is fairly deep. The damage caused by multiple disadvantages can be detrimental because they have interactive effect. For example, a blind child or a child without parental love or a child without food can suffer due to each one of these factors. But think of a child who is blind, has no food and has no parents to care for. How will such a child survive? If he or she survives what kind of childhood would he or she have?

Children from adverse conditions and multiple disadvantages suffer from ill health, poor mental abilities and language skills. Malnutrition and poverty prevents them from schooling, thus they cannot have any fun of learning. They are forced to work and earn their own living. In addition, they have the problems of filthy or unhygienic surroundings. All these factors put together affect their cognitive, personal and emotional development.

Sometimes when the deprivations occur in the critical stages of development the effects are permanent and life-long, such as blindness, small body, permanent loss of certain skills as well as a negative attitude towards everything, resulting in indifference.

Let us take one example of a disadvantaged child.

### Case 1

Govinda was a 9 year old boy residing in a slum area of Bombay. He had many brothers and sisters and his father was an alcoholic. He worked in a petrol pump from 7 pm to 11pm in the night and went to morning school. Often he would find that his father had beaten his mother and was waiting to snatch Govinda's earnings of the day. If he did not give the money to his father, he was also thrashed. So he started sleeping on the footpath and avoided going home. Nobody at home thought of him, he was miserable. Even in school, his teachers would scold him as he could not do his homework and dozed off in the class. Govinda could be from any caste, Brahmin, Kshatriya or from a Scheduled caste.

After studying the above case, note down the various disadvantages Govinda had. You will note that Govinda's family lived in a slum which is an indication of their poverty. The fact that there were mouths to feed and the father did not seem to have regular income added to the problem. The home environment was not conducive since the father abused the mother and probably the children too. At a young age Govinda had to work after school hours till late at night, thus becoming a case of child labour. While most children prefer to be at home, the home environment compelled Govinda to sleep away, perhaps making him into a street child. The school teachers did not seem to be aware of his situations and punished him for not completing his work, making him vulnerable to dropping out of school.

How do you think Govinda or children like him would feel? It is possible that you may have some such children around, in your neighbourhood, or in your family. There would be some children with some other kinds of problems. What can you do for such children? Make a list of all such things that you can do for children like Govinda.

It is possible that you may have some disadvantaged children in your classes. What do you do with them? Do you feel that you can change your approach towards them? Do you think that your school as organisation can help these children?

May be, you have already handled some such children when you held the child close to you, when you wiped his or her tears, when you consoled him/her or when you sat with him/her to complete his/her homework. When you gave him/her a pencil or you picked up some last year's notebooks of other children in which there were some unused sheets and you gave the notebook to the child.

Watch the reactions of this child. He/she will show a different kind of behaviour. He/she will try to hang around you awaiting one warm glance, one affectionate pat from you. He/she will feel very happy when you give him/her these simple pleasures. You will realize that you have brought joy in the life of the child.

We have many Govindas in our society, in our classes. Don't you seat a child on the front bench when you realise that the child cannot hear properly? Don't you ask another student to help them to understand the school lessons or that they share just a small piece of their lunch packet with Govinda? Such good teacher behaviour has double effect on the children. Govinda will get adequate food and will be happy, and your other students will learn to get the joy of sharing and giving.

Then you may also come across some children who are withdrawn, quiet and avoid answering any question in the classroom. But you can see them prompting the answer to their benchmate. When you see their examination paper, you are surprised because they have written the answers much better than your expectations. You suspect that they might have copied. In reality these children do know the correct answer. But they lack the self-confidence to display their knowledge in the class. They are afraid that they would be wrong and that other classmates and even teachers may make fun of them. Occasionally, when they are forced to stand up and respond they start mumbling, stammering and even burst out crying. These children lack the feeling of self-esteem or self-worth. Nobody ever praised them when they were growing up. Nobody patted on their back. But everybody criticised and found faults with them. They, therefore, developed negative self-image. They started believing that they are no good, that they are not capable of doing anything. If these children are not reassured and praised in the childhood they may become permanently withdrawn and unsocial. (You have read about the importance of developing a positive self-concept in the previous unit.)

You too must have come across such children. Can you suggest means and ways to help these children? They may have some other mental blocks too.

Write down the various behaviour and reactions of such children.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....

Now plan your strategies to help these children restore their self-worth. What steps would you follow?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

Occasionally you may find children from these deprived groups who are very sharp. Their thinking, mode of answering could be different but quite logical. They often ask you questions which you cannot answer. But they are disinterested in the everyday class. They yawn, they draw pictures in books or distract other children. You soon realise that they are gifted or children of superior abilities, but for them the normal classroom teaching or other activities are boring. Lot of tact is required to handle such children. In a subtle way you have to identify the individuality and originality of these children. If you do not, they will lose interest. You have to nurture these children with extra care. These children often do not fit into the normal classroom conditions or in the expected pattern of their age-mates. Their potentialities could be meaningfully utilised in a variety of ways. Such a child could be a responsible leader in your classroom or even outside the classroom. Through such children not only would you get the pleasure of producing a good student but you can also win trust of the community where he/she resides.

**Check Your Progress**

**Notes:** a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the Block.

1. i) State whether the following statements are true or false.
  - a) Social stratification gives people a sense of identity. (T/F)
  - b) Women are discriminated against as they are naturally inferior. (T/F)
  - c) The disadvantaged children are those who have been denied basic facilities due to their social circumstances. (T/F)
  - d) Children from lower castes cannot expect to be treated equally with upper castes. (T/F)
  - e) Children who have a poor self-image are also at a disadvantage. (T/F)
- ii) Fill in the blanks:
  - a) The psychological impact of deprivations is indicated by .....
  - b) Multiple disadvantages have an..... effect.
  - c) As a teacher you can help a deprived child by.....

---

## 7.4 SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF THE SC AND ST CHILDREN

---

The terms 'scheduled caste' and 'scheduled tribes' are used mainly in the context of Indian society. Caste is a specific sub-group which is determined primarily by birth. In ancient India, social stratification was in four major groups – the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Sudras. Later many more stratified groups emerged. The stratification was governed by the nature of occupation and socio-economic and political power held by that group. There was a noticeable hierarchy in these groups. They came to be known as **castes**. Some castes were considered superior to others.

Children born in the specific caste and occupation group began learning about the occupation or craft very early in life without even going to schools. But the groups which had no craft and were assigned only menial jobs suffered great social discrimination. They were supposed to be subordinate to all the upper castes. There are a large number of such socially, economically deprived castes and they were later grouped together as **scheduled castes**.

### Scheduled Castes

The term Scheduled Caste (SC) was first adopted in 1935 when the lowest ranking castes were listed in a schedule prepared by a commission appointed by the Central Government for the purpose of statutory safeguards and other benefits. This group is diverse and large totalling about 100 million. The members belong to numerous sub-castes each of which has its own identity, traditions and characteristics. While the SC group was always a part of the regular society the scheduled tribes, as the name suggests, refer to territorially bound communities. The bulk of them live in the isolation of hills and forests. They have a distinct ethnic and cultural focus which gives them a separate identity.

The problems of the children from these communities are interwoven each being a cause and effect of the other. For example, when the occupation of the family is menial, it does not fetch adequate wages and low wages lead to poverty. This poverty often becomes the cause of ill health, malnutrition, inferior surroundings or habitats. Parents of these children were also born in these conditions. They did not have access to schooling and education. The children of such houses have to earn their livings from very young age. Naturally they cannot go to school and hence they remain illiterate. Thus the awareness that comes with formal schooling and the job opportunities available for literates are denied to them and in turn to their children.

Think of Govinda. He had to work ten hours a day and then go to school. Some children have to work for longer hours and they cannot go to schools. Many children live in villages and they do not have convenient schools.

### Case 2

Mallanna is one such child. His father is not a drunkard like Govinda's. He works on somebody else's farm in a remote village. Mallanna's father used to take him along to the farm ever since he was five years old. Now Mallanna is ten years old. He can do many jobs on the farm by himself. His two younger brothers also go to the fields. He also has two sisters who help in all the work at home. But yet they do not get a square meal everyday because there are no grain in the house. They do not even have clean water to drink. So they go out everyday and eat anything that they find and drink any water that is available in the ponds. Now this food can be infectious. Mallanna and his brothers often become ill: One of his younger brother

died. When they become ill often they cannot walk up to the primary health centre which is far away. In earlier days Mallanna used to share his food with his brothers and sister. But soon he started eating the food all by himself because he himself felt very hungry after work at the farm and there was very little food to share. Once Mallanna's brother tried to snatch the food from his hand. So Mallanna pushed him hard. His brother was struck with a stone and started bleeding in the head.

If we compare Mallanna with Govinda, the latter at least can go to school. But he does not have any books, notebooks or pencils. He also has no energy and time to do his homework.

Read Mallanna's case. Write down all the problems that Mallanna is facing. What do you think, you, as a socially aware person should do for children like Mallanna?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

From the case of Mallanna you can identify that as a consequence of low level of family income the scheduled caste families' children also suffer from other handicaps like inadequate housing , poor sanitation, unhealthy and unhygienic living conditions which prove harmful to the physical well-being and growth of children.

During early years of life these children also can learn many things, but they must have the opportunities and possibilities. If the parents are ignorant and illiterate, they cannot provide opportunities to meet the mental and intellectual needs of children. All children need to go to school, so that they can learn to read, write, speak and communicate properly. It is also necessary that they learn to think and apply their information in the appropriate context. But if the children are not stimulated to think they will not develop the skills of thinking, organising their thoughts and planning for future needs.

In addition to educational deprivations and physical hazards like health, sanitation and also mental deprivation, an individual's membership in a certain social class has important implication for his/her socialisation, his/her personal development and his/her life-style. It is well known that different life conditions lead to different concepts, social reality, aspirations, as well as of what is desirable.

The socialisation process is governed by different child rearing practices prevailing in the respective social groups. There are also special ways of teaching and

emphasising what is desirable. For example, among the SC families, parents emphasise much on obedience as a value. They value conformity to the external prescriptions of the society.

The physical realities of SC children and their specific methods of do's and don'ts affect the social behaviour pattern of children. The children are socialized in very homogeneous and segregated groups and thus suffer from alienation from other larger groups.

The deprivations of socio-cultural involvement can be detrimental to the social development of such children. Apathy, anxiety, timidity, withdrawal, aggression and hostility are some of the outcomes. They are deprived of interpersonal support that is necessary for everybody. Though social legislations are prescribed to help these groups overcome the disparities, it may still take many years before changes actually start taking place.

### **Scheduled Tribe**

In case of Scheduled tribe (ST) children, there is an additional problem of language. The medium of instruction even in the lowest classes is not the local tribal language but the standard regional language. Often the teachers are non-tribal with low or no sympathy or empathy with the tribal cultural environment. Besides, the school curriculum, the content as expressed in school textbooks, timings, vacations, etc., are out of tune with the surroundings and the tribal life cycle.

The institution of 'Ashram Shalas' as residential schools for the SC and ST children have helped in their progress. The effort is tremendous but results are not comparable. Besides the educational handicaps, there is cultural deprivation in families and communities of SC and ST.

The experiential world of 'scheduled tribes' children is quite different than what one can imagine. The stories told to them through the books not interest them. Their hobbies, their curiosities and their knowledge or awareness is just different from the general public. For example, there could be a lesson about the train journey which an urban SC child can easily comprehend. But the very concepts of train does not evoke any picture or an image of a train in the mind of ST children. They cannot imagine what a train looks like. These children need to be taught through their own medium. We teachers have to spend not days but weeks with them in their natural habitat to understand them, to learn their ways of interacting, appreciating and labelling a phenomenon. We must write textbooks and prepare syllabi which will appeal to them. The textbooks should include examples from the life of the tribal children.

The tribal children can identify sounds and classify them in different ways, for example, identifying a certain sound which is alarming and hence running for shelter is common and one need not get upset. Again, the behaviour for reward, praise, punishment could be different, for example, standing in a corner, or running around a school five times may not be perceived as a punishment.

The tribal children can walk through a forest with great skill and vigour. They could be good at the game of Archery but games like Hockey may not interest them. Thus the skill of a teacher lies in identifying their experiential world and using those experiences for teaching.

### Check Your Progress

- Notes:** a) Write your answers in the space given below.  
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the Block.
2. Read the following statements and fill in the blanks.
- i) Caste is the specific sub-group determined by .....
  - ii) The term SC was first adopted in the year .....
  - iii) When occupation is menial it may not fetch adequate .....
  - iv) The SC children's aggression can be due to ..... children.
  - v) The language barrier is predominant for ..... children.

## 7.5 TYPICAL PROBLEMS OF THE GIRL CHILD

“ Birth of a girl child! Grant it elsewhere. Here grant a son.”

This couplet of Atharva Veda written more than thousands years ago appears to be true even today in modern India. In spite of modernisation, technical advancements, industrialisation, literacy and equality rights, parents still pray thus.

Why do parents feel this way? What is so painful about a girl child? A society cannot progress without the girls and women, then why are the mother, wife, sisters and daughters not given equal status?

In most of the societies girls and women are considered to be inferior to men. Girls are treated as a liability. Education of girls is a waste of scarce resources. This is because our social norms are built around the belief that girls have only a domestic role in the household economy, she does not provide for the family but is only a consumer. Her use is only as a potential child bearer and rearer. This perception of parents, community and even policy-makers is the root cause of social discrimination of girls.

What is the role of a girl in the nation's economy? Is she a resource or only a consumer? Medically and constitutionally females and males are not very different. A female brain, heart, lungs and limbs do the same function except that female is smaller in size and has a uterus and female hormones, which are eventually necessary for child-bearing. This quality need not undermine her intellectual abilities or even leadership qualities for any social interaction.

Who determines the status and the roles of males and females? Most of the religious texts written in medieval period portray woman as inferior to man (Eve coming out of the rib of man). Thus, this discrimination was made centuries ago, when agriculture was the main occupation when bull (or male horse as in Europe) was considered more useful for ploughing. The discrimination begins at home when a girl is born and, in some cases even before she is born. Researches show that daughters are breast fed less often and nursed for shorter duration than sons. There are dietary insufficiencies both qualitatively and quantitatively. Girls are more often undernourished than boys. Now with industrial civilisation is catching in India brute force is less required than intelligence.

Imagine an evening in a village, what are the activities men, women, boys and girls are engaged in? Make a list in the format given below:

Men	Women	Boys	Girls
Smoking gossiping	Cooking Washing	Playing	Playing with sublings helping mother
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

In education about 33% of all the girls in India are not even enrolled at the primary level. After enrolment the rate of drop-out is alarming. Only one out of seven reach the secondary level and less than three out of hundred receive education beyond high school. Many factors are responsible for girls not being educated. Parents



believe that (1) girl's education has no relevance for her future life, (2) if girls are educated they get ideas of equality, (3) when they invest in a girl's education there are no returns.

Read the following case.

**Case 3**

Gangamma is a ten year old girl and comes from a family of three brothers and three sisters. Her parents are cultivators and agricultural labourers. Two of her brothers go to school. Her sister stays at home to look after the youngest brother. The family owns two buffaloes and some hens. Gangamma gets up at 6 a.m. She washes the vessels, sweeps the floor, collects the dung and makes dung cakes for fuel and for selling. She also cleans up the place where the hens are sheltered and lets them loose, keeping a constant watch on them and the chicks. She collects the eggs which her mother later sells. Meanwhile her mother cooks and her sister looks after the baby.

Thereafter, Gangamma and her sister help the brothers and father to get ready for school and work. After the brothers have left for school and parents have gone to work, Gangamma and her sister have their meals. Later she goes to graze the cattle. She often carries her younger brother. She also collects firewood. Her elder sister goes to work and Gangamma looks after the buffaloes, hens and her younger brother. In the evening her sister returns home, fetches water, and cooks for the family. By that time her mother returns home. She then sends Gangamma and her sister to a night school where they get about 3 hours to read. Gangamma feels completely tired and hence is not very receptive to what happens in the school.

You may realize that there is nothing unusual in Gangamma's case.

Make a list of the tasks which Gangamma is performing.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....
7. ....

Now make a list of jobs which her brothers are doing.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

The above lists can easily point out the discrimination that exists in our society against girls.

After reviewing the similar state of affairs in our neighbouring countries, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries felt a need to highlight the problems of girl child indicating that girls in these countries face additional problems. The problems arise not only because the country or the family is poor, but also because the country does not realise the immense potential they are wasting by denying equal status and opportunities to girls.

When we talk to parents who themselves are educated, they express a concern for the protection of a girl, because they feel that she is vulnerable physically and can be hence traumatised physically and mentally. For this, certain protective measures are essential in the childhood. The solution lies in training the girls for self-defense, training them to use their intuition or sixth sense and to face any situations of this kind.

Going back to the case of Gangamma, we find that she does not enjoy school. She is too sleepy and tired. She does not realise the importance of going to school. Hence we have to make the school environment more attractive and meaningful. We have to make specific effort to ensure that girls like Gangamma do not drop and remain illiterate.

One alternative would be that we begin the school with story telling and singing session, instead of inquiring who has brought the homework and who has not, since we know that girls have no time to do their school work at home. It is better not to give them homework involving reading and writing. These activities can be done at school. It may also be possible to pair a girl with a brighter one, or somebody from the upper class with somebody from the lower class and giving the responsibility of the younger one to the older one.

The school is also a place where the children discover themselves. They form their self-concepts, realise their self-worth and self-potential. "My teacher taught this" or "my teacher said that I can read well", this kind of feed-back or praise is potentially very rewarding to a girl child who does not get encouraged at home for school activities. We may occasionally send word to the girl's parents to come to school or meet them socially at some convenient place. Here you can impress upon the parents about the girl's potentials. (It is possible that all girls are not good in studies, but they must be good in something else). We have to look for some good points in every girl so as to increase her motivation.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** a) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the Block.

3. State whether the following statements are true or false.

- i) In most societies girls are thought of as inferior to boys. (T/F)
- ii) The status of girls will increase in the society when she will be treated as a resource commodity. (T/F)
- iii) The teachings of religion alone are responsible for problems of girl children. (T/F)
- iv) It is meaningless to educate a girl because the parents have also to spend for her marriage. (T/F)
- v) More girls will come to school if there are women teachers. (T/F)

---

## 7.6 MEANS AND METHODS TO MINIMISE THE PROBLEMS OF SC/ST CHILDREN AND THE GIRL CHILD

---

The problems and suffering of the disadvantaged children are mainly due to the fact that these children are born in socially deprived houses. Thus the logical method would be to reduce these deprivations and encourage them to come into the mainstream of the society.

But the deprivations are multiple. Social discrimination has existed for centuries. It can, therefore, take long to bring the necessary social change hence the Government of India legislated a large number of social reforms through various articles of the Constitution. Simultaneously, a large number of incentives and economic schemes were floated.

Here are some Articles of the Constitution to help the SC/ST and other economically deprived sections of the society:

- i) Special scheme for social justice, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, caste, sex and place of birth, special provision for SC/ST (Article 15)
- ii) Abolition of practice of untouchability (Article 17)
- iii) Protection of right for freedom of speech (Article 12)
- iv) Prohibition of inhuman traffic and forced labour (Article 23)
- v) Provision of fundamental rights (Article 3)
- vi) State to secure a social order promotion of welfare of people (Article 38)
- vii) Appointment of special officer to investigate all matters relating to safeguards provided to SC/ST (Article 338)
- viii) The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections in particular SC and ST, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. (Article 46)

There are also special government and non-government agencies for implementing constitutional safeguards. For example, the Planning Commission schemes for promotion and development of SC & ST were floated as in the first five year plan. There are also efforts to narrow down the economic and education conditions by providing extra abilities and special schemes for reducing the cost of education and increasing occupational opportunities. Some economic incentive schemes are as follows:

1. Pre-matric scholarships
2. Post- matric scholarships
3. National talent search examination
4. Scholarships in residential and public schools (up to 500 every year)
5. Scholarships in industrial training institutes
6. Admission to educational and technical institution and medical colleges

7. Construction of special hostels for SC/ST students
8. Coaching and allied schemes
9. Training of students in different parts of ancillary services – providing books, book grants, mid-day meals, uniforms and educational material
10. Exemption of fees
11. Merit scholarships

Most of these incentives are applicable to the girls as well. In addition, there are specific programmes to promote girls' education. One such programme is mobilisation of the community through creative awareness of the importance of girls' education and developing participatory planning, implementation and monitoring techniques. The education of girls in some places is made the responsibility of local community. Many local and national programmes and schemes are to meet the needs and aspirations of girls. Some of these are as follows.

1. Providing special incentives or awards to school and communities for increasing the participation of girls.
2. Making more women teachers available to encourage the parents to send their girls to school.
3. Opening separate schools for girls wherever possible.
4. Increasing the physical facilities in schools, such as crèches for younger siblings, mid-day meals, providing books and other educational materials.
5. Adding such courses to the curriculum which will help girls make use of their earning in their day-to-day life.
6. Opening non-formal educational centres exclusively for girls and adjusting the time in these centres according to local demands.

Education of girls has been accorded top priority and is included in the country's twenty-point programme. There is free education for all girls in most of the states at least up to the secondary stage, and in some even up to the college level.

There are non-formal education and training centers, alternative schools, open schools and universities established for those girls, who under formal system of schools, cannot be educated. Minimum educational qualifications have been relaxed particularly in rural areas for women to become teachers. Pre-service and in-service training courses will be organised for non-formal educational centres for women.

---

## **7.7 LET US SUM UP**

---

Problems of disadvantaged children are different and it is essential that we understand them. Social groups and strata exist in all societies all over the world. The root cause of the disparities lies in the unequal distribution of land, power, strength and abilities acquired by different groups which tends to get stamped over a period of time.

There are various kinds of disadvantages such as physical, economic, social, cultural, intellectual and gender disadvantages which have interactive effects. Children from such adverse conditions suffer from ill-health, poor nutrition, small body, mental abnormalities, social discrimination, aggression, parental illiteracy and ignorance.

Poverty is a common factor in many conditions and often physical deprivations lead to psychological problems such as poor self-esteem, low aspirations, negative self-concept as well as apathy, indifference, aggression, hostility, delinquency, etc.

In case of SC/ST children most of these traits appear to be frequent. But the root cause lies in years of social deprivation for which a child is not responsible. It is essential that we take concrete steps to reduce this man-made social evil. The socialisation of these children begins with different priorities and need fulfillment. The ST children have an additional problem of language and communication, especially in the schools. One must understand that the experiential world of these children is so different that unless the teachers live with them, they cannot appreciate the children's problems. We need different textbooks written with familiar examples to educate these children. If the children are not brought into the mainstream it will be suicidal for the society.

Girls have two kinds of problems (i) their biology/small body size, lower strength and physiological responsibility of child-bearing and (ii) the attitude of society/community and even parents to the worth of a girl child. The potential of girls is many-fold and they can be competent in the intellectual abilities and skills as boys. Education of girls, economic independence and development of feeling of self-worth are very essential for the upliftment of any society.

---

## **7.8 UNIT-END EXERCISES**

---

1. Visit a social welfare board and enlist the programmes being followed by them, then visit a few places of their list of beneficiaries and make a first hand evaluation. Meet some teachers and students of the SC/ST community and find out their reactions about governmental intervention programme.
2. Meet five urban girls and five rural girls. Find out how they feel about being a girl.
3. Based on your observations of these girls and the scrutiny of text-books (e.g. language books) followed in primary schools. What changes would you like to make there if you are using those lessons for teaching girls in rural areas?