Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

1.1: Conceptualizing the contexts

The present research has been conceived and formulated on a wide canvas of Meo Muslim girls in India, in context of their individual as well as collective significant existence. It directly or indirectly relates to their identity, freedom, equality and meaning making in context of their life situations and aspirations. All these issues are intertwined and impinge upon each-other.

The term 'Meo' is used for the Muslim peasant caste residing primarily in the area of Mewat. The cultural area of Mewat, in actuality, is a huge region, which extend from southward of Sohna town, which is located around 65 kilometers south-west of Delhi. The areas cover large parts of Gurgaon[1] and Faridabad districts in the present day Indian state of Haryana, and, the former princely states of Alwar and Bharatpur in Rajasthan. However, reducing it from a region, it was made an independent district by dividing Gurgaon and Faridabad on April 4, 2005. It was carved out as a district almost after three decades of formation of Haryana state i.e. on 1st November, 1966. These areas are a part of the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Aravali zones. The terrain of the area is undulating- sloping from south to North- in reverse to the general direction of flow of the perennial rivers passing through the neighboring plains of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Mewat, as a region has two distinct areas: a south- western hilly and undulating tract area; and a sandy area.

This peasant caste converted and embraced Islam from Hinduism fold. Actually, the term 'Mewat' itself has been derived from the term 'Meo', who retained many of their earlier socio-culture and religious traditions. Many among Meos, claim that their ancestors were high caste Hindu Rajput or warrior descent. This is why, it is found, that, many of them still have retained their Hindu caste names, and, also equally celebrate, both, Muslim and Hindu festivals, though these have been liquidated in recent years. Some of the studies (Channing[2], 1882; Harris[3], 1907) suggest that the

majority of the Meos are the descendants of lower Hindu caste converts, who, claimed to their Rajput ancestry alongside their gradual Islamization, so as to enhance their social standing and still feel pride in retaining it. In actuality, they belonged to many different castes and not just to that of the Rajput (Aggrawal[4], 1969). Many Meos still follow the 'gotra' system prevalent in the Hindus and avoid marrying in the same 'gotra' as followed in the Hindus. Such gotra system is not followed in Islam, and, in marriages among Muslims, there is no such restriction. Meos are the freedom loving community. This is why, they never accepted the suzerainty of any of the Mughal rulers or the British masters and always resisted to come under sway of any of these powers.

Meos in the entire region are extremely poor. They depend largely on the small rain fed farms and supplement their income by involving themselves in animal husbandry. The region of Mewat had faced severe drought, at regular intervals, which, led the Meos deep into financial debt at the hands of Jain and Hindu Bania moneylenders. The area had also seen '*tablighi*[5] *movement*' since 1940's, so as to promote Islam and familiarize Meos community with the rule of the Sharia. The works of the tablighi movement is responsible for the development of chasm between the Meos community, and, the Hindu peasant communities, such as, Gujars, Yadavas and Jats settled in the adjacent areas. The current political development has also widened the chasm among the Meos and some other religious group of the area as witnessed by recent incidents of clash in the area.

1.2: Post-partition educational development: Muslims and the Meos community

The period after partition was full of crisis for Muslims and hence, for Meos the situation was not very different. From among the Muslims, the educated rich and middle classes, after partition of India, migrated to Pakistan, in an anticipating of better job prospects. Their migration, left behind in India, the poor illiterate masses (Hasan[6], 1981) for whom daily life earning was more important for their survival. Even, till date, when India is seen, as the fastest growing economy globally, it is a shared perception among historians, politicians and others, that, Muslims in general lagged behind the other communities (Shah[7], 2007; Khalidi[8], 2006). This is why, the

Sachar Committee Report also acknowledged that Muslim community in general exhibit '*deficit and deprivation in practically all dimensions of development*' (p.237).

Under this socio-economic situation existing among the Muslim community in general, and, the Meos community in particular, the Tablighi Jamaat, actively worked at the ground level and generated mass movement among the Meos community. They were able to establish several Islamic Madarsas in the region where Urdu, became the medium of instruction in these madarsas. This enabled a new generation of literate Meos, who gained access to Islamic literatures. Due to lack of mainstream schools in the areas as well as the efforts of tablighi movement, people started sending their children for Madarsas education that fulfilled their psychological and intellectual needs. This led to the general perception among many people that Meos do not prefer sending their children to schools, rather, they remain inclined towards Madarsas education as they are mainly concerned about religious education.

In fact, Madarsas education did not enjoy, the social prestige, during the colonial period, as, the British officials, and, even the modern Muslim reformers, considered Madarsas as an obstacle to the progress of Muslim community (Mahmood[9], 1981). The Sachar Committee Report (2006) suggests that, only 4% students from the Muslim population across the country go to Madarsas, where as, 66% goes to government schools and 30% goes to private schools. Similar understanding is reflected from NCERT, which suggests that only 3% to 4% Muslims prefer Madarsas. Therefore, perceiving that Meos prefer madarsas has serious implications on their educational development, since, banking upon Madarsas education and their modernization, actually, will not address the educational backwardness of larger population of the community. Such measures of the government, further erodes the confidence of the members of the community, as they observe, that, policies and programmes framed by the authorities for removing their backwardness, often remain poorly directed, and become a paper work, due to the apathy of the bureaucracy (Siddiqui[10], 2004).

Education among the Meos of the entire region of Mewat has remained lowest in the country, since long for a number of reasons ranging from geographical topographical

reasons, to rare availability of schools that could address the school going population. Therefore, a number of factors have contributed to the backwardness among the Meo community. However, the persistent backwardness of the region itself can be attributed to the abysmal lack of education. The cohort data on educational statistics show that, the enrolment at the primary level are very high, however, the retention rate, after the lower primary stage, becomes very low. Further, with regard to Meo girls, the situation worsens with the withdrawal rate after lower primary, and, it shoots up to as high as 85%. Bhatty[11], (1998) says that the consistent poor educational facilities among the area, lack of commitment and deficient accountability of teachers towards their profession, along with the insensitivity towards the community's need is clearly reflected. The entire region lacks the sufficient availability of high schools for both boys and girls that could match the population of school going children. Ahmad[12] (2005) says that, though some of the schools in the name of English medium school opened up in the region by some private agencies, but they lack basic infrastructure and economy to provide quality education. Therefore, these handfuls of schools are unable to provide good teachers who can send positive message among the community. Most of the teachers in these schools are untrained and are unaware of the pedagogical understanding. Further, these schools run up to primary level, after which, they do not have any blue print to mainstream the students passing out of these schools. As a result, the member of the community, who send their children to these schools, find it difficult, to mainstream their children for further classes, as, high and senior-secondary level schools are very scarce in the region. Even if it exists, they can not meet the demand of schools going population of children, which is much higher than the number of schools. Therefore, the unavailability of schools contributes considerably to lessen the interest in studies. Even ICSSR[13] (2008) mentions that the availability of institute of learning in the area is scarce, where as, a handful of polytechnic and inter-college are located at an average distance varying from 7 kilometer for girls' primary institute, to 28 kilometer for training institutes. Such distance is one of the most important reasons for not sending girls for higher studies.

Table 1.1: Availability of educational institutions in Mewat district

Educational institutions	Villages not having educational institutions	Having	Average distance
Primary school (boys/ co-ed)	0	30	NA
Primary school (girls)	9	21	7.3
Middle schools (boys/ co-ed)	5	25	4.8
Middle schools (girls)	12	18	6.6
High/Higher secondary (boys/ co-ed)	18	12	6.3
High/Higher secondary (girls)	18	12	8.6
Inter college	23	7	15.7
ITI	25	5	16.9
Polytechnic	24	6	19.8
Other training school	16	14	28.5
Religious school	16	14	-

Source: Survey done by ICSSR (2008), p.13

The area also see some of the schools run by the voluntary organizations mostly, till primary schools, however, most of such schools fail to secure government recognition for mainstreaming the students after primary classes. Further, the comparative status of education of Meos girls with other girls of the region shows a grim picture. The illiteracy among both, Hindus and Muslims girls of the Mewat region, show that it is much higher, as compared to other region of the state, and, of India. The percentage of literacy rates among Hindu female decreases with the increase in the classes, which is 3.34% at middle level, 2.05% at high level, and, nil at higher secondary level. Where as, with the Meo girls, it is slightly better, as compared to Hindu girls of the area, but, shows a very disheartening picture. In case of Meos girls, it is 2.94% at middle level, 0.50% at high level and 0.47% at higher secondary level.

Table 1.2: Educational status of household members

Educational status	Hindus			Meo Muslims			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Illiterate	29.63	65.17	45.09	33.31	64.61	47.54	32.68	64.74	47.15
Below primary or informal education	22.07	19.78	21.08	27.74	23.86	25.98	26.80	23.19	25.17
Primary	20.62	8.55	15.37	15.37	7.03	11.58	16.26	7.27	12.20
Middle	15.50	3.34	10.21	11.50	2.94	7.61	12.15	3.00	8.02
Management or commercial school course (vocational)	2.40	0.23	1.46	1.20	0.20	0.75	1.40	0.21	0.86
High school	7.33	2.05	5.03	7.43	0.50	4.28	7.42	0.74	4.40
Higher secondary	1.57	0.00	0.88	1.85	0.47	1.22	1.81	0.40	1.17
Technical diploma or certificate below degree	0.55	0.20	0.40	0.44	0.00	0.24	0.46	0.03	0.27
Technical or professional degree	0.15	0.24	0.19	0.44	0.17	0.32	0.40	0.18	0.30
Graduate degree	0.18	0.20	0.19	0.41	0.19	0.31	0.37	0.19	0.29
Post graduate degree	0.00	0.24	0.10	0.29	0.00	0.16	0.25	0.04	0.15
Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.01
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey done by ICSSR (2008), p.22; M= Male, F= Female, T= Total

The statistics shows that Meo girls are the most disadvantaged and backward as compared to others. Bhatty (1998) in her study showed that female literacy rates among Meos in Mewat region were 1.76% which is the lowest in the country with the highest dropout rates among the girls in the country. This is why, education among the Meos has always remained a matter of concern. However, in the preceding decades the perception of the Meos community has changed and many Meos children especially girls are coming forward to take education. As a result, almost 39 Madarsas are running Open Basic Education (OBE) within Mewat. The OBE is an initiative taken by National Institute of Open Schooling, Delhi that run the programme of basic education. The positive perception for education among Meos also reflect from the census reports which shows, that, the literacy rate among Meos girls in Mewat has

increased up to 36.60% (census, 2011) which was 23.90% according to 2001 census report.

Table 1.3: Literacy and sex ratio in rural Mewat-2001 & 2011

Tehsil	Literacy rate						Sex ratio			
	Male		Female		Total		All		Child (0-6)	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Taoru	70.5	89.05	34.5	73.53	53.6	81.70	884	886	880	807
Nuh	61.8	77.91	23.2	60.47	43.6	69.62	891	912	888	942
Firozpur Jhirka	56.7	79.20	17.4	58.66	38.0	69.35	904	909	894	852
Punhana	53.6	78.98	15.3	52.72	35.3	66.41	910	915	904	902
Mewat District	**59.9**	**69.94**	**21.6**	**36.60**	**41.8**	**54.08**	**894**	**907**	**891**	**906**
Haryana	75.4	84.06	49.3	65.94	63.2	75.55	866	879	823	834

Source: Village level directory, Census, 2001& 2011

Another factor that has marked its negative impact upon the education of Meo girls is the fear of insecurity of the girls in the region which makes the parents reluctant, to send their girl child to far off places for study. Therefore, many girls lose the opportunity to receive education. Further, shortage of schools and teachers with redundant instructional strategies demoralize students towards schooling. Apart form these, early marriage in the Meos, limits their educational prospects as employment of Meo girls outside their home is seen as non-accepted practice among the community. The Meo girls within the strongly patriarchal rural community of Mewat face many disadvantages. As for example, they continuously engage themselves in household chores and actively participate in work, such as, animal husbandry and agriculture. Their engagement in these works, everyday, since dawn to dusk, shapes their worldviews and experiences. The profile of activities of Meo girls suggests that their workload is much higher than that of men. Their everyday experiences suggest, that, many socio-cultural traditions have exclusively reserved for women. The Meo girl in their family is often expected to help her mother to carry out the entire household activities, and, looking after her younger siblings. They are socialized quite differently and hence, their socialization directly or indirectly affects their education, and ultimately, shapes their perception. Further, in terms of education, men and women do

not have the same access to schooling. Educating a son often appears to be universally endorsed by Meos for economic reasons. They recognize that while education may not lead to a salaried job in formal sector, it helps them to cope with the demands of modern living.

In Mewat, the patterns of inequality in education, correlates significantly and consistently with several factors, such as, gender and poverty, and, suggest a very complex intersection that produces persistent education exclusion. The shaping of the experiences of any individual as a member of the community depends largely upon the social group that controls the educational structure, through the processes of political powers. Hence, for the construction of knowledge, institutional education becomes important. To understand how knowledge and understanding shapes the world view and life aspiration of Meo girls, it was necessary to observe those processes, which remains associated with them. The persistent backwardness of Meo girls are largely due to their lack of education[14] and because of their being doubly marginalized. The formal education system within the area is ineffective and uninspiring for potential student community. The apathy of the government officials and lack of accountability at all the levels have contributed immensely for such prevailing educational situation in the area. The condition of the government schools available in the area is hardly different from the other region with broken chair, windowpanes and unavailability of proper toilet and drinking water facility. Bhatti (1995) and Ahmad (2005) suggest that the school usually remain empty with a few teachers idling around, who tells, that, the student do not come to school because, the Meos do not value education. However, the members of the community want their children to go to school to learn and not to roam around (Ahmad, 2005). They are specifically concerned about their daughters, and fear, that, in the absence of teachers, they may get involved with boys that will bring bad name to the family. In fact, the educational statistics also shows that the enrolment rate at the primary level are high, but, a very low retention rate after the lower primary stage is reflected. In the case of girls the situation is worse as the withdrawal rate after lower primary goes up as high as 85%.

Besides all these, there is a total insensitivity towards the community's need with regard to education on the part of the government. This is also because of the identity

related issues of the Meo community. Actually, identity is a social construct[15] and is often manipulated[16] in everyday life situations, and, the cultural politics of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and other social categories[17]. It is argued that Meos identity and status as a religious group generate social and psychological insecurities, which affect their education in multiple ways. Therefore, under such case, the decrease in education occurs due to two major factors, viz. a viz. desire for acculturation and the desire for socio-economic mobility[18]. Psychologically and religiously, majority of Meos are aware that their identity is seen as hateful, and, alien. They also perceive that the powerful forces of the society want to dominate and rule them and also try to make them politically impotent[19]. Therefore, in contexts of education, shaping of experiences, worldview and life aspirations of Meo girls must be seen in tandem in relation to the global events and movements within the country[20].

There is some socio-cultural and linguistic non-commensurability that has widened a chasm between the two communities due to their historical circumstances which are becoming problematic for their developments in the present Indian socio-political situation. The psychological impact of the lingual identity of the Meo community has lessened their chance of development in the era of contest mobility. Further, majority of Meos are rural and live in demographically 'underdeveloped' areas of developed Haryana. The strong feeling of community with several insecurities makes it compulsive for them to live in a cluster of illiterate, poor and tradition bound areas. Most of these areas do not have proper facility of schooling and other amenities. However, even within their cultural contexts, Meo girls are showing positive sign towards schooling and coming forward for education breaking all the hurdles and cultural boundaries. Actually, Meo girls do not practice purdah, and hence, their retention in school can considerably be enhanced with appropriate steps so as to make them feel secure in and outside the schools. Even, most of the community members who were earlier reluctant to send their girl child to schools have recognized the value of education, and, coming forward to send their girl child to schools. No doubt, a small percentage of educated people from within Meo community have failed to bring about any rapid change[21] but, one can not deny the reflection of changing attitude towards education among Meo community in general, and, Meo girls, in particular.

This also reflects from the fact that, many girls, breaking the socio-cultural boundaries, have made their presence felt by excelling in the field of education and have become a motivating factors for others to come forward.

1.3: Envisioning Perspectives

The present section attempts to develop a theoretical discourse that seriously engages upon certain concepts. All these concepts (schooling, social exclusion, disadvantage, marginalization, resistance and social justice) are relevant in context of the research taken up, as it impinge upon each-other and directly relates to the community upon which the research has been taken up. While critically understanding these concepts, and, situating the perspectives, the researcher has tried to engage the challenges posed by Marcuse[22] (1960) who says,

> *'the divorce of thought from action and theory from practice is a part of un-free world. No theory and no thought can undo it; but, theory may help to prepare the ground for their possible re-union. The ability of thought to develop a logic and language of contradiction is pre-requisite for this task.'*

The challenges posed in the above thought of Marcuse centers around the need to develop critical understanding fashioned in theoretical discourse. This is because, it mediates, the possibility for social action and transformation, that will be, emancipatory. Hence, in this section, the researcher has tried to develop the discourse that, acknowledges a vital concern relating to the area of sociology of education. An attempt has also been made to analyze these concepts in context of human agency and structure, so that, it should help to understand, how, the dynamics of domination and contestation, mediates the specific forms, the Meos, take under their historical circumstances. Therefore, in essence, this section attempts to delve deeper analysis of the concepts in context of socio-cultural situations and practices that constitute the realm of everyday life.

1.4: The agency of schooling

The entire schooling processes plays a significant role in the life of a student, not only because of the explicitly stated activities, but, also because, the hidden curriculum that works differently in the life of children. This is because students coming to school belong to different socio-cultural, historico-political and economical background.

Therefore, developing conceptual understanding upon schooling in context of its functions was directly linked to this research. The works that were particularly significant to build understanding upon schooling and its functions were that of Parsons, (1959); Frere[23], (1985); Kumar[24], (2005); Apple[25], (2000); and Giroux[26], (2005) as all of these works revolves around the political character of schooling. The researcher has tried to conceptualize schooling by drawing my understanding primarily upon these theoretical works.

There are two major theories that relates to schooling. The thinkers belonging to the *functionalist* group, believes 'modern' schools, to be the most important social institution for the development of children, as it teaches common culture shared by the society. Parsons[27] (1959) belonging to this group believes, that, school teaches its pupil to think, how to cross the narrow boundaries of the self and the family, and, to move towards a more universal thinking and behaving. Therefore, schooling, as an agency of socialization, make the pupils learn to work, with many other individual, without even growing with them. With this perception in mind, he stresses upon providing suitable education, so that, it develop social values and norms that will enable people to live with each-other even in case of differing occupations and culture. Suggesting prescriptive role-performance for the students Parsons (1959; p.51) says,

> *'capacities can be broken down into two components, the first being competence or the skill to perform the task involved in the individual's roles, and the role-responsibility or the capacity to live up to other people's expectations of the interpersonal behaviour appropriate to these roles[28].'*

However, this view of schooling, attempts to understand principles of education, only in instrumental terms, and, locate it in an individual. This is why, the functionalists, overlook the relations among power, knowledge and ideology that work simultaneously in school, and therefore, ignore the social order within school. It is due to this ignorance, he see schooling, merely, as instructional sites. The functionalists, also ignore the fact, that, school is also associated with cultural and political life of the students, and, represent a place of contestation and struggle, among different cultural and economic groups. This is presented by the radical thinkers.

The radical group of thinkers, often known as *conflict theorists,* differs from the functionalists, and, sees the processes of schooling, in terms of power relations. They, therefore, challenge the traditionalist paradigm. They believe, that, conventional schools just teach children, how to remain submissive, and, fail to equip students, with skills to enter into workforce, and, challenge the inequality and injustice meted out to them. Some of radical thinkers, such as, Frere (1985), Kumar[29] (1987), Apple[30] (2000), Pathak[31] (2002) believe, that, the conventional schools prepare its pupils, to accept mindless instructions from the powerful, dutifully and obediently, without even questioning it. In order to this, the schools and its processes '*reproduces the domination of the powerful*'[32], who controls the processes of schooling through curriculum, contents, language, examination and so on. The conflict theorists, base their understanding upon the deepest divisions in complex Indian society, and argue, that, there is a need of '*special universal cultures*[33]' to be incorporated in the curriculum, for the emancipation of pupil, as, there is a huge rural and urban divide. Frere (1985) visualizes education, as a '*banking system*[34]', in which, students' involvement, often, remain as a depositories i.e. patiently receiving, memorizing and repeating, the task provided by the dominant i.e. the depositor, who, often, works as oppressor. Under such system of schooling, therefore, knowledge becomes a gift, by the powerful i.e. the oppressor, who considers themselves as the knowledgeable. Using this analogy of 'gift', Kumar[35] (2009) says, that, '*when we give a give a gift, we often, choose it, by considering the receiver's personality, likes and needs*[36]'. However, applying this analogy on the entire schooling processes of the child, the difficulty arises, that, education is not limited to one child and their likes and desires, but, for millions of children. This is why, the chances of creation and recreation, do not find place in schooling. Hence, the processes of schooling, becomes alienating[37]. In fact, under such schooling system, the oppressors try to change '*the consciousness of the oppressed and not the situation which oppress them*[38]'. The reason behind this, lies, in the maintenance and reproduction of power. Thus, '*the more the oppressed adapt to such situation, the more easily they can be dominated*[39]'. Frere (1985) suggests that, the solution from such circumstances, lies, in the transformation of the structure of schooling, as, it will liberate the students. Just integrating them into the existing structure without changing it, will continue, the oppression of students. This

is also because '*the school curriculum has no reference to children's life outside the school*[40]'. Trying to find the reasons for such precarious situation, Kumar (2005, p.50) says that, '*the hiatus between the curriculum and the learner's social milieu is part of colonial and pre-colonial legacies of our education system*[41]' which overlooked the question of equity and equality. Actually, it is '*in this context of curriculum, colonial perceptions and understanding of Indian society shaped the state's policy on what ought to be taught in the school*[42] without even challenging the curriculum. This is why, the processes of schooling are disassociated with the child's immediate socio-cultural and physical milieu which becomes one of the major reasons of estrangement from schooling[43].

Sensing this power relation in schooling processes, Gandhi proposed 'basic education', which had also a symbolic reason, apart from its functional aspects. Functionally, it proposed the introduction of local crafts and productive skills in schools with the idea that the schooling processes will get related to process of production in the local milieu. However, Kumar (2009; p.10) says that,

> '*symbolically, by proposing local crafts and production-related skills and knowledge in the school, Gandhi was proposing the allocation of a substantive place in the school curriculum to system of knowledge developed by and associated with oppressed groups of Indian society*[44]'.

In fact, had the basic education been implemented effectively, it could have '*seriously disturbed the hierarchy of the different monopolies of knowledge in our caste based Indian society*[45]' and hence, the cultural capital of the dominant class would have been challenged, as, it could not have carried the exclusive validity as appropriate school knowledge. Thus, the dominant group often utilizes education in their own favour, in such a manner, that, the voices of the disadvantaged should be phased out, and, become inaudible. Actually, the civilized dynamics of education do not let the schooling processes include the concerns of oppressed groups, and, that is why, we see existence of exclusive schools for the elites, other than, that of the common mass. In this context, Kumar (2009; p.44) says, that, '*the co-existence of parallel schools ensures that children of the better-off are separated early, from the children of the poor*'.

Another critical thinker Giroux[46], (2005) says,

> *'if public education is a crucial sphere for creating citizens equipped to exercise their freedoms and competent to question the basic assumptions that govern democratic political life, teachers in both public schools and higher education will have to assume their responsibility as citizen-scholars by taking critical positions; relating their work to larger social issues; offering students' knowledge, debate and dialogue about pressing social problems; and providing conditions for students to have hope and believe that civic life matters and that they can make a difference in shaping it so as to expand its democratic possibilities for all groups.'*

This suggests for educators, that, it is essential to take position and bring to the fore, ideas and researches, that should critically challenge the official knowledge, so as to help pupil, empower, as individual, and, as a social change agent. In fact, school as a state apparatus, function to maintain, and, reproduce the labour force, which in-turn, act in accordance with the dictates of capitalist and their institutions. Therefore, we find the structuring and re-structuring of the workplace, according to everyday routines and practices, which shape the social relations within classroom. Under such hidden curriculum, we often find, that, resources are selected, organized and distributed in schools, so as to maintain the power relations. This is why, the traditionalists do not give importance to praxis, subjectivity, class-struggle, emancipation and so on. Contrary to this, the radicals, make relations with schools, power and society.

Apple[47] (1993) sees education in the political dimensions, and says, that, its policy and practices are politically directed by the dominant groups of the society, so as control the knowledge, which Althusser has called, an *'ideological state apparatus[48]'*. Apple, (1993) says, that, it is *'to make their knowledge legitimate and increase their power in the larger arena'* (p.10). Therefore, our educational institutions, *'fill the needs of the social division of labour in the society, and, produce the knowledge and culture required by an unequal society'* (Apple[49], 1995; p.83). He directs that, unless it is understood how schooling situate in contexts, it is difficult to analyze the realities of schooling[50]. This is because *'there is another end to the rope which binds schools to outside agencies'* (Apple, 1995. p. 65). With regard to the girls, Apple (1995, p.98) says, that,

> '*Girls seem more marginal, because, they are often pushed by male dominance to the periphery of social activity. Their free time is controlled by parents more closely. They assume apprenticeship for domestic labour, which begins at home*'.

All these works suggests, that, the processes of schooling are not only limited to the developmental aspects, rather, they assert identity formation among the pupil. These identities, pave the way for setting future course of action, either, by the individual, or, by the state.

1.5: Schooling as an agency of identity formation:

The manner in which the basic relationships are conceptualized, and, ordered in school, often shows, whether it meets the social needs or reproduces domination. Spending time in school for a longer duration, shape the identities of the child, and, how they respond to various challenges arising out of the processes of schooling. Therefore, the processes of schooling are directly linked to the formation of identity among students.

The work of Mead[51] (1934), Eric Erikson (1950[52], 1968[53]), Marcia[54] (1980), Kakkar[55] (1981) and Pathak[56] (2006) are particularly relevant works to conceptualize identity. Mead (1934, p. 135-226) emphasizes, that, the processes of social experience and activity, by which, an individual remains associated, plays, greater role in identity formation. He says, that, the social processes influence the behaviour of an individual. This makes identity a socially constructed reality, where, everyday cultural practices and the process of socialization shape the identity of an individual.

Erickson (1950, 1968) tries to understand the development of self, through eight stages of life, ranging from infancy to old age. He utilizes 'ego conflict' as the central concept that develops self. The ego conflict flows from the developmental tasks, and, remain in conflict, at each of the eight stages of life. However, the conflict may be resolved, either positively, or, negatively. He says, that, the formation of identity involves the meaning of existence, as to, who one is, what value one owns, and, what one wants to achieve, and, pursue in life. Marcia (1980) says, that, the question of identity remain very volatile, as, an individual pass through the period of adolescence. This is because, during the period of adolescence, the shaping of identity often keeps changing. This change is often attributed to interaction with different entity of the

environment, and, meaning making. Therefore, identity of a person works as a driving force, that addresses various commitments in life, such as, career, values, life aspirations, sexuality, body image, autonomy aspirations and so on. Hence, identity is related to psycho-social dimensions of an individual. This is why, a person holds multiple identities, and, acts in contexts of complex social structure, in which, they belong to various social institutions simultaneously.

Pathak (2006) suggests that, identity must also be understood in context of personal and social variables, such as, gender, religion, nationality and so on, in relation to the 'others'. This 'otherness' belongs to the groups, with which a person identifies, or, differentiates self. This is why, the worldview of an individual is determined by the identity of an individual, '*that often emanates from caste, ethnicity, language, religion, gender and nationality because of our memories of the historical past, local traditions and cultural specificities*[57]'. Pathak (2006) says that it is due to multiple identities, that, an individual develops conflict, with regard to religious identity, racism, casteism and so on. Therefore, multiple identities actually restrict an individual mind to think in a broader context, because, an individual consciousness, and, approach often remain situated in social relationships. This is why shared and inter-subjective world, becomes important, as, an individual, starts considering oneself comparatively in contexts of others. However, Kakkar (1981) points out, that, it is because of multiple identities, that, an individual, possesses personal inner world based on one's experience, and, visible external world, which s/he is socialized to lead. It is due to the influence of multiple identities that a person's behavior, and, appearance becomes dynamic. Further, due to the nature of Indian society, which is collectivist and patriarchal in nature, girls develop a relational sense of identity. Therefore, a girl projects her identity, in relation to others, and, often not, as an individual existential identity.

1.6: Thoughts on social exclusion

Throat and Newmen (2007, p. 4121-24) consider social exclusion as '*the inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic, and social functioning of the society*[58].' They also see it in terms of inequitable distribution of opportunities, due to external social reasons, where, equal access to opportunities is denied by the

dominant groups of the society. This, in turn, affects the culturally defined groups more, and, results in their further deprivation. Further, Throat and Attawell[59] (2007, p.13-19) points out that, in Indian context, it is the ascriptive characteristics, rather than, the achieved characteristics, which become the basis of exclusion. They consider, that, the ascriptive characteristics, are not agreeable to modification, because of its being a consequence of individual agency.

One of the biggest worldwide attention to the dimension of social exclusion was drawn by Amratya Sen[60] (2000) who distinguishes between situations, where, individuals are deliberately kept out, or, left out. He considers the circumstances of inclusion on deeply unfavorable terms, as 'forced inclusion'. He says, that, both of these situations can adversely affect the development of a person. Further, he considers discrimination as a particular type of exclusion that can take an active, or, passive role. It is through active discrimination, that the participation of members of a social group, are systematically refused to be accepted by those agents, who are involved in it, despite of their qualification. These dominant agents, routinely favour, members of other groups, who are equally, or, less qualified. Such consequences lead to indirect deprivation, through passive discrimination. Hence, in the passive discrimination, discouragement, and, lower self-confidence, often results, in poor performance, and, it may limit, access to income, education, and, allied fields that lead to upward mobility.

Scholars of race in the United States[61], and, of caste in India[62], have pointed out another type of discrimination i.e. market-based discrimination. This type talks of formal and informal restrictions, through selective inclusion, and, unequal treatment, on the entry of subordinate groups to the market. This type of discrimination can be seen, when persons, having same education, training, work experience and identical human capital, differ, only on personal characteristics that have no implications for productivity. They are treated unequally. Under such unequal treatment, the minority group members are denied jobs, or provided low wages, or, unfavourable working conditions. On the other hand, majority, or persons belonging to higher status are favoured in these domains. In the same manner, when members of subordinate groups face restrictions that prevent their entry into the occupations of majority group

members, then occupational discrimination occurs. In such occupational discrimination, members of subordinate groups, face, differential treatment, in the acquisition of essential services, such as, credit related to market, exclusion from property, and so, on needed to enter the market. Thus, social exclusion, works as discrimination, in its specific manifestation. Therefore, it also refers to such process by which an individual, group or groups, are restricted from full participation in the economic, educational and social institutions, that define their social membership. The marginalized groups, often, lie at the bottom of the social order, and, find themselves restricted, and repressed, as citizens. They live on the edge of society, and often experience, contradictory cultures. Thus, exclusion, actually, discriminates, segregates, isolates, and deprives the subordinate groups on several bases, such as, caste, religion, region, gender and so on, and, make them the disadvantaged one.

1.7: Exclusion emanating disadvantage

Looking to the system of schooling in India, we find the deepest divide between rural, and, urban India. The largest population of the Meos lives in the rural areas, in spite, that, they are located in one of the developed states of India. They are mostly left out of the main processes of Indian society, and, are disadvantaged[63]. The researcher has tried to understand the concept of disadvantage and marginalization, mainly, on the basis of, social-cultural dimension, and, tried to relate it to the Meo girls.

In terms of educational disadvantage, Passow[64] (1970) says, that, disadvantage usually indicates, such relatively stable condition relating to the life styles of certain social groups- including minorities and members of working classes- whose knowledge, skills and attitudes hamper learning. Therefore, it is actually a feature of social comparison extending far beyond the life of schooling. Edwards[65] (1979) suggests three major forms of explanations, focusing on why certain groups, comparatively, in terms of others, remain at a disadvantage. *Firstly*, he says, that, some groups are naturally less able than others and are, in fact, genetically inferior. This view of Edwards has been widely accepted on the basis, that, certain ethnic and minority groups, in fact, show *deficits[66],* which leads to inferiority in basic intelligence within certain groups. *Secondly,* he says, that, disadvantage is the product of faulty environment. Therefore, children from certain groups, often remain

surrounded with unsatisfactory nature of their physical, social, psychological world. This position suggests, that, there is a need to identify and remedy those environmental factors, that lead to poor cognitive, and, social functioning[67]. *Thirdly,* disadvantage is taken as a difference, and not, as a deficit. This position is taken in terms of the nature of environment that often remains dissimilar, and, hence, comparing a child from one social background, to other, is. in fact, inappropriate. Actually, the question of being disadvantage arises, when, a group sharing certain common elements, differ, in one, or, more respects, while coming in contact with each other. In case of non-existence of such contact, the question of disadvantage would not exist. Therefore, it is only in case of comparison that disadvantage takes shape.

Instruction in the regular classroom always benefits the children in their social-cultural and psychological adjustment. The general background of the Meos has often been perceived to be different and deficient. The Meo girls are socio-culturally disadvantaged, because, the educational agencies are not recognizing their background, and, the realities of their lived social world, as, distinct. The culture and social world in which they live are looked down upon, because, they are doubly impoverished, and, powerless. As disadvantaged children, the Meo girls, often experience a sharp discontinuity between the home, and, school[68]. The researcher realize, that, such conditions cannot be easily overcome, unless, the discontinuity and the difference, that exists, between their home, and school life, are taken care of. Being at the lowest ladder of disadvantaged community, the Meo girls constitute one of the doubly disadvantaged, and, marginalized communities, living in one of the most developed state of India.

1.8: Marginalization and the state

Marginalization is that social process, by which, people are pushed to the fringes of the society. Thus, a marginalized person become socially excluded and unable to avail the benefits, that, the government provide, as, it is systematically and deliberately blocked. They are also denied to participate socio-politically and get themselves integrate to the mainstream society. Thus, a marginalized person actually feels oppressed, powerless, exploited, vulnerable, and so on.

The processes that define the relation between the marginalized person and the state depend upon how they negotiate with the state. This is because, the state, play a crucial role in generating such environment, that, defines and shape marginality through its policies, laws, schemes, and so on. Therefore, discourse upon marginality must be seen in contexts of the relation that the marginalized share with the state. Actually, the approach, by which, the state become the provider to the beneficiary, has, neither helped the state, nor, the marginalized people, as, the state, often ignores, the voices of the marginalized, in making the policy for them. On the contrary, the marginalized being powerless, do not actively involve themselves in the decision making processes. Thus, the bureaucratic approaches of the governance, often strengthens the disparity, between, the state and the marginalized. This happens in spite of the legal and constitutional safeguards provided to the marginalized as a citizen. Das and Poole[69] (2004, p.3) say, that,

> '*our analytical and descriptive strategy was to distance ourselves from the entrenched image of the state as a rationalized administrative form of political organization that becomes weakened or less fully articulated along its territorial or social margins. Instead…reflect on how the practices and politics of life in these areas shaped the political, regulatory, and disciplinary practices that constitute, somehow, that thing we call the 'state''*.

Therefore, they suggest that while understanding the marginalization of the community, where, control politics of the state often remain, delicate and frail, it is important to understand the policies and practices of the state, in relation to the marginalized community.

1.9: Framework of Resistance

Understanding and conceiving the theory of resistance is particularly significant as this concept directly linked with the research being taken up. It refers to the ability and practices of the people, who engage themselves in resistance towards coercive powers. This is done in order to come out of the deplorable socio-economic conditions that they think are deliberately made, and, maintained by the dominants, in order to control the material conditions. The people who resists, also consider, that, the dominant powers are the sole reasons of their deplorable conditions. Actually,

resistance prepares a ground for social change, and enhances the chances of negotiation, by which, power relations can be altered or changed.

Many of the conceptual understanding upon the area can be derived from postcolonial analyses of subaltern subjectivities especially through the work of Bhabha (1983[70], 1984[71] & 1985[72]), O'Hanlon[73] (1988), Spivak (1985[74] & 1999[75]) and Scott[76] (1985). Apart from these, the concept in relation to gender can be understood from the work of Lilja[77] (2013).

Looking to the nature of resistance, the researcher found, that, the open form of resistance are highly visible, however, the subtler form of resistance are equally relevant, as, it is generated due to encountering daily life experience and outcomes in everyday conversations. This helps in understanding the processes relating to social change. This may take a form of organized rebellions, or collective action, depending upon the intensity of everyday resistance. With regard to the nature of resistance, Scott (1985) conceptualizes it as anonymous, disguised, opportunistic, cautious, compromising and even un-organized forms of resistance. However, David Butz[78] (2011) criticizing Scott's model of everyday resistance argues that it does not provide a base for understanding subjectivities in terms of covert form of resistance. Similarly, Mitchell[79] (1990) also argues, that, Scott's understanding of dominance as purely coercive, is faulty, because, the sample upon which Scott rely, were forced into subjugation. Actually, it is not only the discursive forms of power which lead to resistance, rather, material matters must also be taken into consideration while analyzing resistance.

The researcher believes, that, power and resistance, simultaneously co-exists together since, resistance gives strength to power, whereas, power nourishes resistance. In this regard Foucault[80] (1976, p.95-96) says, that,

> '*Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. There must always be points of insubordination at which it is possible not to escape power per say, but, to escape the particular strategy of power-relation that directs one's conduct*'.

Resistance can be seen as a response to the dominance, and, hence, it is shaped by relations of domination. Foucault (1982, p.780) says, that resistance might be used as

a *'chemical catalyst, so as to bring to light, power relations, locate their positions, and find out their point of application, and, the method used'*. However, it is not only limited to response to power, rather, it affects power relations, and may also co-exists with it. This is why, we find existence of alliances, assertions and accommodations, which is in fact, a relationship between the two i.e. power and resistance. We also find differing nature of resistance, such as, violent and non-violent, confrontational or circumventing, deconstructing or re-constructing, productive or hindering, individual or collective, accommodating or enforcing, and so on. However, the form it takes, often depends upon the site of power. But, we also find resistance, which is neither organized, nor, politically motivated. This form of resistance is reflected in everyday resistance (Scott, 1987; Martin[81], 1999) which often found to be a subtle-resistance. Several post-colonial researchers found such subtle resistance in terms of resistance narratives (Azar[82], 2002; Johanson[83], 1999); mimicry (Bhabha[84], 1994); hidden transcript (Scott, 1987) and so on. Though these studies throw light upon phenomena of resistance, however, they are unclear about its relevance and interrelations. The marginalized groups often try to negotiate and create reactions against the domination, in terms of resistance, that could be reflected in terms of demonstrations, protests and various other forms. Pointing towards rural women, Radcliff[85] (2000) says that in the resistance struggle, the rural women become the primary actors in their capacity as bearers of traditions and icons of indigenous culture. Everyday resistance, often remains disguised and hidden, and, reflects in behaviour of the marginalized.

1.10: The idea of social justice

The idea of social justice is concerned with evolving such social order which could secure suitable rights and advantages for different sections of the society, particularly for the vulnerable, and, under privileged sections. Therefore, it is necessary to discover and strike at the injustice perpetuated by the established, or prevalent social order, so as to evolve a system, that can transform, or, reconstruct the new social order based on egalitarianism. Hobhouse[86] (1965, p. 114-15) trace the concept of social justice in the stoic conception of natural equality, and, Christian conception of common brotherhood, where it says, that, all are the sons of god. But, in modern conception, it originated in the conditions of social inequalities created by the

industrial revolution, as, the ancient and medieval thinkers justified, and, rationalized social inequalities. Actually, the institution of private property after industrial revolution was responsible for division of society into masters and slaves in the ancient times, lords and serfs in the medieval times, and, capitalist and workers in the modern times. Therefore, the modern thinkers tried to demonstrate, that, all the previous social arrangements were intended to evolve such social order, that served the interests of dominant class. And hence, they realized, that, social order of the society must be based on human values discovered by the human faculty on the basis of rationality. Thus, with the industrial revolution and social injustice, social consciousness also developed, which tried to discover various manifestation of social injustice, and urged remedial solution in such circumstances. Therefore, modern concept of social justice, stemmed out of modern consciousness. Being a dynamic phenomenon, social justice demands, change in the unjust and oppressive social conditions. As far as the forms of social injustice are concerned, it differs from one community to another. The demands for social justice, therefore, also differ in different countries, societies and communities. Although, some demands are found uniformly, at universal level, such as, the cases taken up by the United Nations and its different bodies. It also poses a wider problem, because, it proposes a situation, in which, some sections are placed, more or less, permanently in a disadvantageous and under privileged position, as compared to, other section of the society.

The process of securing social justice cannot be divorced from the process of social development. The, developmental concept of social justice represents a humanist aspiration, treating justice as a matter of improving the conditions of the oppressed and underprivileged sections, not by placing them in a competitive situation, but, by creating more congenial conditions for the deprived sections.

1.11: Summing up

The above works provided the direction to the researcher to envision different perspectives, so as to understand, the social realities relating to the Meo community in general, and, Meo girls, in particular. Works of Parsons made the researcher understand schooling, as a sub-system of the society, that prepare a 'good' and 'developed' citizen. The other works such as Frere, Kumar, Apple, and Giroux

critically analyzed the functioning and helped in conceptualizing schooling in terms of power relation as to how schooling reproduce the already existing hierarchy of powers. Further, some other psychologists and theorists such as Mead, Erikson, Marcia, Kakkar and Pathak focused on identity formation within school and how multiple identities are shaped in terms of schooling of the children. These works, in fact, situated the inter-relational ethos of schooling with the marginal community.

The researcher specially focused upon the work of Throat, Newmen, Attawell and Amratya Sen to conceptualize upon social exclusion and how it works within social world. The works of Passow and Edwards, focused upon, exclusion leading to disadvantage, whereas, the work of Das and poole, were essentially focused upon marginalization. Through these works, the researcher understand that exclusion may work within the framework of both, the deprivation, as well as, marginalization, and that, it have both-socio-economic and social implications.

The idea of Foucault, Bhabha, O'Hanlon, Spivak and Scott made the researcher's conceptual understanding upon resistance. Though largely, these works upon resistance, were conducted with the agrarian community, but, it provides deep understanding upon the resistance against power and also how resistance generate power. Relating to resistance, the work of Lilja specially focused in relation to gender. Her work was conducted with the Combodian female community, and provided a deep concern with regard to female, many of whom the researcher understand, stands universally across the globe with female. Her work has provided the researcher to understand the social reality from the lenses of female. It made the understanding of the researcher that, in case of women, the ability to resist stereotyping, hierarchical constructions and low status identity often reflects through discourses. In addition to the communication with women, the prevailing discourse leads to understand resistance by them.

Mewat is the region, where, strong cultural boundaries and hierarchies act to subjugate women, and, limit their opportunities. Passing through historical times, the Meos refused the identity positions that were assigned by the dominant and powerful authority. As a community, they constantly resisted the state power and never accepted the suzerainty of any dominant authority. The exclusion of women in

general and Meo girls in particular from the socio-political and educational spaces, is often, a result of the separation of women and men into two stereotyped categories. While men in a strong patriarchy Meo community correspondence to an image of dominant decision maker, Meo women own a secondary status with less influence in decision making. However, their resistance, against this power often reflects in various other representations and in their communications. The association and disassociation between them continued to unfold throughout the work.

1.12: Rationale of the study

In spite of the constitutional provisions of equal educational opportunities to all citizens under the Indian constitution and some efforts of the government, Meos in general, and Meo girls in particular, have not been able to respond to the challenges of improving their educational status and have not kept pace with that of the rest of society. The reasons for the Meos' educational issues can not be understood in isolation. It should be understood in tandem with other indicators of human development. This is why; Cohen and Ball (1999) consistently make reference to environmental contexts, in which human development remains rooted[87]. The researcher considers, that, the dimensions related to the influence of socio-cultural, historico-political, psychological, and economic discourses of society, in general have a major influence upon the social consciousness and shaping the perception of Meo girls. Therefore, the researcher believes that it is necessary to analyze education of Meo girls in terms of above development of the country that has marred the education of Meos[88]. The post-partition development in India has created a vacuum for the community, along with the acute psychological crisis of identity. Further, the deliberate neglect of the community, on the part of the government, has marred its impact on their education and employment. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a systematic, analytical approach to understand and unravel their educational concerns and issues of Meo girls. The researcher believed it to be important to understand the education of Meos in the context of the total society, where development is slow, wages are low and unemployment is on the rise. Thus, literatures suggest, that, most Meos thinks that opportunities of upward mobility and their economic advancement

are blocked and their community has borne the brunt of official neglect and discrimination.

Thus, the research was conceived and formulated on a very wide canvas of girl children from the Meo community in India i.e. in context of their living and seeking of individual and collective significance, and, the meaning of their existence. It concerned, directly and indirectly, to their world view and meaning-making about self and the others. It also, covertly and overtly relates to their identity, freedom and security as all of these issues are interrelated and impinge on one another. Thus, the study is situated at a juncture, when, the right to free and compulsory education, and, the concerns with regard to quality of education, are central, to policy makers and in the arena of academic discourse.

The need of the present research arose, while the researcher was working on women education during her M. Ed. and M. Phil. course of study. During masters in education, the researcher worked upon education and life prospects of some sections of Muslim girls in Delhi, where as, during M. Phil. programme, the researcher took on the case studies upon Muslim women and focused her study upon attitude of women towards education. Both these researches were related to women in context of their education. The proposed area emerged as issue, when the researcher interacted with the some samples belonging to Meo community. This led the researcher to explore some of the available literatures relating to the Meo community and found their typicality. Further, in India, most of the sociological studies focus attention to what happens inside the school, as well as, within the classrooms, in everyday contexts. This helps to understand the nuances relating to prevalent inequalities that prevent the spread of equal opportunities, good quality of education, and so on more minutely, as compared to traditional research, which focuses on standard technique of set of techniques. However, very few studies have been done in context of what goes on within schools and classrooms in everyday life contexts. In larger context of 'providing equal educational opportunities to all' the state has failed in multiple ways as is reflected through prevalence of inequalities- qualitative and quantitative, gender, access and so on. Further, educationists and researchers largely tend to neglect everyday lived experience in the process of schooling- where student engage within

themselves with teachers and other school personnel that ultimately shapes their meaning making in the process of education. This is because, understanding the experiences of education, provides broader analysis of the process of educational systems where access, quality, equity and similar other factors works. This is why, what goes on in the life of students at schools becomes significant. Therefore, the researcher felt it important to understand schools- focusing participants in the process of schooling, i.e., students, teachers, community members and other participants, so as to unravel, how they negotiate with them. The purpose for deciding to do this was to examine the socio-political and cultural contexts of such meaning making and not just to provide description of how meaning is produced by different stakeholders in school. This is why, Giroux and Simon (2000; 1541) emphasize understanding of *'school as sites of struggle'* and *'pedagogy as a form of cultural politics'*. Further, they consider that, school is a place, where, *'meaning is produced through constructions of forms of power, experiences and identities that needs to be analyzed for their wider political and cultural significance'*. Hence, the researcher believed that it was necessary to pay attention to socio-political and cultural forces that shape school experience in varied social contexts. Actually, there are various ways by which the agencies of schooling could be understood. One way to understand it is the assertion of students where they rebel, question and go against the norms of school, challenge authority and so on. The other ways of understanding is to unfold the forms and roles of agencies that remain covered and do not always directly expressed, but, remain embedded in the student culture, and, exert far reaching consequences that reflect through the students' perspectives, attitudes, world-views and so on. At this level, students seek to assert their independence, from ideological and indoctrinated characteristic phenomenon of school processes. With this understanding, the researcher has tried to examine different agencies of schools that discipline, punctualize, constrain and shape their experiences in multiple ways. This is why, the researcher, thought it to be essential to unearth, unpack and unravel the world of Meo girl students' culture in formal school setup. This was also important because students construct their own perception of several factors that contribute to create important aspects of 'life' at school. Gender and religion play a very important and significant role that are often contradicted and contested- this need to be uncovered. The location

of the schools especially, in the Mewat region, undoubtedly, shape and provide meaning to perception of students. Hence, the voice of students in the meaning making processes of schooling, was essential to understand. Therefore, it was important for the researcher, to let the Meo girls speak for themselves and researcher to listen their voices carefully and patiently in order to unravel their aspirations and perspectives so as to reach the analysis correctly. This was because, the ways by which students negotiate and interpret the principles of school, often create a gap, between, schools as imagined by the authorities, and, as perceived by the students. Thus, it was important to understand how are different concerns of Meo girls expressed in the everyday contexts of school? How do they negotiate and contest in different settings viz. a viz. life at school and life at home? How do Meo girls try to realize their goals? How do teacher, parents and other personnel contribute to the complex experience of students? What forms of identities are constructed in different settings?

The work is important because it has tried to uncover fascinated life of Meo girls at schools in contexts of resistance, relationship, identities and ways of being. It has captured the voice of experience, feelings and perception of Meo girls. The narratives provide rich description accounts of what Meo girls think and feel while at school. This is because, the environment of the school is not only created by the official discourse, rather, it is simultaneously constructed by the students, who brings meaning to the situation where they live, study, play and interact. This is why, the study also concerns the ideals that evolve and formulated, negotiated and expressed in everyday life of Meo girls at school. Being a Muslim, Meo gorls mark an identity who experience themselves in 'duality'- of being a Muslim girl (in Mewat) and 'other' as a part of larger identity of Indian.

Hence, the present research will help to understand the social world of everyday life experiences that often remain uncaptured through the recording and analysis of empirical information. Thus, the research will help several other researchers, students, teachers, and all those working in the filed of women's education to understand the embedded issues relating to women in general and Meo girls in particular as it contributes to understand meaning-making in school processes. The researcher

thought to unpack and unravel the world of Meo girls as constructed in school life. Actually, different culture, media and other information from the outer world enters the school, and, create a unique culture within school. As a consequence, the students do not remain isolated and get influenced with them and ultimately construct their own understanding of 'life' in school as they are conscious human being that own dreams and aspirations. Further, the study seeks to provide 'alternative' frame that will help to cater to a particular similar marginalized social groups. Since the exploration is situated around the ground realities, therefore, the policy makers could be benefited to unravel and unearth the basic issues, at intervention level, since, it provides pragmatic and an in-depth understanding relating to education of Meo girls. Further more, the linkages between experiences of Meo girls, and, their schooling has been traced out which will help the readers in multiple ways- howsoever, they want to utilize the research. The factors taken in the research are potentially relevant and constitute the basis, due to which, educational development of Meo girls in India has not kept pace with the time. All the above mentioned concerns raised certain important issues to be explored.

1.13: Research Questions

- How do Meo girls perceive schooling and experience everyday school practices in shaping up of their educational aspirations, world view and meaning-making about self and the others?

- What are the factors that emanate Meo girls' dropout from school in the process of growing up and reaching up for higher classes?

- If the family composition plays any role towards Meo girl's education? Whether the Meo parents find any motivating factors or any structural and cultural barriers in terms of sending their daughter to schools?

- Whether the socio-cultural identity and stereotypes create any barrier for Meo girls that in turn impact their education? if yes; how, and in what ways does it impact?

- If any aspects of security, freedom and equality influence the schooling experience of Meo girls?

- How do teachers negotiate and mitigate the situation, in case, if they identify girls from Meo community who are on the verge of dropping out from schooling?

- Whether any attitudinal change reflects among the Meo girls across generations towards education? If yes; what are the reflections and how does it impact the educational aspirations of Meo girls?

- How do Meo girls negotiate with the changing situation?

- How does social deprivation influence the schooling of Meo girls?

- Whether community members play any role in promoting girls education? How do they perceive the issue of girls' education?

1.14: Statement of the problem

Breaking boundaries and escaping marginality: An enquiry into Meo girls' experiences of resistance, schooling and change

1.15: Definition of the key terms

Breaking boundaries: Meo community has specific and unique cultural boundaries which makes them a distinct community. The researcher has utilized the terms 'breaking boundaries', in the sense of coming out of such socio-cultural traditional faiths, customs, beliefs, values and so on, that are supposed to be carried forward by the female members of the community.

Escaping marginality: Marginalization is that social process, which, pushes a person to the fringes of the society and make them socially excluded. As a consequence a marginalized person becomes unable to avail different benefits. By the terms 'escaping marginality', the researcher believes to break-out of such thwarting situations, that pushes them to periphery, and, make them socially excluded and disadvantaged.

Resistance: Resistance is that force, which acts to stops the progress, and, prospects of a person, and, makes it slower. The researcher has utilized the term 'resistance' in the sense of 'the act of fighting and refusing to accept or comply with something, that affects, a person adversely'.

Schooling: The processes of a school play a significant role in the life of students, as a result of their participation and involvement in different activities. Hence, the researcher has utilized the term in the sense of 'participation of a person in the instructional and other related processes of an institution under the age of the college, which develops the person in multiple ways.

Change: By the terms 'change', the researcher believes socio-cultural, economic and perceptive transformation.

1.16: Objectives

1. To understand how historical, socio-political and economic contexts constitute the identities of Meos

2. To understand the experiences of Meo girls across generations in negotiating everyday challenges in the process of their growing up and education.

3. To understand how everyday lived experiences shape Meo girls' life aspirations, world-view and meaning-making about the self and the others and consequently influence their perception

4. To understand how the community and other stakeholders play their role towards Meo girls education.

1.17: Methodology:

The study is a qualitative research written in a descriptive form. Qualitative research is designed to obtain precise and pertinent information concerning the current status of phenomena in its natural settings so as to draw valid conclusions from the discovered facts (Koul, 2013). On the basis of the collected information, the data has been classified, analyzed and interpreted in consonance with the objectives of the study. Apart from the exploration of related literature and secondary sources such as census report and surveys conducted by voluntary organizations working in the area, extensive interviews were conducted with girl children. Focus group discussions (FGD) with parents, teachers, and other key persons of the community have also been done from various angles so as to explore the qualitative aspect and understand the imbedded issues deeply and comprehensively. Observation, both participant and non-participant was another methodology that helped in gathering data.

1.18: Modalities of the problem:

The research consists of two major parts namely (a) theoretical and (b) operative. Theoretical part has been explored by understanding the base through existing literatures. The operative part has been conducted in three schools located in three sub-division of the Mewat district. In these schools Meo girls' experiences and perception were mapped so as to collect the data.

1.19: Structure of the study

The study has been conducted in different phases, which gave the researcher an opportunity to identify the field on the basis of existing literatures and conducting pilot survey in the district of Mewat. After determining the actual field area of the study, the researcher stayed in the field and conducted extensive exploration so as to gather the data. This was done on the basis of the above mentioned tools and techniques.

1.20: Delimitation:

The present study will be delimited to

- Girl children in the age group of 11 years to 14 years

- Parents and teachers of the sample children

- Three schools of Mewat district

END NOTES:

1   The name of Gurgaon has been changed to Gurugram by the office order of the government.

2   Channing, F. C. (1882). *The land revenue settlement of the Gurgaon District, Lahore.*

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