

Chapter 3

Society, Women and Education in Sikkim

- **Brief History**
- **Peoples**
- **Social Stratification**
- **Land Holding**
- **Marriage System**
- **Status of Sikkimese Women**
- **Education: Pre-Merger and Post Merger Period**
- **Findings**

CHAPTER: 3

SOCIETY, WOMEN AND EDUCATION IN SIKKIM

3.1 Brief History

The 22nd State of India, Sikkim is a very beautiful, peaceful, small hilly, region. The name of the State 'Sikkim' is derived from the Nepali word-'Sukhim' which means 'The new Place'. Lepchas who are believed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim used to call the place 'Nelien' means the 'Country of caverns' or as 'Mayal - Lyang' which means the 'Garden of Paradise'. But in the old official documents the name of this State is mentioned as 'Sikkimputtee'. The Tibetan immigrants used to call it 'Denzong' which means the 'valley of rice' (Shukla:1976, Ghosal:1990). The ethnicities, culture, tradition, scenic beauty of the State create a uniqueness which attracts the outsiders. From 19th century onwards travellers from different countries started visiting the place. Among the valuable travel accounts left by these travellers, 'Particulars of a visit to the Sikkim Hills' (1830) by J.D. Herbert is the earliest one (Datta:1991).

Modern history of Sikkim starts from 1642 A.D. Before that, for at least three centuries, the Namgyal dynasty ruled over the Chumbi and Tista valley. The Namgyal dynasty ruled Sikkim till its merger with India in 1975 through 12 succeeding *Chogyals*. Phuntsog Namgyal became the first *Chogyal* of Sikkim in 1642. His capital was divided into 12 districts or Dzongs. During his period Buddhism was the established religion of this region. In 1670 Tensung Namgyal became the *Chogyal* and he moved his capital to Rabdentse.

He was succeeded by his son Chagdor Namgyal in 1700 A. D. But Chagdor's half sister opposed his succession and invited Bhutanese force to kill him. Rabdentse palace was captured by Bhutanese force. Fortunately Chagdor Namgyal survived and was taken to Lhasa. After eight years when the Dev Raja of Bhutan withdrew expedition on the mediation of the Tibetan Government, Chagdor returned to his kingdom. Bhutan made another invasion during his reign. Chagdor Namgyal established the great Pemayangtse Monastery and started a system of sending the

second son of every Bhutia family to the Monastery mandatorily. He was succeeded by his son, the 4th *Chogyal* of Sikkim, Gyurmed Namgyal in 1717.

Namgyal Phuntsog became the 5th *Chogyal* in 1733. During his period annual taxation system was introduced to increase the state treasury (Desai:1988). He was succeeded by his son Tenzing Namgyal the 6th consecrated *Chogyal*. The 7th *Chogyal* of Sikkim was Tsugphud Namgyal. His rule was the longest in the history of Sikkim, lasting from 1793 for almost 70 years (Joshi:2004). During his period the British penetrated into the Himalayas for trading purpose with Tibet. The British helped the 7th *Chogyal* to drive out Gurkhas from south-west Sikkim. He was against the settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim (Desai:1988).

In 1814, the capital shifted from Rabdentse to Tumlong. Sidkeong Namgyal succeeded his father Tsugphud Namgyal, and became the 8th *Chogyal* in 1863 (Sikkim Coronation). In 1874 Maharaja Sidkeong died and his half brother Thutob Namgyal became the 9th *Chogyal*. During his reign the capital shifted to Gangtok (Basnet 1974:60). In 1887 Claude White arrived at Sikkim as the first political officer. British wanted to check Tibetan influence. In 1888 a small expedition fulfilled the target. The boundary between Sikkim and Tibet was fixed under the Anglo- Chinese convention of 1890. After that for next 30 years the British was in control of the administration of the State and they encouraged immigration of Nepalese (Desai: 1988). In 1914, Sidkeong Tulku succeeded his father and became the 10th *Chogyal* of Sikkim. He was sent to Oxford University for Higher Education and he was influenced by western ideas of liberalism. He brought a number of reforms in Sikkimese society. "Sidkeong Tulku, by his reformist zeal, had displeased not only the feudal landlords but also Claude White's successor in the political office, Charles Bell. His death was as much a relief to the political officer as it was to the kazis and monks" (Basnet 1974:64).

He was succeeded by his brother Tashi Namgyal, the 11th *Chogyal* of Sikkim. It was the brightest period in the history of Sikkim. He brought development in all fields-social, political, economic, cultural. In 1957 for the study of Buddhism The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology was established. In 1961 he started the Sikkim Subject Regulation; before there was no clear definition of the status of Sikkim

subjects. After this regulation a person who has been registered would be recognised as a Sikkim subject and entitled to all rights and privileges of a Sikkim subject. He was succeeded by his son P.T. Namgyal the 12th and last *Chogyal* of Sikkim (Sikkim Coronation: n.d.).

3.2 Peoples

Ethnic Groups

The population of the State comprises three ethnic groups—the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalese. They are simple and hardworking people. Among the three ethnic communities it is universally accepted now that Lepchas were the original inhabitants of Sikkim. They came to this region from Assam and Upper Burma and settled here. The word ‘Lepcha’ originated from a Nepali word ‘Lepcha’ meaning vile tongued. The Lepchas call themselves as ‘Rongpa’ or the people of Ravines. There are different versions regarding the origin of the word ‘Lepcha’. According to one opinion it is said to originate from the word ‘Lapcho’ which means a place whose residents were called as Lapcha by Nepalese. Another opinion is, ‘Lapcha’ is a type of fish in Nepali language (Shukla:1976). Lepchas have mongoloid features, they are of medium height and fair complexion. They are peace loving people who have their own dialect. Originally they were animist but later they converted to Lamaist Buddhism after coming under the influence of the Bhutias and there are a considerable number of them who have converted to Christianity. They have old tradition of polyandry and they are believed to be originated from supernatural and mythological ancestors. On the basis of this, they are divided into five patrilineal clans (Datta:1991).

Bhutias migrated to Sikkim from Tibet and set up a government in 1642. They also have Mongolian features. They are of good physique and fair in complexion. They are considered as good traders and farmers. Bhutias are mostly Buddhist by religion. The Bhutia kings or *Chogyals* were interested in spreading Tibetan Buddhism in Sikkim. In 17th century when they migrated to Sikkim, they came into contact with the Lepchas.

Settlement of Nepalese who constitute almost three fourth of (Joshi:2004) Sikkim’s population started from around mid 19th century. But writing of some scholars mention about the existence of Kirati settlement including the Limboos, Rais

and the Yekhas of the Nepali community before the Aryan colonisation in India (Subba:1983). The Nepalese community in Sikkim is composed of three sub cultural stocks: the Kiratis, the Newaris and the Gurkhas(Datta:1991). They differ from each other in their physical characteristics and customs.The Kiratis consist of the Limboo,Tamang,Sherpa,Rai,Mangar,Gurung tribes andcastes.These small but distinct groups of people have different languages or dialects.Few of them practice Buddhism while others practice Hinduism.

In the beginning of the 19th century,the Newars entered Sikkim as the Nepali counterpart of the kazis.The Newars are mainly trading class.They practice Hindu religion and have their own dialect.

The Gurkhas consist of higher caste Brahmins,Chhetris,Thakuris and lower caste Kamis,Damais,Sarkis.By religion Gurkhas are Hindus.They do not have separate language.Like almost all Nepalese,they communicate in Nepali language which is derived from Sanskrit language.

Nepali, Bhutia, and Lepcha are the three major languages spoken in Sikkim. Nepali is the lingua franca of the State because the majority of the population belongs to Nepali community. Besides there are several dialects prevalent among the different Nepali castes like Gurung,Rai,Tamang,Mukhia,Newer,Manger,Sherpa etc.,However within these communities also these dialects are rarely spoken.They usually speak Nepali language.English is the official language of the State;along with it Nepali is also used as official language in Sikkim.

Majority of the population belong to Hindu religion.Other important religions professed by the people of Sikkim are Buddhism and Christianity.In the 17th century Buddhism entered Sikkim.Bhutias are Buddhist.A majority of the Lepchas, and some Nepalese also practice Buddhism.But a majority of the Nepalese practice Hinduism. Some people from all three ethnic communities are now converted to Christianity. Besides there are a very few Muslims,Sikhs and Jains who basically belong to non-ethnic community.

Plainsmen

Apart from the ethnic groups, there is a sprinkling of plains people who migrated here generations ago. Their migration is noticeable during the tenure of first British Political Officer J.C. White. He got the responsibility to channelise trade across the border and to help the Chogyal in administration of the State. During that period a large number of plainsmen mainly the Marwaris entered Sikkim for trading purposes with the Tibetans. People from other parts of India like Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Kerala, Punjab etc. also entered Sikkim during this period (Sarma:1991).

Besides trading, some emigrants plainsmen were engaged in other types of occupation such as teaching, administration etc. After merger, the service sector in Sikkim expanded rapidly. Educated unemployed people from different parts of India started migrating into Sikkim taking jobs in administration, government and private schools etc and settled here.

Recently to protect the local educated unemployed youth and to maintain the 'son of the soil' policy the State Government of Sikkim does not favour plainsmen from other parts of India for occupying government jobs unless there is unavailability of local capable persons.

3.3 Social Stratification

Social stratification in Sikkim is based on the criteria of eating *kalo Dal* i.e. black pulse and *murwa ka Bhat* i.e. porridge made of millet flour. The higher castes do not accept *kalo dal* and *murwa ka bhat* from lower castes. It is only served to the member of one's own caste or to the castes which are considered lower. Brahmins and Chhetries accept raw and fried food from touchable castes, Pradhan, Gurung and Manger exchange raw and cooked food among themselves. But they do not exchange *kalo dal* and *murwa ka bhat* among themselves. They accept it only from the Brahmins and Chhetries. Similarly Rai and Limboos do not exchange *kalo dal* and *murwa ka bhat* with each other. They accept it from Brahmins, Chhetries, pradhan, Manger and Gurung (Bhasin:1946).

In the pre-1947 period two broad classes existed in Sikkim – the upper classes and the lower classes but after merger there is inclusion of one more class that is the

middle class. Class hierarchy is based on education, occupation, prestige, political power etc (Bhadra:1992).

Among the Nepalese, caste system is very rigid. Upper castes have the feeling of superiority. They are the puritan castes who wear sacred thread called as '*tagadharis*' and the non puritan castes are called as '*matwalis*' (Choudhuri: 2005).

Brahmins and Chhetries are at the top of the hierarchy. Pradhan, Gurung, Manger, Limboo, Rai belong to touchable group, below the Brahmins and Chhetries. The service castes are treated as untouchables by all the upper castes and they are not allowed inside the upper castes' kitchen. However, with the spread of education, this system is slowly changing. Among the untouchables are *Kami* i.e. blacksmiths, *Damai* i.e. tailors, *Sarki* i.e. leather workers, *Majhi* i.e. fishermen. The non-Hindu groups like the Bhutias, Lepchas, Sherpas, Tamangs are above the untouchables. While dealing with the lower caste peoples, the Bhutias and Lepchas behave like upper caste Hindus.

3.4 Land Holding

Before the Bhutia immigration in Sikkim, the land was in the hand of Lepchas. At that time the country was ruled by local Lepcha chief (Shukla:1976). In 1642 Phuntsog Namgyal became the first Bhutia ruler in Sikkim. To rule the region smoothly, the Bhutia rulers encouraged inter marriages with the Lepcha chiefs (Basnet:1974). Bhutias were mostly traders and herdsmen. They were devoted to trade as well as the occupation of courtiers than agriculture. After driving the Lepchas into the lower valleys and forest, the immigrant Bhutias settled in higher altitudes. In the fifteenth century, the consolidation of the Bhutia rules led to the formation of the State of Sikkim. Since then all land belong to the Bhutia rulers. In return of the services of the courtiers mainly the *kazis*, aristocrats etc. the ruler or the king used to gift a portion of land (Sinha:1975). The *kazis* who were landlords mainly belong to Bhutia community and few Lepcha *kazis* were there who attained equal status of the Bhutia *kazis* through matrimonial relation which was encouraged by the Bhutia rulers. The *kazis* usually appointed '*mondals*' to rent out the arable land to the individual farmer's family. The Lepchas were mainly tenant cultivators. The *kazis* used to collect land revenue from all the people within their jurisdiction and paid a fixed amount of revenue to the king. Though the landed property were controlled by the Bhutias, any

cultivators and they acquired land from the Bhutias and Lepchas on lease. The Nepalese immigration into the region led to change in the land settlement pattern as well as agricultural technique. The later immigrant Nepalese in the country had introduced the new terraced type of cultivation in place of age old technique of shifting hill cultivation. Large scale Nepali immigration resulted in population pressure within Sikkim and which in turn led to the scarcity of cultivable land. It compelled the cultivators to settle permanently in one place. Thus the question of individual's right of holding on a certain plot of land for tilling permanently became a serious issue. To become eligible for the status of Sikkimese, individual tilling right on certain plot of arable land played important role especially for Nepalese. Among them, only the earliest settlers who had cultivated certain plots of land since many decades, were given the tilling rights and after 1951 land reform programme, their names were maintained in a register. This proprietary rights became an essential factor in determining the Sikkim subjects recognition as the *Durbar* recognized the earliest settlers as legal settlers. By Sikkim Subject Regulations, 1961, they are referred to as Sikkimese.

3.5 Marriage System

Among the hill tribes throughout the Eastern Himalayas, the social norm regarding marriage is quite flexible. Since the Bhutias came and settled in this region, inter community marriage between the Bhutia and the Lepcha community started (Bhattacharya: 2001). Along with the Bhutia immigration from Tibet to Sikkim, the practice of polyandry entered this region. Though officially the system was abolished in 1912, (Kharel: 2003), in reality, till now it is not completely abolished. As both the Bhutias and Lepchas belong to tribal community, they follow different forms of tribal marriage viz. marriage by capture, marriage by elopement etc. Besides, marriage by mutual arrangement is also a popular form of marriage among them. Lepchas are also polygamous. Polyandry is an acceptable system to them also, but in recent times, modern educated young Bhutia–Lepcha generation do not prefer polyandry. Widow, widower remarriage, divorce are permitted. The prospective bridegroom has to pay bride–price or *daijo* in cash or kind to the girl's family.

The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 which came into force in the State after its merger to India is not applicable to the Bhutia and the Lepcha communities as they have been declared as scheduled tribes. Therefore, the matrimonial issues like marriage, divorce, maintenance etc. are still regulated by their customary laws. Bhutia-Lepcha people hardly go to court for legal separation as well as divorce. If the couple find their temperament not suitable to each other, they can be easily separated by mutual consent or it can be settled by the heads of the villages (Lama: 1994).

Among the 'matwali' group of Nepalese, tribal form of marriage and tribal rituals of marriage are more popular, though marriage by negotiation is also an important form of marriage. It is worth mentioning here that recently, Tamangs and Limboos of Nepali community got the 'tribal' status.

Among the higher caste Nepali people, marriage by negotiation or *mangni biha* is a more acceptable form of marriage though marriage by elopement or *chori biha* is also one of the popular forms of marriage among them. They prefer monogamy. Though older generations used to practice polygamy, polyandry was not accepted. Widower remarriage and junior sororate is practiced but widow remarriage is not practiced by the higher caste Nepalese. Among the 'matwalis' widow remarriage is not rare.

Among all three ethnic communities of Sikkim one custom is prevalent called 'jat danda'. If a boy marries a girl outside his caste group then he has to pay *jat danda* to the girl's family. Generally Rs 61/- is taken as *jat danda* from the boy along with meat, alcohol etc according to the demand of the girl's family of a 'matwali' group. The higher caste demand 'ghew' (Butter), 'churpy' (Milk Product), sweets etc. In case of a Bhutia-Lepcha family, they also demand cash, meat and alcohol etc. Paying Rs. 61/- as *jat danda* has become customary to every community and along with it, the girl's family may demand more money from the groom's family. After elopement, negotiators are sent to the girl's family from the boy's family. The negotiators negotiate the demand money and settle every thing. But now-a-days, this custom is changing with the expansion of education. If the groom is well educated, employed and is able to take care of the bride, the bride's family accept only Rs. 61/- as a custom and return other things to the groom's family.

3.6 Status of Sikkimese Women

Women constitute nearly 47 per cent of the total population of Sikkim. Compared to other parts of the country, the social position of women in Sikkim is better. Fortunately still now the instances of female infanticide or dowry related deaths have not been reported. Women's participation in decision -making process is more than most of the other states in India. Even their number in government services is greater than that of Sikkimese men (Lama: 2001).

The position of women in Sikkimese society including their socio-cultural, economic, authoritative, decision making power etc. varies from one community to another. Patriarchal family system is present in the Lepcha community. Father is the head of the family and his decision is unquestionable. Property is transmitted from father to son. If the couple has no son they can adopt a male child called as '*kup_chops* or *kup Lam*'. This adopted son has inheritance right on family property. '*Kamok-Myok*' is that type of son-in-law who are brought into the father-in-law's house and he becomes the heir of his father-in-law's property. Bhutia women also do not hold legal rights in family property. But there are various unwritten norms to safeguard the women's rights. Women receive gifts in the forms of livestock, ornaments etc. and after marriage they may take their movable property. Lepcha widow without a male child enjoy movable and immovable property in her lifetime but after her death, property transmits to the nearest male relative. Bhutia women enjoy equal status in the family (Foning: 1987). Despite the patriarchal family system, Bhutia-Lepcha women occupy higher position in their family. They enjoy a better living standard because of their economic independence. Both husband and wife equally share all the household responsibilities and even the responsibilities of children. There is no feeling of sex superiority or inferiority among Bhutia and Lepcha people. The girl child is not a burden to the family (Bhattacharya: 2001).

Among the Nepalese too, patriarchal family system prevails. Women of '*matwali*' group enjoy more freedom than the orthodox upper caste families. Nepali women do not inherit family property. Father's property is divided among all sons. Unmarried daughters also receive some shares of parental property. Among the Brahmins widower remarriage and junior sororate take place, but widow remarriage is

not practiced. Most of them are engaged exclusively in household works, though some have employed themselves in service. Among the Chhetris and Newaris widow remarriage is permissible. A widow is regarded inauspicious. But now the women of all communities are found in various types of activities. They are no more confined to only household activities, but take part in decision making process and participate in economic activity too (Bareh:2001).

3.7 Education: Pre-Merger and Post-Merger Period

Pre-Merger Period

There is a popular saying in Nepali- '*Pari Lekhi Kay Kam ,Hollow Joti Khao Maam*' means to make two ends meet, you have to plough the field. Then what is the use of reading and writing? Traditional education system of Sikkim was based on that saying. People used to gather knowledge from their day to day experience of life. Hence traditional education was very practical and need based. Though the royal and elite family members were very much interested in spreading education within this region, the then political turmoil did not allow the growth and development of education.

Before the British administration started in Sikkim, the lamaistic education imparted in the monasteries prevailed in this region. This type of education was restricted to the lamas and it imparted religious education only. To become a monk, the lamas used to get training on different skills like painting, paper making etc. But for the common people educational facilities were very negligible.

Britishers wanted to bring educational reforms in Sikkim. Their intention was to make the future chogyal or ruler modern English educated so that he would follow their ideology and support British policy of reform. The Britishers tried to create loyal people who would not oppose them in finalising the future successor of Sikkim.

Before starting modern English system of education in Sikkim, the first British political officer, Claude White wanted to educate the royal prince and the children of some influential persons like the lamas and kazis. To fulfill that objective 18 children from elite family were sent to Darjeeling for education .Later Kumar Sidkeong Tulku was sent to Oxford University in England for further studies.

J.C.White was also interested in establishing an English boarding school at Gangtok .He thought that in this way the government could save the money which it spent on educating the local boys outside Sikkim. Within two consecutive years i.e. 1906 and 1907,two boarding schools namely Bhutia Boarding School and Nepali Boarding School were established respectively.After completion of education from these schools, children were provided financial support to go to Darjeeling for higher studies.

Kumar Sidelong Tulku returned from England in 1908 and became the Vice-President of the State Council. He was handed the charge of education, forest and monasteries.He had shown keen interest in spreading modern English education all over the State and gave new dimension to education in Sikkim.During that period, a number of schools were established. Before that education was confined only to the children of the elitist section.However, he started encouraging the common people to send their boys and girls to the newly established schools which imparted modern English education. In 1909 he established Enchey School in Gangtok as a monastic school which at present has been continuing as one of the government higher secondary school.In 1912 three government schools in three different places viz. Namchi,Rhenock and Pathing started functioning which was the brain child of Kumar Sidkeong Tulku.Through the efforts of Kumar Sidkeong Tulku,female education in Sikkim was finally given priority.

In 1913 one girls' school mainly for the daughters of the kazis was opened. Subjects like Tibetan, Hindi and knitting were taught there. Only 5 girls enrolled their name in that school. In 1915 the number of the students increased up to 13.In the year 1918 the curriculum was revised and subjects like spinning and lace making were also introduced. Girls of the common people were not allowed to join this school.

In the late 19th century, Christian missionaries also became interested in spreading modern education in Sikkim. But the then maharaja Tashi namgyal did not favour Christian missionary activities in Sikkim.A few schools of Christian missionaries were handed over to Scottish missionaries. The Scottish missionaries also established different schools in the State.Sikkim had 21 schools including 6 government schools, 13 mission schools and 2 schools under landlords by the year

1920 (Lama:2001). Female education got priority when the Scottish mission established a girls' school in 1923. A Scottish missionary Mary Scott opened a girls' school for the common people at Gangtok. It was the first full fledged girls' school. The State Government extended financial support for this school. Apart from English education, girls of all classes used to get training in cooking, first aid, needle work etc. Before 1939 it upgraded up to middle school level. In 1941, it was decided by the Sikkim Durbar to build a new school building with hostel facility in the memory of the Maharaja kumar Paljor Namgyal, who was killed while serving in the Royal Indian Air Force. In 1945 it was recognised as a high school by Calcutta university and at present it has been continuing as Paljor Namgyal Girls' Senior Secondary School at Gangtok, but it is not a fullfledged government school at present. It has an autonomous body but the State Government provides financial assistance to this school.

After the establishment of a few modern schools in the State, gradually the Thikadars also understood the importance of modern education and they encouraged establishment of more schools in this region. By 1925, 14 schools were established in different villages of Sikkim. In 1925 both the Bhutia and Nepali Boarding School were merged into one high school and named after the then Maharaja Tashi Namgyal which is today's Tashi Namgyal Higher Secondary School. Over the years, the number of schools continued to increase. In 1954 there were only 86 schools while in 1961 the number increased up to 182. In 1975 the total educational institutions were 264 in Sikkim and total enrolment of the students were 20959 (Annual Report, State Mission Authority 2002-2003).

Post-Merger Period

In the post-merger period, a large educated workforce became indispensable for the State to maintain administration and welfare. Therefore, the State Government started giving emphasis on educational development. Till now the education sector has been receiving greater priority in the State. Since 1975, there has been a tremendous growth in the number of educational institution and in the number of teachers. By 2005 total number of educational institution in the State were 1595 among which 783 are government schools. However the schools are unevenly

distributed among the four districts on the basis of population concentration. Most of the schools in Sikkim are co-educational. At present there are only 4 girls' schools of which 3 schools are government schools and one is government aided school. Among these four schools, two are located in the East district, one is in the West district and one is in the South district. But till now, there is no school exclusively for girls' in the North district.

The result of more educational institutions was that the total enrolment of the students also increased. The State Government has taken lots of initiatives to increase the enrolment of students at different levels of education. In 1975, the total enrolment of students were 20959. By 2002 it increased to 137656 (Annual Report of S.S.A 2002-03). As on March 2003 total enrolment of students in Sikkim is 137673 among which 68762 are boys and 68911 are girls. This indicates an encouraging feature that the total enrolment of girls is more than boys. Table 3.1 shows the district-wise and class-wise enrolment of students in Sikkim:

**Table 3.7.1: District-wise and Class-wise Enrolment of Students in Sikkim
Master Sheet of Government School (as on 31.3.2003)**

Class	East			South			North			West			Grand Total		
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL									
P.P.	3731	3475	7206	3297	2859	6156	934	887	1821	3133	2724	5857	11095	9945	21040
1	3176	2955	6131	2664	2320	4984	697	661	1358	2358	2221	4579	8895	8157	17052
2	3122	3108	6230	2713	2331	5044	614	606	1220	2273	2217	4490	8722	8262	16984
3	3127	3242	6369	2531	2384	4915	591	555	1146	2188	2262	4450	8437	8443	16880
4	2561	2803	5364	1999	1896	3895	453	486	939	1750	1728	3478	6763	6913	13676
5	2440	2717	5157	1540	1573	3113	344	405	749	1432	1756	3188	5756	6451	12207
Total	14426	14825	29251	11447	10504	21951	2699	2713	5412	10001	10184	20185	38573	38226	76799
6	2007	2233	4240	1115	1295	2410	278	331	609	1148	1188	2336	4548	5047	9595
7	1603	1858	3461	808	1007	1815	216	228	444	902	1000	1902	3529	4093	7622
8	1576	1992	3568	798	981	1689	237	241	478	863	987	1850	3474	4111	7585
Total	5186	6083	11269	2721	3193	5914	731	800	1531	2913	3175	6088	11551	13251	24802
9	1213	1240	2453	698	728	1426	135	173	308	651	668	1319	2697	2809	5506
10	948	907	1855	412	409	821	115	112	227	434	445	879	1909	1873	3782
Total	2161	2147	4308	1110	1137	2247	250	285	535	1085	1113	2198	4606	4682	9288
11	842	752	1594	338	369	707	92	113	205	354	311	665	1626	1545	3171
12	672	627	1299	290	264	554	51	85	136	298	286	584	1311	1262	2573
Total	1514	1379	2893	628	633	1261	143	198	341	652	597	1249	2937	2807	5744
Grand Total	27018	27909	54927	19203	18326	37529	4757	4883	9640	17784	17793	35577	68762	68911	137673

Source: Statistical Profile 2004-05

The literacy rate of the State has also increased. In 2001 female literacy has gone up 61.46 per cent which was only 46.69 per cent in 1991 whereas male literacy rose from 63.74 per cent in 1991 to 76.73 per cent in 2001.

With the expansion of educational institutions in Sikkim the number of teaching staff has also increased. But district-wise their distribution is uneven. Altogether there are 5587 teachers including both trained and untrained recruited in all four districts upto upper primary level by 2005. Compared to the all India level, the teacher-pupil ratio is better in Sikkim which was 1:19 at the primary level in 1995 and all-India teacher-pupil ratio is 1:46. But class-wise and school-wise this distribution is very uneven. The number of students in humanities section in senior secondary school is much higher than the number of students in science classes which may negatively affect the teacher's effectiveness (Lahiri et.al.:2001).

To make education accessible to all sections of the society, the Government of Sikkim is extending financial support, especially to the weaker section of the society. A large number of private schools are also coming up in the State to meet the rising demand for better education. Though the demand for a full-fledged university which was a long-felt need, became a reality recently, the number of colleges and technical institutes are not sufficient to meet the demands of the increasing number of students.

3.8 Findings

Until the early seventies, the small and beautiful place Sikkim was an independent kingdom ruled by the '*chogyals*' on hereditary basis. With the 35th amendment of the Indian Constitution in 1974, Sikkim became the 'associate' state of India. It became the 22nd state of the Indian Constitution with the 36th amendment of the Indian Constitution in 1975.

The mosaic of Sikkimese society consists of three ethnic communities—the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalese and some plainsmen from different parts of India. The Lepchas are believed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim. They are of Mongoloid origin. They migrated from Assam and Upper Burma to this region. They are peace-loving people. Along with them Limboos of the Nepali community too were found in Sikkim during that period. Until the Bhutia immigration, the Lepchas were ruled by local Lepcha chiefs.

The Bhutias entered Sikkim from Tibet. They also have Mongolian features. They ruled here through 12 succeeding *chogyals* and wanted to spread Buddhism all over Sikkim. With the influence of the Bhutias, majority of the Lepchas who used to practice Animism earlier converted to Buddhism.

The third ethnic group—the Nepalese started immigration during the British reign in India. They are mainly Hindus. Few of the Nepali tribes are Buddhists. There are some converted Christian Nepali tribes and castes.

Along with these three ethnic communities, there are some plainsmen from different parts of India who entered this region during the period when J.C. White was appointed as the first British Political Officer in Sikkim. Now they have settled in different parts of Sikkim with diversified occupation mainly in trade and commerce. All the communities maintain peace and harmony in the State and their peaceful co-existence gives the State a unique feature.

Among the Nepalese of Sikkim, caste system is very rigid. The higher castes are called as '*tagadharis*' who wear sacred thread and the non-puritan group are called as '*matwalis*'. The *kamis damais*, *sarkis*, *majhis* are treated as untouchable while the non Hindu group i.e. the Lepchas, Bhutias, Sherpas, Tamangs hold the position above the untouchables.

Different languages and dialects are spoken in Sikkim. Nepali is the lingua franca of the State. Hinduism and Buddhism are two important religions practiced by the Sikkimese people. Besides some Christians, Muslims, Jains and Sikhs are also there.

Stratification is based on one peculiar criteria i.e. exchanging of *kalo dal* (black pulse) and *murwa ka bhat* (porridge made of millet flour). These two dishes can be served to the member of one's own caste group or to the castes which are considered lower. But the higher castes do not accept these from lower caste.

The earlier settlers of Sikkim got the legal status of Subjects of Sikkim by Sikkim Subject Regulation 1961. The Lepchas, Limboos and Bhutias were automatically recognised as the Sikkimese. But it was not an easy task for the Nepali community. The proprietary rights of the people on certain plot of land became

important factor in determining the Sikkimese status. Only the earliest Nepali settlers were able to achieve the Sikkimese status.

Regarding the marriage system of Sikkimese people, polygamy entered to this region with Bhutia immigration. Though it is officially abolished, in reality, instances of polygamy are noticed among all three ethnic communities. But the educated young generations do not encourage this system. The *matwalis* and the Lepcha-Bhutia people follow various customs of tribal marriage. Marriage by negotiation is also popular among them. The higher castes Nepalese prefer marriage by negotiation but among them '*chori biha*' i.e. marriage by elopement is also popular. Instead of dowry, bride – price or *daijo* is given to the bride's family. In case of inter caste marriage the customary system '*jat danda*' is prevalent which the groom's family has to pay to the bride's family. The cash payment should be Rs.61 for every caste but the kinds vary from caste to caste. While it is meat, alcohol for *matwali group* and Bhutia–Lepcha community, higher caste bride's family demand milk products, sweets etc. from groom's family.

Womenfolk of this State hold a good social position compared to their counterparts of other regions in India. But their freedom and position is not equal among all communities or castes. Though all these ethnic communities are patriarchal where property transmits from father to son, women hold important position within their family. Moreover female infanticide and dowry related problems are not noticed in the State still now.

Before merger Sikkim was an educationally backward place. The infrastructure for education was not sufficient and moreover the traditional belief regarding education did not encourage the youths specially the women to go for higher studies. Before the British Administration, only religion based lamaistic education existed in Sikkim. Only the lamas were entitled to get those types of education. Britishers were interested to introduce modern education within this region so that they could get loyals who would support the Britishers to finalise future successors of Sikkim. To fulfill that intension Kumar Sidkeong Tulku was sent to England for higher studies by the instruction of J.C. White, the first British Political Officer of Sikkim. After his return, Sidkeong Tulku took initiative to spread modern education in Sikkim. Two

Boarding Schools namely Bhutia Boarding School and Nepali Boarding School were established during that period. Christian Missionaries and Scottish Missionaries were also interested to spread modern education in Sikkim. Mary Scott, a Scottish Missionary established a girls' school at Gangtok for the common people. Gradually, the Thikadars and common people started understanding the importance of modern education and took initiatives to establish more Schools in Sikkim.

After merger, with regard to education scenario, vast expansion has been noticed. The number of educational institution has increased. More recruitment of teachers took place, literacy rate has improved, and different measures have been taken to improve the quality of education. According to 2001 Census, the literacy rate of Sikkim is 69.68 per cent which is higher than the all India level. Female literacy of this State is 61.46 per cent. Total number of educational institution increased from 86 in mid nineties to 783 government schools. Teachers- pupil ratio is also good compared to all India teacher – pupil ratio. It is 1:19 in Sikkim against 1:46 in all India teacher – pupil ratio in 1995. Though the overall educational scenario in Sikkim is quiet impressive and encouraging, still region- wise and gender- wise disparity is noticeable. Moreover rural – urban gap in literacy rate is also high.