

Chapter 7

Problems of Women Education: Some Case Studies

- **Selected Case Studies**
- **Major Problems Identified**
- **Findings**

CHAPTER-7

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION : SOME CASE STUDIES

7.1 Selected Case Studies

Some selected case studies have been done in support of the major constraints to women education in Sikkim. To get an overview of the problems, cases have been classified in 7 different categories – housewives, students of primary level, secondary level, senior secondary level, graduate or post graduate level, professional women and dropouts. From each study area these different categories of women were selected. In that way 28 case studies have been mentioned here.

Timburbong *Busty*:

Case-1 Kumari Pradhan is a housewife. She is 50 years old. Her parental home is also at Timburbong. During her childhood she joined school but could not continue her studies after a year at school. Her father died when she was an infant. The economic condition of her house did not facilitate her to study. Kumari did not have proper uniform for school. Her family was so poor that they could not provide her proper uniform. While going to school, her friends used to create panic in her by saying that she would be punished by her teachers as she had not come to school in proper uniform. Little Kumari was passionate about wearing plastic jewellery like bangles, ear rings etc. which was not allowed at her school. This was one of the reasons that made Kumari lose her interest in continuing her studies. In addition to that, her elder brothers and sisters tempted her by saying that if Kumari continued her studies, she would miss the opportunity to get gold ornaments and that, as they were engaged in household chores the whole day, parents would prefer to give gold ornaments to her brothers and sisters. Poor Kumari, drawn by the desire of wearing gold ornaments, completely lost her interest in studies. It seems that

lack of guidance and the social situation which existed then did not encourage the girl to study. She joined her siblings in household works. At the age of 17 her marriage was fixed with a person having education under primary level. After marriage she involved herself in familial affairs. But now she regrets being an ignorant person who can not guide her offspring. She tried to provide both her sons and daughters equal access to education. She informed the researcher that if her daughters are interested to pursue higher studies, she and her husband will leave no stone unturned to support their wish.

Case-2 Tulasa Kami is a student of class II. She is 9 years old. Tulasa belongs to a scheduled caste family. Her father Dal Bahadur Kami is a farmer. He studied up to primary level. Due to very poor economic condition Tulasa's father could not continue his study and shared his hands with his parents in cultivation work. Tulasa's mother Radhika is an illiterate lady. Tulasa has three brothers and sisters. At the age of six Tulasa got admitted in a government primary school. Though her father is a poor farmer and her mother is an illiterate person, they always encourage their children to study well. But they could neither teach nor guide Tulasa in her studies. Tulasa is a laborious student. At home, her parents try to involve her as little as possible in household activities. When she was asked about her ambition, Tulasa replied that she wants to be a doctor but she does not have any idea about how many years of study she has to put in and which subjects she should opt for to become a doctor. Her parent's illiteracy is the main obstacle. Moreover, they can not provide private tuition for her. Therefore, Tulasa has to completely depend on school education. Her parents personally requested her teachers to guide their daughter as they wanted to see their daughter well established in life.

Case-3 Dew Maya Pradhan is a 16 years old girl studying in class VIII. She hails from a poor family. Her father was an illiterate farmer. He died when Dew Maya was in class IV. At present, she has a widowed mother, 2 brothers and one sister at home. Her brothers study in class VI and II respectively and her sister is in class I. They have a small portion of cultivable land. Dew Maya's mother Pratibha Pradhan till the land. During cultivation season they take the help of hired labourers. As Pratibha herself is an illiterate woman she never encourages her children to study. Because the other children of the village go to school, Pratibha also sends her children to school. Moreover the children get mid-day meal, free accessories from school, therefore she does not oppose them. Being the elder daughter Dew Maya has to perform lots of responsibilities. In the morning when her mother goes to the agricultural field she has to cook for all members of her family. At that time her other siblings go to jungle in search of fuel and fodder. None of them study in the morning. Dew Maya cooks in the evening also. Sometimes when her mother takes the responsibility of cooking, Dew Maya has to go to jungle with her siblings. From her daily routine she hardly manages any time to study. She studies only a few days before examination. Dew Maya wants to complete class XII and dreams to get a job so that their standard of life would improve and her little brothers and sister would get all types of support from her to complete their education successfully.

Case-4 Purna Kumari Sharma is a student of class XI. She is 18 years old. Her father studied upto class X and looks after their own orange orchard. They have a patch of paddy field and they also produce ginger in their own land. Purna's mother is a housewife. She studied up to class VI only. Purna completed her education up to secondary level from the nearby government secondary school. Then, she joined a government senior secondary school which is $\frac{3}{4}$ kilometers away from her home and which is also the nearest senior secondary school from her home. She goes to school by taxi. Purna has two elder sisters. One of them has completed graduation, is married and by

profession, a teacher. The other sister stays with one of their relatives in a different place. At home, Purna is staying along with her parents, two younger brothers and one younger sister. Purna's mother suffers from chronic illness and that is why Purna is given the responsibility of cooking. She gets up early in the morning and before cooking, studies for at least one hour. But in the evening her study time is not stable. After school and cooking dinner she often loses her energy to open her books. In their locality, houses exist in a dispersed way. Their nearest neighbour is quite a distance away from them and therefore Purna does not face any disturbance from neighbours and friends. She wants to finish college level education and is interested in joining police department. The uniform, the power of a police officer has attracted her since her childhood. Purna gives importance to education mainly because it makes a person economically independent and helps to hold a powerful position in the society.

Case-5 Dhan Kumari Subba is a college student. She is 19 years old and studies in the first year in Government Law College. Their economic background is very poor. They only have their homestead land where they grow vegetables for their subsistence. Both her parents are illiterate. One of her brother is studying at a government senior secondary school in class XI. Her elder sister is unmarried. She studied upto class X. Another sister studied upto class VII and got married. Dhan Kumari completed her secondary level education from a government secondary school which is situated at a walking distance from her home. After that she joined a senior secondary school which is situated 4/5 kilometres from her home. Her parents could not afford money for her communication and therefore she started staying in one of their relatives place near the school. She used to perform all types of household works at her home and at the relative's place also. She used to get scholarship from the government during her school days as she belongs to a tribal community. With that meagre amount of money she used to manage her school expenses.

Dhan Kumari's family does not have any relatives in the capital town and she was late in applying for a place in the government hostel. Therefore she is staying in a rented house situated far from her college. As she is unable to pay high rent, she somehow manages in a room which is lacking in many facilities. Sometimes she has to go to far places to manage drinking water whenever there is water crisis at that house. Before going to college, Dhan Kumari cooks for herself. Her family is also taking lots of hardship to manage her educational expenses. Now also she is availing governmental grant. Her father works as a labourer. He is borrowing loans from relatives to support his daughter in completing her college level education. The main obstacle which Dhan Kumari is facing is their bad economic condition, therefore she opines that importance of education in individual's life specially in women's life is to become economically self-sufficient.

Case-6 Hema Devi Sharma is a primary teacher of a government secondary school. She is 42. Her father is a farmer who studied upto primary level and her mother is an illiterate house wife. Hema Devi recalls that during her school days her hands used to be full with household chores. Her mother was sick and therefore Hema used to look after her younger brothers and sisters. Her school was situated 5/6 kilometres from her home and she used to reach there by foot. She could not attend school regularly because she had to do lots of household activities. She especially remembers the great economic and situational problems she faced during her class X final examination. However she managed to overcome all odds and passed the examination. During her school days that much of educational degree was enough for anybody. No one encouraged her to study further. She got a job and after sometime, got married to a person who is also in the same profession. In their happy married life, they have two daughters. Both Hema Devi and her husband are very supportive regarding their daughters' education. Hema Devi even thinks that daughters should be given more education than sons because education equip them with strength to fight against all odds. She also thinks that today's

children are lucky as they get more facilities and guidance than the children of the past days.

Case-7 Durga Sharma is a drop out. She is 24 years. She studied upto class VIII. Her mother is illiterate and her father studied up to class IV. Her father works in a government office as a fourth grade staff. During her school days, Durga used to do lots of household tasks. She did not develop the habit of regular studying. Her parents also did not pressurize to her. Therefore, Durga failed in her classes several times and accepted the fact that she is not good in studies. When she failed in class VIII, she lost hope and left school. Now she runs a small shop at her own locality. whenever she failed the examination, she did not put blame on anyone because she realized that she herself was weak in studies. She is happy with her educational status because with that much education she can calculate and smoothly run her shop.

Bariakhop Busty:

Case-8 Rajani Chhetri aged 24 years. She is a housewife. Her educational qualification is upto class XII. Rajani stays with her parents. Her father is a peon in a Government Senior Secondary School and her mother is an illiterate housewife. Rajani studied at Bariakhop Senior Secondary School from the beginning, which is situated at only 4/5 minutes walking distance from her home. She has one sister who is undergoing M.A. course from open university. While studying in class XII she fell in love with a person of her age. When they got married Rajani was only 19 years old. After marriage she involved herself with familial affairs and became less interested in pursuing higher studies. Her husband and other family members encouraged her to continue study but all their attempts were in vain. Later on she joined a local saving company as an agent. But unfortunately because of some internal problems the company locked out and she became jobless. Now she is the

mother of a lovely two years old girl. She is satisfied with her role as a wife and a mother but in the corner of her heart, some dissatisfaction sometimes rears its head especially when she meets her old friends who are established in their life. But still she is not interested to continue further study. To her, women should at least complete their education up to class XII to run a family smoothly.

Case-9 Devika Gurung is 13 years old. She is in class IV. Her father Bir Bahadur Gurung is an electrician, who has learnt his work through his own effort without any formal training. Bir Bahadur is an illiterate. Devika's mother is also illiterate. Devika has one sister who studies in class IV in a government school. Devika's family owned a little portion of landed property. Her father does not have any regular employment. At home, cooking is the responsibility of little Devika. Her mother does not help her in cooking. Her mother goes to field everyday in the morning but does not return home at any fixed time. Therefore Devika and her sister have to look after the household work, bring fodder and fuel etc. Once Devika fell down from a big tree while collecting fodder for cattles. Her right hand was fractured and she could not attend school for several days. Devika does not have the habit of regular study. Only before examination she prepares herself. Both her parents are addicted to alcohol. They are totally busy with their own world. Their illiteracy has made them ignorant about the future of their own children. Devika does not have any ambition in life. No one in her family encourages her to study well.

Case-10 Binita Pradhan – 13 years, educational qualification – student of class VIII. Binita's father Bal Bahadur Pradhan is a private contractor who mostly stays in Gangtok in search of work on contract basis. Bal Bahadur joined

school but after class I he dropped out school. Binita's mother Bishnu Maya is the 3rd wife of her father. Bisnu Maya studied upto class VIII. When Bal Bahadur and his first wife found their temperament incompatible, their relation broke up and his first wife returned to her parental home. Bal Bahadur's second wife got married with someone else leaving 4 children with Bal Bahadur. From his third wife Bishnu Maya, Bal Bahadur has two children – Binita and Bishal. Bishal is staying with one of his step brothers, while Binita and her mother are staying at Binita's maternal uncle's home. Now-a-days Binita's father has given up all responsibilities of his children and wife. Therefore Binita along with her mother and brother is facing lots of hardship for their livelihood. Her mother is in dire need of a job. Binita's father is a drunkard. Whenever he comes from Gangtok, he only creates trouble and nuisance at home. He physically abuses his wife and children. At her maternal uncle's home, Binita has to cook in the morning and evening. She hardly gets any time to study. The environment of her home is not suitable for studies. In the evening, after meal when she gets a little time, no one is there to tell her to study. Therefore she enjoys watching television instead of studying. She hardly opens her books everyday. Binita does not have any firm determination regarding her educational aspirations. Her immaturity does not allow her to think about her future prospects. Moreover her parents' relationship creates lot of hindrance to her educational accessibility.

Case-11 18 years old Bina Maya Gurung is a student of class XI. Both her father Ram Bahadur Gurung and mother Shiva Maya Gurung are illiterate. They have landed property of less than 1 acre. Bina has two brothers studying in class II and VI respectively, one elder sister who got married studied upto class V and one younger sister is studying in class VI. Bina Maya joined Government Senior Secondary School, Bariakhop from Class I. She is a good student. But she hardly gets any time in the morning to study.

Before coming to school, she cooks for her family members, as her parents go to field to cultivate food grains. After she returns from school she goes to the jungle to collect fodder. But everyday she tries to manage at least 1 or 1 ½ hours time for studying in the evening. Her parents are illiterate and therefore can not help her regarding studies. She helps her younger brother and sister in studies whenever they face any problem. Before or during examination, she works hard in the evening. Bina is a very punctual, hard working, labourious student. At school, Bina Maya gets inspired by her principal's advice in the morning assembly. She wants to complete graduation degree successfully and dreams to get a job so that she can look after her parents, properly. She is determined that she will remain unmarried and will be staying with her parents to take care of them. None of her family members are educated, therefore Bina wants to go for higher education so that she can help and guide her family members in every way. She wishes for more time to study. She feels that if she had educated family members, she could have achieved better result. In her opinion, education of women is very much necessary as only an educated mother can teach and guide her children. According to her, to run a family efficiently, education of female members is very important.

Case-12 Binita Chettri has completed her graduation from Siliguri College of West Bengal. She is 23 years, belongs to a well-to-do family. Both of her parents are government servants. Binita studied upto class VI in a private missionary school which was approximately 12 kilometres from her home. Therefore she used to stay at one of her relative's house. From class VII she joined the nearby government school. When she passed class X, fortunately that school was upgraded to class XII. But Binita along with her friends faced the problem of shortage of teachers for a limited period of time. The infrastructure of that school was not good. Girls did not have separate toilet and common room. The school offered only one stream i.e. Humanities. Binita had no choice but to opt for Humanities. Her parents are very encouraging

regarding her studies. Binita does not face any discrimination or is not burdened with household chores as she hails from an economically sound family. But when she thinks about her father's extra-marital affair from which he has an illegitimate daughter, she feels sad and mentally disturbed though all of them try to maintain a good relationship with each other. The environment outside Binita's home or the surrounding locality is not suitable for studies. Majority of the people of that locality are illiterate, the young are addicted to alcohol, gambling or pass their leisure time idly and girls get married before completion of secondary education. She thinks that it is because of her parents support and guidance that she has successfully completed her graduation degree. The challenge she is facing now is her desire to go for further studies however till date, the Sikkim university is not functioning in this State and as she has grown up her parents are afraid of sending their daughter to a distant place. Binita is trying to convince her parents as she aspires to become a renowned sociologist and to reform her own society.

Case-13 Bhim Maya Gurung, aged 40 years, passed class X examination. She is working in a government senior secondary school as a primary teacher. She is unmarried. She belongs to a well-to-do family. Her father K.D. Gurung was an ex-panchayat president, ex-zilla member, ex-chairman of Khadi Udyog and he is still an influential man in this locality whose education is upto class VII. Bhim Maya's father committed polygamy. Both wives are illiterate and in the beginning they used to live together. Bhim Maya's mother could not bear a male child and that was the reason for her father's second alliance mainly because of familial pressure. Now the two wives of K.D. Gurung are staying at separate houses with their own children and maintain good relationship with each other. Bhim Maya was quite small when her father got married for the second time. Now whenever she recalls those days she thinks that illiteracy, unemployment, social pressure or ignorance may be the reasons that her mother could not stop her husband K.D. Gurung from committing polygamy

and therefore, accepted his second marriage without any protest. Being a member of a well-to-do family Bhim Maya did not face much difficulty in completing her studies. Moreover parents (even the step mother also) and teachers were very encouraging and showed favourable attitude towards her studies. If negligent towards her studies, she used to be strictly punished by them. According to her there was no gender discrimination regarding studies at her home. Along with her brothers and sisters, she used to go to Soreng Secondary School which is 10 kilometres away from her home. But the distance was not a barrier to her for her studies. She used to follow a shortcut path and chatting with other friends, she used to easily cross that much of distance within 45 minutes everyday. She was a mediocre student and in spite of taking regular private tuition, she failed in final examination of class X. As a private candidate she passed the examination and underwent a teacher's training from Government Teacher Training Institute. Just after completion of that training course she got the job of a primary teacher in the same school where she studied. She is of the opinion that during her school days, education up to class X level meant a lot. People used to occupy prestigious positions in the society with that much of education. But now she repents not having acquired more educational degrees. She realises that lack of guidance and no role model are responsible for her lack of ambition to acquire higher education.

Csse-14 Pumpha Rai, aged 25 years who is the newly elected Panchayat President of Bariakhop village, studied up to class IX. She is unmarried. Both her parents are illiterate and her brothers and sisters are also less educated. Her parents never encouraged her to study. Pumpha could not continue her studies because of economic problems at home. According to Pumpha loads of household work became a major obstacle in her studies. She wants to continue her education but again her mother's ill health does not allow her to fill up the form for class X examination from open school. Being a drop out she has no idea about the various schemes beneficial for the women

folk of her locality. She was unable to answer the questions related to the possible steps that she can take as a Panchayat President for the emancipation of the women of her own locality. She surprised the researcher by saying that her political participation is not according to her wish but according to the pressure of her neighbours.

Geyzing Bazar:

Case-15 Anu Subba(neé Darjee), aged 30 years, is a housewife. Her father is a tailor who studied up to class VIII. Her mother was a illiterate who expired when Anu was only one year old. After her mother's death, Anu's father got married again. Anu was brought up at maternal uncle's home with grandparents. Their economic condition was very poor. Anu's grandfather was physically challenged and grandmother was illiterate. Her father did not want to fulfill his responsibility towards her. Her grandparents could not afford to pay for her education. Anu belonged to schedule caste community before marriage. During her childhood too, schedule caste students used to get government grants but no one was there for Anu to prepare the schedule caste certificate. Then her grandfather expired. Teachers and friends used to provide her support but she thinks that it is her fate that she could not continue her studies. At 14 years she got married. Her husband is a small businessman who studied up to class VI. They have two sons and one daughter. All of them are studying in government school. Anu is dissatisfied with her educational qualification. When her children need parental guidance regarding their studies and they can not help, both Anu and her husband feel helpless. Therefore they have decided to give them all possible support for higher education. Anu feels that without education an individual becomes a burden on other people. They are also very hopeful regarding the governmental support for higher study.

Case-16 Nim Lhamu Bhutia aged 14 years, studies in class IV. Her father is a businessman and her mother expired when she was in class I. Her father got married again. She has 3 brothers and 2 sisters. One sister is married. Two brothers do not go to school. Nim Lhamu and one of her sisters along with a brother go to school. Nim Lhamu is suffering from malnutrition. She often falls sick at school. During the summer season especially on sunny days she can not bear the scorching heat of the sun at the school assembly time and often, faints. Her family can not afford to pay for her medical treatment. They rely on traditional medicines for her treatment. Because of weakness Nim Lhamu can not concentrate on her studies. Moreover she does not feel any interest in studies. Her family members do not encourage her to study at home. She failed once or twice in some classes. Her step mother engages her in household works. The idea of importance of education still has not developed in her mind, and therefore she can not speak about her aim.

Case-17 Chandra Kumari Chhetri is a student of class VII. Although her parents are at Geyzing, she stays separately with one of her unmarried aunty's house. Chandra kumari has 4 elder sisters and two brothers. Only one of the sisters has completed class X level education. Among the brothers, one is mentally challenged. Her father is a drunkard. Her mother is illiterate. They have a little piece of cultivable land. They also have a milch cow which they have received from the State Government. Chandra kumari's father is an irresponsible person who spends most of the time out of home. Chandra kumari is frustrated about the relationship between her parents and the carelessness of her father. Chandra kumari's mother has sent two of her daughters including Chandra kumari to their relative's home so that they can live a better life. Two of her sisters recently got married. At aunty's home Chandra kumari has to perform lots of work starting from cooking, washing, cleaning etc. Although she lacks guidance from her family, she wants to continue her studies as much as her family allows her. When Chandra looks at

her educated teachers she gets inspired to study. She thinks that it is because of education that her teachers are leading better lives.

Case-18 Binita Sharma is a student of class XII. Her father is a teacher who himself is undergoing M.A. Course from distance education. Binita's mother studied upto class XII. Binita has only one elder brother. He is pursuing his medical course in Manipur. Binita studied upto class X from Government Girls' School after that she went to Soreng as her father got transferred there. She joined the Government Senior Secondary School in science stream. Her inspiration is her father who always encourages her to study. She wants to become a doctor. But she is not satisfied with the educational environment of the school. She finds that there is less opportunity for girls to get exposure in her school. But she is very courageous and determined to fulfill her target. To her, only through education, women can equally shoulder the responsibilities of society.

Case-19 Rinchen Ongmoo Bhutia is a student of B.A. first year of Loreto College, Darjeeling, West Bengal. She is 18 years. Her mother is a clerk in a government office. Rinchen was small when her father died and her mother got married again. She has one step brother who is studying in class X. Rinchen was good in studies and her parents as well as teachers used to encourage her to study well. She studied in Pelling Senior Secondary School which is 9 kilometres from Geyzing. She used to reach the school sometimes by foot taking a short cut route or sometimes by vehicle. Coming from an economically sound family, she did not have heavy pressure of household works. But when her mother got married the second time, Rinchen was upset. Though her step father looks after her and treats her like her own daughter, Rinchen still has some insecurities which at this adolescent period, creates

disturbance in her studies. But she is determined to achieve the highest academic degree. She believes that before getting married, girls should complete their education and create their own identity. According to her it is time for girls to show their competence and talents in each and every field.

Case-20 Sushma Subba, 48 years old, is a headmistress in a government secondary school. Her mother is a teacher and father is an ex-army man. Born and brought up in a well-to-do family, Sushma did not have the burden of household works. But she recalls her school days when the parents were not so conscious regarding their ward's studies. Though her father had M.Com.degree, she did not get much encouragement from him also. Before the result of her B.Sc.(Honours) came out, she got the job of a laboratory assistant. But unfortunately she failed in B.Sc. examination and joined B.A.Course. After completion of the course, she got a job as a graduate teacher in a government school. At the age of 26, she got married and gave birth to three children. She feels that her daughters are lucky enough to get all types of parental support and encouragement which she herself did not receive during her school/college days. She completed B.Ed. and M.Ed.courses later on to get promotion and perfection in her professional life. According to Sushma, women education is indispensable to make the family and society better. She says that, education may help to eradicate gender discrimination from the society. Sushma equally encourages all her three children – two daughters and one son, to pursue their studies seriously. She wants to give equal access to education to all her children.

Case-21 24 years Sonam Phuti Bhutia is a class VI drop out. Her father is an employee of power department whose educational qualification is up to class VIII. Her mother does not have any formal educational degree. Sonam is

unmarried. All her three siblings are students of schools and colleges. But only Sonam did not continue her study. She says that her memory power is very weak and it acted as a barrier to her study. She was a student of low intelligence and could not follow her teachers. Her parents also did not encourage her to study. Gradually she found it a very difficult task to read and write. She failed several times and then stopped going to school. But even Sonam feels that to become successful in life, education plays a vital role.

Nayabazar Town:

Case-22 Renuka Subba is a 34 years old house wife. She studied upto class VIII. Her husband is a driver and his educational qualification is also up to class VIII. Both Renuka's parents were illiterate. Renuka got married at a very early age. Before reaching 18 years, she entered into marital life and left studies. Moreover she was not interested in studies and her husband did not encourage her to study as he did not want his wife employed in any institution. But now when Renuka looks back and meets her schoolmates, she regrets her own decision to discontinue her education. She says that since she was at a very young age, she did not realise the importance of education. She thinks that education not only helps to provide jobs but it is also essential as it helps particularly women to fight against any kind of exploitation. It helps to increase an individual's status. She has one daughter and a son. Now as she has realised the importance of education, she wants to provide equal education to all her children,irrespective of their sexes.

Case-23 Sita Mangar studies in class III. She is 13 years old. Her parents work as non-agricultural labourers (coolie). Both of them have educational qualification under primary level. Sita belongs to a very poor family. She has three brothers. Two of them go to school. At this very young age Sita has to perform loads of household works. She hardly gets any time to study. When

she was asked about her interest in studies, she replied in the negative. She is not interested in studying but she would like to go to school so that she gets more time to play with her friends and also enjoy the mid-day meal. At home, she is given the responsibility to cook. She failed several times after which her parents never encouraged her to study further. Both her parents consume local made liquor almost every day after the whole day's work and do not return home at a fixed time. Sita could not reply distinctly about her ambition in life. She lacks the guidance and proper parental care at this very young age.

Case-24 Bandana Gurung is a student of class VIII. She is 14. Her father who studied upto class V, is a fourth grade government employee. Her mother studied upto class XII. Bandana studied upto VII in a government school. When she was in class IV her parents were divorced. Both Bandana and her brother started staying with their grandparents and an unmarried aunty. Bandana performs household tasks only on holidays. Her aunty encourages her to study well. Two years back when her divorced mother (now married again) realised her responsibilities towards her children, she became interested to take educational responsibilities of Bandana and approached her grandparents regarding this. It is because of her support that now Bandana has joined a private school for better education. But poor Bandana could not cope with the new educational environment as she is not a bright student. She failed in all subjects. Now she is repeating the same class and happy with the new school as she gets special attention there. The divorce of her parents makes her feel insecure everytime. Her grandparents are always worried about her future. Bandana wants to be a teacher. When she was asked to show reasons for it, she said that teachers always get the chance to read and expand their knowledge and she too wants to enjoy that facility.

Case-25 Bhumika Chhetri studies in class XII. She is 18. Her father studied upto class V. He is an unemployed person. Her mother studied up to class VIII. Bhumika's family does not possess any cultivable land. Her mother tries to manage work on contract basis occasionally. They have one old wooden house which they have given to one family on rent. Bhumika has one sister who is studying in class V. Bhumika completed up to class X from a government school, Jorethang(South Sikkim) which is situated at a walking distance from her home. Now she is staying at a rental house at Soreng, West Sikkim, as she has joined one government senior secondary school of that place. This school is 10/11 kilometres away from her home. Her earlier school does not provide science stream and therefore she was compelled to join here. When she is at home she used to cook because her mother has to visit various places in search of getting contractual work. Now she is free from doing any type of household work at her rented house but for her family it becomes an extra burden to send her money for her monthly expenses. Bhumika dreams of becoming a doctor but is afraid if her parents can afford it or not. From home she gets encouragement to study but she along with her female friends, express their dissatisfaction regarding the partial treatment they get from some teachers of their school. She feels that teachers always encourage the boys, not the girls. Bhumika supports women education upto master level in today's competitive world.

Case-26 Prem Kumari Tamang is a student of B.Com. first year in Sikkim Government College, Tadong. Her father is a government employee who works in power department. He studied upto class VIII. Her mother is a housewife who has studied up to class III. After completion of primary education from Nayabazar Junior High School she joined Jorethang Senior Secondary School. She completed secondary level education from there. She wanted to pursue her study as a commerce student, but the stream was not available at that school. Therefore she shifted to Soreng. She passed the

examination successfully and joined college. She is staying in girls' hostel now. She has three brothers. Two among them have completed graduation. One is in business and the other one is interested in pursuing higher studies. The third brother studied only upto class VII and is a driver. Being the only girl child at home, Prem always gets attention from others. At home, she did not face any type of pressure especially regarding household works as her mother and sister-in-law has taken the entire responsibility of running the household smoothly. She gets supports and encouragement for study from her family members especially from her educated brothers. Her aim in life is to become a chartered accountant. She opines that women can enjoy a secured life only if she is educated.

Case-27 Nilam Rai is a 35 years old business woman. She studied upto class VII. Both her parents were illiterate. During her school days Nilam used to walk 8 kilometres to reach her school. Her father was a rich farmer. They had maid servants at home to perform household works. But at her very young age her father expired. Her illiterate mother and little educated elder brothers and sisters did not understand the importance of education and never tried to create pressure on Nilam to study. She got married when she was only 15 years old. Her husband is in hotel business. They have only one son who is a student of engineering course. At this mature age Nilam realised the importance of education in individual's life. She believes that education of women is essential and that women need it even more than men because it provides all types of opportunities to raise their status and to stop exploitation against them

Case-28 18 years old Priyanka Rai is a drop out. She did not complete class VIII. Her father was a farmer who expired when Priyanka was small. Her mother studied upto class VIII and runs a small hotel. She has one brother who

studies in class IV. Priyanka's old and sick grandfather also stays with them. When her mother goes to the hotel which is at a little distance from their home, Priyanka looks after all household activities and takes care of her grandfather. She was weak in studies and did not have the habit of studying throughout the year. No one at home inspires her to study. She failed many times and when she failed in the class VIII board examination, she lost total interest in repeating the same class and decided to give up. Till now she does not have any regrets regarding her incomplete education.

7.2 Major Problems Identified

After discussing the state of women's education in Sikkim, particularly in West District of Sikkim and after the empirical study conducted in rural and urban areas to know the educational status of the women, I have come into the conclusion that though women literacy rate in Sikkim is quite impressive, still there is vast gap between male and female literacy rate. Despite the Sikkimese women enjoy a higher position within their society compared to most of the other State in India; their educational position is not satisfying or equal to men. Then there is rural urban disparity in female literacy. Therefore, I honestly tries to find out what are the problems acting as a barrier to women education in Sikkim. The various reasons identified as the major constraints to women education are stated below :

(1) Historical

The causes educational backwardness of the Sikkimese people lie in its historical development. Due to various political turmoil in this region expansion of education did not take place in this tiny State. Before the British rule, people were far from the modern education system. Alienation from modern education among the common people of Sikkimese society was mainly due to conservatism. In pre-merger period, education in Sikkim helped the upper class in establishing their domination in society. Education facilities for the common people was not enough and could not fulfill the actual requirements in the society. Level of education was very low which could not create skilled and trained people who could have taken leading part in the State's developmental process. Introduction of modern education in Sikkim is the impact of missionary activities in Sikkim. Prior to that education in this region was

monastic in nature and there was no evidence of formal education system for Sikkimese women. The monastic education was not beneficial for the common people.

A very few educated people who belonged to upper class, secured positions in the Sikkimese bureaucracy and to suit the interest of the feudal elites, the educational qualifications which were required for particular occupations, were modified or reduced.

Christian Missionary Education began in the State with the support from the kazis in the late nineteenth century. Later on, some of their schools were handed over to Scottish Missionaries. For many years Christian Missionary schools for girls offered only basic education including sewing, knitting, vocational training etc. and that type of education was also restricted to the girls of the kazis and influential persons. It was only in 1924 that Mary Scott, a Scottish missionary opened a girls' school in Gangtok for the girls of the common people and it was the first full-fledged girls' school in Sikkim. Therefore, it requires some time to reduce gender disparity within the State.

(2) Infrastructural

The village settlements in Sikkim is very scattered by nature. Town areas of this hilly regions are also devoid of some basic facilities which is available in other parts of India. For instance, good communication facilities.

The available educational facilities in the villages and towns in Sikkim particularly women educational facilities are not well developed. Separate educational institutions for girls with hostel facilities, library facilities, separate toilet for girls are rare. Surprisingly still now there is no degree college in West Sikkim. As a matter of fact girls are facing serious problems with regard to their educational upliftment and in pursuing higher studies.

(3) Economic

- (a) Poor economic condition of mainly the village people is one of the vital reasons for educational backwardness of the women in Sikkim. Due to their poor economic condition, they fail to maintain their budget for education of their child especially girl child. They are poverty-ridden because of their low

income and high expenditure to maintain the standard of life. Girls are also expected to perform loads of household work like fetching water, bringing fodder and firewood from distant places and therefore they can not continue their studies.

- (b) When the parents work in field, it is a traditionally accepted role for a village girl to look after her younger siblings which thus, disturb their studies.

(4) Socio-cultural

- (a) Education of parents is very essential to educate or guide the children. But unfortunately a vast number of the parents in Sikkim are illiterate or very less educated. Majority of the students in villages are first generation learners. Hence, inadequate guidance from their parents. Moreover the parents are not conscious about the studies of their children particularly of their daughters. Stagnation in class is an acute problem in village areas devoid of facilities of coaching centres where illiterate parents can not guide their children. Large size of family also lacks favourable environment for education at home.
- (b) Girls of Sikkimese society enjoy excess freedom or liberty compared to their counterparts of different other places of India and they sometimes misuse their freedom, ignore their studies and do not show any interest to continue their studies. This is one of the major constraints to women education in Sikkim.
- (c) Marriage before the completion of their school education is also a common practice among the girls of Sikkim. It is mainly because of the acceptance and popularity of one of the form of tribal marriage i.e. marriage by elopement which is locally termed as '*chori biha*' among all the communities of Sikkim. Moreover lack of consciousness of the parents regarding the legal norms of the marriageable age of the girls also encourage this practice. As a result, girls withdraw their enrolment from school in the mid way.
- (d) From traditional period Indian daughters are treated as '*Paraya dhan*' that means after marriage they will be included as a permanent member of their in-laws house. Therefore to invest money for their studies means complete

wastage of money for some parents. Some of the Sikkimese parents still nurture this belief and some even cling to the age old traditional belief that if daughters are given more education it may destroy their moral character and so, they do not encourage their daughters' education.

- (e) The general feeling and belief among some less educated parents is that there is a lack of job opportunity or gainful employment for their sons and daughters even after higher studies. This feeling is also a retarding factor which does not encourage rural girls to continue higher studies.
- (f) There is lack of motivation from the community itself. Influential people hardly take any initiative to encourage younger generations particularly girls to study more.
- (g) Alcoholism is associated with hill-culture. Among the '*Matwali*' group of people, use of alcohol in everyday life and during festive occasion is very common. Other ethnic communities have also adopted this culture as a result of their peaceful co-existence for decades. Many people have misused this practice, mainly the rural illiterate people who often cross the limit of consuming alcohol. After heavy consumption of alcohol, they forget their responsibilities at home, they forget to take care of their own children and to guide them. Not only the fathers, but in some rural houses, even the mothers are addicted to alcohol. This bad habit of the parents has a very negative impact on the studies of their children especially on their daughters.
- (h) Polygyny or freedom of sexual life or post marital relation of parents is also a constraint to the education of children of Sikkimese society especially to the girls. Parents often get involved in post marital affairs with other partners and forget their responsibilities towards their children. Children feel insecure because of this kind of attitude of their parents. Enjoyment of parents hamper the studies of their children mainly the studies of girls who are by nature more emotional than boys.
- (i) Some teachers who hold the traditional belief that men hold superior position in society, encourage the male students to participate in all types of educational

activities. They give preference to the boys only and the girl students lack confidence and develop inferiority complex. This type of attitude of teachers act as a barrier to girls' education. Moreover the number of committed teachers are very rare in the State.

7.3 Findings

The comparative study between the rural and urban areas of West Sikkim regarding the women's educational situation reveals that the educational position of women is not equal to men. Though the literacy rate of both urban and rural areas of West Sikkim is higher than the national average still vast difference has been noticed between male and female literacy in all the study areas including rural and urban. Various reasons have been identified acting as a hindrance to women's education as well as overall educational situation.

First of all, it has been noticed that Sikkim being an autonomous country where monarchy used to prevail, people did not bother about their educational achievements. Their lifestyle was very simple and to get two ends meet was enough for them. Their superstitious belief did not encourage them to send their daughters to schools. Common people had the notion that if women learn more they will become 'bakshi' or witch.

2nd, there is ecological and environmental problem which also acts as a barrier to education particularly women's education. The hilly terrain lacks good communication facilities. Unbearable cold winter also may create problems to continue further study.

Lack of separate girls' school with hostel facilities and separate toilet facilities is an important issue in both town and village areas. It is a major constraint to women education.

Poor economic factor is a retarding factor to girls education. Girls are expected to perform different types of household activities, bring fodder, firewood, water from distance places. They look after and take care of their siblings and hardly get any time to study.

Different socio-cultural problems have been identified as major constraints to girls education. Some students being first generation learner do not get proper parental guidance. Large size of family sometimes lack favourable environment for education. Stagnation in class has been noticed in village areas, lacking coaching centres and educated parents. Sometimes girls show carelessness regarding their studies because they do not understand the importance of education in their life. They marry before completion of school education also.

Then some less educated parent belief that to invest money for the higher studies of their daughters means complete wastage of money as they will become a member of their in-laws family.

Some people even think that as the employment opportunity is less, why should they insist their daughters to pursue higher studies?

Influential persons also do not take any steps or initiatives to educate their community girls. Practice of taking alcohol limitlessly by the parents mainly by the illiterate parents is also responsible for the poor performance of the students specially the girl students.

Parents post marital affairs and irresponsible attitude also demoralise the children. Girls, who are by nature emotional, feel insecure because of the changing behavior of their parents and lack interests in studies.

Sometimes the preferential treatment of the teachers towards the male students makes the girls to feel inferior. This type of attitude of the teachers discourages girls' educational upliftment.

These are the major constraints to women education and vast rural-urban male-female disparity in literacy.