

Chapter 8

Major Findings, Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

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- **Recommendations**

CHAPTER 8

MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The basic objective of this study is to find out the state of women's education in rural and urban Sikkim with particular reference to their educational status, problems and prospects in West Sikkim. In the foregoing chapters, on the basis of data collected from two villages and two town areas of West Sikkim, these issues are analysed and presented with relevant facts and figures.

This section presents a general observation or the main findings of the entire study with concluding remarks on the proposed research questions, major constraints and at the end some recommendations or suggestions are made on the basis of the empirical study.

I

Education is a process which develops the inherent capabilities and personality of an individual. It is the more powerful force which reshapes our society. The transformation of individual from a biological being to a social being is possible through socialisation and education. Education is the birthright of every individual. Durkheim defined education as "the action exercised by the older generations upon those who are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to awaken and develop in the child those physical, intellectual and moral states which are required of him both by his society as a whole and by the milieu for which he is specially destined" (Bhattacharyya:2002).

Education is an integrative force which imparts moral values. It provides technical skills which is important for economic development. Education plays a pivotal role in bringing social development. Literacy stimulates social, economic and political development. That is why it is essential to educate all. Literacy of males and females is equally important but emphasis should be given on women's education,

because if women are given education, they will help to create an educated future generation as their education will easily transmit to the next generation and empowerment of women of our society will be ensured through education.

History reveals that educational status of Indian women in the past was very poor. Sikkim was no exception in this regard. But after the merger, the overall educational scenario of Sikkim as well as women's educational position has also improved. But still their position is not as equal as men in both rural and urban Sikkim. The present study is a humble attempt to find out the actual educational position of women of both rural and urban Sikkim. For this purpose empirical data have been collected from intensive field study at four different places choosing two from village areas and another two from town areas of West Sikkim. Name of the rural areas under study are – Bariakhop and Timburbang *busty* and the urban areas are Geyzing or Gyalshing *bazaar* and Nayabazar town. The study is confined to only the ethnic groups found in the areas under study. Among the ethnic groups, mainly the Nepalese and few Bhutia families were found in the study areas. The empirical findings are:-

At Timburbong village, 266 households that were surveyed, consist of total 1430 people and at Bariakhop village, out of 214 ethnic households surveyed, consist of total 1048 people. Whereas the areas and population of towns are very small. Out of total 92 households surveyed, 367 people of ethnic community live in Geyzing and in 63 households surveyed, 289 people live in Nayabazar town. Among the religious groups in two village areas– Bariakhop village is numerically dominated by Buddhist religion whereas at Timburbong, Hindus are numerically dominant. While in the two town areas, Hindus are the numerically dominant group. It needs to be mentioned here that in the two town areas the total population of non-ethnic groups are more than the ethnic groups.

Out of four study areas, total female population is less than the male population in all three areas, except at Timburbong where more than 50 per cent population (52.31%) are females. Therefore, total rural female population (50.52%) is more than the female population of the urban areas (48.48%).

Urban people are more conscious than the rural people and they desire to keep their family size small. Average size of a household in urban areas is 4.23 i.e. approximately 4 persons reside in a household. The average size of a household in rural areas is 5.16 i.e. approximately 5 persons reside in a rural household. People of both rural and urban areas prefer to live in nuclear family.

Total dependent people are more than the earning members in both rural and urban places. But the percentage of dependents is more in rural areas (74.33%) than that of urban areas (67.23%). Agriculture is the main source of income of the rural people. Majority of the total rural population (62.92%) cultivate their own land. Typical rural characteristics have been found in the villages whereas the urban areas also hold urban characteristics where 41.29 per cent population are engaged in government service or in white collar jobs. Besides these jobs, people of urban areas are engaged in business.

Per family average yearly income is not satisfactory in rural areas. Only 23.75 per cent of total rural population has yearly income above Rs.50, 000/- whereas more than 50 per cent (55.48%) of total urban population has yearly income above Rs.50,000. But in slum areas of Nayabazar town, per family average income is very less.

With regard to educational facilities, three places – Geyzing, Nayabazar and Bariakhop have more or less equal opportunity. Nayabazar town area is provided with one J.H.S. only. For higher studies, students go to Jorethang Senior Secondary School which is only 1 kilometre from there but falls in separate district (South Sikkim). In Geyzing also there is one government senior secondary school within one kilometre from the town area, but in the town area itself there is no senior secondary school. At Bariakhop village, there is one government senior secondary school and at Timburbong, there are two government secondary schools but no senior secondary school. Children have to walk at least 4/5 kilometres to reach the nearest senior secondary school or they stay at rental houses to complete their school education. In the West district of Sikkim, till now, there is no degree college. Students join college for further studies either in Gangtok College (East district) or Rhenock College (East district) or in Namchi College (South district).

The total literacy rate of urban areas is quite high (85.37 %) compared to rural areas (73.28 %). Geyzing town occupies the top position (91.55%) in this regard. But the interesting fact is that, very negligible difference with regard to total literacy has been noticed between one of the village areas under study i.e. Timburbong (76.57%) and one of the urban areas under study i.e. Nayabazar town (77.51%).

Overall girls' literacy rate in the rural areas is satisfactory but vast difference has been noticed between rural and urban women literacy rate. It is 66.37 per cent in rural areas whereas it is 79.25 per cent in urban areas. Again, Timburbong village (69.92%) and Nayabazar town (69.06%) differ very little regarding women literacy rate and surprisingly Timburbong *busty* has slightly more female literacy rate than Nayabazar town.

The literacy standard of the male and female population differs greatly both in rural and urban areas. But at the secondary level, the number of rural females (51.52%) is more than that of rural males (48.48%). The total standard of literacy in the higher level i.e. graduate and post graduate level, though quite negligible, in urban areas (7.86%), is comparatively higher in comparison to the rural areas (4.24%) and the percentage of female literates in this level is same (36.36%) in both rural and urban areas.

Regarding enrolment of students, it has been observed that the enrolment of the girls both in rural and urban areas is less than the boys. In rural areas, out of 847 students, 433 (51.12%) are boys and 414 (48.88%) are girls. In urban areas, out of 225 students, 127 (56.44%) are boys and 98 (43.56%) are girls. At higher level i.e. graduate and post graduate level, girls' enrolment is far behind the boys' enrolment in both rural and urban areas. Timburbong village shows highest percentage (98.14%) of girl students who are continuing their studies among the villages and towns under study.

In the rural areas, among the students who are continuing higher studies i.e. graduate and post graduate studies, percentage of the girls (42.86%) are less than the boys (57.14%). Same picture has been noticed in the urban areas. Among the urban students who are continuing higher studies, 46.15 per cent are girls compared to 53.85 per cent boys. Thus it is clear that the percentage of the girls who are continuing higher studies is more in urban areas than the rural areas. Therefore, it can be said that

the urban girls are more conscious regarding their educational achievement compared to the rural girls and they intend to go for higher studies.

According to the Annual Report of S.S.A.(2004-05), upto secondary level, dropout rate of girls (25.39%) is less than boys (27.13%) and among the four districts, the dropout rate is more in the West district upto secondary level. Dropout problem is visible in the rural and urban areas under study. According to last one year (2007) the school record and report of the S.S.A., the number of dropout girls or detained girls upto elementary level of the rural areas is less than the boys whereas the number of dropout girls or detained girls upto elementary level is more than the boys in the town areas.

The present study reveals that the disparity between male-female literacy rate in both the rural and urban areas is mainly because a large number of the present generation are first generation learners and their parents are illiterate. The parents and the girls are less conscious about the importance of education in individual's life. But now the situation has started changing and the people are developing consciousness and awareness about the importance of education. Some of the illiterate parents are in favour of equal access to education and more facilities especially for girls' education.

In a partriarchal society like ours, the opinion and attitude of males may change the status of women. Therefore, the perceptions of males towards women's education, employment, dignity, empowerment etc., have been taken into consideration. To know the views of the women regarding their own status, educational level, employment, empowerment etc. similar kind of questions were asked to them. The findings are as follows:-

45.83 per cent rural men believe that women enjoy equal position with men in the society and 83.87 per cent urban men hold the same view. 20.83 per cent rural men compared to only 6.45 per cent urban men deny the existence of women's equal status. It is worth mentioning here that from Nayabazar town not a single respondent think that women are inferior to men. Total 33.33 per cent rural men agree that women hold superior position than men against 9.68 per cent of total urban men. When women were asked to give their opinion regarding their own status, total 65.63 per cent rural women opine that they enjoy equal position with men, while

77.42 per cent of total urban women support the same. 30.21 per cent rural women feel that their position is inferior to men and only 6.45 per cent urban women agree with that. 4.17 per cent of total rural women hold the opinion that their position is superior to men and 16.13 per cent of total urban women share the same opinion.

All the male respondents from both rural and urban areas support women's right to cast votes. 97.92 per cent of rural males against 90.23 per cent of urban males express positive feeling regarding the participation of women in family decision making process. 93.75 per cent rural men and 80.65 per cent urban men think that women should have the right to choose their husband. 96.88 per cent rural men against 87.10 per cent urban men support women's right to choose their own profession. 86.46 per cent rural men and only 74.19 per cent urban men support equal share of parental property among male and female members of the family. 97.92 per cent rural men and 96.77 per cent urban men support women's representation in local government bodies. It seems the attitude of rural men are more positive regarding women's rights and empowerment than urban men.

88.54 per cent rural men are in favour of co-educational system and 83.87 per cent men from urban areas do not have any objection to co-educational system. 3.13 per cent rural men against 16.13 per cent urban men are also in favour of co-educational system but on certain conditions. 8.33 per cent rural men do not support co-education system. They have very negative views regarding this system.

81.25 per cent rural women are in favour of co-educational system while majority of urban women (80.65 %) support this. 12.5 per cent rural women against 19.35 per cent urban women support co-educational system but on certain conditions while only 6.25 per cent rural women are against this system.

85.42 per cent rural men against 80.65 per cent urban men support women's employment outside home while, 7.29 per cent rural men against 16.13 per cent urban men impose certain conditions on it and 7.29 per cent rural men against 3.23 per cent urban men totally disapprove of it.

77.08 per cent rural women and 74.19 per cent urban women approve of women's employment outside home. 15.63 per cent rural women compared to 19.35

per cent urban women impose certain conditions before approval while 7.29 per cent rural women against 6.45 per cent urban women do not favour it.

With regard to the objectives of female education, the opinions of female respondents were asked. Majority of rural women (30.21%) think that the main aim of girls education is to get employment. 12.5 per cent of them think that it is mainly to acquire knowledge, 15.63 per cent believe that to increase the status of the family, women should be educated, 28.13 per cent believe that to make the women independent, education is required, while according to 11.46 per cent of them, the objective is to educate the younger generation of the family. Only 2.08 per cent rural women think that education may help them to find a suitable husband.

While majority of the urban women(48.39 %) are of the opinion that the main objective of education is to make women independent. Only 6.45 per cent of them opine that it is mainly to acquire knowledge, 16.13 per cent of them think that to get employment is the main objective of women education. 9.68 per cent urban women believe that educated women increase the family status and 19.35 per cent think that to educate the children, women must get education.

More than half of the rural female respondents (52.38%) are happy with their educational attainment while more than half of the urban female respondents (52%) are dissatisfied with their educational level . Among the rural women who could not achieve graduate degree, same per cent i.e. 19.30 per cent blame either their parents or familial works which did not encourage them to continue their higher studies. Urban women who are dissatisfied mainly think themselves responsible for not continuing their studies as majority of them (35.71%) got jobs and lost interest in continuing their studies while others put forward some different reasons.

The entire male and female respondents of rural and urban areas under study feel the need for education for both sexes. 41.67 per cent rural men favour girls' education up to graduate level against 57.29 per cent of them who support it for boys. While only 11.46 per cent suggest post graduate level education for girls, 25 per cent rural men suggest this level for boys. One person from rural area who constitute a very negligible percentage(1.04%) suggest only up to primary level for girls. Similar kinds of opinion have been received from urban men. More than half of the urban males

(61.29 %) are interested in educating their daughters or female members of their family up to the graduate level while 58.06 per cent of them suggest this level of education for boys. 25.81 per cent urban men suggest post graduate level education for girls while 29.03 per cent suggest this level for boys. It seems that urban men prefer boys a little more than girls for higher education.

Majority of the rural (35.42%) and urban women (54.84%) suggest graduate level of education for common girls. While 23.96 per cent rural women against 38.71 per cent urban women suggest post graduate level for girls, 23.96 per cent rural women against only 3.23 per cent urban women are interested in giving their daughters education up to class XII, 16.67 per cent of rural women and 3.23 per cent urban women have aspiration of only upto secondary level of education for girls.

Male respondents were asked whether they noticed son preference for higher education within their society or not. Many replied in the positive. Among them, 42.55 per cent rural men think that it is because of the feeling that women will be included in their in-laws family after marriage, that investing money in their education is considered a complete wastage. More than half of the urban men (58.33%) agree with this reason. 46.81 per cent rural men against 41.67 per cent urban men think that the preference is because of the hope that in their old age, a son will look after them whereas only 10.64 per cent rural men think that sons are more meritorious than daughters and therefore, should be given preference for higher studies.

72.92 per cent rural women from various educational backgrounds and 74.19 per cent urban women from various educational backgrounds have positive feeling on their gender situation, while 27.08 per cent rural women against 25.81 per cent urban women have negative feeling on their gender situation. They have given different reasons to support their feelings.

While asking the opinion of the respondents regarding women's educational position within society, area-wise their opinion differed. 80.21 per cent of rural men compared to 45.16 per cent urban men believe that women are educationally backward than men. While only 19.79 per cent rural men and more than half of the male respondents (54.84%) of urban areas think that women are not educationally lagging behind.

More than half of both rural (63.54 %) and urban (54.15 %) women have positive opinion regarding their educational status. But 36.46 per cent rural women and 45.16 per cent urban women feel that they hold a backward position in education.

Both male and female respondents of rural and urban areas have identified various reasons which act as barriers to women's education. 46.75 per cent rural men against 35.71 per cent urban men identify lack of parents' consciousness as that barrier. While 10.39 per cent rural men and 21.43 per cent urban men hold the girls responsible for being a barrier to their own education. 11.69 per cent rural men against 21.43 per cent urban men blame poverty while 16.88 per cent rural men and 7.14 per cent urban men feel that it may be due to low marriageable age of the girls. Same per cent of rural and urban men i.e. 14.29 per cent, assume that lack of institutional opportunity especially for girls may be the barrier to their education.

47.54 per cent rural women and 23.53 per cent urban women feel that because of parents' lack of awareness and consciousness girls sometimes do not continue their studies. 8.20 per cent rural women against 17.65 per cent urban women believe that lack of interest of the girls themselves in continuing their studies may have acted as a barrier against their educational growth. While 10.67 per cent rural women and 35.29 per cent urban women are of opinion that poverty may have hampered their educational growth. 18.03 per cent rural women against 17.65 per cent urban women state that girls marry before completion of education and leave their studies. While 6.56 per cent rural women and only 5.88 per cent urban women think that lack of institutional opportunity for women is the barrier to women's education.

II

The present study is an exploratory research work to find out the answers of the questions set as research questions. Following are the attempts regarding the remarks on the proposed research questions:

Before the merger of Sikkim into India, the State was backward in every field. The simple lifestyle of the people did not encourage them to study and women were expected to perform household works. The study reveals that the illiteracy and

educational backwardness of the Sikkimese women is mainly due to their unawareness, superstitious belief, lack of consciousness etc. During the traditional period, common people had a superstitious belief that if women are given education, they would become a 'bokshi' or a witch. In 1913, one girls' school was established mainly for the daughters of the Kazis. Language, knitting and spinning were taught there. Daughters of common people were not given admission there. Establishment of girls' school is mainly because of the missionary activities in Sikkim. Mary Scott, a Scottish Missionary first opened a girls' school for common people. But till merger, status of women's education in Sikkim was very depressing.

After merger into India, there has been a lot of improvement in women's educational position. Parents have understood the importance of education in women's life. They send their daughters to school. The female literacy of the State is 61.46 per cent according to 2001 census which is quite impressive.

There is tremendous gap between rural -urban women literacy in Sikkim. Women literacy rate in urban areas is very high (80.19%) compared to the women literacy (59.05%) in rural areas [Census 2001]. Women, who are staying in urban areas, have much more consciousness regarding their life, education, etc. But rural women are slowly becoming conscious regarding their studies. Their literacy rate is gradually improving. They are trying to fight against all the odd situations. Moreover their facilities compared to their urban counterparts are less and that may be the reason that they are still more backward than their urban counterparts.

Educationally, Sikkimese women are still more backward than the men. 76.73 per cent of male literacy against 61.46 per cent female literacy has been noticed in the year 2001. But the positive feature has been noticed, that is, the rate at which their literacy percentage is improving is higher than the rate of growth of male literacy.

In Sikkim, there are more government schools than private schools. In government schools, children get different types of facilities like free books (upto class V), bag, raincoat, mid-day meal, scholarships for S.C./S.T. students and meritorious girls etc. But the medium of instruction in all types of school is English. Therefore, the people, mainly the village people face difficulties.

Sikkimese girls think that women education is a must for their self development. More than half of the total urban women (54.84%) believe that up to graduate level education is a must whereas majority of rural women (35.42%) believe the same.

Various factors that hinder educational upliftment of the Sikkimese girls have been identified by the men and the women of the Sikkimese society. They mainly hold their parents' lack of consciousness regarding education, as a large section of present generation of Sikkimese society is first generation learner, responsible for being a hindrance to the educational upliftments of girls. Then, the girls themselves are not interested in their studies and show negligence towards it. Poverty or poor economic condition is also, to some extent, a barrier to girls' education. Girls of Sikkim enjoy excess freedom and some of them marry at a very early age that is before completion of the minimum level of education. Educational institutions purely for girls' are also lacking in this State. That is also a barrier to girls' educational development. Girls are expected to do lots of household works- to fetch water, bring firewood, fodder from distant places. But these laborious manual tasks have not identified by any of the respondents as a hindrance to the girls' educational development. May be it is because of their traditional role acceptance. Addiction of parents to alcohol, freedom in sexual relations or their post marital affairs and showing negligence in their responsibilities towards their wards are also some major constraints in the educational development of children especially the girls. Sometimes the preferential treatment of teachers towards boys become an obstacle in girls' educational upliftment.

To overcome these types of problems various remedial measures have been suggested by the respondents. Among these- motivational programmes for parents, motivational programmes for girls, free education for girls at all levels, ban on early marriage or before attaining the minimum level of education etc. have been suggested by both male and female respondents.

III

From this study it reveals that the prime thing which is necessary for the development of women education in Sikkimese society is people's awareness. It could be achieved through motivating them. This responsibility should be shared by the Government as well as by the influential persons of the society. Basing on this study, in this section, I would like to put forward some recommendations to improve the educational scenario of Sikkim with particular reference to women's education as suggested by the people and also on the basis of my field experience.

(A) Administrative Measures- Actions to be Taken by the State

1. Government should provide adequate importance on women education as women can contribute to the socio-economic development of the State as well as the nation. Government should take necessary steps to open more girls' schools and colleges in both rural and urban areas.
2. Appointment of women teachers upto 75 per cent in primary level is required because it is universally accepted that female teachers compared to male teachers can take better care of small children. Timely appointment of teachers should be done. Before the session starts, all the formalities for teacher recruitment should be done. Only the eligible and committed teachers should be appointed and women teachers should be provided suitable accommodation in the rural areas. They should get priority in teachers training. Instead of part time and ad-hoc teachers, more regular teacher appointment is required.
3. Separate Education Directorate should be established for female education. In Education Department, a senior officer should be recruited in charge of girls' education. Effective supervision for all levels of education is required.
4. To help in the formulation of plans for women education, a board of members should be set up at the Centre and the State to monitor and evaluate progress of women's education.

5. Annual targets should be fixed to remove illiteracy rates particularly for women and annual allocation of budget for the development of women education should be satisfactory.
6. Emphasis should be given to frame school curriculum which should be free from gender bias. Curriculum of primary school education should be made in such a way that awareness of women about their educational rights will increase and they can participate in every aspect of socio-economic activities of society.
7. School timing should be set in such a way that it may suit local needs. To encourage more enrolment and to minimise drop-out rate, incentives like free textbooks, uniform, mid-day meals and whatever other facilities till now they are availing should be reached in school in proper time.
8. Girls should be encouraged to join vocational courses and professional courses. Seats for girl students should be reserved in these courses. Girls who have joined vocational courses, occupational opportunities for them should be available.
9. Scholarships for girls to pursue higher studies should be implemented in every school and schemes should be introduced that the schools that sent up more girl students in the final examination would be rewarded and there should be incentives for the poor and needy parents so that they will be encouraged to send their wards in school.
10. Learning should be made more attractive and playway method should be adopted by the primary teachers and for that adequate teaching materials should be provided in schools.
11. Facilities of safe drinking water and separate toilet may increase the attendance of girl students.
12. Practical knowledge should be imparted in schools so that the parents will be motivated to send their girls in schools and the girls can apply their education

in their day to day life activities and monthly parents meeting should be held in every school to make them aware about the performance of their wards.

13. More girls' hostel should be established in both remote areas and urban areas.
14. Keeping in view literacy requirements of the female learners, district plans should be prepared since there is vast imbalance in female literacy rate of the four districts of Sikkim.
15. An incentive scheme should be introduced to motivate panchayats to ensure 100 per cent enrolment of girls in their areas.
16. Efforts should be made to introduce correspondence courses.

(B) Action to be Taken by the Communities

1. Village and town peoples should come forward to motivate the girls and women for participation in school and college education.
2. Voluntary organisations should be encouraged to establish more schools.
3. Political parties, mass media, women's organisation should come forward and take necessary steps to promote women education in the State.
4. NGOs should be encouraged to look after the problems related to women education in the State.
5. Programmes should be taken by the communities to encourage the women about their role in society and to realise their own capacities.
6. Apart from governmental side, scholarships should come from NGOs and influential interested persons.
7. Time to time career counselling programme, health awareness camp by the experts need to take place at the schools, community level, district level and state level.

Finally, on the basis of this study I would like to suggest that the voices of the people, particularly the women's voices to be included and incorporated in educational policies and programmes of Sikkim for overall development of women of the State.