

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters we have examined in detail various aspects of the educational achievements and social change among the Rajbansis. The discussions are spread over a broad canvas from the advent of formal school education in India to educational policies regarding Scheduled Castes. Ultimately we have zoomed in our focus to a small area of Darjeeling district and more specifically to two schools situated within that area. These two schools were studied intensively and sample students, dropped out students and ex-students were interviewed along with some of their family members in their home environ.

In this concluding chapter we shall first present the summary of the findings and then draw a few conclusions from that.

Summary

The present study has analysed the educational achievement of Scheduled Caste students particularly in two rural schools, namely, Phansidewa Higher Secondary School and Phansidewa Government Sponsored Ashram Type Junior High School for girls. For this purpose seven chapters have been organized, in which the research explanation and findings are arranged as follows.

The first chapter is introductory chapter in which statement of the problem and relevance of the proposed study and literature review have been presented. That the educational role and function in a society comprises of socialization in the society and education is primarily provided by the family and then by the society has been discussed in this chapter.

The great difference between the past methods of teaching and present methods of teaching particularly regarding the women's education has been highlighted, besides, a few concepts used in the study have been defined towards the end of this chapter.

The second chapter is devoted to methodology of the study. In this chapter we have described the area and the people studied. The area of study is Phansidewa in Darjeeling district of North Bengal and the people studied are the Rajbansis. The Rajbansi belong to the category of Scheduled Castes, comprising 14 per cent of the population of North Bengal. However, the more significant fact is that among the Scheduled Castes of North Bengal, numerically, the Rajbansi is a dominant community. Even when the Rajbansi is a dominant Scheduled Caste of North Bengal, there are not many studies on this community.

In Phansidewa Higher Secondary School and Phansidewa Government Sponsored Ashram type Junior High School for girls majority of the students are Rajbansi and they come from different villages. A description of the area of study is followed by a history of the schools. The field techniques include total enumeration of the present students followed by interview of sample students and their guardians, drop-out students and 20 case studies of old students in different villages within the catchment area of the schools. Altogether 25 per cent sample totalling to 178 students have been studied. The sample was randomly drawn on the basis of the strata of class, community and sex.

In the third chapter, state of education, enrolment, and drop-out of students and the catchment area of the two schools have been presented in relation to the three variables, class, sex and community. The state of education indicates a positive relation between economic status and educational achievement. In other words, it shows that their economic status and social status are regulating the educational progress of the villagers. There are different problems in most of the villages of which commuting from distant villages to the school by cycle or by bus is a crucial one. Thus majority of the students seem eager to complete their study, but the number of students in different schools come from within 10 K.M Enrolment decreases in upper classes but becomes more or less steady in the topmost classes after which the students appear for school leaving examinations. The drop-out and irregularity in attending classes is related with economic class and occupation of the guardians. The irregularity increases in the agricultural seasons. The drop out among girl students are due to social as well as economic causes. This is followed up in the next chapter.

In the fourth chapter I have analysed the socio economic background of the students through interview of all the students of all the classes, most of the dropout students and their guardians. It has been found that irrespective of the social and economic status of the villagers they have positive attitude towards continuing the education of their children. But they are not interested for their drop-out students as they engage them in different domestic works or field works.

Looking at the enrolment by ethnic groups, an interesting picture comes to light. Although, the area is inhabited by Hindus, Muslims and Scheduled Tribes. Yet the Rajbansi students outnumber those from the other communities. This fact has been considered more thoroughly at a later stage.

The fifth chapter is based on the findings from the sample study. In this chapter I have seen that the educational qualifications of all guardians are not equal but they try to educate their children for their future improvement. I have also seen that most of the guardians are cultivators but they aspire for government service for

their children. So, they want higher education of their children. Thus they want to change the traditional status of their family.

In the sixth chapter the utilization of the formal learning and the female's educational problems have been looked into. It is seen that the state of education have undergone considerable change in the area. There are many girl students now-a-days in comparison to almost none in the past. The educated men and women are utilizing their learning in some way or other. All the women studied are engaged as school teachers or are imparting private tuition, and coaching their children and relatives. Besides this the advent of modern equipments in their homes have also been observed. Economic change towards better has been acknowledged by all of them. Also, they are helping the community by reading out news and disseminating information.

Concluding Observations

It is apparent from the preceding discussions that a definite positive change in attitudes of the village people regarding female education has taken place. The educational level has increased from the parents' generation to the students' generation. The educational change is not so obvious among the Muslims. This suggest a relation between the availing of education and socio-cultural background of the students belonging to different religious groups. The encouraging situation is evident from the parents' aspirations about their children. Although some relationship between the parents' educational attainment and his aspirations for the children has been found, but the illiterate people also want to educate their children. we have sometimes not been able to corroborate this phenomenon, as there is a contradiction between the study and marriage specially in cases of the girls. The girls are often married off or groomed for marriage by engaging her in household chores, which hampers her career as student.

Still the encouragement that the students receive from their home is evident from the facilities provided to them for studying. For the boys commuting from distant villages bicycles are purchased. The guardians are more or less in low economic class, yet they procure money for their children's study selling crops or cattle. They purchase dress and necessary educational materials, engage private tutors for students in upper classes.

In spite of all these many students drop-out. Once dropped out they are neglected by their families and rarely they can return to school. To understand the situation we have looked into the study habits and interruptions in the study of a student. The time spent on study is often irregular. The students are frequently called

for helping their parents- the girl students more so. The boys on holidays go for cultivation or marketing.

Commuting takes toll of the students energy. They go for private coaching in the morning, then go to school and also do some household work. In the evening they are both tired and without the facility of light. Electricity has not reached all the houses in all the villages. Oil for lamp is scarce, so instead of studying they fall asleep. The girl students face some special problems, quite distinct from that of the boys.

A Summary of the girl's educational problems

Educational problems of girl students are—

(a) Distance of the villages from school creates problem specially where there is no regular bus service.

(b) Non - conducive home atmosphere for study for illiterate father and mother who do not care about the improvement of their next generation.

(c) Difficulty in understanding is one of the main educational problems of the girls because they usually speak in a patio at home and are taught in the formal Bengali at school.

(d) Early marriage of the girls is the other problem causing drop-out of girl students from higher education.

(e) The guardians differentiate between the girls and the boys on account of the dowry system.

(f) Economic problem is the main problem of education specially for the girls. The guardians do not want to spend their money for girls' education as they think that in future they have to depend on their sons only.

(g) Lack of sufficient time in study due to domestic works is the other problem of education of girl students.

(h) Most of the girl students do not get help in study from their guardians or private tutors.

(i) Lack of adequate number of Girls' High School and Girls' Hostel are the other problems of education.

(j) Government stipends not sufficient for education of the Scheduled Caste students.

Thus there are different educational problems of the girl students. In order to solve the educational problems of the girl students change in social customs and attitudes is very much necessary.

Drop-outs from school primarily occur because of the job-searching by the boys from class VIII onward when with the class VIII passed certificate they become eligible to join B.S.F, Railways (guard etc.) and other governmental departments and autonomous bodies. The girls are married off as already stated.

Finally, we come to the conclusion that poverty is the primary cause of the drop-outs and lower female education in the villages. The lure of Governmental jobs hampers the onward progress of the students abetted by their parents on the one hand and desire for higher educational attainment as advocated by the media creates a conflicting situation. The girls are, under the circumstances, least entitled for continuation of higher studies.

Thus, the socio-economic milieu combined with the rural poverty inhibit the spread and growth of education of the Rajbansi girls. What spread we have observed is due to the provision of grants, etc. to the Scheduled Caste students and that spread is also confined to lower educational level and eradication of illiteracy.

Until and unless the socio-cultural context is modified, provision of financial grant and quota system only will not be able to change the state of education among the Scheduled Caste girl students as this case shows. For this more in-depth study has to be undertaken to assess the extent of the problem.

This study also shows that the case of Rajbansi girls is not much different from that of the other S.C and S.T girls in other parts of the country as revealed through the review of literature. The girls lag behind their male counterparts as well as girls of upper castes. There are only some regional differences.

Poverty and ignorance of parents combined with the low weightage of female life creates a gender bias against the girls education in practice, although the parents are ideally in favour of it. Moreover, the role model of the girls are their mothers, when the mothers are illiterate the girls themselves often do not give much weightage to their own education. Getting married and being expert housewife becomes the sole ambition in their life. This negative educational model is encouraged by the immediate community.

It is very difficult for the girls to come out of this vicious circle. Yet we have seen among the old students that the women have found some use or other of their education. Through their efforts of sending their children to school, tutoring them and other children of the village they are setting up a new model and helping in the spread of education. But this process is very slow. More thrust in this area coupled with awareness creation against gender bias and traditional social practices like dowry, is felt necessary. Incentives in the form of economically gainful activities for the educated women from poorer section is expected to be helpful in this regard. Ninth plan proposal has envisaged a special thrust area for women, but our past experience of implementation of plan programmes has not always been very happy.

On the note of these few words of premonition I close this chapter.