

Women in Education and Bureaucracy: A Case Study of Sikkim

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The greater access to higher education and larger and effective participation in the decision making process are widely considered the effective means of women's empowerment. In Sikkim, the author observes, the literacy rate and access to higher education among women has risen sharply in the recent years, in research and teaching profession the women have almost caught up with the men, but the participation of women in bureaucracy, particularly in higher bureaucracy, is abysmally low.

[Keywords: literacy, access to higher education, participation in research, women in teaching profession, women in *panchayat*, women in bureaucracy, national education policy, empowerment of women]

Introduction

The participation of both man and women is absolutely necessary for the development of a nation; hence, the demand for gender equality and equal representation of women in all activities, including education and employment, has been a central issue in the discourse of development. The greater access to higher education and larger and effective participation in the decision making process are widely considered the effective means of women's empowerment. In India, although there has been steady growth in literacy, women's access to higher education was comparatively gradual during the first four decades after Independence. Despite all talks of achievements in the field of higher education, there has been a huge gender-disparity at the higher level of education and in technical education. While there has been growing participation of women in the *panchayats* and administration, a large percentage of them are at lower levels. The participation of women in higher level of administration, e.g., in bureaucracy, is hugely inadequate.

In the present paper an attempt has been made to assess the position of women in higher education and bureaucracy in Sikkim. The tiny mountainous state has witnessed large-scale developmental initiatives since its merger with Union of India in 1975. At that time Sikkim was deficient in trained and educated personnel who were in great demand for the expanding administration and democratic institutions. Keeping the growing demand for higher education in the post-merger Sikkim, Sikkim Government College was established in 1977. Since then, it has been the only premier educational institute of higher learning in the state that offers undergraduate courses in all three streams - Science, Commerce and Humanities. The other institutes of higher education came up in the state in the post-90s. Moreover, the State government has introduced a policy of reservation of 30 per cent of jobs for women of Sikkimese communities in all public sector offices and enterprises. This has created huge employment opportunity for Sikkimese women in public sector undertakings, which in turn has been a huge source of motivation for women to go for higher and technical education, which had overwhelmingly been a male domain. An endeavor has been made in this paper to assess how the women in Sikkim have responded to the employment opportunities that have been created in the areas of higher education and bureaucracy in the state. The paper is based on the data collected from Sikkim Government College and Information and Public Relation Department, Government of Sikkim and other secondary sources.

Education as a means to empowerment of women

Education, particularly higher education and technical education, is the surest means to human resource development and capacity building which can bring women employment, economic self-reliance and contribute immensely to their empowerment. Stressing the importance of woman education, The United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report (1995) states: 'investing in woman's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself, but is also the surest way to economic growth and development.' The report further states: 'Human development is impossible without gender equality. As long as women are excluded from the development process, development will remain lopsided' (*ibid*).

The National Commission on Self-Employed Woman (1987) acknowledges education as an important instrument for enhancing the chances of women's employability and for empowering them. This has also been acknowledged by the Indian Government in the National Policy on Education, 1986, where it has been mentioned that education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women (Agrawal and Agrawal 1994: 94-95). Education therefore, can effectively transform the women of marginalized communities, for betterment of life, social advancement and realizing social justice and gender equality. Spread of education can improve the quality of life both for educated girls and their future children. So, education can serve as a vehicle of social transformation and means of empowerment. Hence, the role of education in enhancing the status of women in the quest for gender equality is unquestionable. It is the unique and potent instrument to bridge the gap between the privileged and the unprivileged section leading to social development and progress.

In India, the entry of women into the formal education system began in the mid - nineteenth century, but it got wider acceptance only in the mid-twentieth (Desai and Thakkar 2001). The problems of education of girls acquired a new significance after the attainment of Independence. The Constitution of Indian Republic introduced in 1950 included a number of provisions which had direct bearing on education of women. *Article 15* states that state shall endeavor to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they reach the age of fourteen years. *Article 16* imposed non- discrimination on grounds of sex in public employment. *Article 15 (3)* empowered the State to make special provisions for the welfare and development of women and children, the provision invoked to justify the provision of expanding the girl's access to education at different levels (Desai and Thakkar 2001: 47-48).

Talking about the importance of women education, the father of nation Mahatma Gandhi said: 'You educate a man, you educate an individual; if you educate a woman, you educate a family' (cited in Roy 2005). The first major step pertaining to women education in the Nehruvian era was establishing a University Education Commission (1948-49) headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan. The Commission devoted a full chapter on women's education covering the various dimensions. Asserting the significance of women's education, the commission stated: 'There cannot be educated people without educated women. If general education had to be limited to men or to women, the opportunity should be given to women, for it would most surely be passed on to the next generation' (Agrawal and Agrawal 1994: 29). The commission further says that that the women are as able as men to do the same academic work, with no less thoroughness and quality (*ibid*, 49).

A committee (1961) appointed by the National Council on Women's Education (1958-59, Ministry of Education, Government of India) to examine comprehensively the problem of curricula for girls has claimed: 'If society is to be organized on the new basis, women will have to be given real and effective equality with man' (*ibid*, 43) and recommended various measures for achieving the same. The National Education Policy, 1986 accentuated the role of education for women's equality and empowerment and in its part IV entitled 'Education for Equality' it focuses on 'Education for Women's Equality'. It also states that Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women...major emphasis will be laid on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education. The policy of non- discrimination will be pursued vigorously to eliminate sex stereo- typing, in vocational and professional occupations as well as in existing and emergent technologies' (*ibid*, 86-87).

As a consequence of various initiatives undertaken by the government, post Independent India has witnessed significant improvement in the literacy. Female literacy too has significantly increased. The overall literacy rate has jumped from 18.33 per cent in 1951 to 64.84 per cent in 2001. The literacy rate for women has also risen from very insignificant 8.86 per cent in 1951 to 53.86 per cent over the same period (Table 1). However, although there is marked improvement in the women literacy the illiteracy among the women continues to be very high. Thus, notwithstanding expansion of educational opportunities after independence more than 46 per cent of women population of the country remains illiterate (Table 1)

Table 1: Literacy Rate by Sex in India (in percentage; 1951-2001)

Census Year	Persons	Males	Females	Gender gap
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.3
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.06
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98 <small>233923</small>
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	64.84	75.26	53.67	21.59

Source: Census of India

In addition, although, the literacy rate of women has shown a considerable progress, the gap between male and female literacy continues to be significant and has not actually narrowed down over the years. The gender gap in literacy was 18.3 per cent in 1951, which increased to 26.62 per cent in 1981. The gap in 2001 is 21.59 per cent, which indicates persistence of wide gender disparity in literacy (Table 1). The analysis of census figures indicates that the rural-urban difference in the female literacy rates and the regional imbalances also continue.

Women in higher education: The Indian scenario

Whereas elementary education fulfills the social and human development needs and proves to be an effective means to better health and for income generation, the higher education of women promotes social and occupational mobility and leads to intellectual and personal development. The higher education is seen as a crucial step in personal, familial and societal mobility (Desai and Thakkar 2001: 57).

Although, the women literacy has improved over the years women's access to higher education was comparatively gradual during the first four decades after Independence. Despite all talks of improvement at the higher education plane, women in higher education still constitute a tiny minority. The situation in the field of technical education is no better. Although there has been considerable rise in the number of institutions exclusively for girls at the plus two and graduation levels all over the country, such institutions often suffer from inadequate enrolment and management uncertainties, thereby creating problems for the entry of girls in higher education. Further, the girls representing urban high middle and elite classes make the most of the opportunities created in the field of higher education (Rao 2005: 100). And their participation has been primarily in the feminine, non-professional and non-market courses in general education viz. in humanities and social sciences. Socio-cultural and economic factors acted as barriers to women's access to higher education and particularly in science streams and in technical education (Chana 2004: 85).

In recent years, there has been phenomenal growth in the enrolment of women students in higher education in the country. The share of girls' enrollment, which was less than 10 per cent of the total enrolment on the eve of Independence, has increased to 41.60 percent in the beginning of the academic year 2010-11, (retrieved from www.google.com on 5.01.2012). There were 33.06 lakh girl students enrolled out of 83.99 lakh students in higher education in 2000-01 which works out to be 39 per cent. The share of girl students climbed up to 41.4 per cent in 2008-09. The rise in the enrollment of has been constant since 2000-01(*ibid*).

Another interesting dimension of women education in India is clear cut gender streamlining across disciplines. The NPE states and recommends for: '*... wider women's access to vocational, technical and professional education at all levels, breaking gender stereotypes.*' However, the information indicates a clear gender streamlining of the courses. According to the statistics presented, a large percentage of women were in Arts courses accounting to 41.6 per cent as per the estimated figure of 1986-87. The percentage of women in professional courses like Engineering / Technology, Law, Agriculture was very low with less than 10 per cent except in medicine, where the percentage of women stood at 30.4 as per figure of 1986-87 (Agrawal and Agrawal 1994: 123-126).

However, although, there are still differences between disciplines, some of the erstwhile ‘masculine’ disciplines are becoming more balanced and in prestigious courses like Law, the presence of women stands at 20.8 per cent. Women have made significant inroads in courses like medicine (44.7 per cent) and in science (39.4 per cent). Their proportion in engineering courses is 22.3 per cent (Chana 2004). Therefore, although enrolment of women in higher education has made a significant progress with more women still concentrated in the traditional female oriented programmes, the trend is changing with more women taking to science, engineering and other emerging areas of study.

One of the paradoxes of women’s education in India has been that whereas literacy and elementary education which touches the mass of women presents a gloomy scenario, the picture of women in higher education is not so depressing. Chana mentions that while the proportion of women to total enrolment was 10.9 per cent in 1950 -51, it increased to 27.2 per cent in 1980-81 and 52 per cent in 1996-97 (Desai and Thakkar 2001: 57). Another indication of the growth of women in higher education is the proportion of level wise women students in higher education. In India, women account for about 40 per cent of the undergraduate students in higher education according to published statistics for 2002-2003 (UGC). However, in comparison to undergraduate courses, women are less represented as Ph.D. students and their proportion is also lower at 38.1 per cent at the research level (Chana 2004: 27).

Women in education in Sikkim

Sikkim, nestled in the North eastern Himalaya, officially merged with India in 1975 as its twenty second state. In the post-merger Sikkim, this Himalayan state has made steady progress in the social and economic fields. The state has witnessed developmental initiatives in all sectors and rapid growth in the economic field. The modernization and expansion of bureaucratic and administrative structure have created new employment avenues in the state. The state government is committed for the cause of social justice to all sections of society including the women. Hence, development of human resources through the spread of education has been the one of the priorities of state government. There has been a significant increase in the number of educational institutions both in government and private sector in order to cater the growing need of education. The people in the state are now responding to new opportunities of development and educational Infrastructure. The women in the state have come forward to use the educational opportunities so that they can make use of the employment opportunities in administration and in other fields. The steady advance in education and employment has not only brought about economic self-reliance but the greater participation of women in administration and bureaucracy has contributed to their empowerment. The achievements of women in Sikkim in the field of education and employment have laid gender relations on a greater egalitarian term.

1. Literacy Scenario of Sikkim

Since, the state’s merger with the Indian Union, there has been a steady increase in the educational sectors and during the past thirty years, Sikkim has witnessed a substantial improvement in the literacy rates. In addition to overall literacy rates, the female literacy profile also portrays a positive and an encouraging trend.

Table 2: Gender gap in literacy

Sl. No.	Area	1981	1991	2001	2006
1.	Rural	22.01	16.54	16.06	1.70
2.	Urban	16.02	11.29	08.42	06.13
3.	Sikkim	21.75	10.18	15.27	11.28

Source: Sikkim: i. A Statistical Profile, 2004-05; ii. State Socio- Economic Census, 2006,
DESME, Government of Sikkim

Table 2 shows that the gender gap in terms of literacy achievement in Sikkim has gradually narrowed down, even though the rural – urban differences are striking. The gender gap has narrowed down from 22.1 per cent to 16.06 per cent between 1981 and 2001 and again to 11.70 per cent in 2006 in rural areas, whereas in urban areas the percentage came down drastically from 16.02 per cent to 8.42 per cent between the same periods and again to low as 6.13 in 2006. The gender gap in literacy rate for the state had fallen down from 21.75 per cent in 1981 to 10.18 per cent 1991, although the gap again increased to 15.27 percentage point in 2001. However, the gap came down to 11.28 percentage point in 2006. The shrinking gender gap in literacy

is definitely a positive signal and an indicator for the changing perceptions of the society towards women and the gender roles. Migration of male workers from outside the state in various developmental projects in the state partially explains the higher gender gap in literacy in 2001 census.

To augment the support of the journey of Sikkimese women towards gender equality through education, a glimpse of the literacy rates of women over the years would be highly relevant here. Tables 3 and 4 present the literacy profile of Sikkim as reflected in 1981 and 2001 censuses and in 2006. The table shows the phenomenal increase in the literacy rate of the state as a whole from 34.05 per cent in 1981 to 69.68 per cent 2001. The literacy rate increased to 86.04 per cent in 2006 in the state. The female literacy also shows an encouraging trend with a jump from 22.20 per cent in 1981 to 61.46 per cent in 2001, i.e. almost three times within a span of twenty years. The figure went up to 74.76 per cent in 2006.

It would be interesting to take note of the rural-urban divide in literacy in the state. The rural literacy rate has increased substantially from 30.05 per cent in 1981 to 67.67 per cent in 2001. The female literacy in the rural areas in the same period has risen more than three times from 18.24 per cent in 1981 to 59.05 per cent in 2001 (Table 3). The literacy rate rose to 79.82 per cent in 2006 (Table 4).

Table 3: Literacy Profile (1981, 1991, 2001 census)

Area	1981			1991			2001		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Rural	40.25	18.24	30.05	51.94	35.40	44.14	75.11	59.05	67.67
Urban	61.44	45.42	54.86	74.69	63.40	69.85	88.61	80.19	84.82
Sikkim	43.95	22.20	34.05	56.94	46.76	56.94	76.73	61.46	69.68

Source: Sikkim: A Statistical Profile, 2004-05, DESME Government of Sikkim

The urban literacy scenario is definitely better than the rural picture. The overall literacy in the urban Sikkim has risen from 54.86 per cent in 1981 to 84.82 per cent in 2001 and again to 89.42 per cent in 2006; a remarkable achievement in literacy, no doubt. The female literacy has also recorded a satisfactory rise. The female literacy in the urban area has improved substantially from 45.42 per cent in 1981 to 80.19 per cent in 2001. The figure for 2006 is 86.10 per cent (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 4: Literacy Rate in Sikkim, 2006 (In percentage).

Particulars	Total	Male	Female
Total	80.66	86.04	74.76
Rural	79.82	85.42	73.72
Urban	89.41	92.23	86.10

Source: State Socio- Economic Census, DESME, Government of Sikkim.

Thus, achievements in the field of literacy and female literacy are remarkable in the state in the recent years. In quest of economic independence, better status and societal mobility, the growing fascination and absorption of Sikkimese women in the government service and in other service sector have further enhanced the importance of education among all the sections of state population. Over the years, the growing awareness of women for elementary and higher education must have its impact on the women's roles and the statuses among all sections of state population. One can illustrate this point with a case study of Sikkim Government College. It would be interesting to note that the premiere institute of higher education has grown in importance and stature with the growing aspirations of the Sikkimese in the field of higher education.

2. Gender ratio among the college teachers

In order to cater to the growing need of higher education in the state, special emphasis was laid on the development of educational infrastructure after the merger of Sikkim with India. Sikkim Government College established in 1977, was the product of vision of democratic Sikkim to provide the facilities of higher

learning to the masses of Sikkim. The government college is running under-graduate courses in science, commerce, humanities and tourism courses with the largest teaching faculty.

An analysis of the table (5) on sex break up of faculty in the college tells us that it has faculty strength of 83, taking all streams together. Of the total faculty, 30 have been appointed on ad hoc basis. The men and women teachers are equal in number among the ad-hoc teachers. The high percentage share of ad-hoc teachers (36 per cent of the total teachers) indicates that the government follows a conservative policy in appointing teachers on permanent basis. One of the obvious reasons of casualisation of college teachers is the preference accorded to the local (Sikkimese) candidates.

The state which was officially merged with India in 1975 has experienced development in all spheres in the post-merger era. Simultaneously, the state also witnessed the multiplication of population vis-a-vis the growing awareness and development of human resources in recent years, which resulted in escalating resource competition within the state. Consequently, the state government has adopted the ‘policy of preferential treatment for locals’ in all socio- economic and political fronts in order to guarantee protection for locals. The non-local teachers are mostly appointed on ad-hoc basis. The share of ‘outsiders’ among the teacher is dwindling over the years with the spread of higher education among the Sikkimese. The local too are appointed as faculty on ad-hoc basis, when they lack UGC-set qualification or when adequate permanent posts are not sanctioned by the government.

Table 5: Men-women ratio among the faculty in Sikkim Government College

Designation	Men	%	Women	%	Total (%)
Principal	1	100	-	-	1 (100)
Reader/Selection Grade	12	60	08	40	20 (100)
Lecturer	14	48.27	15	51.72	29 (100)
Resource person for regional Languages	02	66.66	01	33.33	03 (100)
Total (Regular)	29	54.71	24	45.28	53 (100)
*Ad Hoc. / part time	15	50	15	50	30 (100)
Grand Total	44	53.01	39	46.98	83 (100)

*36.1 per cent of total

Source: Office of the Principal, Sikkim Government College, (December, 2009)

The strength of women teachers in higher education of Sikkim stands at marginally lower than that of men teachers. The share of women teachers is 47 per cent as against 53 of men teachers. Among the permanent teachers the share of women teachers stands at 45 per cent as against 55 men teachers. Thus although the male domination is yet to be reversed the women are fairly represented in teaching faculty of Sikkim Government College. If we take the senior positions, e.g., the grades of Reader and Selection grade lecturers, the share of men and women teachers is 60: 40. The presence of more women in the lecturer grade indicates that in recent years women are better prepared to compete with men candidates, which would not have been possible, had the Sikkimese women not pursued higher education and quality education. The situation presents a bright signal and is prognostic of gender equity and equal representation of women in later years even in the senior positions.

We inquired if this gender parity has been evenly maintained across the disciplines. Here we came across some interesting results. Table 6 presents a fascinating revelation that in spite of the encouraging trend of gender equity in overall figures, there are clear cut gender streamlining and stereo types across the disciplines. Although the numbers of women teachers are at par with men in aggregate, the science stream especially physics, mathematics and chemistry departments are marked by total absence of women teachers even on ad hoc basis. However, life sciences department like zoology and botany presents an encouraging scenario (Table 6). It has maintained favorable ratio where the women teachers exceeds the men counterparts. Women teachers have no presence in commerce department. Therefore the departments like physics, mathematics, chemistry and commerce appear more like masculine than feminine disciplines.

Table 6: Sex break up and Stream-wise faculty members (Sikkim Government College).

Faculty/Department	Regular Faculty					Ad-Hoc		Total	
	M	F	Ph. D.			M	F		
			M	F	Total				
Physics	44	-	02	-	02	-		04	
Chemistry	03	-	02	-	02	02	01	06	
Mathematics	22	-	01	-	01	02	-	04	
Botany/Zoology/ Envs	04	04	04	03	06	03	05	16	
Commerce	02	-	01	-	01	01	-	03	
Hum / Social Sciences / Tourism*	14	20	02	09	11	07	9	50	
Grand Total	29	24	12 (50%)	12 (50%)	24 (100)	15	15	83	

* Inclusive of Principal, those on deputation & Resource Persons in Regional Languages

Source: Office of the Principal, Sikkim Government College (December,2009).

In contrast to science and commerce streams, the social sciences/humanities streams present a picture where we can see greater gender parity and some of the departments even appear to be feminine disciplines. Out of total 34 teachers in social science and humanities streams in the regular category, 14 are men and 20 are women.

3. Participation in research

Research degrees are increasingly becoming important for recruitment and promotion for teachers in colleges and universities primarily because of norms set by the University Grants Commission. Research for Ph. Ds is highly valued activity for both man and women faculty. Research provides passport for upward mobility and is the primary qualifications for visibility and advancement within university system and one's own profession.

Four male teachers in pure science departments, viz., physics, chemistry and mathematics and all male teachers in life science departments hold Ph. D. degree and are involved in some kind of research projects. In life science departments, zoology and botany, out of four regular women teachers, three hold Ph. D. degree and one is on the verge of accomplishing it.

In commerce section, one holds the Ph. D. degree and one is pursuing research for the same. In the social science and humanities streams there is numerical domination of the women teachers and women teachers with the Ph. D. degree. Out of fourteen men teachers only two hold Ph.D. whereas nine out of twenty women teachers are the proud holders of this degree. Therefore, women teachers have an edge-over not only in terms of number but also in terms of accomplishing the research degree. This is an indication that women in the higher education are gearing up to take more challenges and are preparing the ground for upward mobility in the college and university system.

Taking all the permanent teachers together the percentage of women Ph. D. holders stands exactly equal to that of men (Table 6), and this is one field where there is no gender inequality. However, gender stereotyping becomes clear when we see the dominance of men both in number and in terms of holding Ph. D. in science commerce streams. The share of women in life sciences is substantial both in terms of number and higher academic achievement.

Men-women ratio in administration

The cry for gender equality and equal representation of women in all spheres including education and employment is becoming stronger over the years. It has been observed that women's access to higher education has increased significantly in India as well as in the state of Sikkim. However, notwithstanding an increased access and participation of women in the higher education, the percentage of women at senior managerial level is still very low. In Sikkim, at the entry level, or at the lower level of administration, the presence of women is favourable, but, the gender disparity appears wide when we consider the participation

of women in the academic leadership, administration and managerial positions. Data presented in table 7 suggest that women are not fairly represented in academic leadership as the Principal.

Table 7: Principals in Government Colleges of Sikkim since establishment

SI No.	Institution	Year of Est.	Principal	
			Men	Women
1	Sikkim Government College	1978	06	-
2.	Namchi Government College	1994	03	-
3.	Renock Government College	2005	01	*01

*First Woman Principal appointed in April, 2009

Sikkim Government College, which is the oldest institution of higher learning in the state, had six principals in its 33 years of existence, but none of them was woman. However, the college has witnessed woman vice-principals in between. Namchi Government College, established in 1994, has been administered by three principals, all men. Renock Government College, established in 2005, has been headed by a woman principal since 2009. This is one welcome exception.

Women in bureaucracy

There is a fundamental transformation in gender relations in the contemporary world, particularly in the economic life and in social relations. The major factors that have contributed to change in gender relations are women's achievements in education, women's growing participation in paid employment and their greater representation in decision-making bodies. These changes have wide ranging implications for deciding the position of women in society.

Table 8 shows that the presence of women in the highest level of bureaucracy in Sikkim, as elsewhere, is still insignificant. Women represent not more than 8% in the category of IAS, IPS and IFS officers. However, the under-representation of women in the highest level of bureaucracy is only a part of the story. With the preferential policy of the state government for the locals and with no social bar on the Sikkimese women to work, the women should have been better represented in State Civil Service Cadre.

State government's policy of reservation of 30 per cent of government jobs for Sikkimese women is likely to boost the participation of women in these jobs and in State Civil Services. The spread of higher education among women is also likely to make the women more visible in service sector jobs and in administrative positions in the state. Following this, the representation of Sikkimese women in government service has been increasing over the years (Human Development Report 2001).

Hence, although, the representation of women in the highest level of bureaucracy is still low compared to the representation of men, this should not be taken as the discouraging situation at this nascent stage of the development. The general trend in Sikkim indicates that women are now opting for more challenging responsibilities in the areas that had conventionally been the male domain. The general awareness among the Sikkimese in general for education and the need for economic independence for the women obviously has its reflections on the status of women in Sikkim.

A look at the gender composition of group A & B officers (see Table 8) in the state shows that women have a marginal presence among the IAS, IPS & IFS officers in the state. Against the backdrop of reservation of 30 of seats reserved for women in State, the state Civil Service has a fair representation of 34.4 per cent women officers, whereas the State police Service is underrepresented by women despite reservation. All the engineering services - civil, mechanical and electrical - and State Forest Service have very low representation of women.

This truly speaks of the facts that the Sikkimese women have yet to break the gender stereotypes. State Agricultural Engineering Service is the domain, where women have 27 per cent representation. One area

which has a significant 47 per cent women officers in Group A and B is the State Health Services which is the second highest among all categories. State Stenographer Service is the one having highest women officers who constitute 68 per cent of all officers. Overall, in spite of the 30 per cent reservation in public employment, women's represent is only 21 per cent of the total officers in Group A and B. State Nursing Service is the only area where there is 100 per cent representation of women in both group A and B categories.

Table 8: Women officers in Group A & B Category

Group A & B Officers	Men	Women	Total	% Of Women
Indian Administrative Service	34	3	37	8.1
Indian Police Service	28	2	30	6.6
Indian Forest Service	22	2	24	8.3
State Civil Service	169	89	258	34.4
State Police Service	67	2	69	2.89
State Finance & Accnt. Service	112	23	135	17.03
State Engineering Service (C)	194	11	205	5.3
State Engineering Service (E)	99	4	103	3.8
State Engineering Service (M)	41	1	42	2.3
State Forest Service	97	5	102	4.9
State Education Service	41	9	50	18
State Cooperative Service	60	6	66	9
State Directorate& Misc. Service	81	13	94	13.8
Private Secretary to HM & DM Service	15	1	16	6.2
State Health Service	117	105	222	47.2
State Agricultural Service	121	23	144	6.2
Animal Husbandry& Vetr. Services	46	20	66	30.3
Mines and Geology Service	17	0	17	0
Information Technology Service	13	3	16	18.7
State Nursing Service	0	34	34	100
State Para Medical Srv.	25	11	36	30.5
Dirct. Of Handicrafts & Handloom Serv.	9	0	9	0
State Weights & Measures Serv	6	0	6	0
State Excise Service	8	0	8	0
State Architecture Serv.	9	2	11	18.1
State Statistical Service	27	6	33	18.1
Science & Technology Serv.	3	2	5	40
Land Revenue Service	9	0	9	0
Feed & Fodder Service	3	1	4	25
State Fisheries Service	10	0	10	0
State Labour Service	6	0	6	0
State Agr. Engineering Service.	8	3	11	27.2
State Legal Service	4	1	5	20
State Stenographer Service	8	17	25	68
Officer other than Organized Service	12	4	16	25
Total	1521	403	1924	20.9

Source: Information and Public Relation Department, Government of Sikkim, 2009

Overall, going by the trend of women's participation to work one can say although very gradually, the women of Sikkim are preparing themselves well for serving in higher positions as officers in state bureaucracy and challenge the male hegemony in this field. The spread of higher education and change in women's self perception are helping their cause.

Conclusion

One striking development in the field of literacy in Sikkim over the last three decades has been a noteworthy increase in the literacy rate. The increase in literacy rate has been noticed both in rural and urban areas for the population as a whole and for the women, in particular. This has been the overall response of the state and the Sikkimese population to the development opportunities opened up in the post-merger period. While educational infrastructure has been strengthened, the people in the state have shown serious interest in education so that that can avail of the development opportunities.

The case study of Sikkim Government College, the premier institute of higher learning in the state, reveals that women are fairly represented as the faculty and the trend shows more women are entering the profession equipped with the required educational qualifications. However, the gender wise break up shows that although women are present in substantive number in the teaching faculty, there is clear gender streamlining across the disciplines. The science departments and commerce departments are clearly marked by the absence of women teachers, whereas life science department is more balanced in terms of ratio of male-female teachers and also in terms of teachers holding Ph. D. degree. The humanities and social science stream has favorable presence of women teachers and thus qualify to be called "feminine discipline". In this college the women teachers are ahead of men teachers in terms of holding of research degree. However, more women are clustered in lower and junior position at the moment. The presence of women in junior position can be read as a positive indication since in a few years from now there will be more women in the higher positions as well. They will take the advantage of promotional avenues.

Despite considerable presence of women in teaching faculty, all colleges in Sikkim is marked by the absence of women in administration and senior academic leadership. However, the appointment of first woman Principal in Renock College recently could be a trend changer. This would motivate woman teachers to take up more challenging administrative and academic responsibilities in near future. With more women pursuing higher education, there will be greater representation of women in positions of academic and administrative leadership in the years to come.

The representation of women in IAS, IPS & IFS, the central cadres in bureaucracy, is marginal. The state has reserved 30 per cent of the positions in all cadres of state public employment, which seems to have benefitted the Sikkimese women. The state civil service has fair representation of women as 34.4 per cent of officers are women, but the state police service is underrepresented by women in spite of reservation. All the engineering services, civil, mechanical and electrical, and state forest services have very low representation of women. Thus, the Sikkimese women are yet to break the gender stereotypes. State Agricultural Engineering Service is an area where women have fair representation. In overall, the women constitute only 20 per cent of group A & B officers, which is far below 30 of reserved positions in public sector employment. However, slow but steadily the women are coming out of traditional shackles to take up the challenges and opportunities unleashed by the development initiatives in the post-merger Sikkim. One can also see the gradual break down of the gender stereo types across various professions.

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