

Education of Women in Chamba District: A Step Towards Development

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Abstract: Education plays a critical role in the development of a nation whether it is social or economic growth. A nation can be educated, when its entire population is educated. Education opens a whole new world of opportunities for a girl, it gives her the confidence to tackle different problems of life, become economically independent, make better choices, resolve family or community issues satisfactorily, stand for her rights and guide her children. Women constitute almost half of a country's population, when 50% of the population is denied education. Empowered women contribute to the development of the society, community and nation in numerous ways. A woman with education is a powerful person, she has the power to educate the children in her family, guide them in taking decisions, contribute economically and offer valuable inputs for improvement on home and social front. Women education is an essential need to change their status in the society and also empowerment intellectually. Chamba is one of the 12 districts of Himachal Pradesh where the literacy rate is 72.17 percent. The male literacy rate is 82.59 and female literacy is 61.67 percent. Women education in Chamba has been a most important preoccupation of both administrative and civil society because educated women can play a very important role in the society for socio-economic development, besides political, and legal. The present paper highlights the scenario of Chamba District of Himachal Pradesh with the focus on women.

Keywords: Women, Education, Development.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main components for all developments and a powerful tool to form knowledge based society in this modern world. It has become an imperative concept that education is most essential for individual growth and societal developments, which is now been accepted unanimously and universally. Education is milestone of women empowerment as only the educated women can play a very dominant role in the economic development of our country as well as in becoming informed citizens, parents, and family members.

M. K. Gandhi & Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan also emphasized on women education and their slogan was: "To Educate women is to educate a Generation". Women's role becomes all the more significant in the conventional culture of Himachal Hills, located in the mountainous region of Himalayas, where the livelihood of communities is still dependent on the management and sustainable utilization of its resources. Women hold an outstandingly significant place in Himalayan culture. Women now take part in all activities including education, games, politics, media, art and culture, service sector, science and technology, etc.

Eradication of illiteracy is one of the major concerns of the government of India since independence. A number of programmes have been taken up in this direction in the post independence period. Saakshar Bharat Mission was launched on International Literacy Day i.e; 8th September 2009 but in Chamba district it was started from August 2010 (State Resource Centre, 2011). Himachal Pradesh is among the leading states in the country in terms of literacy with 83.78% literacy rate (male 90.83% and female 76.60%) as per 2011 census (Govt. of Himachal Pradesh, 2010-11) and therefore, all the districts except Chamba have a higher literacy percentage. In Himachal Pradesh the Chamba district is the one which is covered under this mission. After conducting survey it was found that 1, 35,824 persons are illiterate. The 2011 census shows that total literacy rate of Chamba district has increased by 11.10% (Govt. of Himachal Pradesh, 2011-12)(census of India, 2011)

Many policies and campaign are run to promote girl/women education in Himachal Pradesh. The female literacy percentage has increased from the year 1951 to 2011. But the growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow implying that still large women folk of our state are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Therefore,

“educating the women” is the most powerful tool that can bring change of position of women in society bringing reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family.

Chamba District – An Overview

Chamba (Hindi: चम्बा) is an ancient town in the Chamba district in the state of Himachal Pradesh, in northern India. Located at an altitude of 996 metres (3,268 ft) above mean sea level, the town is situated on the banks of the Ravi River (a major tributary of the Trans-Himalayan Indus River), at its confluence with the Sal River. Chamba State is situated in the bosom of the Himalaya Mountains. The Ravi River flows through this district, and many hydroelectric generating stations have been developed here. Chamba is the headquarters of the Chamba district, bordered by Jammu and Kashmir to the north-west and west, the Ladakh area of Jammu and Kashmir and Lahaul and Bara Banghal to the north-east and east, Kangra to the south-east and Pathankot district of Punjab to the south. It has an average elevation of 1,006 metres (3,301 ft).

The inhabited area reaches to 10000 feet. The district has an area of 6, 528 square kilometers. The town, the district and the valley where the town is located, share the name of Chamba. The town of Chamba is located at the junction of Ravi River and its tributary, the Sal River, with the Shah Madar hill forming the backdrop on its eastern side. The Ravi flows in east-west direction forming deep canyons. During the spring and summer months, the levels of the river rise significantly from snow melt and pose a flooding risk. Record levels were experienced in early July 2005, when the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation was forced to shut down the power generation on its 300-MW Chamera Power Station. Main source of income in the district is from the agriculture sector and per capita income is Rs. 23,059. The crime rate in the district is 146.61 for the year 2014. Total cropped area is 66,825 in hectares and the forest area is 2,437 in sq km (2015). Table no. 1 shows the profile of Chamba District.

Table 1
Profile of District Chamba, in Himachal Pradesh

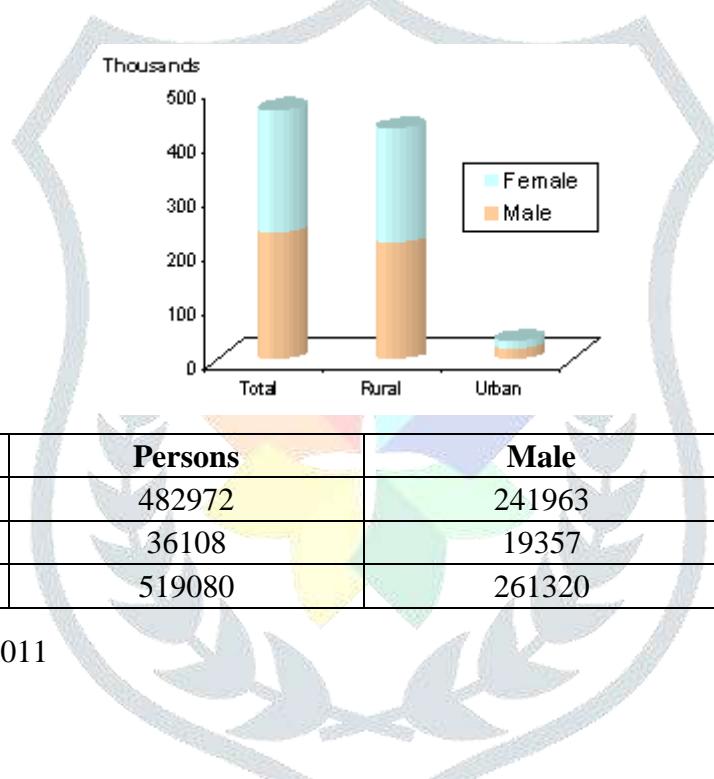
Description	2011	2001
Actual Population	519,080	460,887
Male	261,320	235,218
Female	257,760	225,669
Population Growth	12.63%	17.19%
Area Sq. Km	6,522	6,522
Density/km2	80	71
Proportion to Himachal Pradesh Population	7.56%	7.58%
Sex Ratio (Per 1000)	986	959
Child Sex Ratio (0-6 Age)	953	955
Average Literacy	72.17	62.91
Male Literacy	82.59	76.41
Female Literacy	61.67	48.85
Total Child Population (0-6 Age)	70,359	69,579
Male Population (0-6 Age)	36,024	35,594
Female Population (0-6 Age)	34,335	33,985
Literates	323,842	246,169
Male Literates	186,064	152,533
Female Literates	137,778	93,636
Child Proportion (0-6 Age)	13.55%	15.10%
Boys Proportion (0-6 Age)	13.79%	15.13%
Girls Proportion (0-6 Age)	13.32%	15.06%

Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011

Table 1 shows average literacy rate of Chamba as per 2011 census 72.17 as compared to 62.91 in 2001. The gender wise, male and female literacy were 82.59 and 61.67 respectively. Sex Ratio in Chamba, is 986 women per 1000 male. The average national sex ratio in India is 940 as per latest reports as per 2011 census was 953 girls per 1000 boys compared to 955 girls per 1000 boys of 2001 census data.

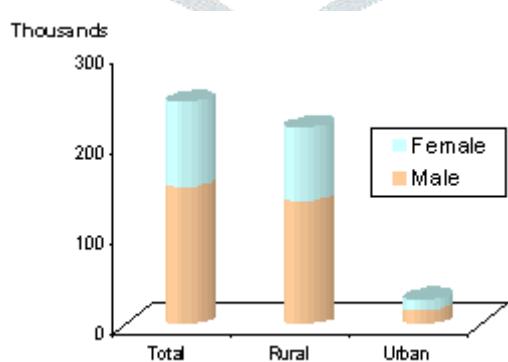
As per 2011 census the total population residing in urban regions i.e; 6.96 percent.. In total 36,108 people live in urban areas out of which males are 19,357 and females are 16,751. As per 2011 census, 93.04 % population of Chamba districts lives in rural areas of villages. The total Chamba district population living in rural areas is 482,972 of which males and females are 241,963 and 241,009 respectively. In rural areas of Chamba district, sex ratio is 996 females per 1000 males. Sex Ratio in urban region of Chamba district was 865 as per 2011 census data. Similarly child sex ratio in Chamba district was 924 in 2011 census. Child population (0-6) in urban region was 3,344 of which males and females were 1,738 and 1,606. In actual number 30,159 people are literate in urban region of which males and females are 16,793 and 13,366 respectively. The graph 1 and 2 shows literacy and population of Chamba District.

Population



Source: Census of India 2011

Literacy Status



	Persons	Male	Female
Rural	293683	169271	124412
Urban	30159	16793	13366
Total	323842	186064	137778

Source: Census of India 2011

Chamba has 7 tehsils and 3 sub-tehsils. The table 2 shows the population and literacy in these tehsils.

Table 2
Tehsilwise Population & Literacy Rate

Tehsil/ Sub Tehsil	Total Population 2011 Census			Total Literate 2011 Census			Literacy Percentage 2011 Census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Chamba Tehsil	78376	69188	137564	50617	40144	90761	85.80	66.57	76.08
Bhattiyat Tehsil	21550	21417	42967	15901	12506	28407	85.42	66.75	76.05
Sihunta Sub Tehsil	19634	20237	39871	14523	12179	26702	85.44	68.37	76.71
Dalhousie Tehsil	24339	22421	46760	19577	14250	33827	90.59	71.46	81.37
Churah Tehsil	40152	38836	78988	24856	1575	40431	72.80	47.55	60.44
Salooni Tehsil	24197	23142	47939	16888	11432	28320	81.66	56.43	69.17
Bhalei Sub Tehsil	12561	12765	25326	8548	6067	14615	79.93	55.34	67.48
Bharmour Tehsil	12873	12141	25014	9397	6948	16345	83.51	64.96	74.47
Holi Sub Tehsil	7236	6858	14094	5163	3850	9013	80.86	64.15	72.76
Pangi Tehsil	9579	9289	18868	6913	4855	11768	82.52	59.27	71.02
Dharbala Sub Tehsil	20823	20866	41689	13681	9972	23653	78.09	56.13	67.03
Total	261320	25760	519080	186064	137778	32382	82.59	61.67	72.17

Source: Census of India 2011

Table 2 shows that in Chamba district there are 7 tehsils and 3 sub-tehsils. Sihunta sub-tehsil is upgraded and 2 new sub tehsils have been included w.e.f from 2017. Dalhousie tehsil has the highest male literacy i.e; 90.59 in comparison to 71.46 female literacy, followed by Chamba Tehsil which has 66.57 female literacy. Lowest literacy of male and female is found in Churah tehsil which is 72.80 and 47.55 percent.

Status of Women in Ancient Chamba

Scholars believe that in ancient India, women enjoyed equal status with men in all fields. Works by ancient Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women were educated in the early Vedic period. Rigvedasverses suggest that the women married at a matured age and were probably free to select their husbands. However, later (app. 500B.C.) the status of women began to decline with the Samritis

and with the Islamic invasion of Mugal empire and later christianity curtailing women's freedom and right .the practice of child marriage isbelieved to have started from around sixth century.

Chamba one of the ancient princely states of India is located in the secluded corner in foothills of north-west of Himalayans. This Rajput state seems to have come into existance out of the turmoils caused by the Huna and other foreign invaders arriving from Central Asia. According to Art Historian Herman Goetz, almost all Rajput States of the medieval period seems to have been founded in the isolated zones with the threat of Islamic invasion looming large at the distant horizons.

The ancient inscriptions and other related material in Chamba region throw light on the condition of Chamba. The earliest reference in this connection is sought in the legend of Rani Naina or Suhi, who sacrificed her life for the sake of welfare of the people of Chamba and for the permanance of newly established town. She was elevated to the rank of Goddess and a grand fair is held in her memory and songs of pathos sung in her honour. Perhaps it is the only fair of the world which is known as the Women's Fair (Aurattokamela). The entry of male during the fair was prohibited. Sati came to known in theareas of Chamba, not only associated with the women who performedthe rituals of Sati on the sad demise of her husband but also for those who performed some act of piety or stood for the common weal.

Not only this but even the foundation of the town is named after princess Champa beloved daughter of the founder King SahilVarman (10th Century A.D.) which again indicates the love and devotional attitude towards the women in the patriotional society.

The condition of women in the society of Chamba takes a turn with the advent of Mugal influence in Chamba. Here one find a Royal Zanana palace (thaRawala) being attached to the old palaces meant only for the residence of queens, concubines and maid-servants of Raja of Chamba.

Status of Women During British Period

Women's employment and education was acknowledged in 1854 by the East India Company's Programme: Wood's Dispatch. Slowly, after that, there was progress in female education, but it initially tended to be focused on the primary school level and was related to the richer sections of society.In1863, educational work was started by the opening of a Primary School, the nucleus of the present Boys Senior Secondary School Chamba. In 1871 the school was raised to middle standard and a European Headmaster was appointed. In 1881 education was also fostered and the advanced pupils were encouraged to prosecute their studies by the offer of scholarships in Chamba and on the plains. In 1901 A.D. the missionaries of Sisters of charities established the Sacred Heart School at Dalhousie.

Chamba town has two English Schools, one a High School maintained by the state, and the other an Anglo-Vernacular Middle School maintained by the Church of Scotland Mission which receives a grant-in-aid . The number of boys attending these schools in the year 1906 was 206. There are also school for girls in the capital in which the scholars are taught to read and sew. The state girls' schoolis held in the Rang Mahal. Some very attractive embroidery work done in those schools. All the state schools are perfectly equipped, and the Raja takes as keen interest in this brabch of civilization as in the many others introduced either by himself or his immediate predecessors.

Outside the capital as may be easily imagined, there is almost no school education. There is small school in Churah under state control but it is not largely attended. The overall literacy rate for women increased from 0.2% in 1882 to 6% in 1947.

Present Status of Women in Chamba District

The woman of modern Chamba is entering into certain new fields that were unknown to the woman's sphere of role-sets. The woman, whose status and role traditionally was well defined and almost fixed in the society, is now experiencing far-reaching changes. Now woman keenly desires to enter into a work career because of the pressing economic needs of the family. In middle class families, much emphasis is given to the maintenance of high standard of living. To fulfill the economic needs of the family and to achieve higher standard of living the woman participates in economic activities have generally received higher education than the women of their preceding generation. Some women are attaining influential political stature of their own and have become instrumental in shaping the public opinion for the betterment of women's conditions in society.

A silent revolution is taking place in the remote and backward tribal area of Pangi in Chamba district with womenfolk emerging as harbinger of change by strengthening their economy and improving their socio-economic status. As many as 100 self-help groups (SHG) have been formed with the participation of 800 women under the brand Pangi Hills. The women associated with the Pangi Hills are mainly engaged in making handlooms and handicraft products for self-reliance and they are offering 15 products, including pairian (cover for socks), scarf, gloves and socks, besides growing pahari rajma, which are sold in packages.

Collective Efforts for Voluntary Actions (CEVA), a non-profit organisation, is covering the entire Chamba district and working for the uplift of tribal people. The Pangi Hills is trying to provide a market linkage to the products and in turn providing better, sustainable means to earn livelihood.

To start with, the products were sold in local markets and for the first time these women participated in different fairs in the state and the income of six-seven women in one group ranged between Rs 2 and Rs 2.5 lakh per annum, said Harish K Sharma, president, CEVA, Pangi.

Their hard work and dedication earned them recognition globally through their products and one of the SHG named Lakshmi Self-Help Group from Kawas, Pangi, under their leading lady Nain Dei had achieved an outstanding response in Aajeevika Mela held in Delhi. People were impressed with the traditional hand-woven handloom products and pure organic products which were sold like hot cakes at remunerative prices. "Customers wanted new design and fancy items. To cater to their needs, we proposed to tie-up with some fashion designing institute for training these women," he added.

Kamla Devi, one of the pioneers in forming self-helps groups, said: "After the initial success, we reached out to other women and motivated them with our success stories and in course of time the number started to swell."

Conclusion

But in some rural areas of the Chamba district the scenario is slight different. There is still much work to do for improving the women status. Health facilities should be provided to women in rural areas so that the feeling of self confidence can be generated among them. The problem of domestic violence, rape, dowry deaths, and molestation and less wages given as compared to men can be solved by educating women.

Women are the backbone of society to bring in strength, harmony, cooperation, humanity and eventually transforming the society into a compassionate and peaceful place to live in. Rules and regulations must be adopted to improve the status of woman not only in Himachal Pradesh but in every state.

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