

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### 6.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main objective of this study is to examine gender discrimination in agriculture sector that is dominated by patriarchal notion in Sikkim. The study examined women's position in agriculture sector, the reason behind the backwardness, policies and programmes implemented in agriculture sector with special focus on women members, and especially to find out where women stand in today's world. The study was carried out, in the rural areas in all the four district of Sikkim where majority of them are inclined to agricultural setup.

The study began by understanding the women position from global to local level, the ways in which women are treated and discriminated in almost all spheres of life, the various ways and methods through which issues can be raised and help sought to solve them. Many initiatives have been taken up at various levels, from global to national to local level to deal with discrimination. Many initiatives have been taken for betterment of women population worldwide, but still there is a lot of gap which needs to be bridged. This study was carried out to understand the gap in the Sikkimese society.

**Chapter 1** is the introduction of the proposed study which outlines with literature review, rationale and scope of the study, research questions, hypotheses, objectives of the study, research methodology, limitation of the study and ends with the organization of the study. The chapter basically deals the structure of the study.

**Chapter 2** discusses about theoretical framework and concept of gender, gender stereotyping, patriarchy and gender discrimination and how this concepts are interlinked or connected. This chapter also tries to explain the determinants of gender discrimination in agriculture sector, the variables includes land, labour, education, financial services, and technology.

Women are neglected and in all discriminated spheres of life whether at home or in the society at large and, here is the same in the agricultural sector too. Due to patriarchal set up, women are invisible in decision making process and lack freedom and their desire is always sidelined. Majority of women in the rural areas are engaged in agriculture but as labourers where they have less or no say in the production, and commercialization of crops. Gender is the societal construction norms which ascribes people to behave in prescribed feminine and masculine characteristic. It's so engraved in the society just trying to prove in way or the other as a universal truth by providing societal justification. The discriminatory attitude towards woman or girl child beings from the womb of the mother till she dies, she has to undergo numerous challenges for her survival in the name of gender through the concept of gender stereotyping.

Gender Stereotyping means preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. It has its genesis from the evolution of settlement of mankind and the tool used was the ideology of patriarchy. Patriarchy is not only a male domination or rule by men, but an unequal system created where some are benefitted and some do not.

Discriminatory attitude towards women in the society in the name of gender through the lens of patriarchy is so deeply rooted in the society in such a way from long period of time has become a universal acceptance. All this differences resulted into the discrimination of one from the other, resulting into gender discrimination which is the systematic, unfavorable treatment of individuals with the denial of rights, opportunities or resources on the basis of gender.

Most of the women especially in developing countries are getting their rights violated, be it in political or economical or social and legal etc. Further making them feel inferior in the society. Less importance is given to building or shaping the girl child and her future. The importance of men in each and every aspects of women's life and especially in decision making process has made women's life vulnerable. The society has prescribed dos and don'ts for men and women, and requires them to adhere to it in such manner, creating gender stereotype in the society. Discrimination extends to employment sector, education sector, health etc. The study tries to find out the extent of discrimination in agriculture sector too.

Rural women are major contributors in agriculture and its allied fields. Her work ranges from crop production, livestock production to cottage industry. From household and family maintenance activities, to transporting water, fuel and fodder. Despite such huge involvement, her contribution has not been recognized. Women's status is low by all social, economic, and political indicators.

Women's wage work is considered a threat to the male ego and women's engagement in multiple home-based economic activities lead to under remuneration for their work. Women spend long hours fetching water, doing laundry, preparing food, and carrying out agricultural duties. Family after deprive a girl child opportunity to study, as they are focused to stay back at home to do household chores. The nature and sphere of women's productivity in the labor market is largely determined by socio-cultural and economic factors. Women do not enter the labor market on equal terms as compared to men. Their occupational choices are also limited due to social and cultural constraints, gender bias in the labor market, and lack of supportive facilities such as child care, transport, and accommodation in the formal sector of the labor market.

Physically women are considered weak, and their labour considered as inferior. Employers have predetermined notion of women's primary role as homemakers. As a result of discrimination against female labor, women are concentrated in the secondary sector of labor market. Their work is under paid they have low status, treated causally and lack potential upward mobility. Majority of women in urban sector works in low-paying jobs.

**Chapter 3** deals with the status of women in agriculture sector at global, national, regional and local level. The discriminatory attitude towards women in society be at global, regional, national or at local level is present but their ways and degree may vary.

Women are the world's principal food producers and providers but they remain invisible partners in development process. The gender disparity in agriculture proves that their contribution in agriculture sector is ignored and so is her contribution in the development process.

India is home to the fourth largest agricultural sector in the world. Over 58 per cent of the rural households depend on agriculture as their principal means of livelihood. Indian women workers are found in a few specific occupations, most of which are manual, insecure, part-time or uncertain works, and are characterized by informality, flexible hours; and location of work which is nearby to their homes and can easily manage with their household duties. The better and secure jobs are monopolized by men and women are left with unskilled jobs only few women are able to reach the level of highly standardized and well paid where men are in majority.

The journey of working women in Sikkim has been a roller coaster, ride. Though, they have not suffered as much as their counterparts in rest of India, but still gender inequality persist in the form of disparity in property inheritance rights, domestic violence, cultural and religious sphere.

Processes of male migration and the feminization of agriculture pose many contradictions and trade-offs for gender equality. It has nonetheless led to policy recognition of women's central role in food production and ensuring food security, and consequently a realization that they need to be supported in this role through strengthening their rights and entitlement.

**Chapter 4** discusses about various government and civil society initiatives and programmes in agricultural sector, be it in global, regional, national or at local level. Many conventions and programmes have been organized both at international and national levels. Recent international treaties and conferences have stressed the importance of women's right and gender equality. Many countries have adopted comprehensive plans of action, and have taken steps to improve women's rights in general legislation (e.g., family and succession laws) and in sectoral laws (on land, agrarian reform, cooperatives, etc.). Courts have also played an important role, developing case law on women's rights concerning inheritance, land and labour. However, women continue to be under-represented in various aspects of life all around the world (Menon & Rustagi, 2013).

To tackle down the issue of women suffering, many came forward with the recommendations and policies to tackle the issues and problems for women, especially for agriculture purpose. For which various conventions, policy and programmes by government have been adopted from global to state level and civil

society initiative to minimize the women suffering to help them in farming process, and most importantly to make them aware of their rights.

Documentations of conventions are enormous but when it comes to practicality, wide gap can be observed. The shortfalls can be seen but the issue is not able to pin point the reason of its failure. As it government which has been implementing, plans, actions, and programmes, not being able to follow up and monitor its implementation or is it the needy people who are unable to grab the opportunities or the shortfalls of legislation which is unable to check the problems.

The Conventions, Programmes, Plans, & Laws have been framed and reframed to bring out and tackle down the issues and problems, but in reality the scenario is different. The problem could be due to un-awareness of the development that is taking place.

Supreme Court of India has given gender sensitive interpretations or struck down discriminatory family laws as in *Gita Hariharan v. Reserve Bank of India* (1999), *Sonia Zachariah* (1990), and *Madhu Kishwar v. State of Bihar* (1996). However there are also cases like *Sowmithri Vishnu v. Union of India* (1985) where the supreme Court has upheld discriminatory provisions in the Indian penal Code on the husband's right to prosecute for adultery (Gooneseckere, 2005).

Since independence the Indian constitution are engaged in activities of socio economic development and betterment of living for men and women, but still the state lacks in bringing up the position of women at par with men in the society. So to make a just world the women empowerment is a must, for that the sectors that need to be focused are education, health, nutrition, housing and shelter, environment, etc.

The gap between men and women since the age of Manu to the present day need to be changed. The social stigma should be removed, work divided on the basis of gender need to be discussed, opportunities for rural women should be provided, they should be encouraged to get education and health facilities.

"Just giving women the same access as men to agricultural resources could increase production on women's farms in developing countries by 20 to 30 percent. This could raise total agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent, or 100 to 150 million people. An estimated 925 million people in the

world were undernourished in 2010, of which 906 million live in developing countries." (FAO, 2011)

**Chapter 5** discusses about Findings and Analysis of Field Survey, in the context of understanding gender discrimination in agriculture sector in Sikkim. The study is based on an intensive field study survey of 200 women respondents selected from all the four district of Sikkim, i.e. 50 each from East, West, North, and South district.

The main objective of this study is to examine gender discrimination in agriculture sector that is dominated by patriarchal notion in Sikkim. The study examined the women position in agriculture sector, the reason behind the backwardness, policies and programmes implemented in agriculture sector with special focus to women members, and especially to find out where women stand in today's world. The study was carried out, in the rural areas in all the four district of Sikkim where majority of them are inclined in agricultural setup.

Women who are the major contributors in agriculture and allied activities, since the human settlement existed, still the development of women farmers are ignored. This study is conducted to find out women's position in agriculture setting in the state of Sikkim and to understand the gap in agricultural framework.

The main source of occupation and livelihood of the state is agriculture. 74.84% of people living in rural areas are dependent on agriculture. All the 200 women respondents are dependent on agriculture, 97% of them working more than 8 hours a day. Among the respondents 40% of the respondents decide in inputs and outputs in the fields, and only 24% of the respondents decide in the sale of crops. This clearly indicates that women is facing discrimination in agriculture sector, were their position is reducing and there is lack of women's power of decision making.

**Chapter 6** deals with summary of each chapters of the proposed study. It further discusses findings of the field study and few recommendations to supplement the thesis.

## **6.2 FINDINGS**

(i) The status of women begins from the house where she takes birth. The attitude and behavior towards the child (girl) shapes her outlook and perception about

being a girl and about the society. Our study shows that woman folk is highly engaged in domestic work and in the agricultural fields. 100% of the women are engaged in agricultural activities along with taking care of household work, but when it comes to generating the income, 67% of the respondents are able to generate income and all the 67% of the respondents contribute to their family income. Out of which 9.5% contributes less than half, 42% contribute half, 10% contribute more than half, and 9.5% contribute all of the family income. This shows that the money earned by the female member of the household is utilized in running the household, i.e., contribute to the expenditure of the households.

(ii) Women have dual responsibility in agriculture sector. Their contribution is enormous but their position is inferior. Their work is less valued and unpaid. Indian society being patriarchal has lowered the position of women in almost all the sectors including the agriculture sector.

(iii) Education was found to be considerably influencing the working pattern and the hours of work, educated women devote lesser amount of working hours to daily activities as compared to illiterate women, the increase in the level of education, lesser the work burden. The working pattern revealed that education contributed to women's status within the family and reduces work load related in day-to-day activities.

(iv) The study reveals that the work burden and contribution of females is numerous. However, in majority of the cases, the financial matter relating to household are handled by the male members except in such households where women are heads. The income earned by the female members were not allowed to be spent without consulting the heads of households, only 11% of the respondent decides themselves on the income, 53% decide jointly with their husband, and 3% have joint family decision. It indicates that the respondents themselves have to take into account the views or the suggestion to spend the money earned by them.

(iv) Due to lack of independent utilization of income earned and economic status, women are further marginalized and are in a poor bargaining position within the household. Regarding permission to go out to work, among the 200 respondent, 90% of them replied that they had to seek permission for doing so. It shows the level of empowerment of women, when they work, earn for their family. When it comes to

decision making process, regarding use of the money earned, or to go to work, her husband say is the most. Talking about empowerment, women despite of working or generating income the permission to work outside of their house, or for proper utilization of money, or decision regarding the selling of crops, the power lies in the hands of the male member of the family.

(v) Women's position in land holding is minimal. The respondents tend to support women to own property. Out of 200 respondents, 159 are in favour of holding property by women. On the other hand, only 55 women hold property. Majority think that women should own property but due to discriminated attitude and patriarchal nature of society women do not have ownership of property in their name property (land as a property).

(vi) The process of development has no meaning, unless women are incorporated in the development process. The study also reveals poor progress of ongoing developmental programmes and schemes in agriculture sectors. Our national policy and state policy extend full support and emphasise equal participation of women in all spheres of life. Regardless of policies, women are not being fully considered as a potential human resource and have been marginalised in terms of benefits from the development programmes. For instance, central and state has been continuously providing training in agriculture sectors, but trainees are largely male members of the household and women being full fledged farmers are left behind. Figure 5.33 reveals the darker truth regarding the training obtained; out of 200 respondents only 8 of them have received training. It is evident from the fact that very few women have been contacted by the government departments.

(vii) According to the survey, 95% of the respondents were not provided adequate opportunities in education, further leading to lack of employment opportunities and other economic activities, resulting into low status within the family and the society at large. The survey revealed that, in cases of large families with low income and many mouths to feed has it been always the daughter of the house who was told to leave school. So that as her brother could complete his education, 15% of the respondent revealed that they left school as they were required for household work, 19% revealed that they were required for work in family farm as helping hand for their mother and father, 6.5% revealed that they had to leave school due to the financial constraints, 1.5% revealed that they were required to earn to supplement the



income to run the household; in cases of families with many children and poor economic structure of the household, the daughter was asked to leave school to look after her younger brothers and sisters, 4.5% respondents revealed that they left school as they were required to take care of their siblings; it was the daughter of the household who had to sacrifice her studies in case of the death of either of their parents, as studies revealed that 3% of the respondents left school after the death of their father /mother; in some cases the girl child were objected to go to school, as 5% of the respondents revealed that they left school because their family objected. The study also reveals prevalence of discrimination between male and female children in providing education. The reason for such attitude was economic rather than socio-cultural.

(viii) Religious dogma also restricts women's involvement in agricultural sector. Women in menstrual days are forbidden to enter into agricultural field, as menstruating women are seen as the symbol of impurity.

(ix) Financial Institution has been set up in the rural areas of Sikkim to uplift the women folk by providing low interest loans, but on the contrary one male member of the family is needed to avail the loan, here women have to play the role of the protected from the protector (male member of the family).

The development of women can occur if the perception towards women in the society changes. The status and awareness of women play a significant role in the social transformation. Education is the key to the social transformation. Other factors that contribute to social transformation of women are economic, social, cultural and political. Both the centre and the state government should take an initiative to influence all mentioned factors that would benefit women's education, status and awareness.

Time and again it has been said that women's subordination and patriarchal gender systems could be combated only if a fundamental change was made concerning women's existing lack of rights to property and productive assets. Women's independent right to own and control land and other assets and to rectify existing wage disparity is integrally linked to measures to change the ideology and structures of patriarchy within the family and in social relations (Kelkar and Krishnaraj, 2013).

Education is a means a medium to develop society. Educational backwardness is the major reason for women lagging behind men, be it formal or informal education.

### **6.3 FEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

(a) Efforts need to be accelerated to improve the communication gap between the females residing in rural areas and government representatives extended by different departments, such as agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, animal husbandry, health, social welfare, women and child development and other related departments at state level to provide knowledge and to implement related schemes as they generate income.

(b) Women in the rural areas of Sikkim are found to be hard working, they share the work burden equally with their men in the agricultural field, but when it comes to domestic work, it is considered to be a solely women's duty. The opinion indicates that the perception is still embedded in the traditional environment. So, proper mechanisation of awareness needs to be adopted by both the central and state governments to broaden the mindset of the people residing in rural areas.

(c) Women are sidelined in the decision making process in agriculture sectors and the male members mainly assume the position of decision-makers in production, marketing and distribution. Female members are generally overloaded in the whole process.

(d) While designing the agriculture policies, or providing allocation of resources the policy makers both at state and central level should take into account gender discrimination and inequality in allocation of resources, distribution of income and employment among women population.

(e) Proper knowledge should be imparted to the rural women keeping special focus on those women dependent on agriculture sector so that they are not cheated by other family members, credit providers and especially middle men those who are involved in buying crops and vegetables at low price and selling at much higher price in the market.

(f) More and more involvement of women researchers and agriculturist is required in framing policies at national or local level, and participation of women in voluntary organization specially concerned for the issues in village areas.

(g) The views of local women and men should be obtained and incorporated while framing policies and making strategies.

(h) Vocational and technical skills should also be imparted to women to make them economically independent. Vocational training should be provided to women at rural levels taking into consideration availability of products and climatic conditions, so that they could have additional source of income.

(i) Central and State agriculture marketing wing such as SIMFED should be operated so that the farmers, especially women farmers are not cheated by the middle men. Such wing or organ should concentrate more on women farmers and encourage them so that they are benefited more and do not have to depend upon the male members of the family to bargain.

(j) The existing women organisation and self help groups need to be promoted and strengthened for better participation of low income groups in economic activities.

(k) Both central and state government should recognise and encourage small scale and cottage industries based in rural areas. So as to encourage the working population in such fields, this indirectly benefits the womenfolk as they are the one who are involved in it.

(l) Law has provided for women with rights to land property and inheritance and local womenfolk are aware of the facts, but still they have been denied of their rights, reason are many. If son is eligible for inheriting the parental land then why discrimination prevails against daughters. Law must ensure equal rights for man and woman in the society. The fear and the emotion towards their parental prevent females to go against the will of their parents and their brothers, but in reality they are being cheated. Proper mechanism is required to create awareness especially in rural areas by governments and NGOs; these could include support information and advocacy campaigns on women's rights to own land.

(m) Both Central and the State governments should frame and reframe policy measures supporting women's access to land, agricultural inputs and services at affordable prices and up-to- standard quality.

(n) Since settled civilization began women began with agricultural occupation and in the long run they have enormous traditional agricultural knowledge which needs to find appropriate place in the change process.

(o) Adoption of a new strategic approach, gender awareness, and more human and financial resources, reforms for gender integration at local level, institutional approach, sustainable involvement and economic empowerment are important issues for consideration.