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HIMACHAL PRADESH: A JOURNEY TOWARDS LITERACY

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Abstract: *Himachal Pradesh is a Northern Indian State. After independence, it came into being on 15th April, 1948 as a result of integration of 28 petty princely states. In 1950, it was declared as Union territory, but after the State of Himachal Pradesh Act 1971, Himachal emerged as the 18th state of the Republic of India. Now it is divided into 12 districts namely Kangra, Hamirpur, Mandi, Bilaspur, Una, Chamba, Lahaul and Spiti, Sirmaur, Kinnaur, Kullu, Solan and Shimla. Shimla is the state capital. As according to 2001 census, there was a low female literacy rate in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh. Thus, Chamba is taken as the next step by the government to make it fully literate and there is an urgent need to evaluate the performance of various government and non- government organizations of Himachal Pradesh like: SRC, Shimla, ZSS, Chamba and HGVS, Shimla because SRC, Shimla has completed almost 18 years of its existence and HGVS has completed its 23 years, where ZSS, Chamba and HGVS, Shimla both are working on volunteer basis in fulfilling their objectives. Government Umbrella of fully literate society for SBM-2012, renew the efforts of eighties and nineties and focusing on female literacy so that a sustainable growth and development can be achieved in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh. Thus, female literacy is absolute necessity to empower the Indian woman in her every day struggle in dealing with multiple deprivations on the basis of class, caste and gender. A dispassionate analysis of these postulates creates the need for an in-depth study and thus, mass literacy plays an important role in the improvement of the quality of life of a nation, state, district and place as a whole through the up-gradation of the quality of life at the individual, group and community levels. Hence, the massive programme for the liquidation of adult illiteracy helps in social and economic development.*

Key words: *Mass Literacy.*

INTRODUCTION:

Himachal Pradesh is located in the lap of the beautiful Himalayas and Himalayas go through five states of India named Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. The Himalayas have been described using other words through time including 'Himvan', 'Himvat', 'Himachal' and 'Himadri'. These names and the name the 'Himalayas' were chosen by different people because they all mean endless snow at all times of year. The map no. 1 shows the twelve districts of Himachal Pradesh and where the Himalayas are located?

Himachal takes its name from the Himalayas and it literally means 'land of snowy mountains'. Himachal Pradesh is a small world in itself, which enters from the plains of Punjab, Shivalik hills, through hills of Shimla of beautiful meandering ways, covered with pine and typical temperate and tropical mountain bio-life. High peaks remaining snow clad throughout the year, deep-valleys of meandering rivers and dark deep forest show bio-diversity which comprises countless species of flora and fauna. Himachal Pradesh is bound between 30° 22' to 33° 12' North Latitude and 75° 47' to 79° 4' East Longitude. To the East,

it forms India's border with Tibet, to the North lies state of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttrakhand in the South-East, Haryana in the South and Punjab in the West. The entire territory of Himachal Pradesh is mountainous with altitude varying from 350 to 7000 meters above the mean sea level. Geographically, Himachal Pradesh forms the part of Punjab Himalayas and thus, presents an intricate pattern of mountain ranges, hills and valleys. Being endowed with these natural boundaries, Himachal had certain hazards that hindered its progress along with neighboring states of Indo-Gangetic plane. These hazards juxtaposed with natural beauty are nowhere as pronounced as in Chamba (Balokhra, 2010).

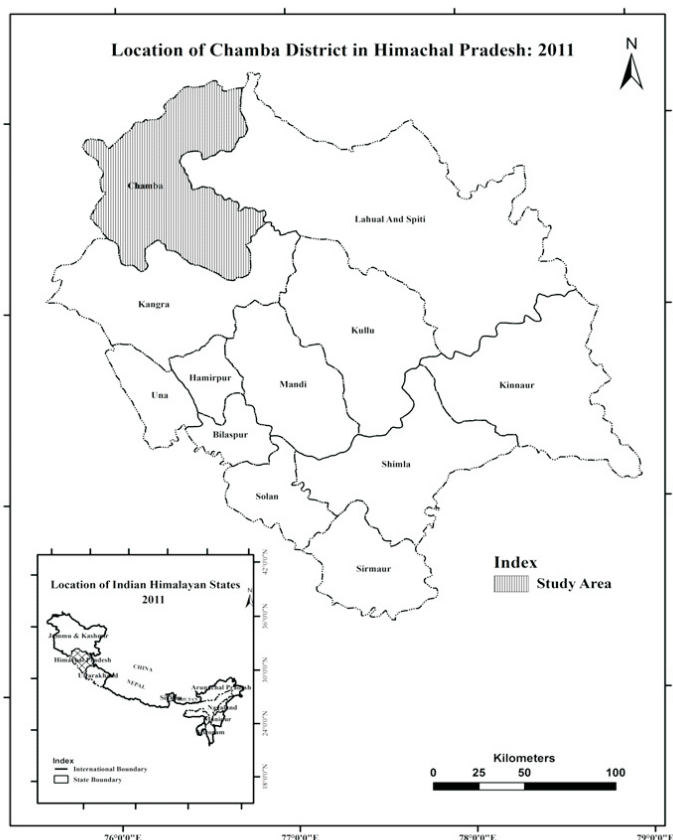


Figure 1: Himachal Pradesh District Map and the Location of Himalayan States in India

(Source 1: For the image of Himachal Pradesh districts is retrieved from <http://www.google.co.in/#sclient=psy-ab&q=loc> on 17/03/2013.

Source 2: For the image of the location of Himalayan states is retrieved from <http://www.google.co.in/#sclient=psy-ab&q=loc> on 17/03/2013.)

Himachal Pradesh is a state in Northern India and it is spread over 55,670 Square Km with total population of 6,856,509 persons including 3,473,892 males and 3,382,617 females as per the provisional results of census of 2011. It is only 0.57 percent of India's total population. After independence, it came into being on 15th April, 1948 as a result of integration of 28 petty princely states. In 1950, it was declared as Union territory, but after the State of Himachal Pradesh Act 1971, Himachal emerged as the 18th state of the Republic of India. Now it is divided into 12 districts namely Kangra, Hamirpur, Mandi, Bilaspur, Una, Chamba, Lahaul and Spiti, Sirmaur, Kinnaur, Kullu, Solan and Shimla. Shimla is the state capital. A district of Himachal Pradesh is headed by Deputy Commissioner (DC)/ District Magistrate (DM). Each district is divided into sub-divisions, governed by Sub-Divisional Magistrate and again into blocks. Blocks consist of panchayats (village councils) and town municipalities.

Himachal Pradesh: Literacy Successes

Himachal Pradesh underwent, "Schooling Revolution" in the 1961-2001 periods that has been called 'even more impressive than Kerela'. Kerela has led the nation in literacy rates since the 19th century

and seen sustained initiatives for over 150 years, whereas Himachal Pradesh’s literacy rates in 1961 were below the national average in every age group. In the three decadal 1961-1991 periods, female literacy in 15-19 years age group went from 11% to 86%. The literacy rate grew by 34.65% between 1981 and 2001.

As compared to other states of India and national figures, Himachal Pradesh registered a remarkable achievement in the field of literacy and became a ‘role model’ in the literacy movement for the other states of India. The literacy rates for both males and females of Himachal Pradesh increased approximately from 76.48% in 2001 to 83.78% in 2011 (http://www.en.wikipedia.org/Himachal_pradesh on 27/04/11). The contribution of the mass literacy movement, as per 1991-2011 censuses in the form of making district-wise neo-literates, semi-literates and illiterates, showing district-wise literacy rates, total population, decadal increase in literacy rates and the ranking of the districts in Himachal Pradesh is evident from Table-1.

Table 1: District-Wise Literacy Rates, Total Population, Decadal Increase in Literacy Rates and Ranking of the Districts in the Different Census in Himachal Pradesh (1991-2011)

S.No	Name of the State and its Districts	Percentage-Wise Literacy Rates for the 2001 Census			Percentage-Wise Literacy Rates for the 2011 Census			Total Population		Percentage Decadal Rate of Growth (1991-2001)	Percentage Decadal Rate of Growth (2001-2011)	State & District-Wise Ranking for the Censuses 2001 & 2011
		Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Census 2001	Census 2011			
	Himachal Pradesh	76.48	85.35	67.42	83.78	90.83	76.60	6077900	6856509	13.23	12.81	
1	Hamirpur	82.56	90.15	75.70	89.01	95.28	83.44	412700	454293	(-)1.72	10.08	1 & 1
2	Una	80.37	87.73	73.18	87.23	92.75	81.67	448273	521057	10.18	16.24	2 & 2
3	Kangra	80.08	87.54	73.01	86.49	92.55	83.44	1339030	1507223	9.94	12.56	3 & 3
4	Shimla	79.12	87.19	70.07	84.55	90.73	77.80	722502	813384	15.07	12.58	4 & 6
5	Bilaspur	77.76	86.04	69.55	85.87	92.39	78.70	340885	382056	11.63	12.08	5 & 4
6	Solan	76.56	84.75	66.89	85.02	91.19	78.05	500557	576670	13.86	15.21	6 & 5
7	Mandi	75.24	85.94	64.82	82.81	91.51	74.33	901344	999518	13.12	10.89	7 & 7
8	Kullu	72.90	83.98	60.80	80.14	88.80	71.01	381571	437474	18.54	14.65	9 & 9
9	Lahaul & Spiti	73.10	82.82	60.70	77.24	86.97	66.50	33224	31528	16.35	(-)5.10	8 & 11
10	Sirmour	70.39	79.36	60.37	79.98	86.76	72.55	458593	530164	19.23	15.61	11 & 10
11	Chamba	62.91	76.41	48.85	73.19	84.19	62.14	460887	515844	19.03	11.92	12 & 12
12	Kinnaur	72.20	84.30	64.40	80.77	88.37	71.34	78334	84298	-	7.61	10 & 8

Source 1: For the figures, district-wise literacy rates and total population for the censuses 2001 & 2011, decadal increase in literacy rates for 2001-2011 and ranking of the districts for 2001 and 2011 censuses in Himachal Pradesh are retrieved from <http://www.hillpost.in/2011/04/district-wise-population....literacy-in-himachal/27291/> on 13/08/2012.

Source 2: For the figures, decadal literacy rate of growth for the census periods 1991-2001 is retrieved from <http://www.himachal.nic.in/tour/census.htm> on 23/08/2012.

Table-1 depicts that the literacy rates in Himachal Pradesh were 76.48% in 2001 census as against 63.86% in 1991 census and 83.78% in 2011 census as against 76.48% in 2001 census. The state has

registered a decadal increase in literacy rate of 13.23% in 1991-2001 census periods and 12.81% in 2001-2011 census periods; even 77.48% is far higher than the national average of 65.38% in 2001 census and 83.78% is also higher than the national average of 74.04% in 2011 census. There are inter district variations in literacy rate with district like Hamirpur having 82.56% in 2001 census and 89.01% 2011 census. The district Chamba having the lowest literacy rates 62.71% in 2001 census and 73.19% in 2011 census. Himachal Pradesh is among the leading states in the country in terms of literacy but all the districts except Chamba have a lower female literacy rate 48.85% in 2001 census. Thus, Chamba district is taken as only one district in Himachal Pradesh, which comes under Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM) - 2012 because of low female literacy rates. The districts named Chamba, Sirmaur, Lahaul-Spiti and Kullu were also the low female literacy districts in the state context. The gain in female literacy in the 2001-2011 census periods has been highest in Chamba district which is close to 14% i.e. 13.29% followed by 12% in Sirmaur, 11% in Kullu and only 6% in Lahaul & Spiti. The State average is 9%. According to the 2011 census, the female literacy rate is now 62.14% i.e., improvement in Chamba after the implementation of SBM-2012.

The table also shows that the decadal growth in all the districts for the census periods 1991-2001 is higher than the national average of 13.17%. However, the four districts, namely Sirmaur, Solan, Lahaul & Spiti, Chamba, Shimla and Kullu recorded a growth rate higher than the state average i.e., 13.23%. With the exception of Hamirpur which recorded a decline of 1.72% in its population for 2001 census and Kangra which recorded a growth rate of 9.94%, Una district recorded the lowest growth rate of 10.18%, followed by Bilaspur district at 11.63%. Other districts which include Mandi, Solan, Sirmaur, Lahaul & Spiti, Kullu, Chamba and Shimla grew at about 12% over the decade. The decadal growth in all the districts for the census periods 2001-2011 is lower than the national average of 17.6%. However, four districts, namely Una, Sirmaur, Solan and Kullu recorded a growth rate higher than the state average i.e. 12.81%. With the exception of Lahaul - Spiti which recorded a decline of 5.1% in its population for 2011 census as compared to 2001 census and Kinnaur which recorded a growth rate of 7.61%, Hamirpur district recorded the lowest growth rate of 10.08%, followed by Mandi district at 10.89%. Other districts which include Bilaspur, Chamba, Kangra and Shimla grew at about 12% over the decade. It is a good transition in overall population growth for the state as a whole when there is a compound growth rate of about 1.2 percent per annum.

CONCLUSION

Though, the state of Himachal Pradesh had made a remarkable progress in the field of literacy during the last two decades but yet some significant gaps were identified in the form of (i) inter-districts variation in literacy rates, (ii) inter-districts gender-disparity in literacy rates and (iii) residual illiteracy mainly due to non-enrolment in the literacy campaigns, left-outs and drop-outs. The various reasons were also found out for lack in female literacy like (i) the co-ordination between the government sponsored Zilla Saaksharta Samities (ZSSs) in twelve districts of Himachal Pradesh and the voluntary organizations was not to the perfection as there has been a continuous attempt to establish the bureaucratic domination by ZSS functionaries, (ii) Himachal Gyan Vigyan Samity (HGVS), Shimla at its own through Kala Jathas and about 60000 strong membership is still trying to create the requisite environment for movement for literacy, (iii) only the Public-Private Partnership through the State Resource Centre (SRC) has achieved a limited success and (iv) the most of the functionaries of the SRC are drawn from the government teachers at various levels who use their political influence to avoid transfers to the remote corners of the geographically hostile terrains. However, the volunteers both in HGVS, Shimla and ZSSs, different districts of Himachal Pradesh have worked with missionary zeal without caring material and financial rewards. The objectives of the SRC, Shimla have only been achieved marginally.

The approach of the HGVS, Shimla in contrast is to use the services of neo-literates who have displayed a lot of commitment on account of the benefits they have reaped after attaining literacy. Action research taken up by HGVS, Shimla have in fact created a new 'Himachal Model' which has been launched at the national level such agencies as Kerala Sahitya Shastra Parishad (KSSP), the pioneer in providing functional literacy. There is need to do much more to reduce and ultimately eliminate illiteracy among the adult population. The development in the economic sector and female literacy in the social sector as too very critical factors that impede India's steady climb to a higher and sustainable level of growth and development.

As according to 2001 census, there was a low female literacy rate in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh. Thus, Chamba is taken as the next step by the government to make it fully literate and there is an urgent need to evaluate the performance of various government and non-government organizations of Himachal Pradesh like: SRC, Shimla, ZSS, Chamba and HGVS, Shimla because SRC, Shimla has completed almost 18 years of its existence and HGVS has completed its 23 years, where ZSS, Chamba and HGVS, Shimla both are working on volunteer basis in fulfilling their objectives. Government Umbrella of fully literate society for SBM-2012, renew the efforts of eighties and nineties and focusing on female

literacy so that a sustainable growth and development can be achieved in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh. Thus, female literacy is absolutely necessary to empower the Indian woman in her every day struggle in dealing with multiple deprivations on the basis of class, caste and gender. A dispassionate analysis of these postulates creates the need for an in-depth study and thus, mass literacy plays an important role in the improvement of the quality of life of a nation, state, district and place as a whole through the up-gradation of the quality of life at the individual, group and community levels. It may also be kept in view that mass education which also includes the mass literacy is a strategic position to accelerate economic and social development, in which the education in the school is unable to achieve especially that for every adult properly and effectively trained his skills are invested immediately into the nation's economy and development in terms of productivity and service. It is indeed education for all and by all, for all trades and for all the times. Hence, the massive programme for the liquidation of adult illiteracy helps in social and economic development. In this regard the mass campaign for literacy is seen as the strategy to make 100 million adults (in the age group of 15-35 years) literate by 2014 and beyond it (http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy_in_India 18/12/2009).

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