

# **Gender Equality and Empowerment: A Study of South Sikkim**

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*Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Philosophy in Political Science*



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**Sikkim**

**2016**

## **DECLARATION**

I, Sujata Rai, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis for the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university/institute.

This is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University.

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We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Head of the Department

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Gender Equality and Empowerment: A study of South Sikkim**” submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Political Science is the result of bonafide research work carried out by Ms Sujata Rai under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associateship and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her/him.

Date:

Signature of Supervisor

Place:

Name of Supervisor

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express deepest gratitude to my Supervisor Sir Bidhan Golay for his constant support and guidance, understanding, and encouragement throughout the course of the study. Without his patience, insights and advice, the dissertation work would have been incomplete.

I also express my sincere thanks to Dr. Durga Prasad Chhetri (H.O.D) for his constant support and encouragement.

I would also like to thank Dr. Om Prakash Gadde, Dr. Amit Kumar Gupta, and Sir. Buddha Lama, for their valuable guidance and encouragement. Big thanks are also due to the Staff members of Teesta Rangeet Library, Sikkim University, for making books and resources available during the course of present study.

I would also like to thank *panchayats* of Rabikhola and Bhanjyang for sharing their views and experience.

My sincere thank to my Parents and my younger brother for their love, care, and moral support all along.

I also like to thank one and all who, directly or indirectly, have lent their helping hand and would like to thanks for their support, advice, and encouragement.

## **List of Abbreviations**

BRAC - Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee

CA- Capability Approach

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

EU- European Union

GE- Gender Equity

HDR- Human Development Report

MGNREGA- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

PD- Population and Development

SEGD- Sustainable Economic Growth and Development

SHG- Self Help Groups

UN- United Nations

UNDP- United Nation Development Program

WC- World Conference

WHO- World Health Organization

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## Introduction

Gender equality is a process of ensuring that all its work, and the way in which it is done, contributes to gender equality by transforming the balance of power between women and men (Kabeer: 2000, p. 7).

Gender is an important consideration in development. It is a way of looking at how social norms and power structures impact on the lives and opportunities available to different groups of men and women. Globally, more women than men live in poverty. Women are also less likely than men to receive basic education and to be appointed to a political position nationally and internationally. Understanding that men and women, boys and girls experience poverty differently, and face different barriers in accessing services, economic resources and political opportunities, helps to target interventions. Compared with men, women control fewer political and economic resources, including land, employment and traditional positions of authority. Acknowledging and incorporating these gender inequalities into programmers and analyses is therefore extremely important, both from a human rights perspective and to maximize impact and socioeconomic development. (Haider and Fraser: 2014, p, 10)

The twentieth century was marked by the significant victories<sup>1</sup> achieved by feminist and women activists in the field of politics mainly in western countries in the North Atlantic, Europe, America, and Australia. In some countries they are stripped off some of the basic rights, Exploitation, and abuse of women, including outright violence still go unabated in countries where women have an inferior social status by customary or formal laws. Violence against women and girls is a direct corollary of their subordinate status in society. There are some cultures and belief system, norms, and social institutions that legitimize and therefore perpetuate violence against women. Abused women in developing countries tend to accept their- inferior status

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<sup>1</sup> . Victories like First Wave of Feminists were successful in focusing on the subjects like abortion, birth control, and overall reproductive rights of women and also focused on legal issues, primarily on gaining women's suffrage (the right to vote). The Second Wave Feminist broadened the debate to a wide range of issues: sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities. They also drew attention to domestic violence and marital rape issues, establishment of rape crisis and battered women's shelter, and changes in custody and divorce law.

and to adopt the traditional values of submission and servility. Poverty and customs in developing countries drive extended families to live together under the same roof, which means that young couples are subordinated by their parents and grandparents, making a normative change difficult if not impossible (Cohen:2006, p. 21).

The status of men is higher than that of women in developed societies because women's unpaid household labour is still not seen as an essential and valid contribution to the industrial economy. In other societies, girls and young women are viewed mainly as "reproductive labourers". They have fewer rights to political and economic participation than do boys and young men, and they perform essential work which they are neither paid nor recognized. They still live mostly in the private sphere, as the public sphere remains largely a male domain (ibid: p. 21)

In industrialized societies, girls and young women have access to organize institutions of modern life – the economy, the state, formal education, or organized religion, professions and unions, and mass- media forms of communications and entertainment. However, the private sphere also remains important to them, with its less formal and emotionally more open networks of social relationships (marriage, family, kinship, neighborhood, community and friendship) that coexist with the public sphere (World Youth Report:2003,p,249)

Life opportunities for girls and young women vary in different parts of the world, at times reflecting a reconvergence of "spheres" (the distinct worlds of work, family and households, and education) separated from each other in industrial societies. In all the Western countries women tend to move more easily between these spheres than do men.

In most societies, however, young women's participation in the public spheres is still restricted. In industrial societies the family, traditionally a female concern, is a household unit of consumption that exists largely in the private sphere, whereas the arena of material production, traditionally a male concern, is typically in the public sphere (ibid: p, 250)

Girls and young women in late-industrial societies are portrayed as those most subordinated to the consumer culture. The majority constructs their femininity according to popular culture; women's magazines and advertising directed at females

tend to promote aspects of self- satisfied, pleasurable consumption as part of a woman's image. In former communist countries, prostitution has offered one way to obtain the money necessary to participate in new consumer lifestyles (ibid: p, 4).

Even in highly developed countries, violence against women of all kinds is routine, and often overlooked. Female sexual slavery and forced prostitution are still terrible "facts of life" for poor, often very young, women. Genetic testing for defects of the unborn is used in some parts of the world to determine the sex of the foetus, so that females can be aborted, while in some countries, female infants are buried alive. Forced marriage and bride-burning are still prevalent in the Asian sub-continent. A pregnant woman in Africa is 180 times more likely to die of pregnancy complications than in Western Europe. Women, mostly in rural areas, represent more than two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults. In the United States, 90% of AIDS cases less than 20 years of age are girls. In many developed countries, where basic gender equality appears to have been achieved, the battlefield has shifted to removing the more intangible discrimination against working women. Women still hold only 15.6% of elected parliamentary seats globally. It is clear that the world has a long way to go to achieve equality and that this work will require concentrated efforts on many fronts. The work of the United Nations and many other agencies in advancing gender equality has converged in three closely interconnected areas: strengthening women's economic capacity, with a focus on new technologies and the new trade agenda; promoting women's leadership and political participation; eliminating violence against women and supporting the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (World Economic Forum: 2005)

Gender-based violence is Violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the victim; and which is derived from unequal power relationships between men and women. Violence is directed specifically against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately. It includes, but is not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological harm (including intimidation, suffering, coercion and/or deprivation of liberty within the family, or within the general community). It includes that violence which is perpetrated is overlooked by the state. This widely

accepted definition of gender- based violence is now expanded to include violence that results from unequal power relations between men and women (WHO: 2009)

Equality between women and men is one of the European Union's<sup>2</sup> founding values. It goes back to 1957 when the principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty Rome. The European Union's achievements in fostering equality between women and men have helped to change the lives of many European citizens for the better. Although inequalities still exist, the EU has made significant progress over the last decades. This is mainly because of policies like equal treatment legislation; gender mainstreaming; specific measures for the advancement of women. Some encouraging trends include the increased number of women in the labour market and their progress in securing better education and training (Walby: 2005, pp.321-322).

We need to stop buying the myth about gender equality. It isn't a reality yet. Today, woman make up half of the U.S. workforce, but the average working woman earns only 77 percent of what the working man makes. But unless women and men both say this is unacceptable, things will not change. Men have to demand that their wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters earn more- match with their qualifications and not their gender. Equality will be achieved when men and women are granted equal pay and equal respect (Knowles: 2014, p.9).

Countries in special situations such as developing and under developing countries- are disproportionately affected by climate change, natural disasters and economic downturns, such as the recent global financial crisis, which are undermining the development prospects, especially of the most vulnerable segments of their population. Women are among the most vulnerable and their special needs and vulnerabilities need to be factored into the development planning and programmes of these countries. Women are also agents of change and can play a critical role in

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<sup>2</sup> Equality between women and men is one of the fundamental principles of community law. EU main objectives on gender equality are to ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women and to combat any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender. The EU has adopted the two- pronged approach to this issue, combining specific measures with gender mainstreaming. The issue also has a strong international dimension with regard to the fight against poverty, access to education and health services, taking part in the economy and in the decision- making process, women right's and human rights.

formulating an effective response to crisis, as well as in promoting sustainable economic growth and development. The empowerment and inclusion of women in the political, economic, and social decision-making processes of countries in special situations are, thus, critical to promote the respect of women's rights and ensure effective and sustainable solutions to crisis (Department of Economic and Social Affairs: 2010)

Gender equality does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike, but rather implies an absence of bias or discrimination. Equality between women and men is both a human rights issue and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable, people-centered development. Working towards equality between women and men is vital if girls are to look ahead to an equal future (UNICEF: 2011).

Equality between adult men and women provides children a model for mutually respectful relationships, as well as the full realization of everyone's human rights. If children cannot witness and internalize social norms, attitudes and behaviours that support gender equality, equality between girls and boys will be difficult for them even to imagine (ibid.)

Gender equality is not 'a women's issue'. The issue of men in development is critical because ending women's subordination involves more than simply reallocating economic resources, it also involves redistributing power. There is a strong case to be made that transformed gender relations will benefit men as well as women – in terms of overall family income, for instance, or men's liberation from imprisoning expectations and stereotypes concerning masculinity. It is important, however, to emphasize that men will have to let go some economic, political and social power if women are to have their fair share of it. And this reality can lead to resistance (Rao: 1999, p.67).

Article 8 of the UN Charter provides that no restriction shall be placed on eligibility on men and women to participate 'under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs'. Nevertheless, women still does not occupy senior positions in case of 'key' areas of international areas like, and international security, peace keeping, & disarmament and in programmes for trade and investment or

economic development. Accurate data in economic, social and cultural matter is uncertain due to concealment of women in the private spheres of the home and family. However, the index ranking of 130 countries on gender equality in basic health, education, and income contained in the 1995 Human Development Report (HDR) prepared by the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) shows that in no country, do women fare as well as men. ‘Out of one billion people living in abject poverty, women are an overwhelming majority (Marilee: 2005, p.16).

Moreover, women earn less for comparable work, are often excluded from certain forms of (profitable) employment, and perform much of their work in the unpaid private sector, including the rural sector. They often have no choice but to accept poorly paid, undervalued work in dangerous working conditions sometimes and with no job security. Legal barriers, including those derived from customary law to the ownership of or access to land, resources, capital, and technology restricts women’s economic advancement. Besides, most of the women are more frequently exposed to violence and exploitation in their workplace (Pande: 2003, p. 21)

Hierarchical relations of power between women and men always tend to disadvantage women because no matter what women are always placed in inferior position. These gender hierarchies are often accepted as ‘natural’ but are socially determined relations, culturally biased, and are subject to change over time. They can be seen in a range of gendered practices, such as ideas of acceptable actions for women and men. Gender relations constitute and are constituted by a range of systems of institutions. As the family, legal system or the market, they are a resource which is drawn on daily to reinforce or redefine the rules, norms and practices which govern social institutions. Since historically women have been excluded from many institutional spheres, or their participation is restricted, they often have less bargaining power to affect change where institutions operate (Ravels and Baden: 2000, p.4).

So, for example, where women try to disobey their accepted roles, they can be physically abused by male partners with relative freedom. In many cultures, beatings or rape in marriage are considered acceptable in the existing legal framework. Even where, influencing women’s groups, rape or violence within marriage is illegal, women may be unwilling to seek redress because the male dominated system is

unsympathetic, or because they fear exclusion. Where women react, they become criminalised themselves. However, change is possible: in a few recent cases, following constant campaigns, women have act calmly in those circumstances.

Hierarchical gender relations hamper development efforts. For example, rigidities in the gender division of labour limit the effective mobilisation of women's labour to support export production. Poverty reduction efforts are hampered where men use their authority to take control over resources targeted at women. Development strategies need to be informed by an analysis of gender relations and to support women's own attempts to change the rules and practices which support these gender hierarchies (Nayak: 2003, p. 333).

The difference in power relations between women and men results in different gender roles, social roles and socially appropriate characteristics and behaviours. All are culture- specific, action, locus, visualization and power, among other things as components in the identification of different roles of men and women. Action refers to sexual division of labour.

Actions are generally categorized into three: productive, reproductive, and community activities. Productive activities are those accomplished for income generation through production of goods and services. Reproductive activities include child bearing and nursing, as well as activities performed for maintenance of the family, such as fetching water, cooking, collecting firewood, etc., while community activities are those performed for the welfare of the general community, such as attending meetings (Addis: 2008, p.12 ).

Locus shows the environment in which men and women operate. It is important in identifying gender gaps, particularly working at home or away from home. Visualisation is recognizing and being recognized due to certain activities and rewarded materially and also by privilege (ibid: 12).

Gender analysis helps us identify where and what kind of inequities may exist between men and women with regard to legal rights, opportunities for personal development, access to productive resources, political participation, etc. Often, but not always, women are at a disadvantage, due to the fact that most societies are



dominated by men and based upon a patriarchal structure. Because of these existing disadvantages, it is not sufficient to provide equal (or the same) access to services for men and women. Special conditions need to be created to facilitate the participation of the most disadvantaged groups, thus filling the existing “gender gaps” (Archer: J. 2006, p.1)

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sikkim is a small state situated in the Eastern Himalaya. The Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese are the three main groups of people to make up the population of Sikkim. The position of Sikkimese women in different activities shows that economically they are relatively empowered. In agriculture, pastoral and garden-economy, women play a vital role. The position of women in Sikkim is apparently better if it is compared with other states of India. However, in political sphere the status of women are very low. One startling piece of statistics is that there are presently only three MLAs in state Assembly of Sikkim out of a total of a thirty member. Women are generally not part of decision- making process. Though it is commonly argued that there is 50% reservation of women in panchayats, it however does not translate into substantive empowerment of women. In rural areas, for instance, even a woman became a Panchayat <sup>3</sup>the rest of the women be it a rural or urban areas, do not actually have decision making power in their hands. All these statistics throw up an interesting scenario. At one hand, the state machinery and the administration seems to be investing heavily on social sector. The state does take up women issues seriously. And yet these policies are not translating into concrete realities. A question does arise with regard to the efficacy of some of the schemes and policies. But at a more substantive level the proposed study shall try to understand the factor under which women attain a degree of freedom and capability. Therefore, there is immense need of participation of more women in political spheres, more awareness for women, trainings to be given, more quality education and support from family, civil society and state. If it continues like this then in future women may lose their rights, their place, pride, and status. Male domination is still there especially in rural areas and most of the decisions are taken by men, women are violated, suppressed, exploited by their husbands. Though state are trying or putting their efforts to uplift the women of

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<sup>3</sup> Panchayat- he/she is the head of village council. The Panchayat is only a rough and ready way of settling disputes, or punishing minor offences.

Sikkim through reservation, policies, schemes and programmes, women in Sikkim are still lagging far behind men. Women are still living in an unequal world because if we see population wise, as per 2011 census total population of Sikkim is 610,577 of which male and female are 323,070 and 287,507 respectively. And male literacy is 86.55% while female literacy is 75.61%. There is still a wide gap between male and female.

### **Review of Literature**

Durga P. Chhetri in *Divided Space: Discourse on social exclusion and women in India* (2014) with different scholars has talked about the social inclusion of Indian women who are poor, dalits, disadvantaged groups, excluded groups, minority, and especially women. Through decentralization the marginalized segments, such as women, minorities, etc, can be able to participate in local level, take decisions in policy making and policy formulation. This in turn has lead to women empowerment and inclusion of excluded groups.

P.Arunachalam in *Economic Impact of Political Empowerment of women in India* (2011) has argued that education is a powerful tool which empowered women as it not only helps women to gain knowledge but also provides the necessary courage and inner strength to face the challenges of life. And these things enable to get jobs and increase the income of the family and achieve social status. It is indeed true but sometimes education alone cannot help. Yes if they get job they don't not have to depend financially upon others but still many women though they are earning nicely but somehow they are dependent on husbands, father, brother for guidance, decision-making, and society looks at women as always inferior even though they take up jobs, though they are educated, skilled, capable to stand in their own feet.

Bina Agarwal in *A Home of her own* (2012) argues that women's rights in property, when effectively implemented, can give them a stronger sense of identity and social protection. She has examined why women's command over such property is very important it is because for the vast numbers still living in villages, land remains the mainstay of livelihoods. It is the primary factor of production, the main source of income and welfare for millions of families. There is also a strong correlation between landlessness and rural poverty. Even a small plot can protect a

family from destitution by providing supplementary income. Secure land access reduces the risk of poverty and enhances food security. Also, those owning some land can negotiate a higher wage in the labour market, since they have something to fall back on and hence greater bargaining power than the landless. These benefits of possessing land are compounded for women, who are even more dependent on agriculture than men since men have been increasingly migrating to non-farm jobs, leaving their families behind. Land in women's hands not only enhances their own livelihood options, but also the welfare of their families.

Dipika Majumdar in *The Changing Status of Women in India* (2009) argue that Indian women in Vedic age played a very important role in their domestic, religious, social, and economic life of the country. There was no system of burning of widows, childless widows inherited the property of the husbands as a matter of right, and women were educated. Later lawgivers put shackles on this freedom of women. The medieval period degrade the women. Women's intellectual power was crippled. Education was a forbidden fruit for them. There were child marriages for girls, sati was highly praised. Later the constitution of India, adopted on 26, January, 1950, brought a social resolution by guaranteeing equal status to women with men by granting the right to vote to women in the preamble and articles 14, 15, 16, 325 and 326. The constitution guarantees women equal social, economic, and political justice resolution by guaranteeing equal status to women with men and by granting the right to vote to women in the preamble and Articles 14, 15, 16, 325 and 326. The constitution guarantees women equal social, economic and political justice but instead of these rights and opportunities women still does not compete with man equally in parliament, election.

Ranjita Chakroborty and Maitreyee Choudhury(eds.) in *Women Empowerment and Gender Insecurities: A South Asian Perspective* (2009) has said that the notion of empowerment predict the feature of freedom, concerned with action, and the very notion of it draws wide gap between the experience of empowerment and an actual capacity to shape the terms of political, social and economic lives.

Aruna Goel in *Women Empowerment: Myth or Reality* (2009) has discussed about the potentialities of women. Therefore, she argued that the potentiality of

women would develop them and result in empowerment. She argues that without women, home, society, nation and even human existence would collapse. Gender equality is an issue of primary importance for the welfare and progress of all nations, and is fundamental to achieving people centered development. She wants a world with no discrimination and violence she wants a world that is free and fair. Education, awareness, and public policy can play an important role in eradicating prejudices. The policy makers and planners to promote women development and empowerment are to be ensured by organization with this work. This requires an ideal structure material and human resources so that the purpose of policy is translated into actions. There is also a need of constant organizational analysis based on method study work measurement and manpower planning.

Dick B. Dewan in *Education in Sikkim: a Historical Retrospect Pre- Merger and Post- Merger Period* (2012) has written about the educational system of Sikkim Pre-Merger and Post Merger Period. He has written wholly about the early education of Sikkim, literacy status, modern education in Sikkim during the Post- Merger period. He has done a commendable job and his keen interest on education of Sikkim helps to bring out the acquired information and materials which is in immense need of.

Bidisha Mahanta and Purusottam Nayak in *Gender Inequality in North East India* (2013) argue that inequality is widespread in northeast India. Though northeast is better off than the nation as a whole in terms of gender equality but deeper probe reveals that women are relatively disempowered and enjoy lower status than that of men in the region. Gender gap still exists in terms of access to education, employment and health.

Ruth Lalsiemsang Buongpmi in *Gender Relations and the Web of Traditions in Northeast India* (2013) argues that women in the region when compared with rest of the country are often portrayed as enjoying greater freedom with respect to their mobility and the absence of certain practices such as dowry, obligation wearing of burquas. These pictures of women enjoying a higher status however are, according to Ruth, an illusion created by many. Even though the discriminatory social practices

seem to be absent, yet in reality there is strong discrimination against women mainly in the sphere of tradition and customary practices.

### **Scope of study**

The geographical boundaries of the proposed study would be South District, Namchi. In Sikkim women enjoy certain freedom if we compare with other states. However, like in many parts of the world, they still live in an unequal world. Traditionally there was no social discrimination against girl child. Girls and boys are considered equal and there are no social evils like dowry, female infanticide, female feticide etc. But inequality is visible in the current political situation. Though fifty per cent reservation for women in panchayats has been fully implemented, there are, however, only three women out of a total of thirty three members in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. The level of physical violence against women is apparently low if it is compared with other states. Girls are still far behind boys in education, early marriage is still going on, women's health is still not taken care of, and political representation is very low as compared to male counterparts. And it would be confined to gender inequality in education, economy and political participation of women. The present research subject has hardly been studied by any scholars, and it has been done with different angles and intensions. There are hardly few studies which examined gender inequality between male and female in the area of education, economic and political participation. Further, no study is available which studies urban status of women as well as the differences in urban and rural status of women in Sikkim. As is well known that within a particular community there are differences arising between male and female. Hence, it is worth undertaking the present research work on gender equalities and empowerment among women in South Sikkim.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To study the 'functioning' of women in the political arena from the perspectives of capability theory;
- To study gender inequality in education, employment, and political participation in Sikkim; and

- To study and establish relation between political participation and capability.

### **Research question**

- Why is there gender inequality in Sikkim despite high levels of social and economic development?
- Why does democratic decentralization fail to address question of gender inequality and women's participation in political process.

### **Methodology**

The proposed study shall primarily rely on quantitative method. The study shall use primary sources principally in the form of government reports, archival sources, and handbooks. The secondary sources shall consist of books and journals. Using the theoretical models and framework as discussed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, a survey was conducted in both the rural as well as urban areas of South District. A rural area consists of Rabikhola and Bhanjyang whereas urban areas cover Namchi town area. A Schedule consisting of numbers of questions were administered to 75 respondents drawn through stratified sampling. Data collected through schedule was analyzed and interpreted using statistical tools like bar graph.

### **Chapterization**

The study is divided into following five chapters including Introduction and Conclusion.

#### **Chapter I: Introduction**

The chapter deals with introduction, brief historical background, reviews of literature, scope, objectives, research question, research hypothesis and methodology.

#### **Chapter II: Gender Equality and Capability: A Theoretical Perspective**

The chapter will be devoted to the discussion of theoretical writings of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.

### **Chapter III: Political Participation and Capability among Women in Sikkim**

The chapter deals with the political participation of women, the factors that hinder them to actively participate in political spheres, the challenges they are facing, whether they are living in an equal world.

### **Chapter IV: Economic Freedom and Empowerment in Sikkim**

The chapter deals with economic freedom and empowerment of women's, what are the factors that hinder them to participate in economic domain, what kinds of functionings should be given to them in order to increase their economic participation.

### **Chapter V: Conclusion**

The chapter deals with the summary of major findings, suggestions, and conclusion.

## **Chapter II**

### **Gender Equality and Capability: Theoretical Framework**

The general structure of the capability approach is well analyzed in Sen's "capability and Well- Being". The focus of the approach is on what persons are able to do and to be within their society. Those things that persons actually achieve- such as being well nourished, having decent shelter, being disease- free, and appearing in public without shame- are called functionings. Having adequate income is itself one important functionings, because it gives people access to basic goods and services and it deliver important social- symbolic information about one's social location. Sen's asserts that the emphasis on capability and functionings, rather than on money, is a more careful way of focusing on those aspects of human development and well- being that we have reason to value. He argues that a society's commitment to treating its citizens as moral equals is best expressed in terms of establishing an equality of "basic capability" (Sen: 1980, p. 183).

Because many kinds of functioning are important for a well- lived life, the capability approach takes a wide view, emphasizing functionings related to various spheres of life: education, nutrition, healthcare, political participation, and so on. Sen has noted that the most basic functioning, or condition of well-being, is literally life itself, and dying prematurely take persons of the chance to function in any sphere of life. (Sen: 1993, p. 34)

Amartya Sen in *Development as Capability Expansion* (2005) argues that the capability approach can be differentiated not only with commodity-based systems of evaluation, but also with the utility-based assessment. The utilitarian notion of value, sees value, ultimately, only in individual utility, which is defined in terms of some mental condition, such as pleasure, happiness, desire-fulfillment. The utilitarian notion has been broadly used, but it can be very misleading, since it may fail to reflect a person's real deprivation. An absolutely deprived person leading a very low life might not appear very badly in terms of the mental metric of utility, if the hardship is accepted without complaining. But, in situations of long-standing deprivation, the victims do not go on weeping all the time, and very often make great efforts to take



pleasure in small mercies and to cut down personal desires to modest—“realistic”—proportions. The person’s deprivation, then, may not at all show up in the metrics of pleasure, desire - fulfillment etc., even though he or she may be quite unable to be adequately nourished, decently clothed, and minimally educated and so on.

This issue, apart from its foundational relevance, may have some immediate influence on practical public policy. Self- satisfaction about continued deprivation and vulnerability is often made to look justified on grounds of lack of strong public demand and forcefully expressed desire for removing this obstacle (Sen: 2005 p, 45).

The most primitive concept in this approach concerns the ‘functionings’. Functionings is an achievement of a person: what he or she manages to do or to be and any such functioning reflects, as it were, a part of the status of that person. The capability of a person reflects the different combinations of functionings the person can achieve. The approach is based on a view of living as a combination of various ‘doings and beings’, with quality of life to be assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings. Capability reflects a person’s freedom to choose between different ways of living. Some functionings are very simple, such as being adequately nourished, being in good health, etc., and these may be strongly valued by all, for obvious reasons. Others may be more complex, but still widely valued, such as achieving self respect or being socially included. Individuals may, however have different deals from each other that they attach to those different functionings, valuable though they may all be evaluation of individual and social advantages must be effective to these variations. In the context of some types of social analysis, for example, in dealing with extreme poverty in developing economies, we may be able to go a long distance with a small number of important functionings and the similar basic capabilities (e.g. the ability to be well nourished and well sheltered, the capability of escaping mental state and premature mortality, and so forth). In other contexts, including more general problems of economic development, the list may have to be much longer and much more diverse (ibid: p.46).

Choices have to be faced in the explanation of the relevant functionings. The system always permits additional ‘achievements’ to be defined and included. Many functionings are of no great interest to the person. Frequently, the same doings and beings can be seen from different perspectives, with varying emphases. Sen argued

that we cannot escape from the problem of evaluation in selecting a class of functionings as important and others not so. The evaluative exercise cannot be fully addressed without openly facing questions concerning what are the valuable achievements and freedoms, and which are not. The chosen focus has to be related to the essential social concerns and values, in terms of which some definable functionings and capabilities may be important and others quite unimportant and insignificant (ibid: p.46).

There is broad literature in development economics concerned with valuing the quality of life, the fulfillment of Basic needs and related matters. That literature has been quite influential in recent years in drawing attention to neglected aspects of economic and social development. These writings have been typically ignored in the theory of welfare economics, which has treated these contributions as essentially ad hoc suggestions. The charge of “ad hoc-ness” against the development literature leaves space for the different forms of disagreement that are used in welfare theory and in development theory. The development theory tends to be immediate, attractive to strong intuitions and perceptions (Sen: 2005, p.46).

Welfare theory, on the other hand, tends to take a more indirect route, with greater elaboration and defense of the foundations of the approach in question. To bridge the gap, it is necessary to compare and differentiate the foundational features which are the essential concern with quality of life, Basic needs etc. with the informational foundations of the more traditional approaches used in welfare economics and moral philosophy, such as utilitarianism. It is precisely in this context that the advantages of the capability approach become easy to understand. The view of human life seen as a combination of various functionings and capabilities, and the analysis of human freedom as a central aspect of living, provide a differently grounded foundational route to the evaluative exercise. This informational foundation contrasts with the evaluative foundation or roots included in the more traditional foundations used in welfare economics (ibid: p.48).

The choice of an approach to the evaluation of well-being an advantage has bearings on many exercises. These include the assessment of efficiency as well as inequality. Efficiency, is concerned with the overall improvements, and in standard economic theory, this takes the form of checking whether someone’s position has

improved without anyone's position having gone down. A situation is efficient only if there is no possible situation in which someone's position is better and no one's worse (Sen: 1983, p. 111).

Similarly, the assessment of inequality too depends on indicator of individual advantage. The inequality measures that can be found in empirical economic tend to concentrate on inequalities of income or wealth. On the other hand, income and wealth do not give adequate account of quality of life; there is a case for the evaluation of inequality on information related to living standards. Indeed, the two informational bases are not alternatives because inequality of wealth may tell us things about the generation and persistence of inequalities of other types. One field in which inequalities are particularly hard to assess is that of gender differences. There is a great deal of general evidence to indicate that women often have a much worse deal than men do, and that girls are often much more deprived than boys. These differences may be reflected in many controlled as well as rough ways, and in various forms they can be observed in different parts of the world- among both rich and poor countries. However, it is not easy to determine, what is the best indicator of advantage in terms of which gender inequalities are to be examined (ibid: p. 112)

In rejecting utility- based evaluations, it may be tempting to go in the direction of actual commodities (enjoyed by women and men respectively) to check inequalities between them. There is again a problem because commodity based evaluations are inadequate because commodities are simply means to well- being and freedom and it does not reflect the nature of the lives that the people involved can lead. But, there is another problem that is hard sometimes impossible to get information on how the commodities belonging to the family are divided between men and women, and between boys and girls. Sen has given instances such as studies on the division of food within the family tend to be deeply problematic since the observation needed to see who is eating how much is hard to carry out On the other hand, it is possible to compare signs of undernourishment of boys and girls, to check their respective diseased or unhealthy rates etc., and these functioning differences are both easier to observe and are very important (Sen: 2005 p.53).

There are indeed inequalities between men and women in terms of functionings, and in the context of developing countries the contrast may be sharp even in basic matters of life and death, health and illness, education and illiteracy. For example, despite the fact that when men and women are treated reasonably equally in terms of food and health care (as they tend to be in the richer countries, even though gender biases may remain in other less elementary fields), women seem to have greater ability to survive than men, in the bulk of the economies, men outnumber women by large margins (ibid: p. 54).

Being able to survive is only one capability though a very basic one, and other comparisons can be made with information on health, morbidity etc. the ability to read and write is also another important capability, and that the ratio of female to male literacy rates is often low in different parts of the world. The combined affects of low literacy rates in general and gender inequalities in literacy rates tend to be quiet devastating denials for women (ibid: pp. 55-56).

Amartya Sen in *Human Rights and capabilities* (2005) argue that, the idea of ‘capability’ (i.e. the opportunity to achieve valuable combinations of human functionings - what a person is able to do or be) can be very helpful in understanding the opportunity aspect of freedom and human rights. Indeed, even though the concept of opportunity is often called upon, it does require considerable explanation, and capability can help in this clarification. For example, seeing opportunity in terms of capability allows us to distinguish appropriately between (i) whether person is actually able to do things she would value doing, and (ii) whether she possesses the means or instruments or permissions to pursue what she would like to do (her actual ability to do that pursuing may depend on many limited circumstances) (Sen: 2005, p. 153).

The capability-based approach defend against an overconcentration on means (such as incomes and primary goods) that Human Rights and Capabilities can be found in some theories of justice (e.g. in the Rawlsian Difference Principle). The capability approach can help to identify the possibility that two persons can have very different significant opportunities even when they have exactly the same set of means: for example, a disabled person can do far less than an able-bodied person can, with

exactly the same income and other 'primary goods'. The disabled person cannot, thus, be judged to be equally advantaged - with the same opportunities as the person without any physical handicap but with the same set of means or Instruments (such as income and wealth and other primary goods and resources) (ibid: p. 154).

Martha Nussbaum in *Women's Capabilities and Social Justice* (2000) argues that women are not treated as ends in their own rights, person with a dignity that deserves respect from laws and institutions. Instead, women are treated as mere instruments of the ends of others- reproducers, caregivers, sexual outlets, agents of a family's prosperity. A girl child is not given care for her health and education in the way a boy receive. A daughter born is often seen as occasion of sorrow rather than rejoicing it because she will involve family in the considerable expense of dowry (Nussbaum: 2000, p.221)

Nor in her marital home women get respect. She is often seen as having an instrumental value; her in- laws would see as her a mere addition of a beloved son, a means to grandchildren, an addition to the number of household workers, perhaps as a device to extract money in dowry payments from her parents. Even when she is not abused, she is unlikely to be treated with warmth, nor is her education likely to be fostered. Her husband can be a buffer between her and the demands of his parents. The woman is likely to have no option from abuse in the marital family. Her natal family will probably refuse to have her back, she probably has no employment-related skills, and the law is not very interested in her problem. If her husband dies, her situation become worse and becomes widow. A tool whose purpose is gone: that is what a widow is, and that is rather like being dead. Women, in short, lack essential support for leading lives that are fully human. This lack of support is frequently caused by them being women. Thus, even when they live in constitutional democracy such as India, where they are equals in theory, they are second - class citizen in reality (ibid: p. 222).

Women are the world's primary, and usually only, caregivers for people in a condition of extreme dependency: young children, the elderly, and those whose physical or mental handicaps make them incapable of the relative (and often temporary) independence that characterizes so-called 'normal' human lives. Women

perform this crucial work, often, without pay and without recognition that it is work. At the same time, the fact that they need to spend long hours caring for the physical needs of others makes it more difficult for them to do what they want to do in other areas of life, including employment, citizenship, play and self-expression (ibid: p. 222).

Martha Nussbaum's has stressed the ten lists of central human capabilities which is a current versions that are as follows; 1. Life, 2. Bodily Health, 3. Bodily Integrity; 4. Senses, imagination, and Thought, 5. Emotions, 6. Practical Reason, 7. Affiliation, 8. Other Species, 9. Play and 10. Control over One's Environment (Nussbaum, 2003, pp. 41-42)

Nussbaum in Human capabilities approach has stressed that the version of capabilities approach, is attractive for many reasons, it has special advantages when we are approaching the special problems faced by women: both intellectually and practically, there is a strong link between a concern for gender justice and reasons (Nussbaum: 1997, p. 278).

The aim of her project as a whole is to provide the philosophical support for a description of basic constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by the governments of all nations, as a least amount of respect for what human dignity requires. The best approach to this idea of a basic social minimum is provided by an approach that focuses on 'human capabilities', i.e. what people are actually able to do and to be - in a way, informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being (ibid: pp. 279) .

Martha Nussbaum has identify a list of 'central human capabilities', setting them in the context of 'political liberalism' that makes them specifically political goals and presents them in a manner free of any specific metaphysical grounding. In this way, she argue that, the capabilities can be the object of an 'overlapping consensus' among people who otherwise have very different broad conceptions of the goods and the capabilities in question should be pursued for each and every person, treating each as an end and none as mere tools of the ends of others: thus, she adopt a

‘principle of each person’ capability’, based on a ‘principle of each person as end’ (Nussbaum: 2000, p. 300).

Nussbaum has talk about how functioning and capability are related. It is crucial in defining the relation of the ‘capabilities approach’ about paternalism and pluralism. If we take functioning itself as the goal of public policy, a liberal pluralist would judge that we were preventing many choices that citizens may make in accordance with their conceptions of the good. A deeply religious person may prefer not to be well- nourished, but to engage in fasting. Whether for religious or for other reasons, a person may prefer a celibate life. A person may prefer to work with an intense dedication that prevents recreation and play. And Nussbaum does not say that these are not fully human and nourishing lives that she is not even instructing government to push people into functioning that are required, no matter what they prefer? (Nussbaum: 1992, p. 221)

Capability, not functioning, is the appropriate political goal. This is so because of the very great importance attached to practical reason, as both expand all the other functions, making them fully human, and also record, itself, as a central function on the list. The person with plenty of food may always choose to fast, but there is a great difference between fasting and starving. And, the person who has opportunities for sexual satisfaction can always choose a life of celibacy, Nussbaum argue here that, the approach says nothing against this. What it does speak against is the practice of genital damage, which deprives individuals of the opportunity to choose sexual functioning (ibid: p. 221).

A person who has the opportunities for play can always choose a workaholic life; there is a great difference between the chosen life and a life constrained by i the ‘double day’ that makes women unable to play in many parts of the world (ibid: p.222) .

Nussbaum here argued that, the objective is to be understood in terms of ‘combined capabilities’. To secure a capability of a person, it is not sufficient to produce good internal states of willingness to act. The material and institutional environment is necessary so that people are actually able to function. Women

burdened by the 'double day' may be internally incapable of play; if, for example, they have been kept indoors and eagerly restrained since childhood, married at age six, and not allowed to engage in environment that male children enjoy (ibid: p. 222).

Young girls in poor areas of Rajasthan, for example, have great difficulty learning to play in an educational program, because their capacity for play has not been nourished early in childhood. On the other hand, there are also many women in the world who are perfectly capable of play in the internal sense, but who are unable to play because of the 'double day'. Such a woman does not have 'combined capabilities' for play. Capability is thus a demanding concept or an idea. On the environment of choice, it is highly helpful to the goal of functioning, and instructs government to keep it always in view. On the other hand, it does not push people into functioning, once the stage is fully set, the choice is theirs (ibid: p.p. 222- 223).

Anne Philips also talks about inclusion because she also want women to be represented as she has experienced the domination, exclusion, exploitation etc, whether she or one who can understand her feelings have gone through same situation can only represent women and man cannot represent their group because they cannot feel the pain of women, and have not experience the same situation as women. Anne Philips in her Politics of Presence argues that there is a common belief that assemblies made up from one group alone are unrepresentative of the citizen body. No one can better express the distinctive perspectives of a group than someone who is a group member, and that no one else is likely to be a better judge of group interests. Embodiment matters. By their presence in the decision- making chamber, members of a previously marginalized group can better guarantee their interests and perspectives. By their presence, dominant groups will recognize and speak of their representing the interest of farmers, but much less reasonable to think of well- informed (male) expert on gender as representing the perspectives of women. A representative without such experience as spokespeople for the group cannot able to represent the experience of a group, and then the policy process will be essentially paternalistic and the policy outcomes almost certainly are biased (Philips: 1998, p.13).

This kind of issues has generated a new set of questions about representation, focusing attention on ensuring a rough representation of experience as well as ideas.



The second thing that stands out in the recent renewal of interest in representation is the declining confidence in a politics of consent. Representation is the lifeline that keeps citizens linked to their political elites, the democracy needs this lifeline, and citizens do not always want it pulled too tightly. Thus, most people will agree that politicians should seek to implement the programmes on which they were elected to office - most of people get edgy when governments simply abandon their supposed programmes but many people expect their representatives to be giving a lead, they do not want their politicians to follow the worst prejudices of the electorate, but they wanted to see their representatives taking a lead in a broader perspectives (ibid: p. 14).

No system can claim to be democratic if it does not recognize the legitimacy of these two goals; and democracies can be located along a variety depending on how well these principles are realized in their practice. The first principle of popular control is central to any concept of democracy. A system is not regarded as democratic just because it claim itself as pursuing the needs or interests of the people, for democracy always implies that the people themselves take some part in determining political decisions. Democracy is not paternalism: it is not only government 'for the people' but government 'by the people' as well. Democracies have mixed extremely in the mechanisms through which people get to exercise this influence or control. Popular control is also, however, thought to have an independent value, and this links it with the second principle of political equality. These two principles of popular control and political equality provide a good basis for the politics of presence. Control is just a moral goal unless people are actually there; equality is hardly achieved when some groups have so much more power than others (ibid: p.14-15).

Iris Marion Young in her *Inclusion and Democracy* (2001) argues that those people who are affected by a policy of democracy should be included in decision-making processes and should have the opportunity to influence the outcomes. Marginalized citizens with fewer resources and administrator can sometimes make up for such inequality with organization and weaker political parties will achieved their political goals when the democratic process is open and fair, and when there is a constant public discussion (Young, 2001,p.14)

Active participation and political representation do not exclude one another. Voting equality is only a minimal condition of political equality. Democratic process is the best means for changing conditions of injustice and promoting justice. Deliberative democracy emphasizes on the principle of inclusion, political equality, reasonableness and publicity (ibid: p. 14).

She has also talked about Democratic Theory for Unjust Conditions, wherein she has explained how the theory of deliberative democracy supports the view that democratic processes are most likely to weaken injustice and promote justice. The model of deliberative democracy assumes that participants in a decision-making process are short of for time, and that they can concentrate significant energies to their discussion. It rules out the influence of previous commitments, unconscious injustice, and authority which often colour even the most well-intentioned deliberations in actual democracies (Young: 2001, p.29).

The theory says that justice is nothing other than what the members of an inclusive public of equal and reasonable citizens would agree to come under these ideal circumstances. The connection between democracy and justice happen to be circular. Ideal processes of deliberative democracy lead to just outcomes because the deliberation begins from a starting point of justice. All effected persons are included in the discussions, and all are able to speak freely and criticize, under circumstances where no one is in a position to threaten or compel others into accepting their proposals. Such conditions would seem to exist only within just institutions that enable the self-development of everyone and where no one is subject to domination by others. No existing democracy is as just as that (ibid: pp, 29-30).

Our democracies contain structural inequalities - for example, inequalities of wealth, social and economic power, access to knowledge, status, and work expectations. These structural inequalities are unjust that they help to produce institutional conditions which support domination or hinder self-development. In many ways that social and economic inequality produces political inequality. Money often has greater influence in determining the outcomes of elections, referendum campaigns, or legislative battles (Young: 2000, p. 121).

In formally democratic societies with serious injustices it must be possible to promote social changes towards greater justice through democratic means. Such process of unjustness can be overcome through social movements and government reform efforts that have indeed damaged injustices by democratic means (ibid: pp. 122- 122).

She also talks about strong democracy which certainly requires many events when public officials and citizens meet to discuss experiences and issues with each other. Imagining democracy as a process of communication to arrive at decisions, however, has not sufficiently been successful to conceptualize democracy decentred in large-scale mass societies. In the context of complex mass politics, a frequently heard complaint of exclusion bring into play norms of representation. People often claim that the social groups they find themselves similar with are not properly represented in important discussions and decision-making bodies, including legislatures, commissions, boards, task forces, media coverage of issues, and so on. Such claims recognize that in a large polity with many complex issues formal and informal representatives mediate the influence people have (Young: 1998, pp.155-160).

For these reasons many recent calls for greater political inclusion in democratic processes argue for measures that encourage more representation of under-represented groups, especially when those groups are minorities or subject to structural inequalities. Women's movement activists in many parts of the world, for example, claim that legislatures peopled mostly men did not said properly to represent women. In response to such claims, some governments have enacted legislation designed to encourage more women legislators, usually requiring that party lists include a certain portion of women. Women's agitation for similar provisions in their countries is increasing in many places without such provisions. Even where the law does not require it, many parties around the world have decided that their lists are not properly representative without certain numbers of women (ibid: p.160).

Bina Agarwal in her *A Home of Our Own* (1994) has talked about women's property rights. Rights in property are critical, not just for their economic well- being

but also for their political and social empowerment. Effective rights mean rights not just in law but also in practice, and rights which enable women to exercise control over property. Land right's is very much important for women because for the vast numbers still living in villages, land remains the mainstay of livelihoods. It is the primary factor of production and the main source of income and welfare for millions of families (Agarwal: 1994, p. 299).

Owning land in women's hand means they are less vulnerable from the domestic violence, spousal violence, husband's alcohol abuse, household's economic position etc. However, being employed (except in the formal sector) did not protect women against violence. In fact, where the woman was employed and the man was not, or she was better employed than him, she faced a higher risk of physical violence. There was no such bad effect with property: a propertied woman married to a property less man faced less and not more violence (ibid: pp. 299-300).

Sikkim, comparatively small situated in the Eastern Himalaya. Three main groups Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis, are the three main groups of people to make up the population of Sikkim. Women in Sikkim work in engaged in different activities. In agriculture, pastoral and garden-economy, women play a vital role. The position of women in the society is fairly better. Women play a leading role in household work and taking care of children, in-laws, husband, everyone. Relevance of bride price also shows the importance of women in their society. In the sphere of religion women are bit backward and in political sphere the status of women are very low (Diyali: 2004.p. 12).

In past Sikkim was under monarchy and had no schemes to empower the local women, they had no roles to play in decision making process. The old law gave no rights to women, the king and the men enjoyed the laws. However, women played a active roles in agricultural, household activities etc., along with male members and in some cases women contributed more than male members but were confined to private sphere (Subba: 2014, p. 4).

Population wise it is clear that women are lesser in number compare to men, which also makes them to be in a minority group. Throughout the ages women group

all over the world has been widely dominated and excluded from political, social and economic sphere, in which Sikkim is no exception (ibid: p. 5).

The enrollment of girl child in higher education was poor as many would drop out due to early marriage once if the girls get married she didn't have any chances to continue their studies as she would enter into early motherhood and in rarest cases the family of husband gave opportunities to their daughter in law to continue their studies (lama: 2001, p. 20).

The status and place of women in a given society, determines the level of progress and development attained by that society in its journey of development. "Blessed is a society where women are respected and held in high esteem; such a society is gifted with all the finer qualities of life." It is true that "liberation of women in a given society determines the liberation of that human society" (Ghatak: 2004, p.3).

In Sikkim, the dominance of tribal population apart, the sobering legacy of feudal past, are factors that have had a combined influence in shaping and defining the status of women in the contemporary Sikkimese society which is comparatively much dignified than in most other places. From childhood to adolescence and even after that they enjoy all the love and affection and other family privileges from parents are completely at par with those enjoyed by the male child. Girls, as they grows up, go to school that is just as similar as the one attended by their brothers. The male members enjoy property rights and women are untouched by these amenities which they deserve (Lahiri: 2001, p. 11).

Healthcare and Agriculture that came on the 1950 Treaty signed between India and Sikkim. Rapid developments were being made in Sikkim until the forties, and saw progress in eighteenth century. In such a scenario efforts were made although under an ambitious monarch, towards positive goals. That is why women of Sikkim have had a high privilege in society. But in spite of all this status, privilege, initiatives taken by government, NGO's, State Commission of Women, women in Sikkim is still behind men. (Subba: 2009, p. 18)

It is not as different as other countries regarding the problems faced by women in Sikkim as well as in south Sikkim. They are also unequal like the women of other countries in terms of education, social, economic and political status. They are also dominated, exploited, suppressed by the patriarchal system as well as from their own society's norms and patterns; because they cannot escape from these traditional norms because it has been there since the ancient times. Women had to look after the family and go for a work but a man on the other hand, does not do the household work. women are burdened by the lot of works and they do not have time for resting, playing, communicate in society, and they have no freedom etc., so to speak, they cannot do what they actually wanted to do because they are capable to do so many creative things. In this way they cannot use their capability because their functioning is restrained because of time constraint. Women here become tools for other ends.

So, in this situation capability approach is suitable as it immensely supports women because this approach is gender sensitive. Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's capability approach is geared towards real empowerment and freedom. Capability approach has special advantages when we are approaching the special problems faced by women: both intellectually and practically. Capability approach supports for an explanation of basic constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by the government of all nations, as a minimal amount of what human dignity requires. This approach especially focuses on human capabilities, i.e., what people are actually able to do and be. This approach provides a political freedom that makes them specifically political goals.

And in that way capabilities can be an object for people and the capabilities is pursued for each and every person, treating each as an end and none as mere tools of the ends of others. This principle of each person capability based on principle of each person as an end.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Political Participation and Capability among Women in Sikkim**

Political participation refers to the actual participation in those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly in the formulation of public policy. Social scientists broadly define political participation as being the process through which the individual plays a role in the political life of his society and has the opportunity to take part in deciding what the common goals of that society are, and the best ways of achieving those goals (Eakin: 1972, p. 96)

Milbrath feels that every person participates at least inactively in the political system in which he or she lives...there is no such thing as not behaving. As traditional liberal democratic theory belief that, the literature often shows concern that is wide and spread political participation by large majority of citizens. The logic of this is simply that to have a government of the people, there must surely be a great many people politically involved (Milbrath: 1965, p. 29).

Jessica J. Kulynych argue that political scientists have traditionally understood political participation as an activity that assures individual influence over the political system, protection of private interests, system legitimacy, and perhaps even self-development. As reported by Jessica the impact of the conditions of post modernity on the possibility for effective political action in remarkably similar ways. It describes a world where the possibilities for effective political action are quite limited. The growing interdependence of state and economy, the expansive increase in bureaucratization, the increasingly technical nature of political decision-making, and the subsequent colonization of a formerly sacred private sphere by a ever-present administrative state provide traditional modes of political participation unable to provide influence, privacy, legitimacy, and self-development (Kulynych: 1997, p. 317).

As the state is forced to take a larger role in directing a complex global, capitalist, welfare state economy, the extent of administration inevitably grows. In order to fulfill its function as the manager of the economy, the administrative state must manage the details of our lives formerly considered private. Yet, as the state's role in our "private" lives continues to grow, the public has

become less and less interested in government, focusing instead on personal and social union, leisure, and consumption.

Ironically, we have become less interested in politics at precisely the same moment when our lives are becoming increasingly “politicized” and administered. This chain of private life and the involvement of this ideology of “civil privatism” in the functioning of the modern administrative state make a disregard of the idea that there exist private interests that can be protected from state intervention (ibid: pp. 317- 318).

Another contextual issue in women’s political participation relates to the nature of politics in general and the liberal democracy in particular. Democracy has historically served men better than women. As a political system from the ancient Greece to the modern times of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has been built on the public- private dichotomy and excluded women from citizenship. Women have been kept outside the public domain of politics as most of the political thinkers and philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and Hegel considered women fit only for domestic roles in the private sphere and maintained that there was no place for women in politics because of their suitability in caring roles as mothers and wives. The public private divide remains as the foundation of the various forms of world democracies (Rai: 2000, p. 177)

This is one of the reasons that the normative political theory considered private sphere as non- political and did not make any effort to explore the political nature of the private life. The ancient and modern democracies failed to recognize women as citizens. Therefore, they sidelined them and their concerns in its theory and practice. It was only the liberal political philosophy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that promoted the idea of ‘free and rational’ individual which was used by suffragists to demand for the right for a vote. However, the conceptual basis of liberal democracy naturally gendered in ways, which carry out the patterns of patriarchy and ignores gender subordination in both polity and society (Bathla: 1998, p. 36).

With an increasing recognition among international community of women’s historic exclusion from structures of power, a global commitment has been made to redress gender imbalances in politics. Women’s greater participation in governance



structures is viewed as the key to redress gender inequalities in societies. The global debate on the promotion of women's political participation/representation has been surrounded by central and instrumentalist argument. The former argues for equal participation of women in politics from the human rights perspective. Women constitute half of the world population and therefore, it is only fair that they should have equal participation and representation in world democracies. Instrumentalist argument pushed for women's greater participation on the ground that men and women are different. Women have different visions and concepts of politics owing to their sex and their gender roles as mothers. Therefore, it is assumed that women in politics will bring a special caring focus and female values to politics (Farzana, 2005: p. 5)

Feminist theorist also challenged the notion of abstract individual in liberal theory and argued it is not a gender- neutral category. This is why though women had the right to vote they were not able to impact public policy and could not bring private sphere in the preview of the public. Even western democracies left them dislocated on many fronts. When women enter politics within this patriarchal context of modern democracies, they are unable to play a role to radically change the sexual politics rather they largely play political roles on male's terms. The fundamental assumption in liberal democracies needs to be changed in order to create genuine political space for women within (ibid: p.38).

The Constitution of India grants universal suffrage to both men and women with equal rights to participate in electoral competition, but the societal value system, the private- public divide in terms of the area identification and male dominance in political system restrict women from exercising their electoral rights and a fair participation in electoral competition. These factors act as a key barrier and obstacle in women's active participation in the Indian electoral system and in larger issues like women's advancement as a whole. The lack of critical and quality representation of women in key decision- making positions results in women's agenda and not getting reflected and addressed in public policies and programmes (Baseline report: 1998).

It is important for us to recognize the fact that the level and forms of women's participation in politics is largely shaped by cultural and societal barriers in the form

of violence, discrimination and illiteracy. Sexual violence as Martha Nussbaum highlighted a significant barrier to women's capability of participation in politics. Child marriage, domestic violence and low literacy rates have lowered Indian women's economic opportunities and contributed to sexual violence in India. Nussbaum states that "In the larger society, violence and the threat of violence affect many women's ability to participate actively in many forms of social and political relationship, to speak in public, to be recognized as dignified beings whose worth is equal to that of others." Self-confidence is likely to increase participation among Indian women, specifically in running election (Nussbaum: 2005, p. 172)

Discrimination is another factor that hinders women's participation. Although the Constitution of India removed gender inequalities among caste and gender, discrimination continues to be a widespread barrier to women's political participation. Discriminatory attitudes manifest in the limitations presented to women including low access to information and resources. Women also lack leadership experience due to the fact they are burdened with household duties. The burden of household duties is a significant reason why many women do not participate. Unlike men, there are fewer opportunities for women to get involved in organizations to gain leadership skills (Nussbaum, 2002 p. 111) illiteracy limits the ability of women to understand the political system and issues. Problems with exploitation, such as women being left off of voters lists, have been reported as illiteracy limits the ability of women to ensure their political rights are exercised (Dubey:2012).

Nussbaum argued regarding the political participation that, "literacy is connected in general with the ability to move outside the home and to stand on one's own outside of it; it is also connected to the ability of women to meet and collaborate with other women". Studies conducted by Niraja Jayal and Nirmala Buch found women are "persistently mocked and devalued in the panchayats if they are illiterate". To overcome issues of discrimination and violence, women's organizations have focused on the empowerment of Indian women. Empowerment can bridge the gaps in education; renegotiate gender roles, the gender division of labour and addressing biased attitudes. Women can also be empowered to participate by family, and when familial support is present they are more likely to run for office (Nussbaum: 2004 p. 325).

The position of women in Sikkim is apparently better if it is compared with other states of India. However, in political sphere the status of women are very low. One startling piece of statistics is that there are presently only three MLAs in state Assembly of Sikkim out of a total of a thirty member. Women are generally not part of decision- making process. Though it is commonly argued that there is 50% reservation of women in panchayats, it however does not translate into substantive empowerment of women. In rural areas, for instance, even a woman became a Panchayat the rest of the women be it a rural or urban areas, do not actually have decision making power in their hands. The state does take up women issues seriously. And yet these policies are not translating into concrete realities.

During the visit an interview was conducted with the panchayats of the rural areas and also teachers, officials, social workers and political activist in Namchi town. The area was divided into three places out of three two rural and one urban places for field survey. Urban areas covered Namchi town and rural areas covered Bhanjyang and Rabikhola.

The reason for choosing this area for field survey is because in South Sikkim women rarely seen to be participating in the political domain and one of the key research questions was to know the reason for women being confined within the four walls of their homes and neglecting the public domain. They are mostly busy in carrying out domestic chores in their home and community. The information and data were collected with the help of a questionnaire which was distributed to the respondents. The target respondents were mostly women. The questionnaire was distributed among 75 respondents and was divided into 25 in each place. The study and the discussions was the outcome of three weeks visit to the rural and urban places. In all the discussions during the field visit, an open and transparent exchange took place with the respondents, panchayats, social workers and political activists.

From the study conducted in the above area is found that eighty percent eighty of women from the both the rural areas of Bhanjyang and Rabikhola and ninety percent from urban areas of Namchi town agree that there is equality in access to education among both male and female. And rest of them says there is still inequality in access to education among male and female. But there is a slight difference

between rural and urban perspectives because in rural areas girls even now have to look after her siblings, take the responsibilities of household work etc, and most of the girls in villages marry in early age. These are some underlying issues which hinder girls in rural areas to equally get education as compared to boys. On the other hand in urban areas girls are given more freedom for education.

The central problem here is the differences co- exist between rural and urban girls, as rightly said by Martha Nussbaum that women are not treated as ends in their own rights, women are always treated as instruments of the ends of others. It is completely true because why in rural areas girls are kept in house to look after the siblings, why she is taking the responsibilities of house, why can't a boy stay in home and look after their siblings and take the responsibilities of house? The answer to these questions is because girls are treated as ends of other, they do not have fuller opportunity and choice and most importantly a complete freedom as a boy enjoy. It is also because our society is very conservative and biased towards women and girls and since ancient time society itself is structured in this kind of biasness towards boys.

Some of the respondents still feel that education alone cannot bring changes and it does not solve the problems of women because some of the women are educated are still unemployed. Some of them are still violated by their husband and in-laws, some of them are financially backward, some of them are not confident to do work. This type of problems often occur, no doubt, education empower women but only if she is employed, if her financial status is strong, and she is confident enough to compete with the demanding and changing situations of modernity, education is not enough to make her a strong women.

Mostly in rural areas women told me that they do not agree that the status of women in Sikkim is better. They think that they are still being neglected. They are unequal as compared to male counterparts because most of the male members do work in offices, they are at the higher position, they run the administration and parties but women are still in lower position. One can hardly see women in higher position as compared to male members. It is because women in rural areas are less educated, and on top of that they are hindered to go out and that they are burdened by household work and responsibility of a family.

In rural areas women told me that it is not possible that the position of women will change because first of all they are uneducated and they are confined to house these are the major setback for them. But in urban areas they believe in changes, they think that they are more confident and determined that gradually women today are competing with men in every areas be it in doing jobs, education, sports, businesses etc.

Most of the women from rural areas that I interviewed believed that they do not have freedom because most of their husbands do not allow his wife to move out from house. They are not allowed to participate in political spheres, their husband do government services and women have to do household work and especially they themselves are worried about their responsibilities towards home and children that is the reason they could not participate.

In urban areas the case is very different, they do have freedom, women are actively participating, women of urban areas think that women today are lesser in political arena because women does not participate at all, more than expecting for justice and equality by simply sitting in home does not bring changes, they believe in participation as important, and they think that women today are more interested to be a teacher, doctor, engineer but not politicians.

In rural areas women are being hindered from participating in political process. , They do not have a complete freedom to do whatever they wish to do. Women want to do so many things but because of the constraints on their freedom and choice they are not been able to utilize their ability. On the other hand most of the women in urban areas that I interviewed think they are lucky enough to have a freedom and the choices. They can participate in meetings, make decisions by themselves, they are independent and strong enough to compete and utilize their ability. From the above responses it can be concluded that the differences are clearly seen between urban and rural areas because their functioning are completely different. In urban areas there is complete freedom for the opportunities as well as choices for women so they can easily utilize their capability but in rural areas there is no freedom and choice, functioning is absent here for women.

Most of the women from rural areas agree that women are valued less than men because most of the decisions are taken by men and they do not consult their wives in any matters. Financial decisions are taken by men and the patriarchic system has dominated women totally. But in urban areas, the tool that women have is education and access to information which makes them capable in every sphere and they are valued and respected as compared to men.

Both from the rural and from urban areas women agreed that if more women do participate, the problems and their issues will be addressed and thereby it will automatically give women a special value because without active participation their voice, their issues, and their problems, would not be heard, therefore they truly believe in participation. Just as Anne Philips argued that no one better express the perspectives of a group who is a group member and has experienced the same problems. She can be a better judge of group interests, but a representative without experience will not be able to represent the experiences of a group, and the policy process would be paternalistic and policy outcomes will be biased (Phillips, 1998: 111).

A woman perhaps can only understand women's problem but that woman also have had that same experience which other women are experiencing, if she is born and brought up in a rich family with better education she might not understand the problems of a women because she has not experience the problems, she don't know what it is to be poor, what women suffer in villages because of illiteracy, poverty, and male domination as well as the societies attitudes towards girls. A representative must be someone who had seen and experience the problems and can able to fight for her and for other women.

Most of the women from rural areas think that yes, participation does redress the gender equalities in societies but apart from that, education, resources, property etc, has to be in the hands of the women. In urban areas apart from participation women think that educational gaps have to be filled and that it should be equal between boys and girls. That there should be a freedom of choice and opportunities so that way there will be no gap between boys and girls, women and men and there will be equality. Mostly in rural areas women believe in voicing for equality and justice

because they don't think that participation alone can bring development for them so it is a high time to stand up and raise the voice but in urban places they believe in participating and coming out from the comfort zone i.e. home because most of the women stay in home. So they should also at least participate and be a part of it in order to bring changes and development.

When asked about the performance of the government few respondents in rural areas are not fully satisfied with the working of the government because they think that whatever policies and schemes have been initiated in the name of women and girls it is for their own political benefits. They feel that the government has not really tried to solve the problem of women in urban areas also they agree that government is not completely working for women They think that government still have not been able to sort out the problems of women and women are still excluded. But some of the political activists disagree with the view that government is not doing their work properly. They think that they are getting whatever they want, they are happy with the working of government.

It is absolutely true, as Iris Marion Young argues that our democracies contain structural inequalities - for example, inequalities of wealth, social and economic power, access to knowledge, status, and work expectations. These structural inequalities are unjust that they help to produce institutional conditions which support domination or hinder self-development. In many ways the social and economic inequality produces political inequality, That is why political participation and representation is necessary, as it does not exclude one another and democratic process is the best means for changing conditions of injustices and promote justice and deliberative democracy emphasizes on the principle of inclusion, political equality etc (Young, 2000, p. 121).

The respondents from both rural as well as urban areas agree that more representation of women is needed to fill the gaps between the men and women so that in coming days both men and women would work together, compete with one another and be equal in every way so that the women would not get neglected, suppressed and exploited. More representation of women is necessary as it is the path that gives women a direction.

Women can be empowered equally as men and compete and contest with them. Women have had a capability to do something and become someone but the problem is they lack functioning; they do not have an independent life, a complete freedom and choices, they always had to listen to their parents, then elder brother, sometimes society, then husbands and in-laws. So women are always stuck in between relationships and the so-called 'traditions' that always loosen her confidence and it is a major setback for every woman who is not able to do what they want to do. That is why capability theory supports that every human being, each person deserves the respect and dignity which government of all nations has to implement it.

Capability approach has focus on education and political participation, on health and bodily integrity, and on the importance of meaningful freedom to fashion one's life. How they have been affected by familial, social, and political, and also it concerns with whether she is in ability of good health, whether she has attained an adequate education, whether she is working in terms of mutual respect and equality with other workers, whether she has a freedom to participate, whether she achieved self-respect and a sense of her own worth as a person and a citizen (Sen, 1993: 15). Capability approach does not only focus on material resources, development but it enhances the wide range of human capabilities, opportunities that people have only when policy choices put them in a position to function effectively in larger areas that are important to a fully human life.

From the field visits and the extensive study that was carried out the following points may be listed. The study revealed that the overall socio-economic condition of women in Sikkim is undoubtedly improving. They are indeed trying very hard to be a part of political domain and to participate more actively. And yet they are at the same time against a host of traditional and cultural factors which hinder their active participation in politics. The specific nature of problems that women face may be listed as follows:

- A staggering seventy percent women are not educated especially in rural areas. So, they are not only uneducated but they are also politically uneducated because they lack access to information and are unaware of the policies and programs of states.



- Women continue to suffer mobility because women and girls often have to take permission from the family and from their husbands for moving outside or to attend the meetings and be a part of campaigning and rallies. They are not independent and free to make the choices as a man does.
- Women have the dual workload, their responsibilities towards the household work; they have to take care of children, elderly and sick and work in fields or government services. So, it is difficult for women to participate in political life. They have no choice but to spend much time trying to meet the basic needs of the families that is why they lack access to participation because of the work responsibilities which is put upon them forcefully.
- Women lack adequate financial resources, they have no access to properties and land rights that is why they face difficulty to contest elections and if they get party ticket by chance they lack resources for campaigning and meetings. The socio-economic conditions play an important role in the recruitment of women to legislatures. The socio-economic status has a direct influence on their participation in political arena and elected bodies.
- A woman has to take permission from husbands, in-laws, and from parents to contest for the election. She will have to think before taking decision. She does not enjoy complete freedom.
- Our society is a male dominated society and obviously men dominate the political arena. This results in women rejecting politics or rejecting the male dominated politics.
- And if a woman wants to participate and be a member of politics the electoral system is not favourable to women candidates. Women participation is better realized when there are quotas made for women.

- Women lack access to decision- making, their husbands takes the decision often. And this thing hinders development of women and it affects economic development of women and discourage in achieving the gender equality.
- Woman lack self- confidence and determination to participate and stand for election. They fear speaking in front of many people. They fear to argue with male candidates because the place is a male dominated place.
- Many women lack political training and information which hinder them from participating in political spheres.
- The traditions and culture of society stress that women's primary role is that of a mother and housewives and they want to put that women in that same position and in same roles. That is why especially in rural areas women today are indeed confined to the house the private domain and public domain is out of reach.

But though there are lots of problems that women face in their day to day lives. They have little opportunity and freedom. But it appears that this t will not last long. Gradually women, it is hoped, will succeed to overcome the prevailing obstacles which hinder women to actively participate in political arena. The factors that will help to solve the existing problems and obstacles of women and lead them to live a life that they have dreamt of, and can actively participate and utilize their ability include;

- Education is the only tool which will empower women and it will lead many women in society to join political parties or participate in political activities. Education is the only channel for encouraging women to speak out and be able to share their problems, issues, etc

- Eradicating poverty will have a positive impact on women's life. If a woman is financially strong that means she can do whatever she wants to do. She can participate in the meetings, can participate in politics and can also contest elections.
- Women should be paid equally as compared to men. Women's contribution should always be recognized, respected and valued and in this way women can be economically sound and strong enough to participate.
- Equitable distribution of household responsibilities between men and women can lead to the freedom for women, having extra time for relaxing, do whatever she wants to do and can have a time to participate.
- Providing special political training in villages, including Gender political awareness, leadership training, concerns of women, skills and communication are important for the process of training women for political careers.
- Women's participation should be increased at the grass- root level also. It will be an important step towards their confidence building and it supports, make easier for women in sharing of their experiences, their problems, issues that concern them.
- The economic empowerment and along with education and access to information will leave women with no constraints to participate in politics and political elections.
- Quotas for women is important and is a step for mainstreaming women in politics by giving them the representation thereby giving them the power and the right to discuss all the problems in order to ask for the solutions.
- The media can play an important role. It can act as an agent of political socialization for providing values of gender equality and gender justice.

- Lastly, except the commitment that are declared by the governments for the empowerment and inclusion of the women, civil society, including NGOs and women groups can play an important role in improving women's representation and bring change in their lives.

Above all these entire factors that provide support and enhance women's development and skills, development is more important because development in a society increases women's position in society. Because development generally weakens traditional norms and values, it will go on to improve the health of a person and reduce the death rates. It increases urbanization and it will lead to greater education and increase women's resources and skills leading to increase in the participation of women in political spheres.

It is therefore necessary to bring new laws and policies ensuring equality and freedom for women because the old laws are not enough to provide measures to solve the problems of the inequality. For freedom of women, educational, economic, and political independence of the women is of central importance. The economic empowerment automatically results in the political empowerment. So, it is quite clear that the socio- economic condition of women will improve only if they became a part of a governing process. Therefore, government of India and women organizations should search for a remedial measure to improve the political status of the women.

With these research questions a study was conducted in South Sikkim.

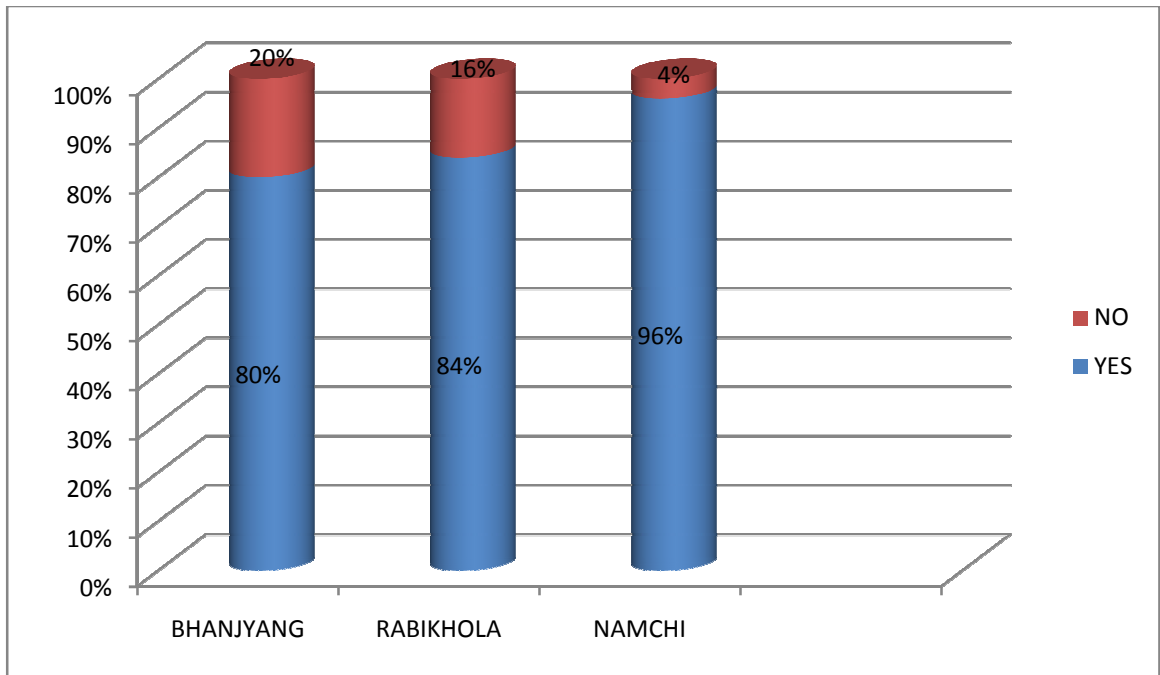


Figure.1. Do you agree that there is equality in education among both male and female?

Approximately eighty percent from rural areas and ninety percent from urban areas of the respondents here agree that there is equality in education among both male and female. There is a slight difference between rural and urban perspectives because in rural areas still girls has to look after her siblings, take the responsibilities of household work etc, and most of the girls in villages marry in early age. These are some underlying issues which hinder girls in rural areas to equally get the education as compared to boys. On the other hand in urban areas girls are given more freedom for education but girls are engaged in bad activities like bunking the class, taking alcohol and psychotropic substance and as a result they quit schools.

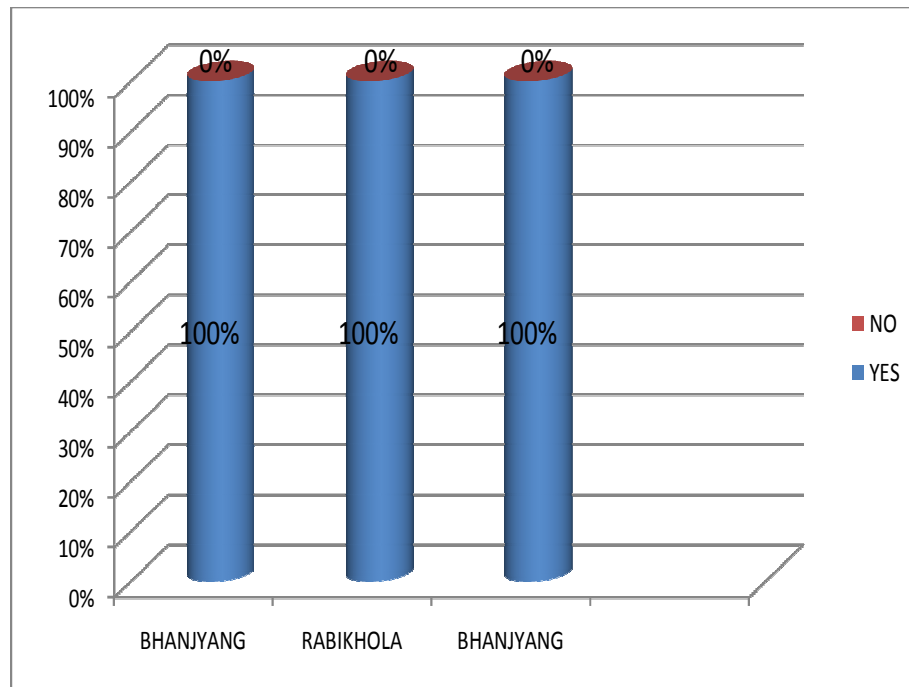


Figure.2. Do you agree more quality education should be given to girls so that they could compete with boys equally in every area?

Hundred percent respondents from each place agree that quality education should be given to girls because they think that girls to some extent are still behind boys and if given more quality education there would be no difference or gap between boys and girls.

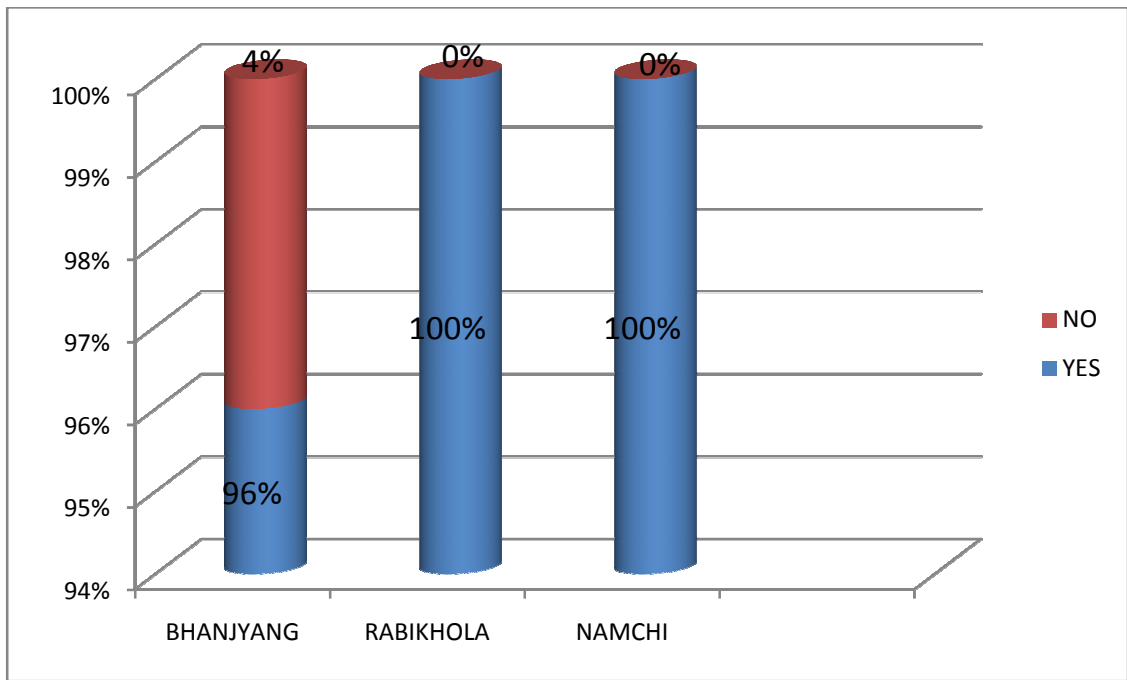


Figure.3. Do you believe education can bring changes and help to solve problems of women's?

Some of the respondents still feel that education alone cannot bring changes and it does not solve the problems of women because some of the women who being educated are still unemployed, some of them are still violated by their husband and in-laws, some of them are financially backward, some of them are not confident to do work.

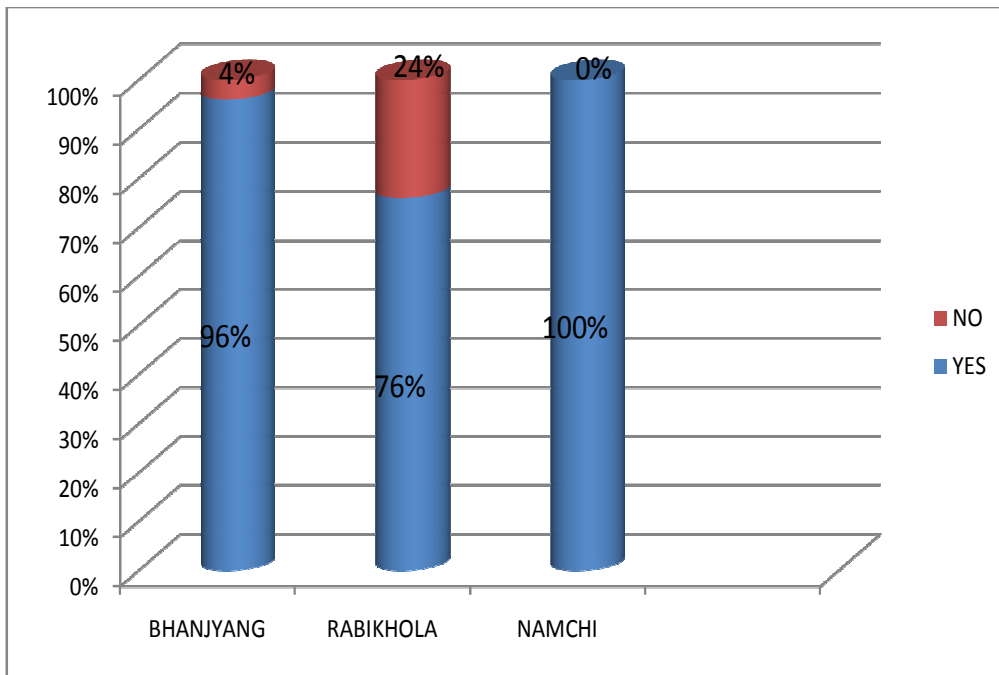


Figure.4. Do you think the status or the position of women in Sikkim is better?

Mostly in rural areas they do not agree that the status of women in Sikkim is better, they think that they are still being neglected they are unequal as compared to male counterparts because most of the male members do work in offices, they are at the higher position, they run the administration and parties but women are still in lower position, we can hardly see women are in higher position as compared to male members.



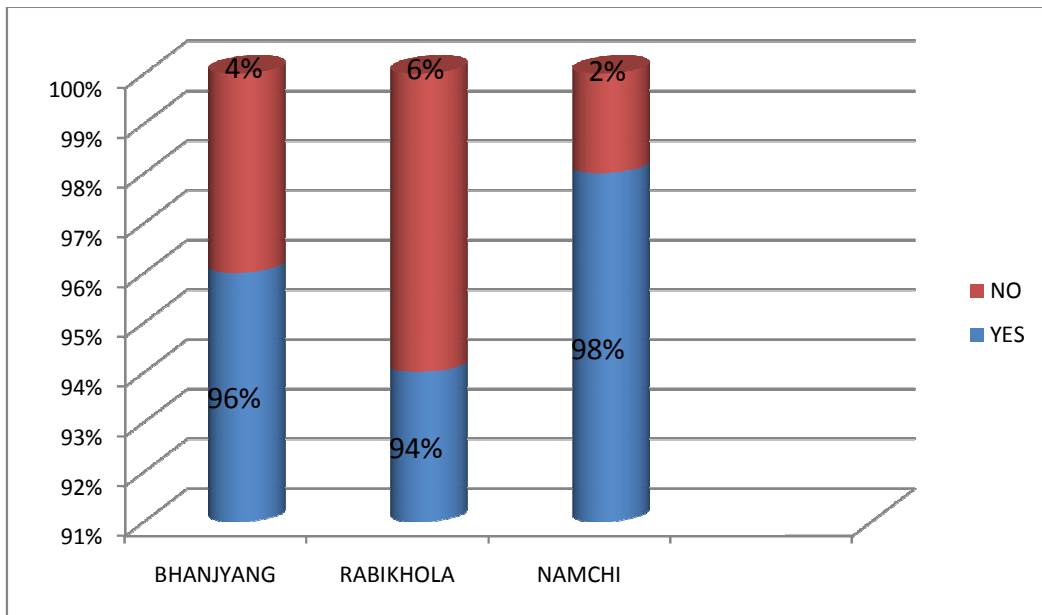


Figure.5. Do you think it is possible to change the present status of women in Sikkim?

In rural areas they think that it is not possible that the position of women will change because first of all they are uneducated and they are confined to house these are the major setback for them but in urban areas they believe in changes they are more confident and determined that gradually women today are competing with men in every areas be it in doing jobs, education, sports, parties, businesses etc.

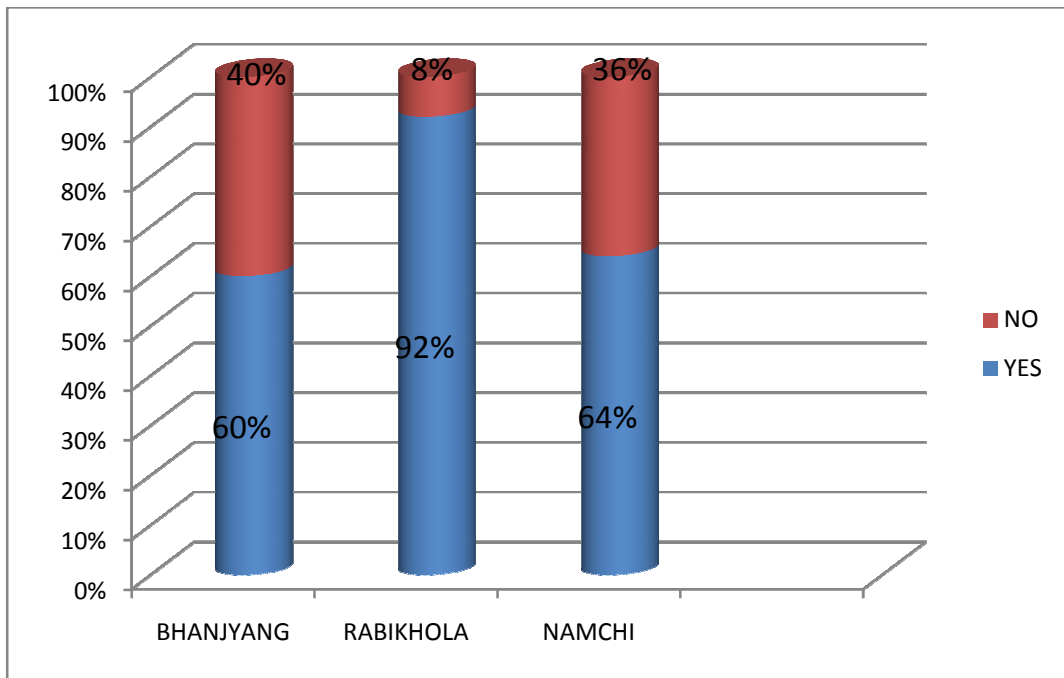


Figure.6. Do you think women today are lesser in number in political arena because they do not have a freedom or a choice to fully participate as men does?

Most of the respondents from rural areas believe that yes they do not have freedom though they have opportunities because most of their husbands does not allow his wife to move out from house, they are not allowed to participate in political areas, their husband do government services and women have to do household work and especially they themselves are worried about their responsibilities towards home and children that is the reason they could not participate and in urban areas the case is very different they do have freedom gradually women are participating, for them women today are lesser in political arena because women does not participate at all, they are more interested to be a teacher, doctor, engineer but not politicians.

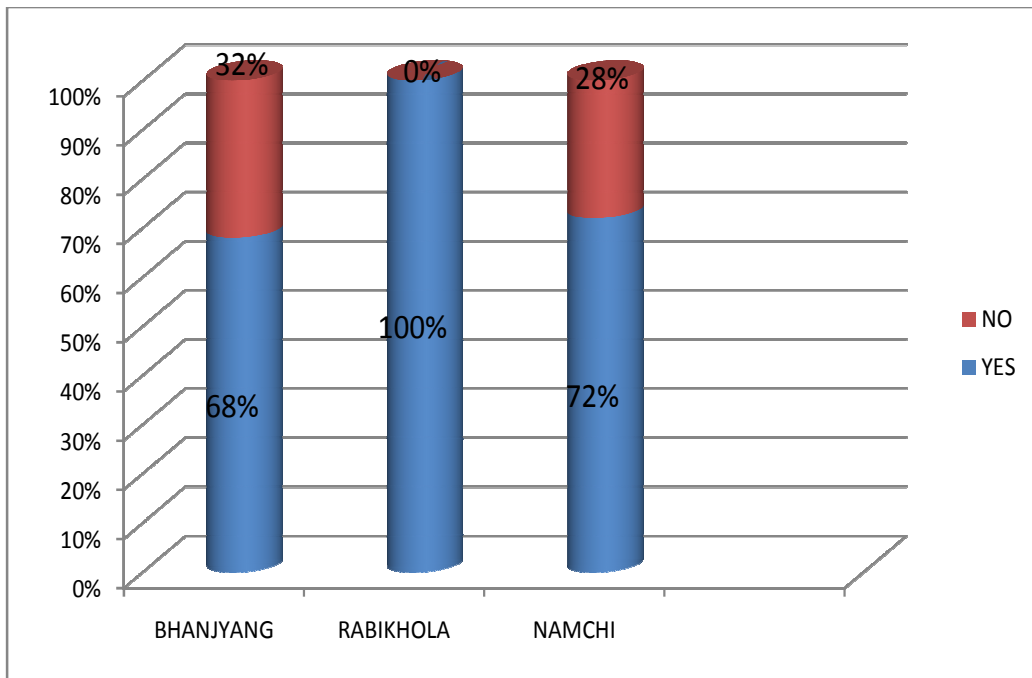


Figure.7. Do you agree that the limitation on women’s freedom to participate, to make decisions, and to participate in meetings, don’t you think because of this restriction women are not been able to utilize their ability?

In rural areas women are being hindered to participate, they do not have a complete freedom to do whatever they wish to do, they wanted to do so much thing but because of the constraints on their freedom and choice they are into some extend not been able to utilize their ability. On the other hand most of the women in urban areas think they are lucky enough to have a freedom and the choices, they can participate in meetings, make decisions by themselves, they are independent and strong enough to compete and utilize their ability.

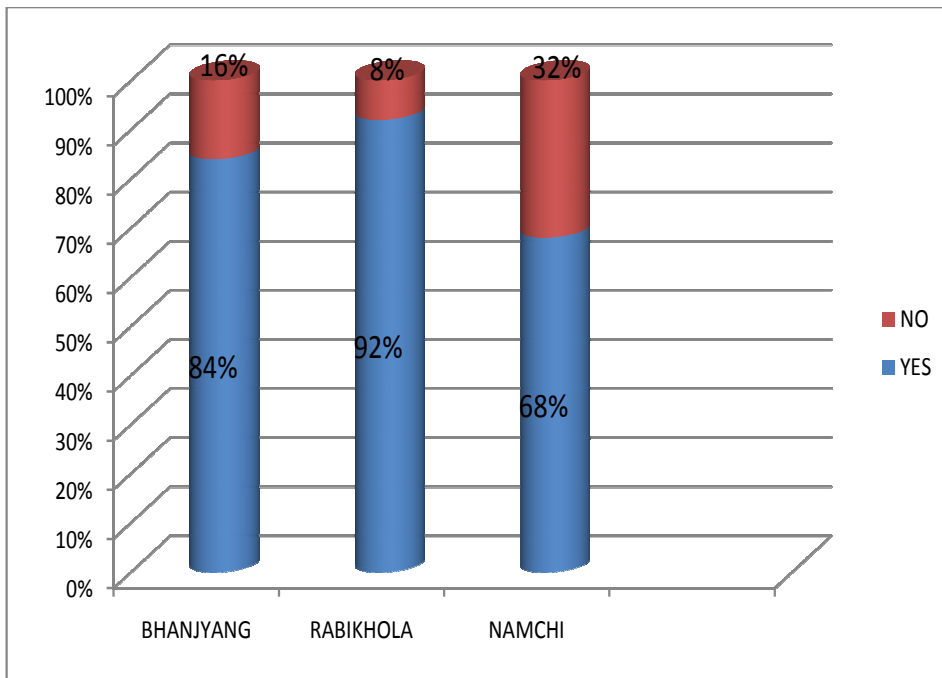


Figure.8. Do you agree because of the gender ideology or roles women are valued less than men?

Most of the women from rural areas agree that women are valued less than men because most of the decisions are taken by men and they do not consult with their wife in any matters, financial decisions are taken by men and the patriarchic system has dominated women totally but in urban areas the advantages the tools that women have is education and access to information which makes them capable in every spheres and they are valued and respected as compared to men.

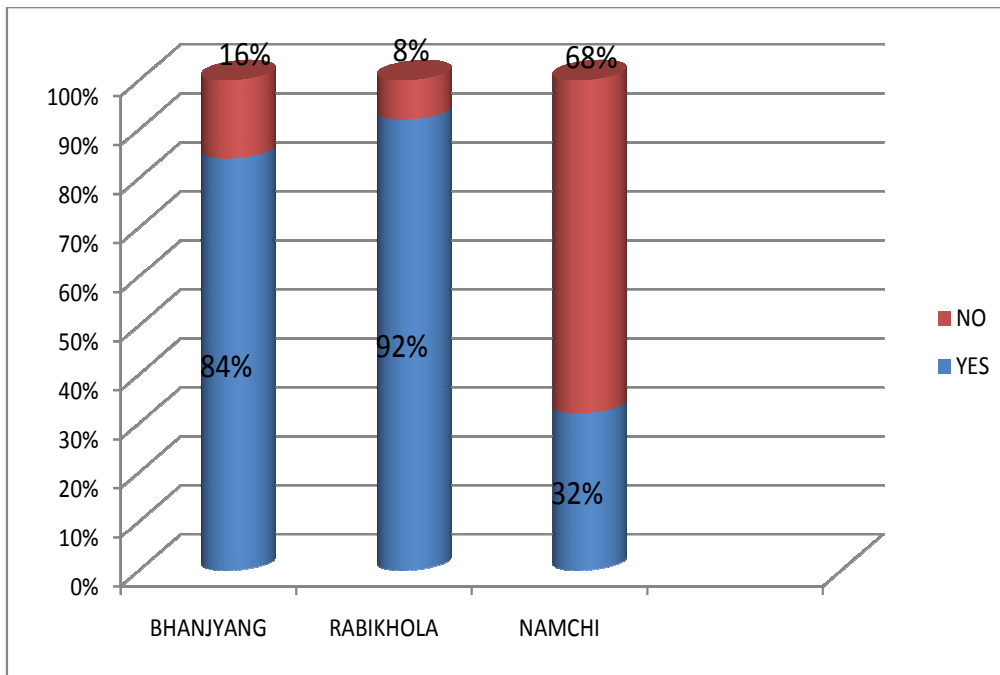


Figure.9. Do you agree that socio-cultural factors like caste and gender discrimination act as a barrier to women's political participation?

Most of the women from rural areas think that not exactly the caste but obviously gender discrimination act as a barrier to women's political participation but in urban areas they don't think they are so much discriminated that they cannot even participate.

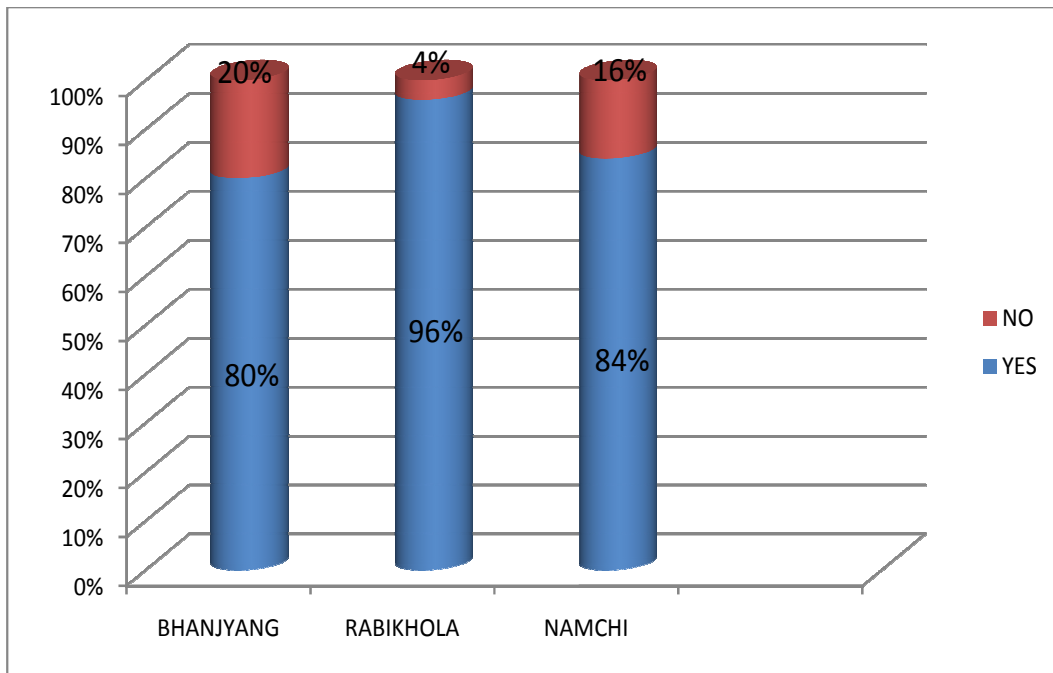


Figure.10. Do you believe political participation of women will be able to bring special focus and values for women as well as to politics?

Here both from the rural and from urban areas women agreed that if more women do participate more the problems and their issues will be addressed and thereby it will automatically give women a special values because without active participation their voice, their issues, their problems, their voice would not be heard, therefore they truly believe in participation.

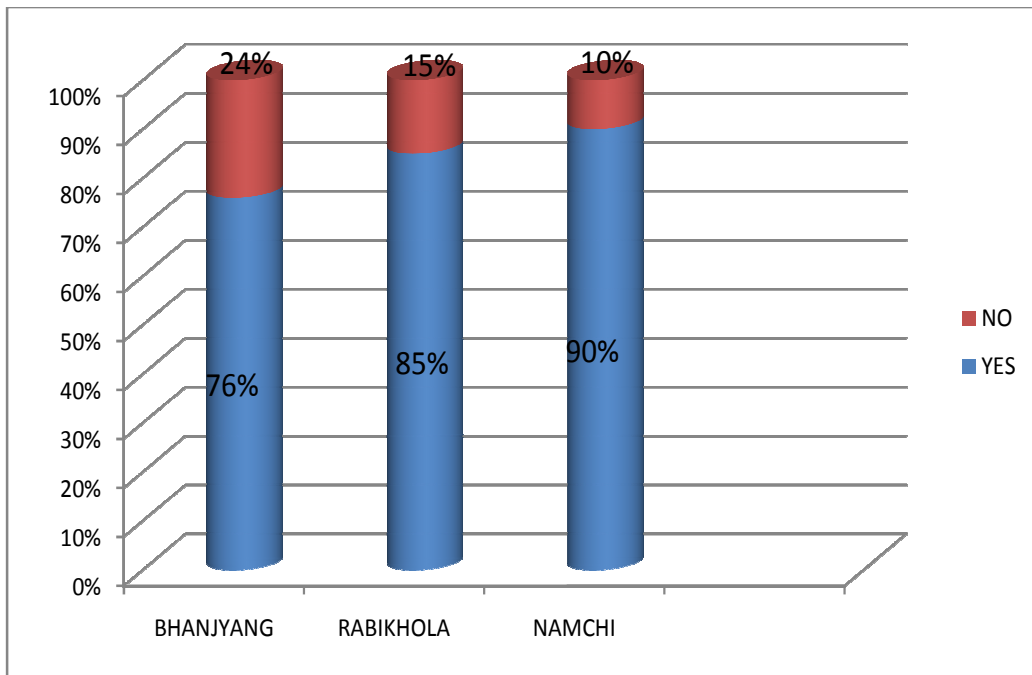


Figure.11. Do you think political participation can redress the gender inequalities in societies?

Most of the women from rural areas think that yes participation does redress the gender equalities in societies but apart from that education, resources, property etc, has to be in the hands of the women and in urban areas apart from participation they think that educational gaps has to be filled and that it should be equal between boys and girls, and there should be a freedom of choice and opportunities, in that way there will be balance between boys and girls and there will be equality.

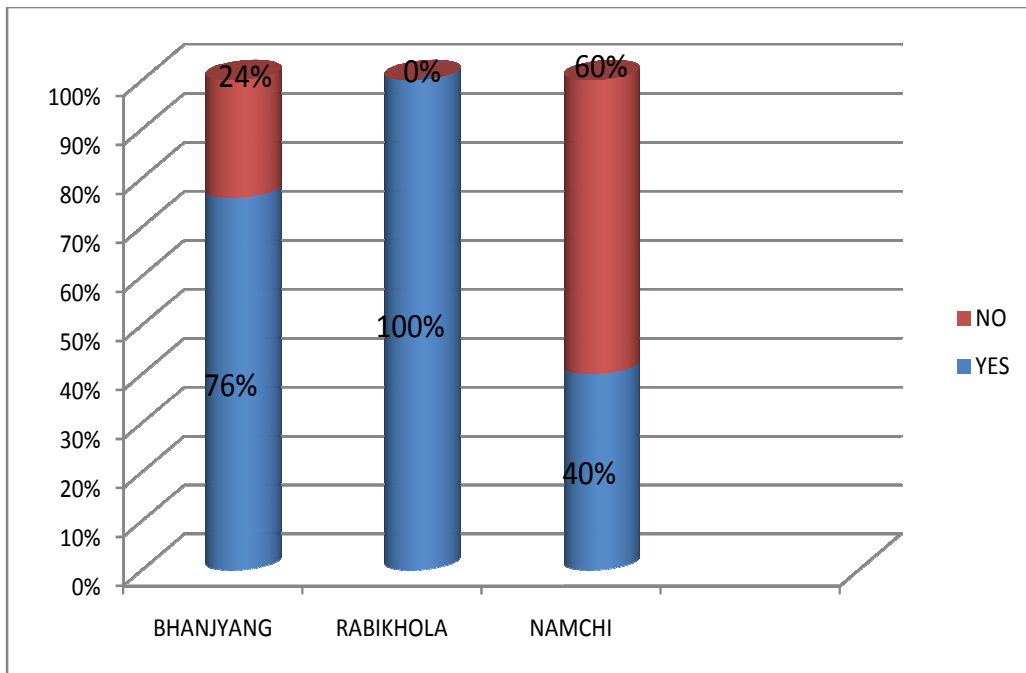


Figure.12. Do you think participation alone can bring development for women or they should stand up and raise the voice for equality and justice?

Mostly in rural areas women believe in voicing for equality and justice because they don't think that participation alone can bring development for them so it is a high time to stand up and raise the voice but in urban places they believe in participating and coming out from the comfort zone i.e. home because most of the women is comfortable staying in home so they should also at least participate and be a part of it in order to bring changes and development.



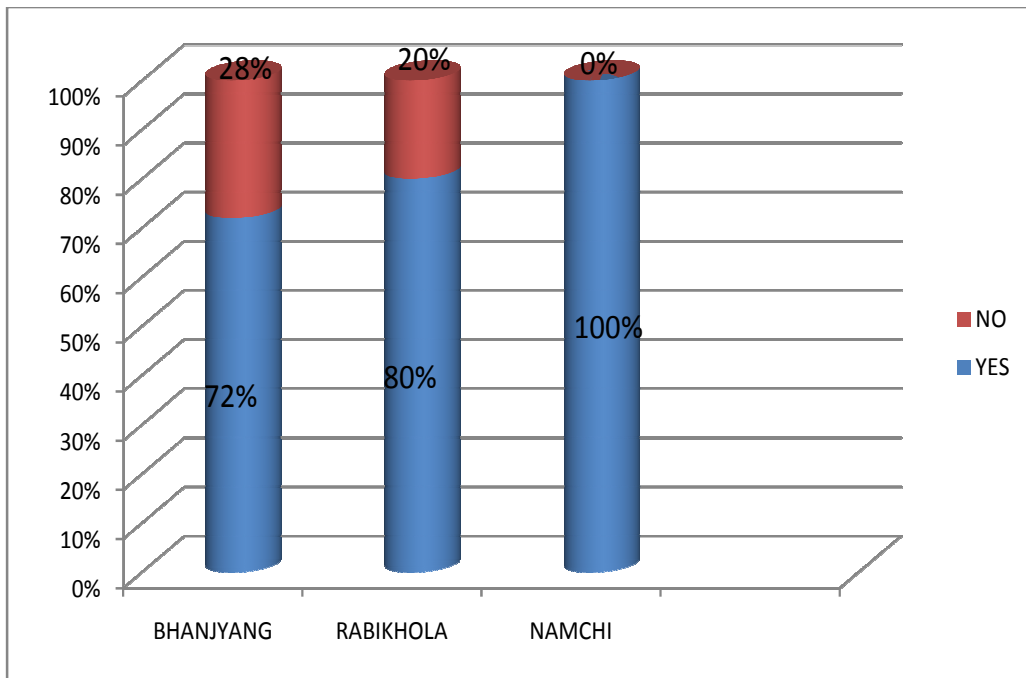


Figure.13.a. Do you think government is fully supporting women or working for the betterment of women?

In rural areas few of the women are not fully satisfied with the working of the government because they think that whatever policies and schemes has been initiated in the name of women's and girl's it is for their own political benefits, in fact they haven't try to really solve the problem of women's and in urban areas I've not found a single person who disagree that government is not doing their work properly they think that they are getting whatever they want, they are happy with the working of government.

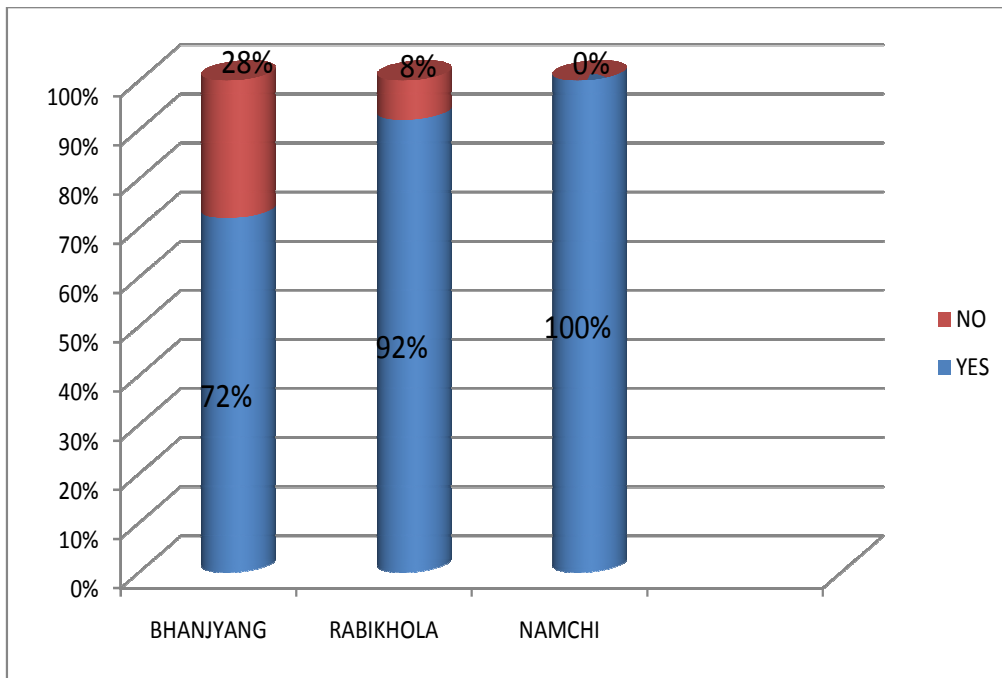


Figure.13.b. Do you agree that due to lack of representation of women that their issues and schemes have not been highlighted and addressed?

In rural areas few of the women thinks that if women is represented or they became minister they would do nothing for women because they don't care of others problems they would rather serve themselves but in urban areas they think that if women is represented then they would bring changes and do something for the betterment of the women.

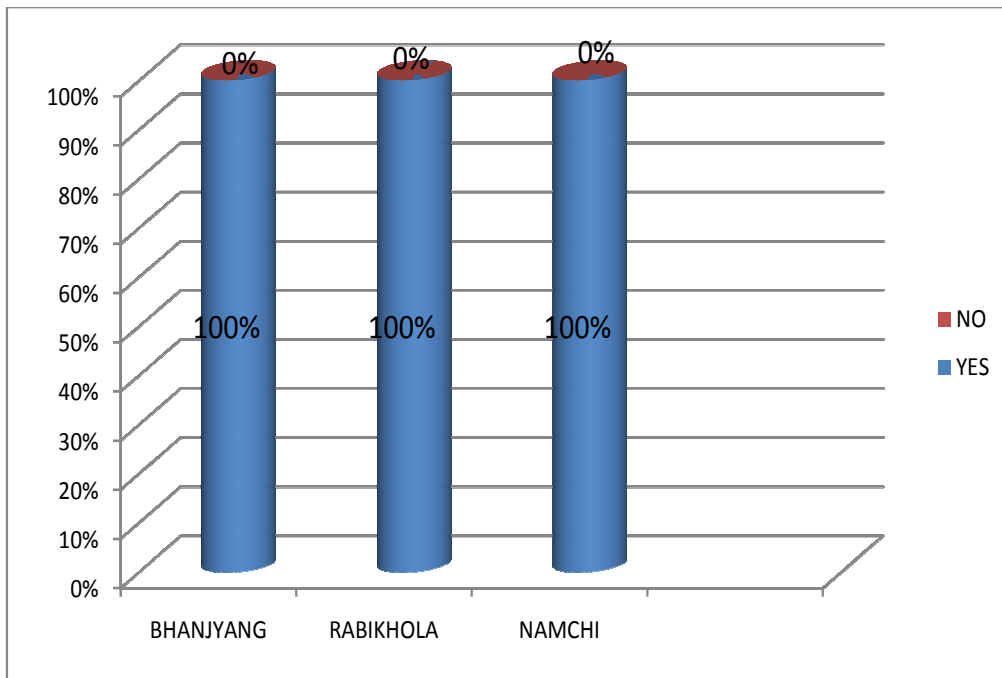


Figure.14. Do you agree women's unity and movement is necessary to raise the voice for more representation and equal status for women?

Here both the women from rural as well as from urban areas agree that more representation of women is needed to fill the gaps between the men and women so that in coming days both men and women would work together compete with one another and be equal in every way so that the women would not get neglected, suppressed and exploited.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Economic Freedom and Empowerment in Sikkim**

Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social environment in which one can make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. It strengthens innate ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power and experience (Sinha: 2012, p.151).

Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individual to think, take action and control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's lives. Empowerment includes control over resources (physical, human, intellectual and financial) and over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes). It is not merely a feel of greater extrinsic control, but also grows intrinsic capacity, greater self confidence and an internal transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers to accessing resources or changing traditional ideology. Women's empowerment is very essential for the development of society. Empowerment means individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercises choice and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society (Batliwala: 1994, p.11).

Empowerment increases a person's freedom to choose and to act. Women's empowerment refers to the ability of women to take control of their lives, pursue their own goals and live according to their own values. The phrase "women's economic empowerment" specifically refers to women's power over their own finances and financial well-being – to have a voice in the financial decisions that shape their lives and the lives of their families so that they can live the lives that they choose for themselves (Sinha: 2005.p. 22).

Financial decision-making power for women has larger societal implications. It is an essential part of strengthening women's voice and influence in society as well as her ability to advocate for herself and the needs of her family; "economic empowerment puts women in a stronger position, and gives them the power to participate together with men, in the shaping of society, and to make decisions that promote their families and their own well being". Women's economic empowerment has been described as the single most important factor to achieving gender equality. It

is, at its core, a human rights social justice issue. It is an essential component of work to improve the lives of women and girls (Taibi: 1994, p. 1469).

In addition to increasing gender equality, women's economic empowerment has numerous public policy benefits, such as strengthening international economies, enhancing human development and reducing the effects of violence (SIDCA: 2009) According to UN women, empowering women to fully participate in economic life is essential to "build strong economies; establish more stable, just societies; achieve internationally agreed goals for development, sustainability, and human rights; improve quality of life for everyone in the community; and impel business operations and goals". Investing in women is simultaneously good for economies and for equality.

There are numerous factors that hinder women's economic empowerment. They are; cultural factor like customs and traditions of patriarchal societies served as great deterrent to women empowerment. Cultural practices, which promote gender-based violence, exist and this act of violence is directed usually at women (Adegoroye: 2008, p. 98)

Socio-cultural factors such as poverty, social inequality and adequate social support as some of the variables that combine to determine the seriousness of the impact of violence against women. In some societies, inherited traditions prevent women from inheriting land both from their fathers or husbands thereby limiting their access to collateral and productive opportunities. Societies often innocently create and perpetuate stereotypes that lead to unfair discrimination and they are seen as dangerous beliefs and threats that can prevent individuals from performing at their ability level in a domain that is important to them (Bisika: 2008, p. 33)

Secondly, Illiteracy remains the center of women empowerment problems and the only effective way to meaningfully contribute to the emancipation of women is to widen the access of women and girls to quality education. Education is the bedrock for empowerment and the only panacea to women empowerment and gender equality considering the fact that without education, it will be difficult to become genuinely economically empowered and relevant in the society and the world. Education increases the chances of employment for women thereby empowering economically (Ebele: 2003).

Thirdly, Financial Factor; finance is the backbone of any economy and can limit the level of economic activities to an individual, society or country. Lack of finance and access to loans hinder against women's economic empowerment. Credit influences autonomy and affects most of the women empowerment indicators significantly. Lack of proper funding is one of the problems blocking the chances of women from attaining economic empowerment and that if provided, it will assist to empower the economic position of women and consequently reduce the level of poverty (Magaji and Aliyu: 2007)

One of the significant milestones of the twentieth century in the field of population and development is the recognition of women as equal partners in development efforts in all societies of the world. Two major conferences on Population and Development and the World Women Conference were instrumental in this regard. At these meetings, it was recognized that issues affecting the reproductive health of women are linked to wider issues of economic and educational status and gender equality. Gender equity and women empowerment were particularly emphasized as a mechanism for promoting and sustainable economic growth and development. By locating women within the context of global development, these conferences have encouraged women to openly discuss issues that affect their status and reproductive health (Odutolu and Olatidoye: 2003).

A major response to this development is a review of programmes and strategies aimed at improving reproductive health of women. This response has been in form of increased research and programmes focus on the reproductive health needs of women, especially girls. This interest has been fired by a growing awareness of the negative health, social and economic consequences of early sexual activity and childbearing including unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and decreased economic power among women. About 15 million young women aged 15- 19 years give birth every year, accounting for more than 10% of births worldwide. About two million adolescence women in developing countries have illegal unsafe abortions each year and at least 10% of abortions worldwide occur among women aged 15-19 years. In addition, rates of STD infection among adolescents are high and their risk of

contracting HIV is growing rapidly. In many countries, women aged 15-24 years account for 40% of all new HIV infections (ibid.).

The importance of empowering women during adolescence cannot be over emphasized. The social costs of young people's inability to exert control over their lives and fulfill their educational, economic and reproductive goals can be enormous. Women who become parents as teenagers experience more social and economic disadvantage throughout their lives than those who delay childbearing. They are less likely to have larger families. Ultimately, pregnancies can also hinder women's attainment of healthy living as evidenced by unsafe and sometimes serious abortions in many countries where abortion is restricted.

As gender identities are often crystallized during adolescence. Empowering women in the early stages of their lives can lay the foundation for achieving a positive balance of power in marriage and for women's enhanced social and economic position later in life (Cheryl:198, pp.77- 78).

Access to the symbols of male power: money, mobility, and public assertiveness, does not give women the same power as men in either economic or sexual domains. Market work requires women to challenge gender role boundaries on a number of levels, not only access to and control over money, but also mobility, boldness, bodily action, language and other aspects of behaviour is usually reserved for men in this society (Barbara and Stella: 2005, p. 149).

In India, as in other south Asian Countries, earning cash income itself has helped women to initiate the process of changing gender relations within the household, by enlisting the support of household members to share daily chores for instance, as their economic contribution is quite visible to the family and society. Apart from income and to some extent assets, women have gained greater confidence, security, independence, security, independence, mobility, and respect in the household. Women's position in the community has also changed. Bangladesh Rural Committee (BRAC) through its low- interest credit, expansion of employment opportunities for women in agriculture, livestock, fisheries, textiles etc, ensuring women's access to village and government resources, and by creating the potential for women's collective action, has weakened the ties of support that bind poor women to rich households under exploitative conditions (Rao: 1998, p. 173).

Alongside this, representative from local women's groups have also been able to develop sufficient managerial and leadership skills to be able to participate in decision-making processes at the village or community level such as in the panchayats. Through, a combination of skill training, credit, income generation, and organizations-building, has attempted to enable women to make conscious and responsible choices for their own development. This ranged from decision-making within their household, to raising their collective voices against practices such as dowry, wife beating, unequal wages etc. while at one level, men and community organizations have recognized women's role in and contribution to development process, and have supported them in their work; there has also been resistance and backlash at another (ibid: pp. 173- 174).

The Aahir community of Banashkantha district in Gujarat imposed restrictions on women's mobility and education. But the women are no longer prepared to accept it quietly. They have managed to get a partial relaxation on the issue of mobility. They have realized the importance of literacy for their economic independence and self-reliance, hence are stubborn to defy the ban on education if necessary, in order to make their daughter's study (Bhatt: 1989).

Many organizations of women have now taken up advocacy for policy change as a major agenda. Trade unions of construction workers in the country have been campaigning for a change in laws in their favour. Similarly, women have raised the demand or changes in pricing policies, forest policies, credit policies, etc. In India there has been a struggle of women with the forest departments in several parts of the country, to give them access to raw materials such as bamboo, bidi leaves, etc, essential for their survival, at reasonable rates and on a regular basis (ibid.).

(Bina Agarwal, 1994, A Home of her own) Apart from welfare benefits, given the feminisation of agriculture, secure land rights for women are necessary for increasing farm output. About 40% of agricultural workers in India are women but their productivity is seriously constrained by their lack of access to land, credit, inputs, technical information, and so on. Without land titles, women are not even seen as farmers and government schemes rarely benefit from the many government



schemes as well as essential productive inputs such as improved seeds and fertilizers, crop related information, and markets?

The field survey was conducted in the South Sikkim but was divided into three places. The urban and rural places were taken to study. The urban areas cover i.e. Namchi and rural areas cover i.e. Rabikhola and Bhanjyang.

In the rural areas women think that in South Sikkim they are not still equally empowered if it is compared with men because women are not in the position where men are today, like men run the big shops and businesses, but women still lack in those things but in the urban areas women think that they can compete with men because they don't think they are weak and they are educated and financially sound. In rural areas, women think they are not economically empowered; it is because women lack of education, lack mobility and their work is invisible. Lack of mobility implies that women should work only within their homes, and the invisibility of their work means their work is devalued as subsistence or household work rather than as productive work. Thousands of women, skilled in embroidery, stitching, crafting, etc, are contributing to household income, but they are also categorized as housewives and they are devalued and not respected at all.

Amartya Sen has argued that the “perceived contribution” of women, as perceived by both men and women, is often lower than their ‘actual contribution’, on account of social norms, the form and nature of work and the perception of legitimacy. He therefore stresses the importance of visible employment for changing perception about women’s relative contributions, and hence their share of entitlements (Sen, 1987, p. 198).

In both the rural and urban places every women believe that education, trainings, resources, and skills play a vital role in empowering women economically because without these elements they cannot move forward and compete in the market place.

In rural areas they think that all this factors are the underlying issues which hinder women to fully participate in economic life though they want to establish their

own businesses but because of the financial problems, lack of support from the family and lack of education women from rural areas cannot have the economic freedom and that is hindering women's full participation in economic spheres.

In urban areas some of the women said that they lack support from the family, and some of them gets full support and they believe women should do their work by themselves instead of depending upon others.

It is to some extent correct but the thing is everyone is not lucky to get good education, freedom, opportunity, family support, and financial support. The lack of education or marketable skills is the major barrier to women's ownership of important resources. Women's lack of educational training essentially limits their employment opportunities and their access to high-wage jobs. This lack of ability to create financial resources in turn create a major barrier's to women's abilities to acquire productive resources, including land, which imposes constraint in improving the economic status of women.

Economic independence is necessary, the opportunity has to be given so that women could equally take part and if a woman is left behind in economic spheres then there will be no equality. Functioning is necessary more than the resources and wealth.

Mostly in rural areas women believe in having financial power in their hands means they can take the decisions and they become more powerful and in urban areas also most of the women agreed in this point but few of them thinks that financial decision-making power does not makes women economically empowered because the real owner of that money is the husband, he is the owner of the house so, he will never let his wife to take hold on that money and decisions taken by her. We rarely see women taking decision so unfortunately taking financial decision-making in the hands of women is impossible but if she is doing work, earning money by herself then she can take any decisions after all she is economically empowered and independent and can take any type of decisions.

Women argued that government should initiate more policies and programmes that provide loans because they said that government should make concrete laws that woman do not have to depend for husband's documents because women's documents does not have value and does not work until and unless their husbands documents is displayed while taking loans. In rural areas as well as in urban areas hundred per cent women believe that due to lack of loan facilities and credits they are to some extent have been hindered to establish their own shops and businesses, they get credits but they had to show the husband's documents otherwise they will not get credits so this is a major drawback for women.

It is completely unfair and unjust to women's because they being a citizen of Sikkim had to depend upon other's documents, it is like feeling of being like an outsider. Government here can do a lot for women by initiating policies or the credit arrangements or the process of spreading knowledge regarding credit facilities that are in favour of women which will empower women and it will provide a freedom a functioning for women because women are being hindered by this policy of government to equally participate in economic sphere and work equally with male counterparts. And especially in rural areas women need additional encouragement in order to recognize their capabilities and to expand their expectations.

In rural areas women believe that because of the household work they could not work or go outside and earn money, this things hinders them to be economically unsound and in urban areas few of them think that though they work outside though they have jobs they have to invest more money than their husbands because their husbands invest money on unnecessary things for instances, in gambling, taking alcohols, and they became irresponsible and dependent on their wife and also become violent towards them. In this way women are emotionally and economically weak though they have jobs.

The problem here is with women only because women could desire home and family life, but should not have to hold on to complete responsibility of these areas. The problem also arouse when women is earning something or earning more than her husband's and looking after the needs of the family, their husbands is first of all

becomes very dependent upon his wife and becomes irresponsible and secondly, he becomes more violent towards his wife because of his ego problem that he cannot bear that his wife is earning more than him so there is a chances of more violation and sometimes divorce. As Goode argued that, women's economic independence is expected to increase the likelihood of separation of divorce by reducing the gains from marriage and creating a practical alternative for unsatisfied spouses (Goode, 1971, p.16) and this thing effect and takes away her confidence and the level of participation and to communicate with others in society. In this type of situation women are deprived of functioning.

Both from the rural and from urban areas women think that yes they should work, do whatever they are capable to do and earn money so they could stand on their own feet and become independent and empowered, they just wanted to come out from their house and experience the outside world.

Mostly in rural areas women feel inferior because their income is less and some of them even don't have jobs, sometimes when their husbands is in a bad mood they pour out all the feelings, that they are the owner the head of the family and their wife cannot do or say anything because they do not have earnings and they have to tolerate everything which is not acceptable for them. But in urban areas most of them have jobs, small earnings, shops, that is why they do not have to be dependent and feel inferior with their husbands.

Women in rural areas are vulnerable they are illiterate that is why they had to tolerate the humiliation and domination of their husbands. If they were literate, they can do jobs that got paid but because they are illiterate they had no options and had to bear everything that is against her will. The problem is the household work that is done by women does not get paid and not even they get respect from their family and husbands, because their work is not seen as a work and gets totally neglected. This is the reason that women are always weak and not confident to do something. It is here important to bring the private domain into the purview of public domain and it will help women to enhance their capabilities and skills.

Women from rural and from urban areas have a strong faith that if land rights are in their hands they had a better opportunity to work in the field and increase the productivity of the agricultural sector and from that sector enjoy sustainable growth, and also the ownership of land means having a power of independence and also it provides security for women. Unfortunately, ownership of land is still largely in the hands of men and women also lack credit facilities, support from the family etc. women are helpless and dominated by men because they lack the land ownership, because if they are violated by her own husbands she has a no place to go she cannot go to parent's house because her parents might blame her for not being responsible towards husband and this in turn leaves women with no options rather to stay in her husband's house and bear the tortures, violence all the time.

That is why Bina Agarwal has argued that land rights is very much important for women because vast numbers are still living in villages and land is the primary factor of production and main source of income. Owning land in women's hand means they are less vulnerable from the domestic violence, spousal violence, husband's alcohol abuse. Being employed did not protect women against violence. In fact, where the woman is employed and the man is not, or she is better employed than him, she faced a higher risk of physical violence. There is no such bad effect with property: a propertied woman married to a property less man faced less and not more violence (Agarwal, 1994).

In the South Sikkim hundred per cent women think that because of the patriarchal system, the dominating nature of men their principles and rules which women have to follow affect in their economic spheres because their husbands does not allow them to do whatever their wife wishes to do, women has to wait for their husbands decision and permission. That is why women are always backward and dominated.

It is so true that women had to let go off the household works then only they can be a better mother and better person and it will ultimately change her positions in her own family and in society. And the problem is that women today are not economically empowered because of the following reasons:

- There is always gap in the payments though their work is equal and the money are paid is unequal between male and female. Women are not paid equally because women faces difficulty in balancing work and family life because family care and responsibilities are still not equally shared, women take more parental leave than men. These are the reasons that women often are forced to leave their labour market. The undervaluation of female skills and work, are some of the causes of the constant gender pay gap.
- Women lack access to decision making. Gender balance should be there in decision making positions because women are underrepresented in decision making positions especially in politics and business. A man thinks women as weak and unvalued. But if women are given a chance to take decision, if they are given a equal status and think men and women as equal, then women will ultimately show what she can do.
- Women always face violence and discrimination both in house and in their workplace and it not only effect women's health and well- being, but it can hamper women's access to employment, thereby it affects women's economic independence and economy as well.
- Women continue to suffer mobility. They are deprived to move freely like men, they are not allowed to work outside in night. It also affects women's independence and opportunity to work and affects their income.
- Women also have no access to properties and resources and a man holds all the land rights and household resources and it creates an imbalances. That is why men always remain in higher position and women in lower positions.
- Mostly in rural areas girls leave the school and get married into early age. Early marriage remains a major issue and an important factor that restricted young women's position in both education and economic activities.

- Women are not confident to use their capabilities equally with men. Despite the political commitments and policies in improving women access to public services, and the increasing legislative reforms and laws that are aimed at women's empowerment and gender equality.

And to overcome this problem which women faces can be solved through this measures;

- Promotion of education and employment is necessary. Without education and employment women cannot be empowered and will always lack access to resources, capital, power, and dignity. On the level of illiteracy adult education programs should be promoted.
- Recognition of women as more efficient would be an advantage for women because it is always said that if money is in the hands of women she is better in the investing of and saving the money more than men, she is better in the distribution of goods and services within the household and in the society this has led to them being targeted with resources aimed at alleviating poverty.
- Economic growth or the income women gets from it does not substantially change the position and situation of women. Gender equality will help in economic growth. Gender equality ensures independence for women, increases women's independence in economic and political, provides full citizenship and freedom from all forms of violence etc.
- Rights for women should be increased and it has to be completely in favour of women, that rights will empower women and they can enjoy the independence, choices and opportunities into the fullest.

As Bradshaw has argued that the rights increase the recognition that women's demand are legitimate claims, and the most notable success for the women's movement has perhaps been the establishment of sexual and reproductive rights. Within this has been recognition of women's right to live free from violence, and a broadening of understanding of violence against women from 'domestic' to 'gender based' (Bradshaw, 2013).

- Gender mainstreaming is important because mainstreaming involves ensuring that a gender perspective is central to all activities, including planning, implementation, and monitoring of all programmes, projects and legislations.
- Limiting the discrimination and violence against women is a necessary step to empower women and a step towards economic independence. If violence and discrimination is practiced, she is first of all excluded from the market sphere, then a woman can never take her stand, she is not able to face the people, she has no courage to speak up for herself and she lack access to, and control over resources, and the empowerment and economic independence which we are talking all the time is a far cry.
- Women should be given the independence of mobility as it will enhance her capability to understand the outside environment, the ability to cope up with the competition and problems and in this way she can be able to stand on her own feet and feel confident.
- Women must have more equitable access to assets such as land rights and the properties of the household, which has to be equally distributed between women and men.
- Equal access to services- land, technology, credit, and banking and financial services which will strengthen the women's rights and it will increase their agricultural productivity and result in economic growth of women.
- Employment opportunities must be improved while increasing the recognition of women's vast unpaid work and creating the employment opportunities not only for the educated women but as well as for



uneducated women regarding their capabilities and skills they have and are able to do it.

- Women must be given the right to access to family planning because sometimes women face the economic crisis and independence because of the pregnancy. So, she should be given a complete right for family planning.
- Training is necessary for women because it will lead to better paid work and does not have to concentrate on low- wage and low- skill work or emphasize on separation between women and men.
- Society must change their attitudes and values that put women and girls all the responsibilities in their shoulders for taking the responsibilities of the home and care of children, take care of the sick and elderly people. Men can share the responsibilities too.
- Political commitments in improving women's access to public services and the increase in the number of legislative reforms and laws should be aimed at gender equity
- Promotion of female entrepreneurship and self- employment is necessary for the economic well- being and economic independence for women.
- More investment in the health and education of women and girls which is good both for productivity gains and it will ultimately limit the weaker population growth and thus, result in the prosperity of a people, society, and a nation.
- Women's empowerment programs must be strengthening in every society, state, nation to promote women's economic independence and empowerment.

And the whole field survey study reveals that though women in urban as well in rural areas are facing lot of problems, ups and downs but ironically, women have found ways of surviving in insecure or in uncertain circumstances. They can cope with the problems and can also build a decent living.

They have built their own associations and taking it in next level. So, economic independence is necessary for enabling women and men to exercise control over their lives and to make genuine choices whatever the situation is.

If there is to be an improvement in the economic status of women, then there must be a reduction, restriction of the cultural, economic, physical and political obstacles which currently limit the economic contribution of women. The prevalence of such obstacles, including shortages of land and skilled labor, insufficient access to land rights and titles, and socio cultural factors, have been reflected in the hindrance of women to participate in economic domain and has weakened women significantly.

And economic empowerment is necessary for women's as it provides access to resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, and properties, skills, market information etc.

Women's economic participation and empowerment are very important in strengthening women's rights and it allow women to have control over their lives and can influence society which is just and equitable.

With this Research question the study was conducted

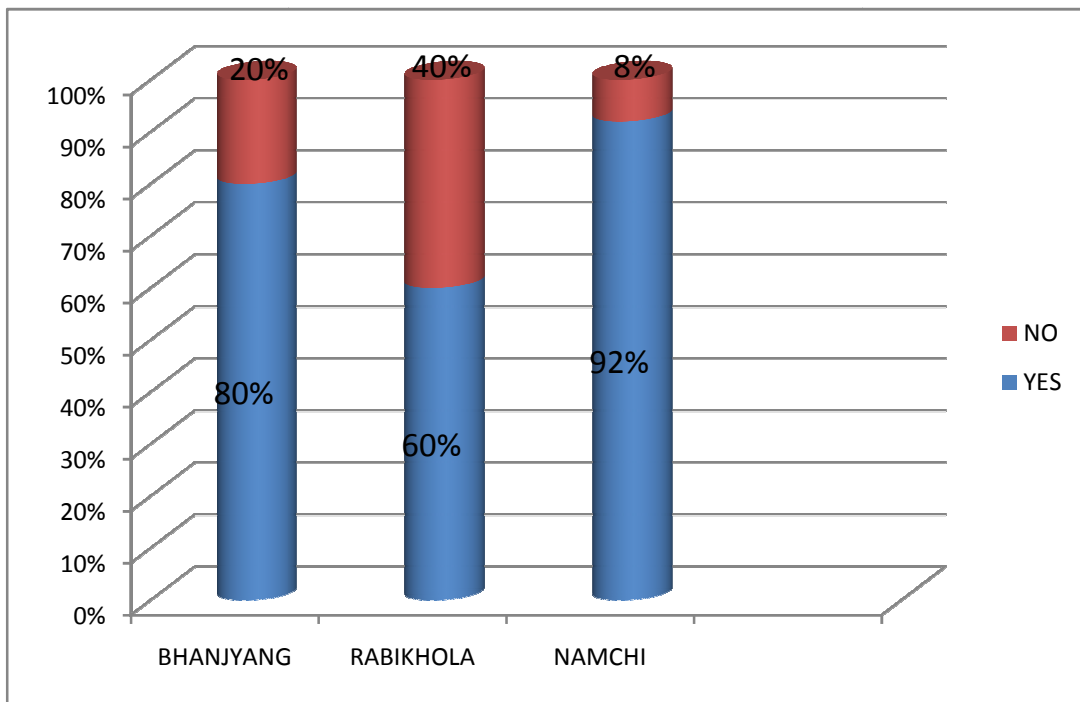


Figure.1. Do you agree women in Sikkim are equally empowered as compared to their male counterparts?

In the rural areas they think that women in Sikkim are not still equally empowered if it is compared with men because women are not in the position where men are today, like men run the big shops and businesses, they take the contracts but women still lack in those things but in the urban areas women think that they can compete men because they don't think they are weak.

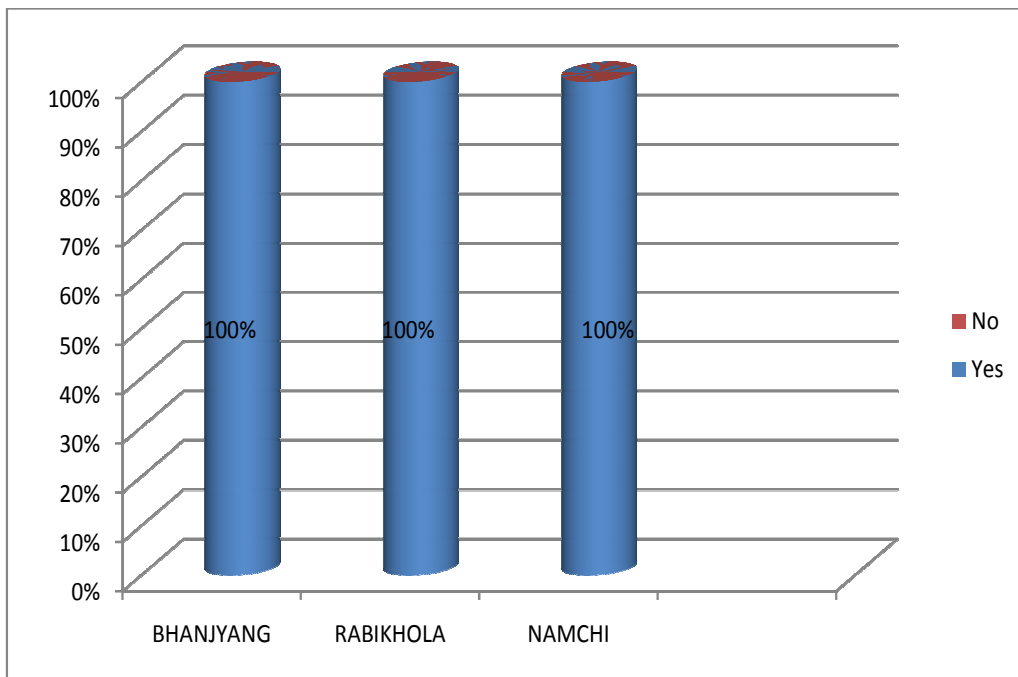


Figure.2. Do you believe for women to be economically empowered, they need education, trainings, resources, and skills?

In both the rural and urban places every women believe that education, trainings, resources, and skills plays a vital role in empowering women economically, because without these elements they cannot move forward and compete in the market place.

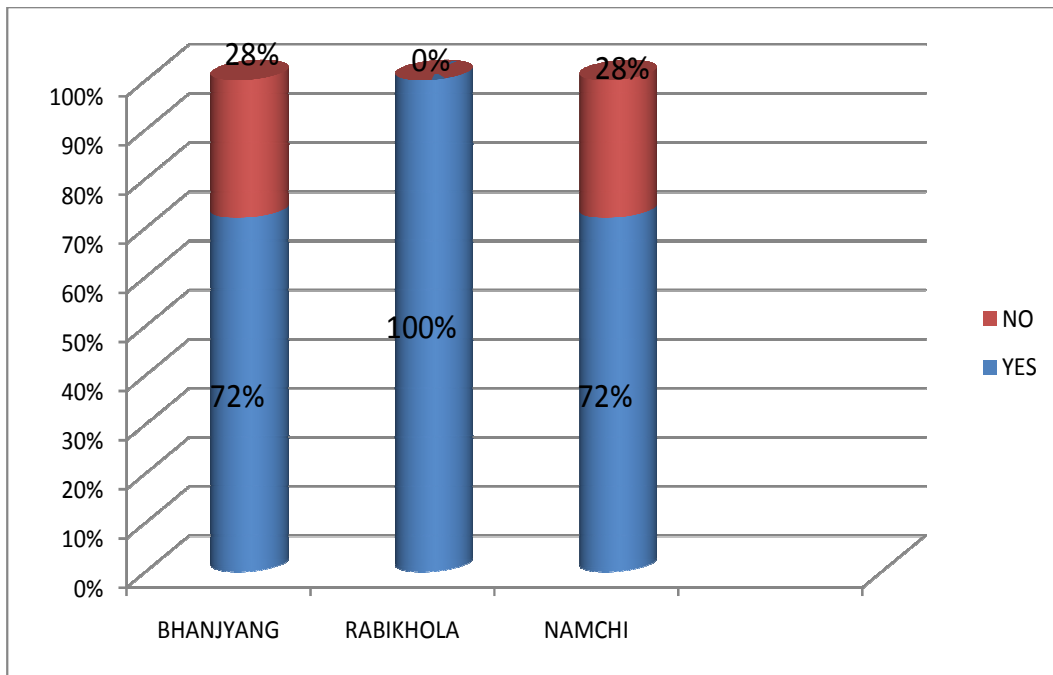


Figure.3. Do you think socio- cultural factors like poverty, social- inequality, and inadequate support from the family often hinders women to fully participate in economic life?

In rural areas they think that all this factors are the underlying issues which hinder women to fully participate in economic life though they wanted to establish their own businesses because of the financial problems and lack of support from the family. In urban areas few of them disagree that there is a lack of support from the family they think that women should do their work by themselves instead of depending upon others.

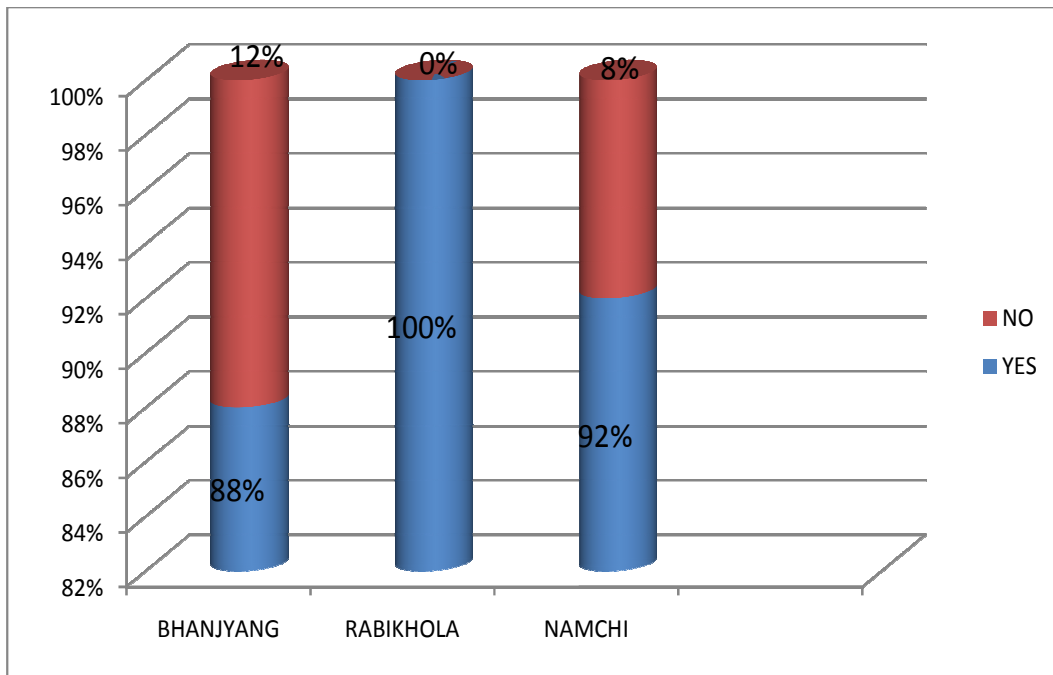


Figure.4. Do you think in order to restore gender equality, economic independence is necessary?

Both from the rural and from urban areas they agree that economic independence is necessary, the opportunity has to be given so that women could equally take part and if women is left behind in economic spheres then there will be no equality.

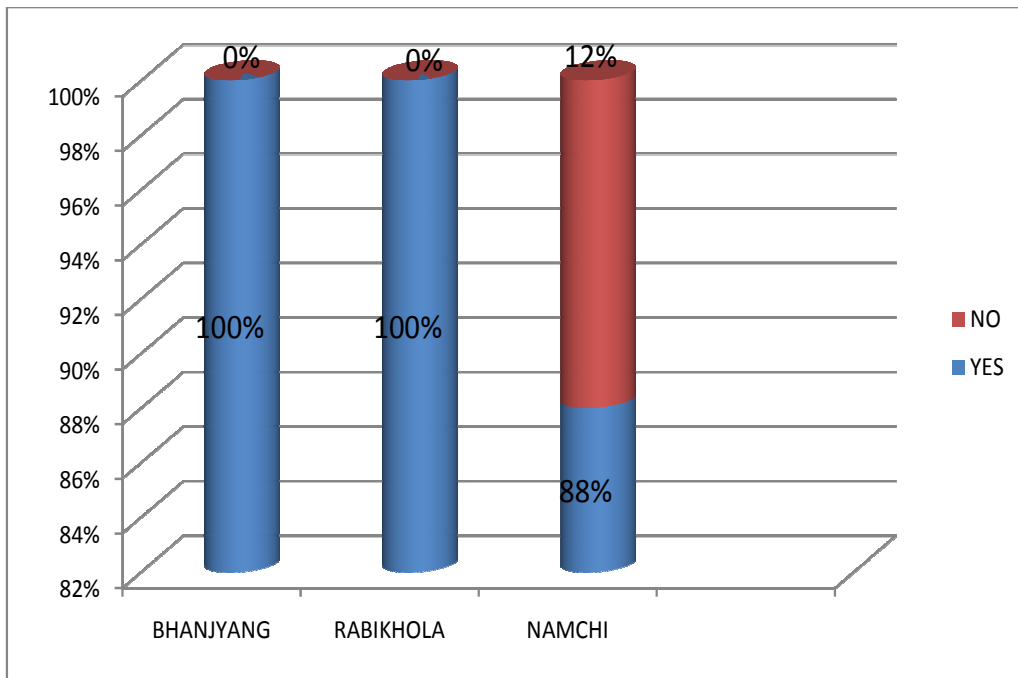


Figure.5. Do you agree that financial decision-making power makes women more economically empowered?

Mostly in rural areas they believe in taking the financial power in their hands if it happens then they can take the decisions and they become more powerful and in urban areas also most of the women agreed in this point but few of them think that financial decision-making does not make women economically empowered.

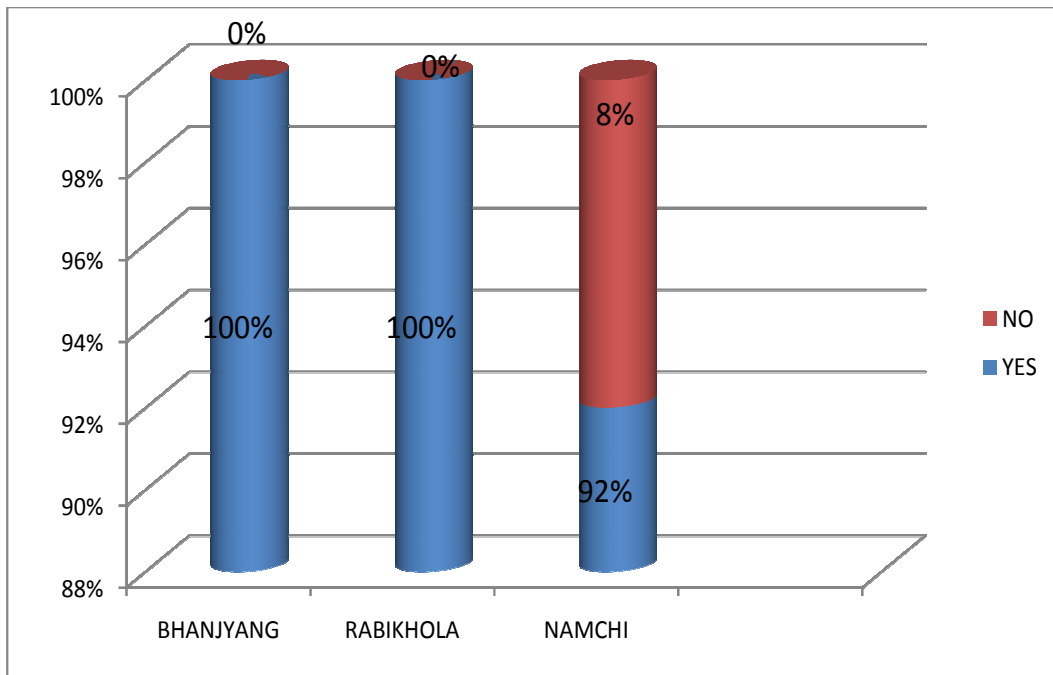


Figure.6.b. If yes, then do you agree that government should initiate more policies and programmes that provide loans, credit facilities to women?

In rural areas they totally agree that government should initiate more policies and programmes that provide loans but in urban areas few of them are saying government is completely helping women, in the above question they said that government should make a concrete laws that women does not have to wait for husband's documents but here they are saying that government on their part is working more for women.



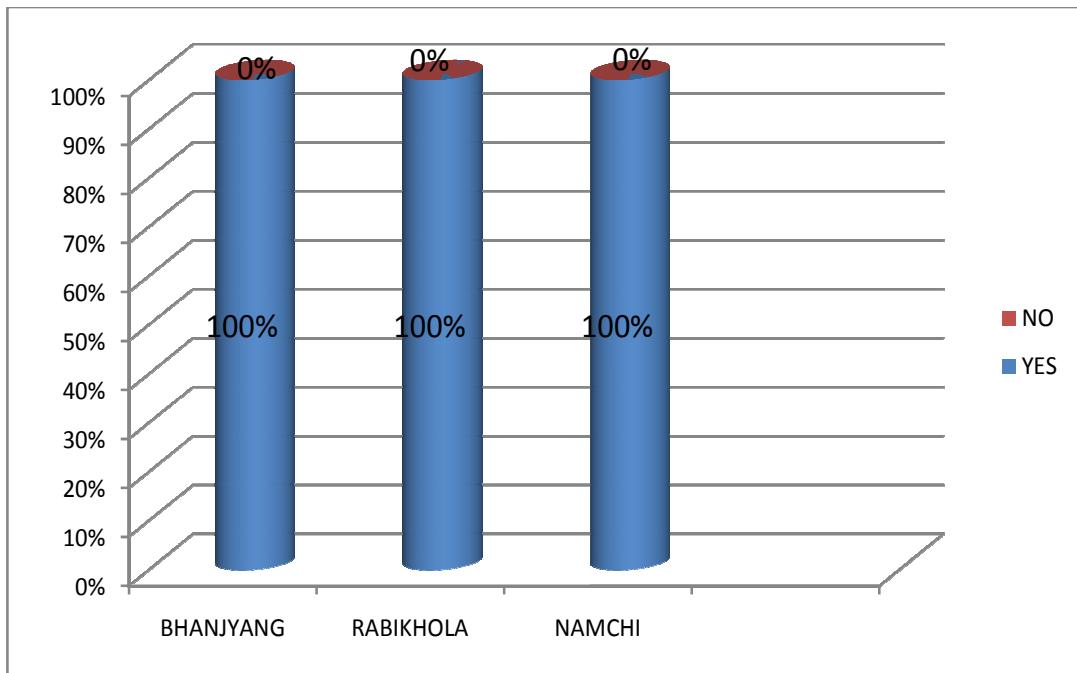


Figure.6.a. Do you agree that in Sikkim most of the women lack access to loans facilities and credits, and as a result hinders women to equally compete with male members in economic sphere?

In rural areas as well as in urban areas hundred per cent women believe that due to lack of loan facilities and credits they are to some extent have been hindered to establish their own shops and businesses, they get credits but they had to show the husband's documents otherwise they will not get credits so this is a major drawback for women.

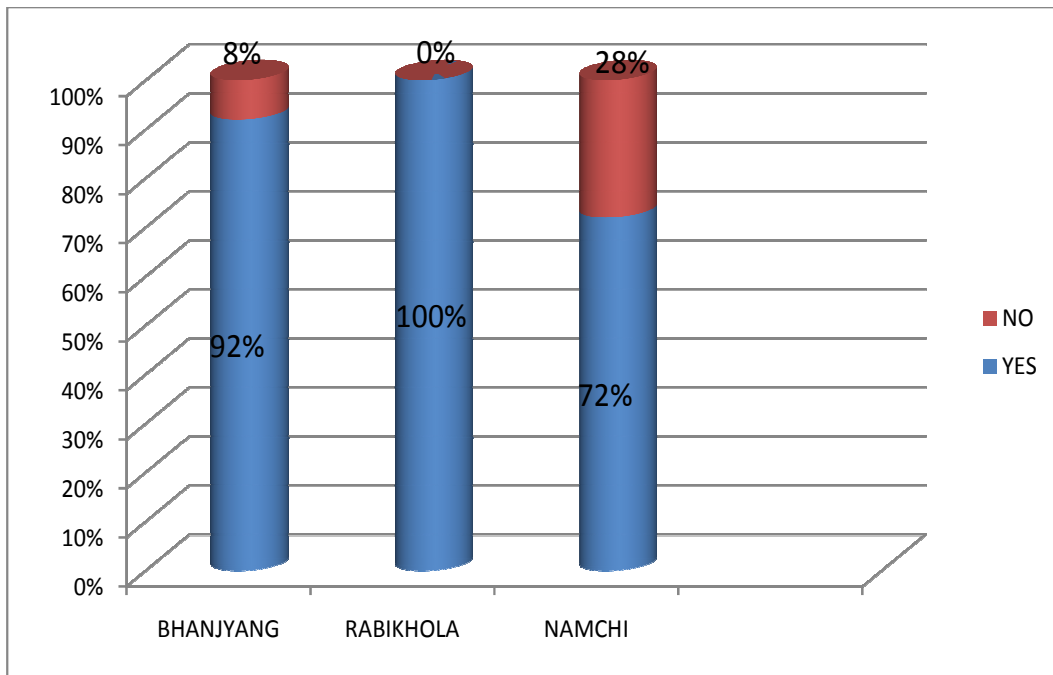


Figure.7.a. Do you believe women are mostly confined to home and domestic sphere and they do the household activities which make them economically weak as compared to male counterparts?

In rural areas women believe that because of the household work they could not work or go outside and earn money this things hinders them to be economically sound and in urban areas few of them think that though they work outside though they have jobs they have to invest more money than their husbands because their husbands invest money on unnecessary things for instances, in gambling, taking alcohols, and they became irresponsible and dependent on their wife. In this way they are also economically weak though they have jobs.

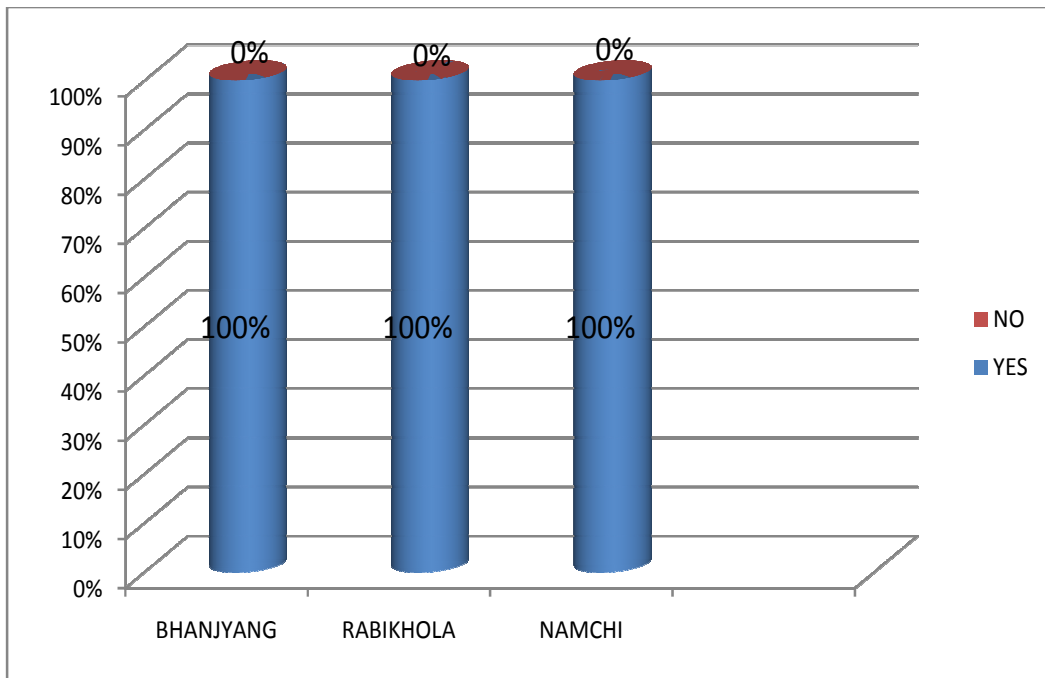


Figure.7.b. If yes, then don't you think women should engage in work that would generate income and become independent?

Both from the rural and from urban areas they think that yes they should work, do whatever they are capable to do and earn money so they could stand on their own feet and become independent and empowered, they just wanted to come out from their house and experience the outside world.

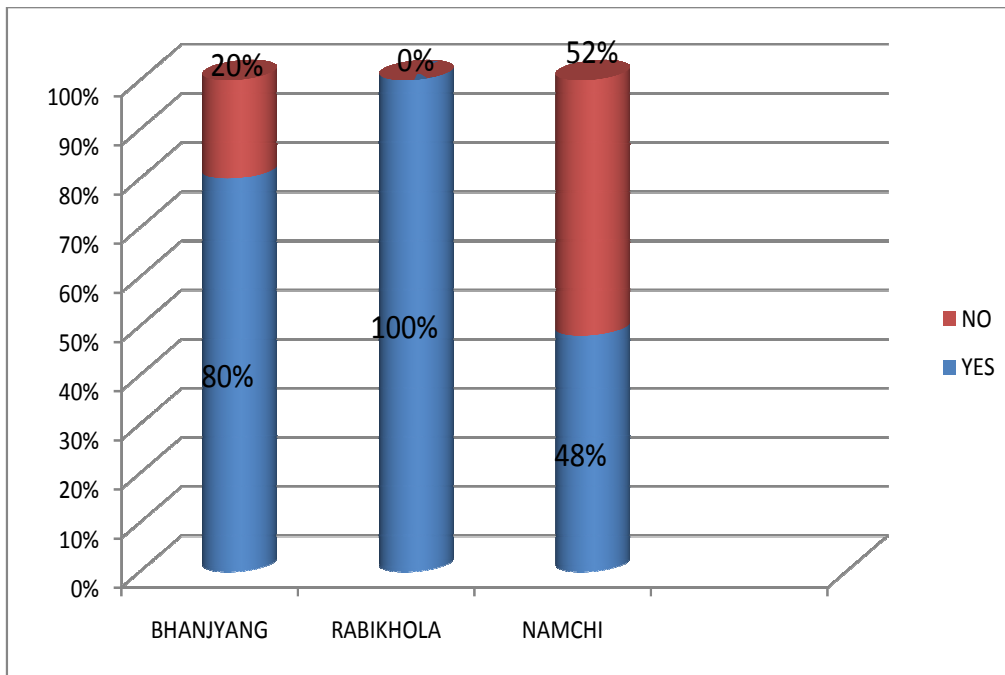


Figure.8. Have you ever felt that if you are not working or your income is less, than your husband misbehave with you or you feel inferior?

Mostly in rural areas women feel inferior because their income is less and some of them even don't have jobs, when sometimes their husbands is in a bad mood they pour out all the feelings that they are the owner the head of the family and their wife cannot do or say anything because they do not have earnings and they have to tolerate everything which is not acceptable for them. But in urban areas most of them have jobs, small earnings, shops that's why they do not have to be dependent and feel inferior with their husbands.

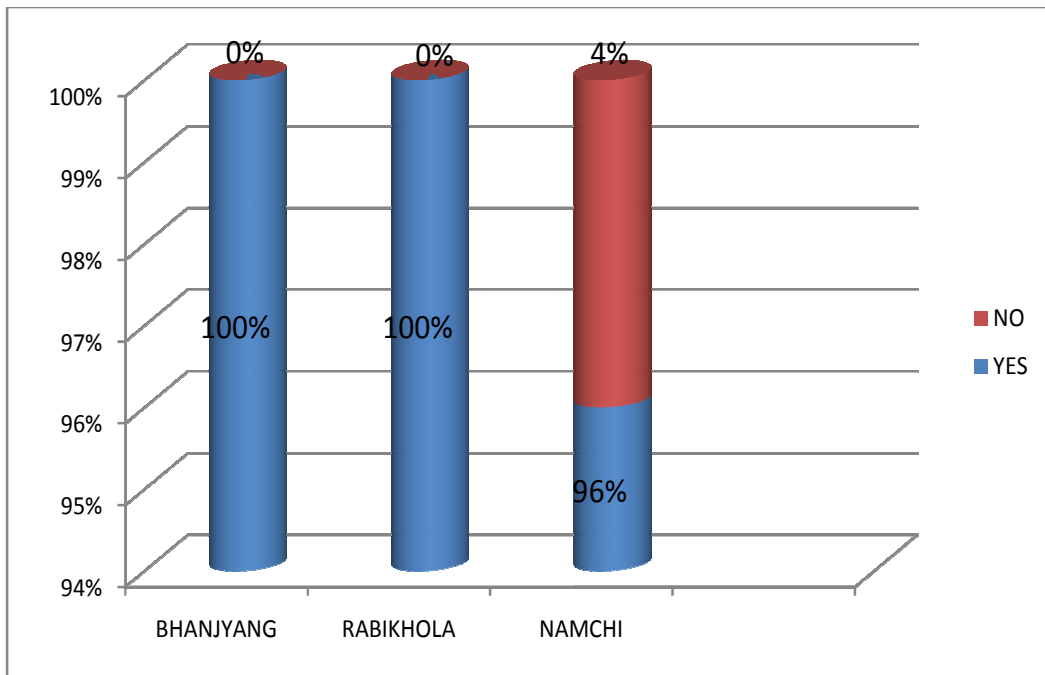


Figure.9. Do you think the existing patriarchal system to some extent, affect women's active role in economic spheres?

In rural areas hundred per cent women think that because of the patriarchal system, the dominating nature of men their principles and rules which women has to follow affect in their economic spheres because their husbands does not allow them to do whatever their wife wishes to do, women has to wait for their husbands decision and permission. That is why women are always backward and dominated.

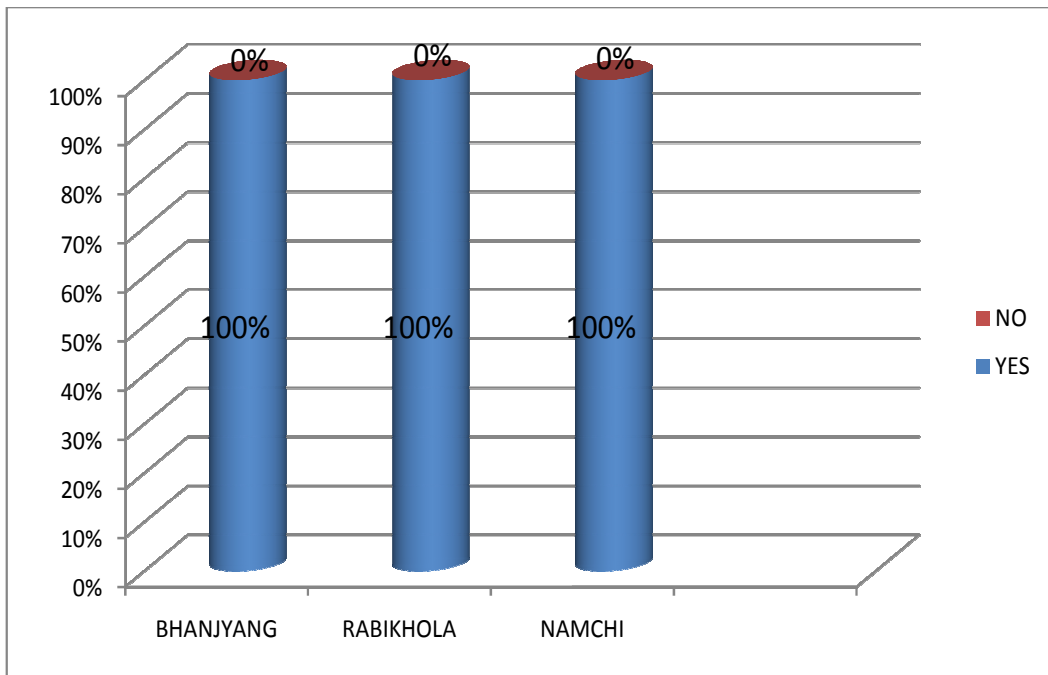


Figure.10. Do you think domestic violence often leads to economic disparity between husband and wife?

Both from the rural as well as from urban areas think that if there is a violence, exploitation, conflicts between husband and wife then not only the economic disparity but there is a chances of breaking of the relationships, a bad environment for children and for society. So obviously there will be disparity, imbalances and inequality in relationships as well as in economic spheres. Men should always have respect for his wife whatever she is doing he should always support his wife and then only there will be equality.

## Chapter V

### Conclusion

The study constitutes of five chapters. The study begins with the Introductory chapters and it also includes statement of the problem, review of literature, scope of the study, objectives, research question, methodology, and Chapterization.

Second chapter deals with theoretical writings as discussed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum in Human capabilities approach argue that women are not treated as an ends in their own rights, rather they are treated as an ends for other rights, and they are not given the respect which they deserve from the laws and institutions. Instead, they are treated as mere instruments of the ends of other's reproducers, caregivers, sexual outlets, agents of a family prosperity. Capability approach's main aim is to provide philosophical support for an account of basic constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by the governments of all nations, for what human dignity requires. Human capabilities focuses on "what people are actually able to do and to be", that is worthy of the dignity of human being.

She identified a list of 'central human capabilities', setting them in the context of a type of 'political liberalism' that makes them specifically political goals and presents them in a manner free of any metaphysical grounding. In this way, she argues that, the capability can be an object of an 'overlapping consensus' among people who have different conceptions of the goods and the capabilities in question should be pursued for each and every person treating as an end and mere tools of ends of others, thus, she adopts a 'principle of each person' capability based on a 'principle of each person as end'.

The latest versions of the list are: Life; Bodily health; Bodily integrity; Senses, Imaginations, and Thought; Emotions; Practical reason; Affiliation; Other species; Play; and Political and Material control over one's environment. Nussbaum argue that this list has a central importance in human life; whatever else the person pursues or chooses. It provides political principles that should be embodied in constitutional guarantees, human rights, legislation and development policy.

On the contrary, Sen's theory of Development as an Expansion of Capabilities is the starting point for the human development approach: the idea that the purpose of development is to improve human lives by expanding the range of things that a person can be and do, such as to be healthy and well nourished, to be knowledgeable, and to participate in community life. From this viewpoint, development is about removing obstacles to what a person can do in life, obstacle such as illiteracy, health, lack of access to resources, or lack of civil and political freedom. The human development approach contains two central theses about people and development, and to distinguish between them. They are what Sen's calls the "evaluative aspect" and the "agency aspect". The first is concerned with evaluating improvements in human life as an explicit development objective and using human achievements as key indicators of progress. The second is concerned with what human beings can do to achieve such improvements, particularly through policy and political changes.

The human development approach emphasize on assessing development by how well it expands the capabilities of all people. Thus, economic growth is only a means and not as an end in itself. The concern with the well- being of all people emphasizes equity as a major policy objective, requiring supervising not only through national averages, but also through procedures of deprivation and distribution.

Third chapter deals with Political Participation and capability among women in Sikkim the factors which hinder women to participate. Women can be empowered if they are given a chance or an opportunity to participate in political spheres. Political participation contributes to the well- being of a people, like, they can increase their efficiency, expand capabilities, control, authority, socialized, become more confident, share the equal share of power and equations with men.

Fourth chapter deals with economic freedom and empowerment of women. Women's empowerment is very essential for the development of the society. Economic empowerment makes women stronger mentally and financially and it places women in a stronger position, it gives women the confidence to participate, compete equally with men and to make decision that promotes their families and their own well- beings. Economic empowerment can help to fill the gap of inequality which is between men and women.



Women do not have access to land, that is why they cannot produce anything and they are denied opportunity to produce and to cultivate. Education is an important factor that would make women economically empowered and gender equality will be achieved. There are no such loans and credits facilities for women, and if it is provided by the government, it will help to empower the women's position and automatically lead to the reduction of poverty.

In Sikkim women are less educated as compared to men, literacy gap is there, economically they are unequal and socially also they are unequal.

Decisions are mostly taken by men, financial decision making power, the property, land rights, belongs to men, and there is nothing in the hands of women. They are remained only as a mother and wife.

It has rightly been said that we have got independence, but women have not got independence till date. Women to a large extent are still under male domination, influence, and exploitation. They lack freedom to do, whatever they want, the choices which they cannot make easily, they have to think many times before making choice, the opportunities to decide, to go where they want, the way they want to live life to the fullest. They have no choice but to listen to their parents, to obey the in-laws, to respect the husband's decisions. Therefore, women though fully educated, employed, and confident have to depend upon men. If a woman doesn't respect the decisions of her husband then she may be called as undisciplined, unfaithful, and weak. This is the harsh reality of women in every part of the world.

In Sikkim, women face the same problems like the women of develop, developing, and under developing countries faces. The representation of women at the local level has somewhat improved after the enactment of 73rd and of 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment acts in 1992. This legislation provides 33 per cent reservation for Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe, and Women at the local governance. This act guarantees women to involve in decision- making process, and representation in grass roots politics. And again in 2012, the reservation was increased from 40- 50 per cent for women belonging from rural areas. But the problem in reality is that rest of the women does not have the power like a Panchayat and it does not change and solve the problems of women. They are still unequal as compared to male counterparts.

Most of the women are uneducated especially in rural areas and this has compelled them to do unskilled jobs. Because of the illiteracy they lack access to political participation, economic freedom and an honorable position in society. They had to depend upon their husbands and are always dominated and had a lower status.

Women have responsibilities towards the household work; they have to take care of children, elderly and sick and work in fields or government services. This has led the women being confined in their homes and left them with no choices and freedom to communicate and socialized.

Women lack adequate financial resources, they have no access to property and land rights that is why they are facing problems. They are denied economic freedom, they are economically weak, and they cannot participate in political sphere and cannot contest the elections because of the lack of financial resources.

The electoral system is not favourable to women candidates. It is always in favour of men since the earlier times. Women participation is better realized when there are quotas and reservation made for women.

Women continue to suffer mobility both in rural and urban places. Whatever their work is, their income is but often had to take permissions from the family and from their husbands for moving out and for doing anything. They are not independent and free to make the choices as a man does. Women are dominated and sometimes their husband use abusive language because women earn less or some of the women do not earn at all.

Many women lack trainings and information which hinder them from participating in political and economic spheres. The traditional and cultural norm of society always dominate women and always sees them as a mother and a housewives, that is why women especially in rural areas are indeed confined to the house.

Mostly in rural areas a girl leave a school and gets married into early age. Early marriage remains a major issue and an important factor that restricted young women's position in both education and economic activities. Socio- economic conditioning and gender inequality is a major factor for lack of economic empowerment of women.

Women face violence and discrimination both in house and in their workplace and it not only affect women's health and well- being, but hampers women's access to employment, thereby it affects women's economic independence and economy as well

But all these problems and challenges that women of South Sikkim are facing today can be solved through the functioning including education it is the only tool which will empower women. It gives confidence to women to speak out and be able to express their problems, issues and the challenges which they are facing today. Education provides employment, mobility to go outside, opportunities, and choices for women.

Financial decision- making power should be shared with men. Economically women will become more empowered and her roles in family and society will be enhanced and automatically it will increase her ability to speak up for herself, she can work equally with men in any areas and then it will result in gender equality.

Women should have access to resources and opportunities, which will provide largely equality in the opportunity to use the basic capabilities through access to economic assets such as land, resources such as income and employment as well as political opportunity such as representation in political bodies. Without access to resources and opportunities, both political and economic, women will be unable to utilize their capabilities for their well- being, for their families, and societies.

Ownership and control over assets such as land provide economic security, motivation for taking economic risk that lead to growth, and results in income. Ensuring female property and inheritance rights would help empower women both economically and socially. Women's lack of property has been linked to development related problems including poverty.

Eradicating gender inequality in employment would lead to the economic empowerment as well as mobility problems of women. Because, increased empowerment opportunities can improve women's mobility and enable women to seek and access to reproductive health care. Security must be provided by the laws made by the government to women because it will reduce vulnerability to violence,

exploitation, domination and conflict. Violence result in the physical and mental harm and lessen the ability, self- confidence of women, and also hinder access to employment, and results in the economic independence of women and their economy.

Reproductive health of women should be taken care of. Maternal mortality rates are high in every countries, states, and societies. Women's chances of dying from pregnancy complications are very high. Government should also initiate policies for women's health and well- being and then only women can have long and healthy life and if she is in good health, she can have access to opportunities and resources.

Enlarging the national policies and programs to provide support for the care of children, elderly, and people with disabilities, will enable women to participate in paid employment because taking care of children, elderly and doing household work does not get paid and not even recognized, valued, and respected. Government here on their part can do something for women.

Political changes in policies, laws, and reforms is essential and political commitments in improving women's access to public services and the increase in the number of legislatives reforms and laws should be aimed at gender equity. Not only governments but Women's Organizations, and NGOs must support in uplifting and bring changes and improvements in the lives of the women's, and it will lead to the empowerment of women and thus women's status would improve.

Apart from problems like unemployment, obstacles, and challenges women are facing but are also trying and had been successful in overcoming it through the government programs like MGNREGA, because it had been successful in providing employments not only for men but also for women. The participation of women in MGNREGA removes out all the discrimination against women. Women's employment in MGNREGA helps in controlling the social and economic resources in households and also at the community. Women participation in decision making is expected to bring qualitative changes in the perception of "Self". Thus the improvements in gender equations across various spheres social, political and economic and brings positive changes in perceptions of 'self' would lead to the empowerment of the women.

The income she earns would help to invest in the health, basic needs, education of the children and can also support husband. With this improvement in socio, economic and cultural domain she can gain access to information, resources, and provide opportunities and also a greater say in decision making both at household and community level.

Another programs, like, self help group (SHG), helps to promote savings and credit activities and promote micro- enterprise development. This can lead to a strong and permanent improvement of women's socio- economic conditions. It provides independence, economic development for women and their families.

So, women can do a lot, can bring change and progress, it's just that they are deprived of the functioning of opportunities and freedom, and the support from family as well as from governments. Gilman argues that she did not believe progress would happen if women were only given the votes. Progress was not measured only by states that allowed women to vote, but as well "in the changes legal, social, mental and physical, which mark the advance of the mother of the world toward her full place (Gilman: 1898, p. 5).

But, slowly and gradually the world is changing so does the women. Their way of thinking, their perception, their ideas, everything is improving and changing steadily if it is compared to the past. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments Act has changed the status of women. In coming future women lives is going to change because government on their part is trying to empower, uplift women by initiating numerous policies, programmes, schemes for women and girls. More quotas and reservation can change the status of women and it might help to fill the gap between men and women not only politically but socially and economically. Women might have a bright future in the coming days.

Gender equality does not require girls and boys, women or men, be the same, or be treated exactly same, but it implies an absence of discrimination and bias. Equality between women and men is both a human rights issue, and indicators of sustainable, people centered development. Working towards equality between women and men is vital if girls are look ahead to an equal future. Equality between adult men and women provides children a model for actually respectful relationships, as well as

the full realization of everyone's human rights. If children cannot witness and internalize social norms, attitudes, and behaviour that supports gender equality, equality between boys and girls will be difficult for them even to imagine (UNICEF: 2011).

The concept of empowerment is related to gender equality. The essence, the real meaning of empowerment lies in the ability of a woman to control her own lives and pursue the goals and live according to their own values and choices. This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capabilities and equal access to resources and opportunities, but they must have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make choices and decisions. And to exercise agency, women must live without the fear of violence and oppression.

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## **Appendix 1**

**Name\*:**

**Age\*:**

**Sex\*:**

**Religion:**

**Occupation\*:**

**Date:**

**Address:**

**(\*it's compulsory)**



9. Do you agree that socio- cultural factors like caste and gender discrimination act as a barrier to women's political participation?
- (a) Yes (b) No
10. Do you believe political participation of women will be able to bring special focus and values for women as well as to politics?
- (a) Yes (b) No
11. Do you think political participation can redress the gender inequalities in societies?
- (a) Yes (b) No
12. Do you think participation alone can bring development for women or they should stand up and raise the voice for equality and justice?
- (a) Yes (b) No
13. Do you think government is fully supporting women or working for the betterment of women?
- (a) Yes (b) No
14. If yes, then do you agree that due to lack of representation of women that their issues and schemes have not been highlighted and addressed?
- (a) Yes (b) No
15. Do you agree women's unity and movement is necessary to raise the voice for more representation and equal status for women?
- (a) Yes (b) No

## **Appendix 2**

**Name\*:**

**Age\*:**

**Sex\*:**

**Religion:**

**Occupation\*:**

**Date:**

**Address:**

**(\*it's compulsory)**

1. Do you agree women in Sikkim are equally empowered as compared to their male counterparts?  
(a) Yes (b) No
  
2. Do you believe for women to be economically empowered, they need education, trainings, resources, and skills?  
(a) Yes (b) No
  
3. Do you think socio- cultural factors like poverty, social inequality, and inadequate support from the family often hinders women to fully participate in economic life?  
(a) Yes (b) No
  
4. Do you think in order to restore gender equality, economic independence is necessary?  
(a) Yes (b) No
  
5. Do you agree that financial decision- making power makes women more economically empowered?  
(a) Yes (b) No
  
6. a. Do you agree that in Sikkim most of the women lack access to loans facilities and credits, and as a result hinders women to equally compete with male members in economic sphere?  
(a) Yes (b) No
  
6. b. If yes, then do you agree that government should initiate more policies and programmes that provide loans, credit facilities to women?



(a) Yes (b) No

7. a. Do you believe women are mostly confined to home and the domestic sphere and they do the household activities which make them economically weak as compared to male counterparts?

(a) Yes (b) No

8. b. If yes, then don't you think women should get engaged in work that would generate income and become independent?

(a) Yes (b) No

9. Have you ever felt that if you are not working or your income is less, than your husband misbehave with you or you feel inferior?

(a) Yes (b) No

10. Do you think the existing patriarchal system to some extent, affect women's active role in economic spheres?

(a) Yes (b) No

11. Do you think domestic violence often leads to economic disparity between husband and wife?

(a) Yes (b) No