

## Women Education and Sustainable Development: Swivel around the Bedrock of Darjeeling District of West Bengal

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**Abstract:** Education, an imperative tool for a nation's development, aids masses to sensitize about the judicious use of the obtainable resources. Without education, sustainable development is a far-reaching goal. The foremost goals of sustainable development are to conserve the natural resources, eradicate poverty and inequality, boost economy, increase productivity and maintain social progress. The attainment of such goals and growth of a nation is feasible only with the equitable progress in the literacy rate of both men and women. According to the census report of 2001-11, in India, the literacy rate of men and women stands at the difference of 82.14 and 65.46 percent. Darjeeling district, which is located at the northernmost district of West Bengal, the literacy rate for both men and women are 85.61 and 73.33 percent respectively (Census 2011). This paper delved the changed literacy ratio in this region as well as attempted to highlight the condition and influence of women education towards the sustainable progress of the bedrock of Darjeeling District. The findings of this study not only contribute to sustainable development of this region but also have practical implications for educationists, policymakers and other stakeholders in shaping the SDGs by nurturing the educational landscape of the Country.

**Keywords:** literacy, women education, sustainable development

### Introduction

Women partake a pivotal role in the developmental segment of the society and the nation. Their contribution to the building of a well-developed home and social environment cannot be unheeded. Despite any profession, they have a poised persona for decision-making and collaborative attitude. Their contributions for the upliftment of the community or society are equally or above to that of men. In both the developed or developing countries, women have been largely excluded from formal and traditional policy and decision-making roles. It is imperative to observe that conceding women an impartial role in decision-making and management would bring to bear their full knowledge, experience and commitment to the solution of problems. In fact, environmentally sound and sustainable development cannot be attained unless women

are permitted to enter the mainstream of decision-making process and management. However, investing in women is one of the most effective ways to advance sustainable development. As Mahatma Gandhi rightly said, "Educate one man, you educate one person, but educate a woman and you educate a whole civilization". Education builds confident and ambitious women through which they become aware of their rights and raise their voice against exploitation, discrimination or any form of injustice meted out to them. A nation loses its goal of integral and sustainable developments when women remain uneducated and underpowered (Hoque & Baidya, 2022).

### **Development of Women Education in Darjeeling district**

Darjeeling District is the northernmost District of West Bengal. It is located in the lap of the Himalayas. The district comprises of four subdivisions namely, Darjeeling (Sadar), Kalimpong, Kurseong and Siliguri. Darjeeling Himalaya forms a part of eastern Himalayan ranges and is bounded by Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan in the north, west and east respectively. It consists of the first three subdivisions of the district while Siliguri is mainly characterized by the Terai and foothills of the district. The area covered by Darjeeling Himalaya is about 1721 Sq. Kms. while the total area of the district is 3202 Sq. Kms. Darjeeling Himalaya consists of a portion of the outlying hills of lower Himalayas and a stretch of territory lying along the base of the hills known as the Terai. The Terai is only 91 meters high above the sea level but there are parts of the district, which are as high as 3660 m. at Sandakpu. The exquisite scenic grandeur and invigorating climate in the area have earned the title of "Queen of the Hill Stations". Darjeeling District lies between 26° 31' and 27° 13' north latitude and between 87° 59' and 88° 53' east longitude (O'Malley, 1907).

Any endeavour on understanding the growth and progress of infrastructure of education in the district of Darjeeling will be incomplete without giving proper honour in the first place to the Christian Missionaries who have made pioneering effort in the same. The introduction of women education in Darjeeling was a Herculean task as it was for the rest of the country. If we comparatively look towards the beginning of women education of Darjeeling and other areas of Bengal, we can say that institutional education reached women of Darjeeling very late. One of the most important figures on female education was Miss Macfarlane, who established the first Girls' School in 1872. She had come on a mission to help the hill girls. Whether the school continued or not is a matter of further debate however, it was the first institution established for the education of native women. In Darjeeling there is a Girls' Boarding School and Female Teachers' Training School, teaching up to the Upper Primary standard. The industrial training was also given to the women.

The missionaries were determined to succeed in imparting women education. The works of the missionary was strengthened by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Graham, members of Church of Scotland Mission. Mrs. Graham founded a girls' school at Kalimpong in 1891.

At Kurseong there was only one school for girls which was established in 1907, known as Scott Mission School. The school provided education to both boys and girls at

primary level. In 1894 Mrs. Graham opened an industrial school in Kalimpong. Encouragement was provided for vocational and technical learning in various fields viz. lace work, wool dyeing, weaving, tailoring, embroidery, carpet making, etc.

The Roman Catholic Missionaries at the outset had created schools for Anglo-Indian students. The Loreto Convent in 1841, St. Helen's in 1890 and St. Joseph's Convent in 1925 were mainly established for the Eurasian students and the local girls were not given access to enter the premises. This was the outcome of the strict order from the Church of Scotland Mission. However, eventually they opened schools for the natives, viz. St. Teresa founded in 1923, St. Philomena, in 1932, St. Joseph's Girls school in 1935, and St. Teresa's Pedong, a primary school for the girls.

Through the government initiatives in 1898 a girl school was started at Dow Hill for the wards of Government Railway officers. The Dow Hill School was basically a girls' division of the government school at Kurseong. In Darjeeling, however, it was found that no less than 12 percent of males, or approximately 1 in 8, were literate, while the proportion of literate female rose during decade ending in 1901 from 5 to 14 per 1000 approximately 1 in 71 – a ratio surpassed by no other district in West Bengal or eastern Bengal outside Calcutta (O' Malley, 1907).

The Government of India Act, 1919 made primary education for boys at free of cost. However, it was only by the Bengal Primary Education Act, 1930 that compulsory primary education was introduced for both boys and girls (Dewan, 1991). Therefore, the governmental effort for women education can be considered as a very delayed act.

The tremendous contribution made by Hemlata Sarkar, the daughter of Pandit Shivnath Shastri, a leader of Brahmo Samaj in the spread of female education in Darjeeling. She took initiatives in establishing school for Indian girls, which was encouraged and financed by her friends, the Maharani of Coochbehar, Mayurbanj, and Maharani of Burdwan. Thus, the Maharani School was started in 1908. The school provided education to the Bengali children and beneficiaries were also the Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepcha children. This school stands a mute witness to the missionary zeal of its sprightly architect and guide who less than a decade after the turn of the last century brought about revolutionary change in the field of education in the then British town of Darjeeling (Mukherjee, 1968).

Shri Ramakrishna Vedanta Ashram was founded in Darjeeling in 1924. Like the Christian missionaries, the Ramakrishna Mission also took up the cause of educating hill people. Swami Avedhananda worked a lot to spread education among the people of Darjeeling. In 1931 Sardeswari Girls' school was started.

In 1934 Himachal Hindi Bhawan was established for both girls and boys and had a provision for a night school for the local students. Pranami Vidya Mandir was founded in Kalimpong in 1944. Youngmen Buddhist Association established girls' school at Ghoom. Anjuman-e-Islamia took the responsibility of educating Muslim girls. A girl Maktab was opened in 1910 in Darjeeling town. By the middle of the twentieth century the largest number of schools for both boys and girls were run by the Scottish missionaries. The Girl's school at Kalimpong was upgraded to high school in 1924. The students were mainly Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha girls.

In 1944 there were 594 girls on the rolls of high school and 5 in training classes. In 1942 the Boarding school of Darjeeling was upgraded to high school and was named as Nepali Girls' High School. On 31st March 1944, the number of pupils learning in the school was 444 of which 27 were hill boys, 331 were hill girls and the remaining has been designated as Christians (Dash, 1947).

In present, there are approximately 460 Elementary Girls/Co-educational Schools, 141 Secondary Girls/Co-educational schools and 28 Girls/Co-educational colleges in Darjeeling district (UDISE, 2009).

### **How Education leads to Sustainable Development?**

Education gives learners of all ages the knowledge, skills, values and agency to address interconnected global challenges including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality. It empowers learners of all ages to make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change society and care for the planet. (UNESCO).

The Sustainable Development ensures in its goals to provide inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Therefore, when women are given their due place and participation like men everywhere without any discrimination then a sustainable society and a nation can be achieved. United Nations and World Bank studies show that focusing on women in development assistance and poverty reduction strategies leads to faster economic growth than gender neutral approaches. We need to educate for sustainable development and we need to educate about sustainable development for the balanced society (Harshadhar, 2014).

### **Women Education – A key to Sustainable Development**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in 2015 embody a roadmap for progress that is sustainable and leaves no one behind. Educating and empowering women and girls is integral to each of the 17 goals (United Nation Girls Education Initiative, 2018).

Educating women reduces poverty and hunger (SDG 1 & 2) - According to research by the World Bank, for every extra year of primary education, a girl's individual wage rate increases an average of 10–20% and 25% with an extra year of secondary school. Furthermore, 90% of a mother's wage goes towards caring for her family, thus lifting a household out of poverty and hunger.

Educating women leads to improved health and well-being (SDG3) - According to a study by UNESCO, if all women had primary education, there would be 15% fewer child deaths. If all women had a secondary education, child deaths would be cut in half, saving almost 3 million lives across the globe. UNESCO study also found that if all mothers completed primary education, maternal deaths would decrease by 60%, saving approximately 98,000 lives.

Quality education is key to empowering women (SDG4) - With quality education, women can support themselves, they have the skills necessary to improve their own health, make proper decisions for their overall well-being, and advance their employment and leadership prospects.

Educating women leads to gender equality (SDG5 and SDG10) - By advancing women and girls' education, women and girls are more likely to realize their potential, exercise their human rights and contribute to society.

Clean water and sanitation and education of women are closely linked (SDG6) - Educated women are more likely to learn about hygiene and improved water sanitation through schools or other programs. Empowerment through education has the potential to bring important changes in water-related practices too.

Educating women can impact affordable and clean energy (SDG 7) - Empowering women can have a profound impact on making an informed decision on energy matters. Educated girls are also more likely to be innovative and advance new ideas such as reliable modern energy services.

Educating women improves access to decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) - According to the World Bank's study in 100 countries, every 1% increase in the number of women with a secondary education yields an increase of 0.3 percentage points in the country's annual per capita income growth rate. For example, if India had a 1% increase in girls in secondary school, their GDP would increase by \$5.5 billion. Additionally, education narrows pay gaps and increases a woman's chance of entering the formal economy.

Educating women leads to advancements in industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG9) - Educating women can create an environment that encourages innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity. Furthermore, educating girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) subjects also increases sustainable industries, and investing in scientific research and innovation helps to facilitate sustainable development.

Educating women increases responsible consumption (SDG12) - When women and girls receive education, they can play an instrumental role in responsible consumption and production. They can also contribute to their families and communities economically.

Educating women increases awareness in the well-being of the environment and climate action (SDG13, SDG14 and SDG15) - Women and girls are among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. They are also the most powerful agents of change. Providing women and girls with relevant education about climate change and the environment allows them to contribute to sustainable development in their communities.

Educating women leads to peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16) - According to UNDP, women and girls who receive an education are more likely to seek justice and tackle discrimination such as gender-based violence or other injustices as they are more aware of their rights. They are also more likely to be active citizens and leaders in their communities.

Educating women leads to partnerships for sustainable development (SDG17) - For as long as girls and women are prevented from achieving their full potential, the world is only taking steps backwards. Through cooperation and partnerships across the world we can achieve gender equality in and through education, and in turn, deliver on the promises set out in the SDGs.

### **Review of Related Literature**

This research paper is grounded on a study by a number of scholars. It provides an outline of current knowledge and allows identifying relevant theories, methods, and gaps in the existing research. A review of related literature conducted and is classified year wise as following:

Harshadhar & Shashirekha (2014) conducted a study on the role of women education for a sustainable development of the balanced society. The study tried to analyze the women contribution for a sustainable development through the valuable education and found out that directly or indirectly women education sustainably develops the literacy level of the nation.

Sharma (2016) conducted a study on women education: need for sustainable development and found out that nearly 17% of the world's adult population is illiterate. Two third of them are women. Approximately, 122 million youth globally are illiterate, of which young women represent 60.7%. So far as literacy rate in India is concerned, it is 82% of males and 65% of females according to 2011 census. So, educating women should be the foremost priority of every Government of any country if they want to develop. If we talk of Education for sustainable development, then it again becomes prior to all other agendas.

Shu'aibu (2015) conducted a study on women education as a tool for sustainable development; issues and prospects. A t-test was administered to find out the contribution to nation building between educated women and male counter parts of Nigeria and found out that there is significant difference between the educated mother and their male counter parts at 0.05 level of significance in favor of the educated mothers.

Paul (2022) conducted a study on the role of women's education in promoting sustainable development in West Bengal with special reference to Purba Bardhaman district and found out that the female literacy rate in urban areas of Purba Bardhaman is 85.35% and in rural areas it is 61.54%. Statistically, the literacy rate among women in rural areas is much lower than in urban areas of Purba Bardhaman. Due to obstacles, education has not reached women in such way, which is one of the obstacles to sustainable development. Child marriage in particular is one of the major obstacles.

### **Research Gaps**

From the literature reviews, it is found that several studies were conducted which tried to explore women education and sustainable development of different states and districts of India, but very less work was found on building the association between the women education and sustainable development of the Darjeeling district

of West Bengal. Therefore, this paper investigates the influence of women education on the sustainable development of the Darjeeling district.

### Objectives of the study

1. To study the sustainable growth of Darjeeling district by analyzing its female literacy rate.
2. To study the influence of women education towards the female workforce participation for achieving the sustainable economic development of Darjeeling district.

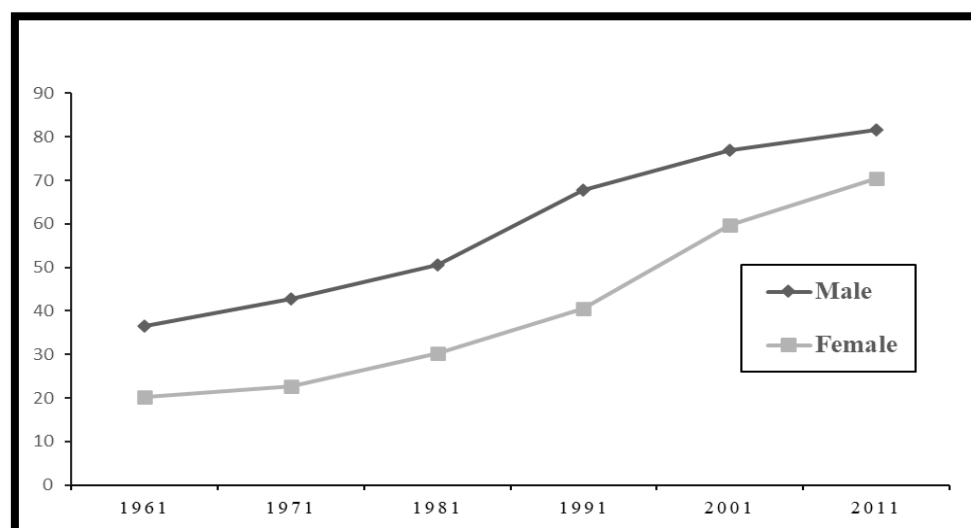
### Methodology

This paper is based on secondary data sources such as journals, articles and reports. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the study. Maximum relevant data is taken from the 2001 and 2011 census reports, published by the Government of India, District Statistical Handbooks published by the Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Government of West Bengal.

### Changing Pattern in the literacy rate of West Bengal

Education is the key to sustainable development. It is the basic tool that can change the economic and social status of women. The literacy rate is generally considered as one of the important indicators of the development of a population and the educational level of a population is considered an important factor of their quality of life.

**Figure 1**



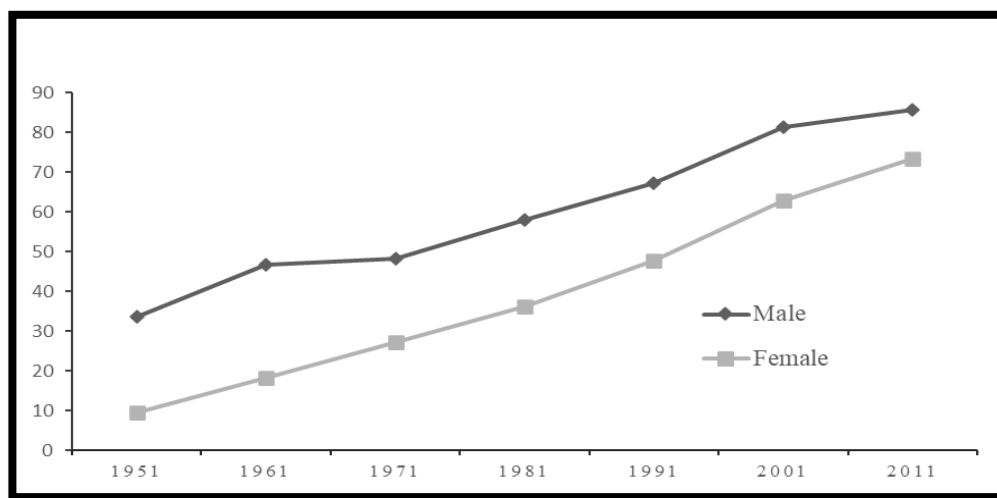
Literacy rate of West Bengal, 1961-2011

**Note:** This figure 1 demonstrates the literacy rate of male and female of West Bengal from the year 1961-2011.

From the above figure 1, it is noteworthy to see that from 1961 to 2011, the literacy rate has increased among the Male and Female Population. In the year 1961, the total literacy rate in West Bengal of male was 34.57 per cent and the literacy rate of female was 20.27 per cent respectively. In the succeeding year, such as 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011, the increasing pattern is observed in the literacy rate of both male and female population in West Bengal. Although, the female population from 1961 to 2011 have shown remarkable growth in the literacy rate but as compared to the male population, women growth is still slighter.

### Changing Pattern in the Literacy rate of Darjeeling District

Figure 2



Literacy rate of Darjeeling district, 1951-2011

**Note:**

This figure 2 demonstrates the literacy rate of male and female of Darjeeling district from the year 1951-2011.

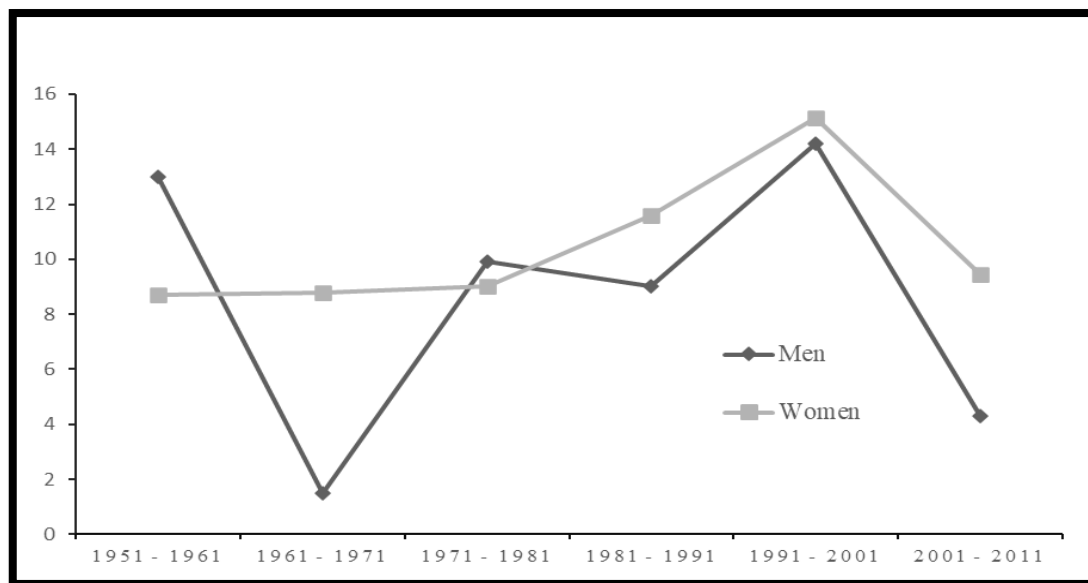
The above figure No. 2 shows the sequential trend of literacy rate of male and female population of Darjeeling district from 1951 to 2011. It is visible that the literacy rate of female was very low in the year from 1951 to 1971, but the gap between the trend lines of literacy rates have narrowed and increased a lot from 1981 to 2011. Looking at the trend line of the literacy rate of male and female population of Darjeeling, it is clear that although female literacy rate of Darjeeling district increased from 1951 to 2011, the rate is comparatively lower than the swelling rate of the male population.

**Table 1**

Decadal Growth in the Male and Female literacy rate of Darjeeling District – 1951 to 2011

| Year        | Literacy<br>(Male) | Literacy<br>(Female) | Growth in<br>literacy (Male) | Growth in<br>Literacy (Female) |
|-------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1951 - 1961 | 33.7 – 46.7        | 9.7 – 18.4           | 13                           | 8.7                            |
| 1961 - 1971 | 46.7 – 48.2        | 18.4 – 27.2          | 1.5                          | 8.8                            |
| 1971 - 1981 | 48.2 – 58.1        | 27.2 – 36.2          | 9.9                          | 9                              |
| 1981 - 1991 | 58.1 – 67.1        | 36.2 – 47.8          | 9                            | 11.6                           |
| 1991 - 2001 | 67.1 – 81.3        | 47.8 – 62.94         | 14.2                         | 15.14                          |
| 2001 - 2011 | 81.3 – 85.61       | 62.94 – 73.33        | 4.31                         | 9.43                           |

**Figure 3**



Decadal growth of male and female literacy of Darjeeling district

**Note:** This figure 3 demonstrates the decadal growth in the literacy rate of male and female of Darjeeling district from the year 1951-2011.

From the above figure 3, we can see the decadal growth in the literacy rate of women from 1951 to 2011. We can find a huge upsurge in the percentage of women literacy and is quite higher as compared to men. The year 1981-1991 & 1991-2001 shows the highest growth in literacy rate of women in Darjeeling district i.e., 11.6% & 15.14%, but in the year 2001-2011 the trend line has gone below to 9.43%.

**Table 2**

| Sl.<br>No. | Literacy rate     |        |       |                       |
|------------|-------------------|--------|-------|-----------------------|
|            | District          | Female |       | Growth in<br>Literacy |
|            |                   | 2001   | 2011  |                       |
|            | West Bengal       | 59.61  | 70.54 | 10.93                 |
| 1.         | Burdwan           | 60.95  | 69.63 | 8.68                  |
| 2.         | Birbhum           | 51.55  | 64.14 | 12.59                 |
| 3.         | Bankura           | 49.43  | 60.05 | 11.07                 |
| 4.         | Purba Medinipur   |        | 81.37 | 16.42                 |
| 5.         | Paschim Medinipur | 64.42  | 70.50 | 6.08                  |
| 6.         | Howrah            | 70.11  | 79.43 | 9.32                  |
| 7.         | Hooghly           | 67.21  | 76.36 | 9.15                  |
| 8.         | 24-Parganas (N)   | 71.72  | 80.34 | 8.62                  |
| 9.         | 24-Parganas (S)   | 59.01  | 71.40 | 12.39                 |
| 10.        | Kolkata           | 77.30  | 84.06 | 6.76                  |
| 11.        | Nadia             | 59.58  | 70.98 | 11.4                  |
| 12.        | Murshidabad       | 47.63  | 63.09 | 15.46                 |
| 13.        | Uttar Dinajpur    | 36.51  | 52.17 | 15.66                 |
| 14.        | Dakshin Dinajpur  | 54.28  | 67.01 | 12.73                 |
| 15.        | Malda             | 41.25  | 56.96 | 15.71                 |
| 16.        | Jalpaiguri        | 52.21  | 66.23 | 14.02                 |
| 17.        | Darjeeling        | 62.94  | 73.33 | 10.39                 |
| 18.        | Cooch Behar       | 56.12  | 68.49 | 12.37                 |
| 19.        | Purulia           | 36.50  | 50.52 | 14.02                 |

Female Literacy rate of Darjeeling district compared to other districts of West Bengal

**Note: Census report of West Bengal 2001 & 2011.**

From the above table no. 2, we can find out that the influence and emergence of different educational establishments in Darjeeling district for women have significantly impacted the growth in literacy rate of women. Within a decade, the district has achieved 10.39% surge in the literacy rate of women, this indicates the achievement of sustainable goal of equitable literacy in the district.

## Female enrolment ratio of Darjeeling District 2012-13 & 2021-22 (UDISE, 2009)

**Table 3**

Total School Enrolment of Male and Female students of Darjeeling district 2012-13

| Location   | Primary (I-V) &<br>Upper Primary (VI-VIII) |       |        | Secondary (IX-X) |       |       | Higher Secondary<br>(XI-XII) |       |       |
|------------|--------------------------------------------|-------|--------|------------------|-------|-------|------------------------------|-------|-------|
|            | Girls                                      | Boys  | Total  | Girls            | Boys  | Total | Girls                        | Boys  | Total |
| DARJEELING | 58763                                      | 58416 | 117179 | 9767             | 10253 | 20020 | 6742                         | 7664  | 14406 |
| Percentage | 50.15                                      | 49.85 | 100    | 48.79            | 51.21 | 100   | 46.79                        | 53.20 | 100   |

**Table 4**

Total School Enrolment of Male and Female students of Darjeeling district 2021-22

| Location   | Primary (I-V) &<br>Upper Primary (VI-VIII) |       |       | Secondary (IX-X) |       |       | Higher Secondary<br>(XI-XII) |       |       |
|------------|--------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|------------------------------|-------|-------|
|            | Girls                                      | Boys  | Total | Girls            | Boys  | Total | Girls                        | Boys  | Total |
| DARJEELING | 18328                                      | 18951 | 37279 | 6826             | 6789  | 13615 | 5123                         | 4814  | 9937  |
| Percentage | 49.16                                      | 50.84 | 100   | 50.14            | 49.86 | 100   | 51.55                        | 48.45 | 100   |

**Note:** The enrolment data of male and female students of Darjeeling district has been procured from UDISE (2009).

From the above enrolment tables 3 & 4 of 2012-13 & 2021-22, we can clearly see that the women education in Darjeeling district has been stirring forward right from its grass root level in an almost equitable manner. Despite its geographically challenged terrain, the district has been able to maintain uniform growth in the literacy of both male and female. After the comparison of literacy rate from two distinct dates, even after such a long gap, the number of enrolment of women in these three levels of education is quite close to men. Thus, to achieve the sustainable development in the district, the gap in the women's literacy has to be curtailed. This will boost the confidence, empowerment and decision-making ability in women, and thus significantly help them to toil for the sustainable development.

## Income and Employment

**Table 5**

Census Report, 2001

| Sl. No. | District   | No. of block | Percentage of Main Workers (2001) |       | Percentage of Marginal Workers (2001) |      | Percentage of non-Workers (2001) |       |
|---------|------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|------|----------------------------------|-------|
|         |            |              | M                                 | F     | M                                     | F    | M                                | F     |
| 1.      | Darjeeling | 12           | 43.23                             | 15.38 | 5.28                                  | 6.00 | 51.49                            | 78.62 |

From the above table 5, we can see that the secondary position of women in the fields of population, enrolment in the schools and literacy have its impact on the total number of female workers in the district. According to the 2001 Census Report, only 15.38 % of women are the main workers and 6% of women are the marginal workers which is bit higher than the male marginal workers in the district. The percentage of non-workers female in the district is 78.62 which surpasses the male non-workers with quite high number.

**Table 6**

| Sl. No. | District   | No. of block | Percentage of Main Workers (2011) |       | Percentage of Marginal Workers (2011) |      | Percentage of non-Workers (2011) |       |
|---------|------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|------|----------------------------------|-------|
|         |            |              | M                                 | F     | M                                     | F    | M                                | F     |
| 1.      | Darjeeling | 12           | 42.29                             | 15.01 | 8.88                                  | 7.43 | 48.83                            | 77.56 |

Census Report, 2011

From the above table 6, we can see that as per the 2011 Census Report, the differences in the work participation of female is almost similar in both the report of 2001 & 2011. There is a decrease of 0.37 % of female main workers, 1.43 % increment in the female marginal workers and decrease of 1.06% female non-workers. The female work participation even after a decade has not shown a significant result, still the women fall unvaryingly short in terms of main workers in the district, this is the clear indication of women acquiring second position in terms of its enrolment, literacy lack of opportunities and involvement.

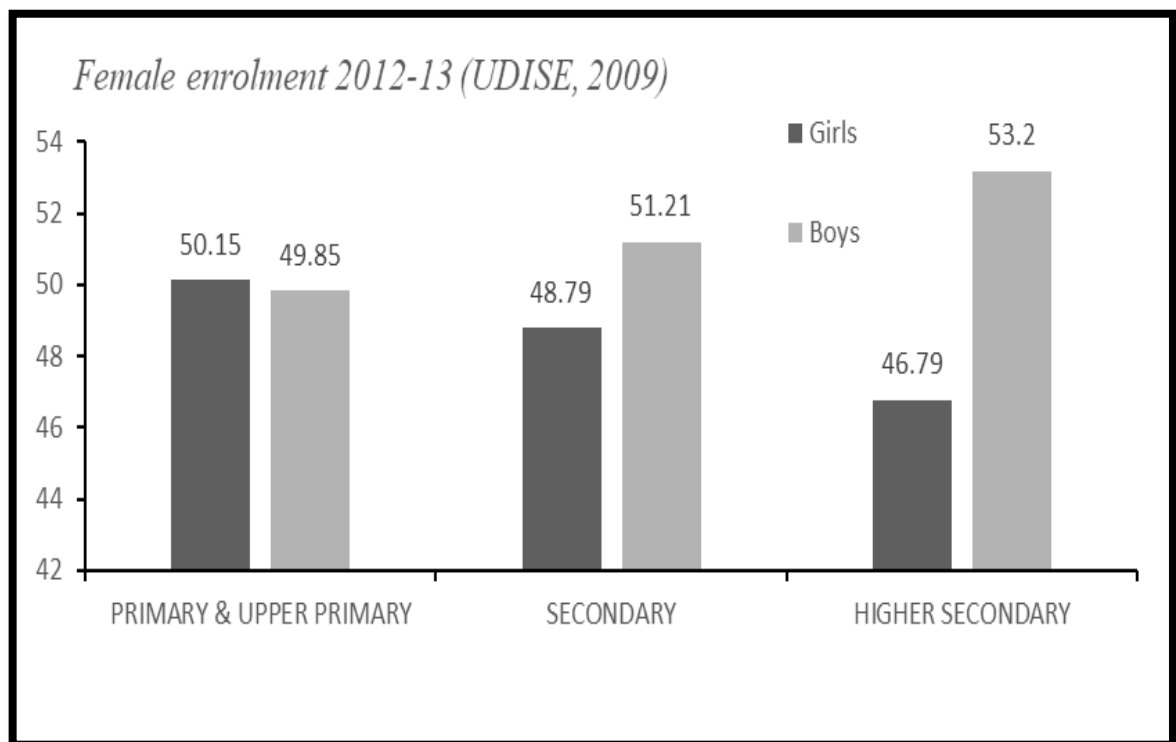
### Findings and Suggestions

The major optimal findings are as follows:

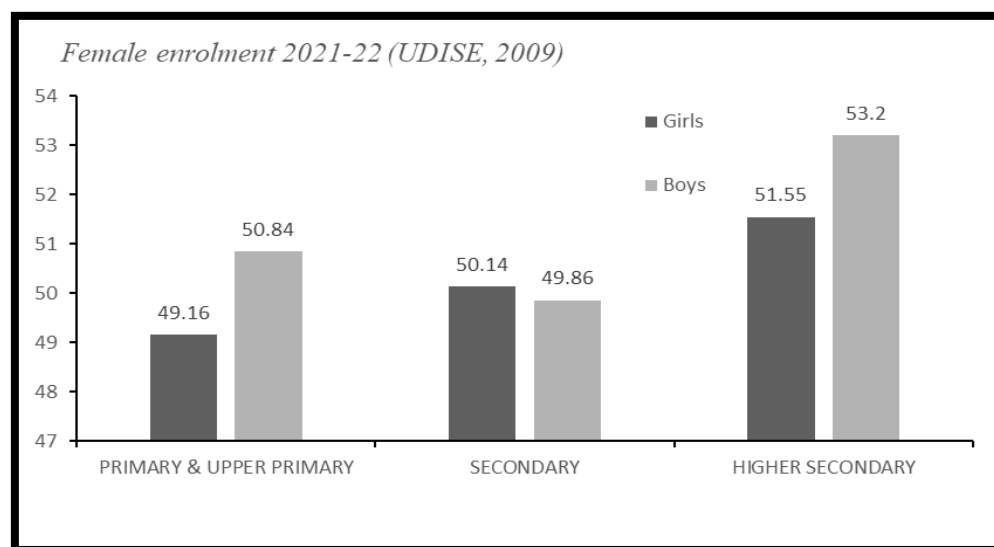
- According to the Census 2001& 2011, when we compare the changing pattern in the literacy rate of men and women of Darjeeling district from the year 1951 to 2011, women stand at the constant progress from the year 1961 onwards. Although, the growth in literacy rate of women exceeds the male literacy to some extent, however, in overall comparison the census reports of 2001 & 2011 shows female literacy to be moderately low as compared to men's literacy. It is crucial for each and every state of the country to bridge the gap of educational inequality. The lack of access to education for women may somehow set hurdles in their role of decision-making and policy development and this will eventually stagnate the achievement of sustainable development.
- From the enrolment tables of 2012-13 & 2021-22, we can find that the women education in Darjeeling district right from its grass root level have been stirring forward almost in an equitable manner. However, the enrolment of girls in the

2012-13, the percentage shows lesser in the secondary and higher secondary level. In the 2021-22 enrolment ratio we can find gradual increase in the enrolment of girls in the secondary and higher secondary level. Despite its geographically challenged terrain, the district has been able to maintain almost a uniform growth in the literacy of both male and female.

**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**

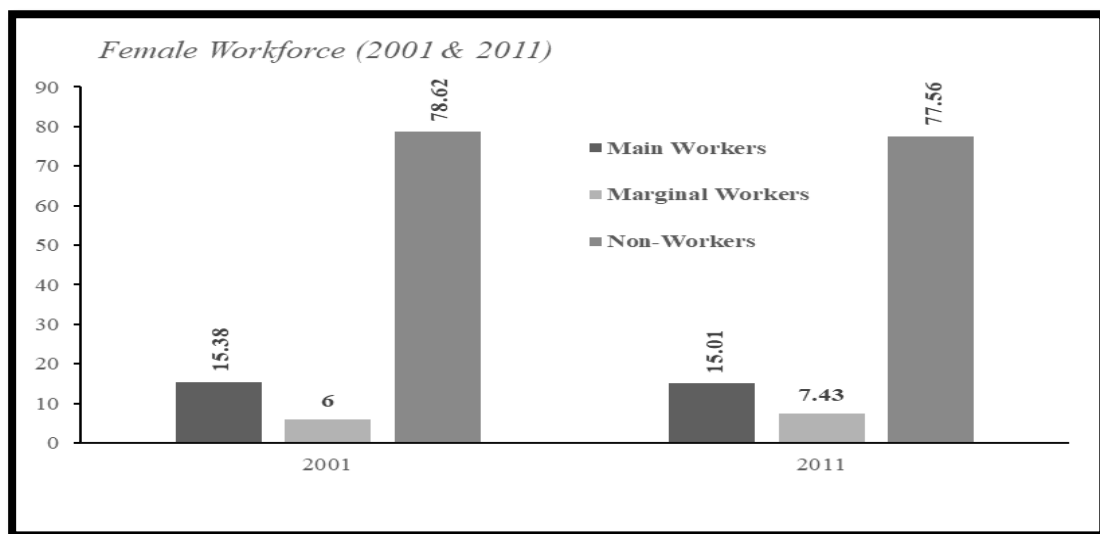


**Note:** The above figures 4 & 5 displays the comparison of female enrolment from two distinct dates, 2012-13 and 2021-22.

After the comparison of literacy rate from the above two figures 4 & 5 from two distinct dates, despite such long gap, the number of enrolment of women in

the three levels of education is quite close to men. However, to achieve the sustainable development of the district, there should be more uniformity in the literacy rate of both men and women.

- The work participation of female is almost similar in both the census reports. There is a decrease of 0.37 % of female main workers, 1.43 % increment in the female marginal workers and decrease of 1.06 % female non-workers. The female work participation even after a decade has not shown a significant result, still women tumble unvaryingly short in terms of main workers in the district, this is the clear indication of women acquiring subsequent position in terms of its enrolment, literacy, lack of opportunities and involvement.



Sustainable development rests on four pillars that are social development, economic development, environmental protection, and preservation of cultural diversity. Women's participation in the economy has a major impact on healthcare, education, and the environment, the participation of women makes the cycle of development go smoothly. The issue of lesser participation of women in the economy should be handled responsibly and effective measures to aware women of their rights should be done for better sustainable development.

### Suggestions

On the basis of the above study, the following suggestions are outlined, those are -

- Central as well as state government need to play positive role in women's education and sustainable development. Even in rural areas, the local government has to be proactive in empowering women. Government, NGOs, every person should be vigilant to ensure that women from all walks of life have equal access to education.
- Develop the women social awareness and capability level by organizing various workshops, seminars, conferences and additional extracurricular activities.

- Private-public partnership in creating and maintaining educational infrastructure. Starting new schools in remote villages can help in reducing the commuting hurdles of girls and encourage them to attend classes more often.
- Create awareness regarding gender stereotyping among parents. Schools & Colleges can provide counselling sessions for parents regarding the importance of women education, awareness to reduce early marriages and teenage pregnancies.
- Government should ensure the efficient implementation of laws to protect the rights of women.

## Conclusion

Women play an important and diverse role in a society. Her part is of paramount interest to the economy as she contributes near about 50% of the world population. Her education is essential for sustainable development because she can bring drastic change in life not only of hers but also for the future generations too.

As women's empowerment increases, so does the country's education and sustainable development. Women, which constitute half of the world's human capital, are one of its most underutilized resources. Sustainable economic growth at national and global levels depends on women joining the labour force and fuller use being made of their skills and qualifications.

For enhancing the well-being of a families and female productivity, it is significant to raise the educational levels and literacy rate of women. In developing country like India, mostly in the rural district like Darjeeling, it becomes very prominent to reduce gender inequality in its educational sector for accelerating the sustainable development. Empowered women can provide plan-document to be used for physical development of the human habitat. Therefore, the presence of educated women is needed to play as a system for environmental development furthermore sustainable development.

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