

**Situational Analysis of
Single Women in
Himachal Pradesh:
2006**

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

This section provides a brief historical and demographic profile of Himachal Pradesh.

'Himachal Pradesh emerged as a distinct political entity after independence. However, it has always been part of Indian history and culture and some of its peoples and regions have figured in our myths, epics, *Puranas* and history. While there are many communities which are unique to Himachal Pradesh, there are many others who have settled there later and become part of the Himachali identity. Linguistically, Himachal Pradesh is known for its heterogeneity and the dominance of the languages of the *Pahari* subgroup. Bio-anthropologically, the communities belong to different ethnic stocks, with a substantial admixture of populations.' (Sankhyān: 1996) This indicates the state has had a history that has not been linear. The state has been formed by conglomeration of different regions. This very aspect makes it necessary to understand the state, in terms of its own historical, physical, social, political, economic context.

Post independence period

The hilly state of Himachal Pradesh came into being as a chief commissioner province of the Indian Union on 15th April 1948 as a result of merger of 30 erstwhile princely states of Punjab and Shimla hills. All these areas at that time constituted four districts viz. Chamba, Mahasu, Mandi and Sirmur with an area of 27,167 sq.km and population 9,35,000. In July 1954, the neighboring part C state of 'Bilaspur' was integrated with Himachal, thereby adding one more district. In 1960, the border tehsil of Mahasu district (chini tehsil) was carved out as a separate administrative unit and district Kinnaur was formed raising the total number of districts to six. In November, 1966, the Punjab state was reorganized with the formation of Haryana as a separate state and merger of then Kullu, Kangra, Shimla and some hilly areas of Hoshiarpur district and Dalhousie of Gurdaspur district into and Himachal further led to the constitution of four new districts viz. Kullu, Lahaul-Spiti, Kangra and Shimla. With this addition then Himachal comprised of 10 districts. In September 1972, two more districts viz. Hamirpur and Una were created by trifurcation of Kangra district and the Mahasu and Solan districts were reorganized as Shimla and Solan districts. Hence, this has resulted in a total of twelve districts in the state. Since 1972, there have been no changes in the administrative structure of Himachal Pradesh except for carving out of new sub-tehsils and rising of sub-tehsils to level of tehsils.

In the year 1951, Himachal Pradesh was made a part 'C' state, till 1956 when it was rendered as a Union territory. It maintained its status of Union territory till 1971, when it was granted a full-fledged statehood, hence became a state on 25 January 1971.

'The process of integration of certain districts with Himachal over a period of 23 years indicates that during this period the fulfillment of the interests of Himachal Pradesh remained in others' hands (Sharma, S.K, 1995 cited in Cranney 2001:125)

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION, PHYSIOGRAPHY AND POPULATION PROFILE OF THE STATE

This section provides an insight into a brief profile of the population in the state and the spatial distribution, providing a background characteristic of population as being rural or urban. There is a distinct clustering of population in valleys; areas of harsh climate and steep inclines are thinly populated. The high and the rugged mountain ranges with snow capped pinnacles and forest clad slopes are particularly inhabited.

The state of Himachal Pradesh is located in the north- west of the country. To the east, it forms India's border with Tibet, to the North lied the sate of Jammu-Kashmir, U.P. n the south -east, Haryana on the South and Punjab on the west. The entire territory of the state is mountainous with altitude varying from 350 metres to 7000 metres above the sea level.

According to the 2001 Census, the state has an area of 55,673 sq. km. It constitutes 1.69% of India's area. Topographically, Himachal's territory from South to North can be divided into three zones namely the Shivaliks or outer Himalayas, Inner Himalayas or mid mountains and Alpine zone or the greater Himalaya. Administratively, Himachal Pradesh comprises of twelve districts, 52 subdivisions, 72 tehsils and 34 sub tehsil as per Census 2001, with 20,119 villages as compared to 19,388 villages during 1991 Census.

Table 1: Statistical profile of the population of Himachal Pradesh

ITEM	Reference	Number
Area (In Sq.Kms.)	2001	55673
POPULATION		
Total	2001 Census	6077900
Males	2001 Census	3087940
Females	2001 Census	2989960
Rural	2001 Census	5482319
Urban	2001 Census	595581
SC Population	2001 Census	1502170
ST Population	2001 Census	244587
POPULATION (0-6 Years)		
Total	2001 Census	793137
Males	2001 Census	418426
Females	2001 Census	374711
% Age of Rural Population to total population	2001 Census	90.20
% Age of Urban Population to total Pop.	2001 Census	9.80
Decennial Growth Rate	2001 Census	+ 17.54
Density of Population	2001 Census	109

Source: Year Book 2002-2003, Health and Family Welfare Department, Himachal Pradesh)

Table 2: District profile of population in H.P. (census 2001)

District	Area (in sq. Km)	Total Population	Rural	Urban	Population density	Sex-Ratio
Bilaspur	1167	340735	318786	21949	292	992
Chamba	6528	460499	4255981	34518	71	961
Hamirpur	1118	412009	381836	30173	369	1102
Kangra	5739	1338536	1266362	72174	233	1027
Kinnaur	6401	77007	77007	0	12	884
Kullu	5503	379865	349772	30093	69	928
Lahaul-Spiti	13835	33224	33224	0	2	804
Mandi	3950	900987	840029	60958	228	1014
Shimla	5131	721745	554912	166833	141	898
Sirmaur	2825	458351	410765	47586	162	901
Solan	1936	499380	408205	91175	258	853
Una	1540	447967	4088545	39422	291	997
H.P.	55673	6070305	5475424	594881	109	970

(Source: compiled from the Year Book 2002-2003, Demographic & Evaluation Cell, Deptt. of H&FW Himachal Pradesh.)

From the data it is revealed that Himachal is predominantly a rural state the majority of population being rural. The state has a population of 6,077,248 (2001 census).

The state of H.P. being predominantly a hilly state, the majority of its population (90.21%) is rural, living in 16,997 inhabited villages. Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur districts have 100% rural population. Kangra has the highest number of rural areas (1, 2266, 362) and Bilaspur district the least (3, 18,786). The urban population concentrated in 57 towns is barely 9.80% of the total population. Shimla district has the distinction of highest urban population (166833). 'The urban population of the state is 594,881 people that are 9.79% of the state population against 8.69% in 1991. In fact the urban population of the state has registered an increase of 32.43% during 1991-2001. The primary reason for this is the addition of the new towns viz. Baddi Nagar Panchayat in Solan district having a population of 22,592 and Mant Khas Census town in Kangra district with a population of 5240. The state capital, Shimla is the only place with the status of Municipal Corporation and apart from this there are 20 Municipal Councils, 28 Nagar Panchayats, 7 Cantonment Boards and one Census town.' (Mehta: 2002). The urban population has shown a trend from 6.99% in 1971 to 8.69% in 1991 to 9.80% in 2001, when there was no change in the total area of the state. 'The decade from 1981 to 1991 showed an increase of 1.08% in the urban population.' (Bisotra, 2000:7)

Population Density

Of the 12 districts in the state Hamirpur continues to have high density of population (369) distantly followed by Bilaspur (292), Una (291), Solan (258), Kangra (233), Mandi (228), Sirmaur (162), Shimla (141) persons sq. km. Where the areas are inhospitable it is sparsely populated as in the case of Kullu (69) and Chamba (71). The trans Himalayan tracts of Lahaul and Spiti and Kinnaur carry very little population as they are semi-arid highland zones, the former maintaining status quo with 2 persons per sq. km since 1971 and Kinnaur stands a little better at 13 persons as compared to 8 persons per sq. km in 1971. Area wise, Hamirpur is the smallest district that covers an area of 1,118 sq. km (2.01%) and Lahaul –Spiti covers the largest area of 13,835 sq. km (24.85% of the area of H.P.)

Religious composition, SC &ST

Himachal Pradesh has a large area under tribal belt which covers two districts of Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur and Bharmaur and Pangi development blocks of Chamba district. Geographically, about half the area of the state is covered under tribal belt whereas the population here is just 2.2 lakhs i.e. 4.2 percent of the total population of the state According to 1991 Census, the Scheduled Caste (SC) and the Scheduled Tribe (ST) constituted a little over 25% and 4% respectively of the total population of the state. (Parmar, 2004:29) The religious composition of Himachal indicates a preponderance of Hindus who constitute 95.77% of the total population. The remaining population is made up of Muslims (1.63%), Christians (0.09%), Sikhs (1.22%), Buddhists (1.23%), Jains(0.02%) and others at 0.01% (Cranney, 2001:125)

Table 3: Decadal Population growth in Himachal Pradesh

Time reference	Population
1951	9,83,367
1961	13,51,144
1971	34,60,434
1981	42,80,815
1991	51,70,877
2001	60,70,305

(Computed from Bisotra: Himachal Pradesh: A Demographic Analysis, 2002)

The decadal increase was less than the national decadal growth in population. The decadal growth of the country has been 24.80%, 24.66%, and 23.50% for the decades of 1961-71, 1971-81, and 1981-91 respectively. The population of the state has been 0.31% of the population of India in 1961, 0.63% in 1971; 0.64% in 1981 and 0.61% in 1991.’(Bisotra, 2002:7). According to the 2001 Census, the state accounted for a meagre share of the total population of India (0.59%). The total population in the state grew from 1.9 million in 1901 to 6.1 million in 2001’ (H.P. Devt. Report, 2005:86)

'Among the districts of Chamba, Kangra, Bilaspur, Mandi, Kullu , Solan, Sirmaur have shown a higher growth rates in 1971-81 decades, whereas Chamba, Kullu and Solan continued to indicate higher growth rate during 1981-91 decade. However, other districts showed decrease in growth rate. The district of Kangra and Hamirpur showed highest growth of rural population during 1971-81 decade; however, they showed signs of decline in the decade that followed.'(Bisotra, 2002: 71)

Sex- Ratio

'The sex –ratio has been rising steadily since 1901 in Himachal Pradesh when it was 884. It crossed the mark of 900 in the 1951 Census' (Mehta: 2002). The sex ratio in the state has improved since 1951. It was 915(1951), 923(1961), 958(1971), 973(1981) and 976 in 1991. The sex-ratio has been above the national average from 1971 onwards. (Bisotra: 2002) An alarming aspect of gender related demographic changes in HP has been the sharp decline in the 0-6 age group sex ratio brought out in the 2001 Census reflecting not just the growth of adverse social attitudes but also the state's inability to grapple with the issue.(Sanan,2004)

The trend in the sex-ratio in the district is almost the same as reflected in the state average except for the districts of Kinnaur and Lahaul- Spiti where the sex-ratio has continued to decline and fluctuate since 1961 due to selective migration.'(Mehta, 2002)

The sex –ratio in the age group 0-6 according to the 2001 Census for Himachal stands at 897, much lower than the national average of 927. Within a decades time from 1991-2001 there have been 54 girl children “missing” across the state. 'The highest sex ratio in the 0 to 6 age group is recorded in the Pangti tehsil of Chamba district and Junga tehsil of Shimla district.' (Mehta: 2002).

Table 4: A comparative of sex ratio of India and H.P from 1901-2001

CENSUS YEAR	INDIA	HIMACHAL PRADESH
1901	872	885
1911	964	904
1921	955	902
1931	950	906
1941	945	897
1951	946	915
1961	941	923
1971	930	958
1981	934	973
1991	927	976
2001	933	970

(Source: Year Book 2002-2003, Demographic & Evaluation Cell, Deptt. of H&FW, Himachal Pradesh.)

The data reveals that sex-ratio in Himachal has shown a rise since the 70's relative to all India averages. Although there has been a slight decline in past decade in overall sex ratio, it is the sex ratio at birth and child sex ratio that is of great concern.

Table 5: Sex Ratio at Birth for H.P

YEAR	SEX RATIO AT BIRTH
1993	898
1994	876
1995	883
1996	879
1997	858
1998	849
1999	784
2000	857
2001	856
2002	866
2003	877
2004	872

**Source: Civil Registration System, Annual Report 2004; Health and Family Welfare Department, Himachal Pradesh*

The sex ratio at birth in the state has been on consistent decline since 1993 with fluctuations in the year 2000-04. In 1993 the sex ratio at birth in Himachal Pradesh was 898 females per 1000 males that recorded its lowest in 1999 to 784. At 2004 the sex ratio at birth stands at 872 which is much lower than 1993. The tabulated form is presented below. In almost a decade there has been a decline of 26 girl children. Within HP, Kinnaur shows the highest sex ratio at birth (CRS 2004) of 948 females per 1000males followed by Lahaul-Spiti (934), Shimla (920), Kullu (918) and Mandi (894).

Hamirpur shows the lowest sex ratio of 814 compared to that of the state as a whole. Please see the state wise graphs of the sex ratio at birth given as annexure.

What remains a significant cause of concern is the declining sex ratio in the 0-6 age group in the state, which stands low at 897 in 2001 as compared to the all India figures of 927. The sex ratio has shown a difference of –54 from the year 1991 when the child sex ratio was 951¹.

¹ visit <http://www.indiafemalefoeticide.org/himachalpradesh15may.htm> for comparative understanding of child sex ratio across the states and union territories in India.

Table 6: Child Sex Ratio in the Age Group 0-6 Years, State/Districts, Himachal Pradesh (1991-2001)

Sl. No.	State/Districts	Child Sex Ratio		Absolute Change
		1991	2001	
	Himachal Pradesh	951	897	-54
1	Kangra	939	836	-103
2	Una	923	839	-84
3	Hamirpur	938	864	-74
4	Mandi	968	916	-52
5	Solan	951	900	-51
6	Bilaspur	923	884	-39
7	Sirmaur	973	940	-33
8	Shimla	958	930	-28
9	Kullu	966	960	-6
10	Chamba	965	962	-3
11	Lahul & Spiti	951	986	35
12	Kinnaur	958	NA*	NA*

Census 2001 was not conducted in Kinnaur district due to natural calamities.

Source: <http://www.indiafemalefoeticide.org/himachalpradesh15may.htm>

A glance at the data across districts of Himachal Pradesh delineates the sub-regional picture, with Kangra district emerging as to be one with the lowest sex-ratio in the age group 0-6, Una, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, too exhibit a sex-ratio lower than the state average.]

Son preference has been a part of the Himachal culture for centuries, as much as it is elsewhere in India. The history of Himachal Pradesh shows a culture of female infanticide although it is concentrated only in some parts of the state like in parts of Kangra and Chamba. However technological advancement has introduced foeticide at a large magnitude. Earlier a preference for son would result in practice of bigamy and polygamy that would be acceptable even to the wives. However today it stands as a viable ground for divorce or informal separation. This is because of two important equations that have emerged in the social fabric. One is that the increase in the female literacy levels has led to opposition to the practice of bigamy or polygamy. Therefore more women today are intolerant to existence of co-wives and prefer a monogamist marital relationship. At the same time however there has been no change in the belief of 'son preference' therefore if the woman is unable to conceive a male child then that becomes a socially acceptable ground for divorce and humiliation in the family. Thus in turn women find sex detections and sex selective abortions as one of the means to save their marriages and resultant humiliation. There has been not only a shift of preference to monogamy but more and more couples today are engaging in nuclear

residence patterns and there has been an apparent shift from joint families to nuclear families. This has led to a problem typical of the shift and that is of 'mother desertion'. Sons are then preferred in the hope that they would provide some securities to their parents in the old age.

LAND AND AGRICULTURE

Land reforms in Himachal Pradesh

This section briefly highlights the different initiatives taken in Himachal Pradesh as in terms of equitable distribution of land.

Himachal Pradesh has taken various steps under the various land reform policies to improve the rural economy. To improve the agricultural efficiency, especially of marginal and small farmers who account for 77% of farmers with 35% of operated land, the State Government initiated multidimensional efforts. Serious thought was given to the land tenancy and tenured system prevailing in the state. (Singh et al, 1992)

'The state has enacted various land reform legislations to restructure the agrarian structure and ensure land to the actual tiller and also distribute the surplus land among the landless households. In fact over the years, the land reform measures enacted and implemented in the state have aimed at conferring ownership rights on the tenant cultivators; reducing inequalities in respect of the distribution of landholdings; encouraging the consolidation of landholdings to prevent fragmentation of land; revision and updating of land records and allotting waste land /village common land to landless and eligible persons under Nautor Rules, 1968 and Utilization of Surplus Area Scheme, 1975(Economic Review, Himachal Pradesh,1997,p.19cited by Sharma, et al ,2000). The Himachal Pradesh Abolition of Big Landed Estates and Land Reform Act were enacted way back in 1953. With the passing of Punjab Re-Organization Act 1966, certain areas of erstwhile Punjab were merged in Himachal Pradesh. This led to the enactment of Himachal Pradesh (Transferred Territory) Tenants Protection of Rights Act in 1971. Again to incorporate the guidelines evolved in Chief Ministers' Conference in 1972 and also to plug the loopholes in the existing land ceiling legislations, the land legislation act was amended and 'Himachal Pradesh Tenancy and land Reform Act' was enacted in 1972'. (Sharma et al, 2000) 'For a long time the majority of cultivators were operating on insecure landholdings without permanent rights on the land they were cultivating from generations.

Keeping in view this situation the State Government passed an Act, called Himachal Pradesh Tenancy and Land Reform Act, 1972(HPT &LR Act, 1972). Under this Act, tenant cultivators were given ownership rights of the land, which they were tilling since a long time. In addition to that, under the landless scheme, every rural household in the state has been provided a minimum of 5 bighas of land (0.40 Ha.) for agricultural purposes those households who owned less than 5 bighas of land were given additional land to the minimum land holding of 5 bighas.' (Singh et al, 1992) To eradicate the phenomenon of landlessness and to augment the amount of surplus land, the Government of Himachal Pradesh enacted 'H.P. Village Common Land Vesting and Utilization Act 1974'. The Act placed *shamalat* (common) land at the disposal of the government for the allotment to landless households. (Sharma et al, 2000)

A glance at the figures available from selected districts supports the fair progress of land reform

measures in H.P for example 'In respect of the tenancy laws, out of 4.34 lakh non occupancy tenants, about 3.96 lakhs have already been conferred proprietary rights . Among different revenue divisions, there were 2, 35,472 non-occupancy tenants in Kangra division out of which 2, 17,332 have been conferred proprietary rights so far. The remaining tenants fall under the category of protected categories of landowners like widow, minor, army personnel disabled and infirm persons. Similarly, in Mandi division, there were 1, 07,107 non-occupancy tenants out of which 95,621 have been conferred proprietary rights. In Shimla division, 30,078 tenants have been conferred proprietary rights out of 31,477 non-occupancy tenants. Likewise, nearly one-lakh landless agricultural laborers have been allotted land acquired under ceiling laws and H.P Village Common Land Vesting and Utilization Act, 1974. What is significant is that 'there are very few landless households in the state who are left without allotment of land. Consequently, the incidence of landlessness is very low. According to National Sample Survey Data, landless households were 7.72% in 1981-82 and 10.46 % in 1991-92. These households are likely to be allotted land in the near future. In so far as the consolidation of landholdings, 21.93 lakh hectares stood consolidated up to March 1996.' (Sharma et al, 2000)

In spite of such good land reforms the reforms seem to lack a gender angle to it. When we consider the cases of single women it is evident that land is a biggest asset for the single women. However from the on-field experience it is evident that their marital families or even the natal families deny the women their land rights and property rights. In Himachal women are very often the marginal workers. They are the real farmers and tillers of land. Due to the restriction on the physical mobility of the women it is very often the men who travel outside village for work and this is evident from the increase in male main workers than female. However the women are left behind to look after their lands. Therefore the land reforms need to take into consideration the status of single women and provide them with some security through the reforms. Where land is considered as the highest asset it can prove to be restrictive for women if she is unable to migrate with her husband to his place of residence. There are cases where women have had no knowledge of their husband's second wives or keeps as they were left in the villages to look after the land while the husbands left for work. Apart from land as an asset, land is also found to be restrictive for the women. Since the land keeps her from moving in with her husband to the place where he has migrated. Thus land in turn restricts her physical mobility and binds her to her marital home.

Agriculture and social fabric

This section briefly looks at agriculture and agricultural activities in the state.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the people of Himachal Pradesh, contributing 21.7% towards the state gross domestic product. This has been lower than the previous years. Out of the total geographical area of 55.67 lakh hectares the area of operational holdings is about 9.99lakh hectares and is operated by 8.63 lakh farmers. The average holding size comes to 1.2 hectare, distribution of land holdings according to 1995-96 Agriculture census shows that 84.5% of the total land holdings are of small and marginal farmers. Semi medium and medium farmers own about 14.9% of land holdings and only 0.6% of land holdings are owned by large farmers. Apple cultivation is of special significance for the people living in the higher hills of the state. Crops grown here comprise wheat,

maize, rice, pulses (accounting for more than 50% of its total agricultural production) and ginger, potato, mushroom and fruits. (Balokhra:1995)

Himachal Pradesh can be divided into four agro climatic zones, on the basis of the homogeneity shared by each zone in respect of natural factors, viz. topography, altitude, temperature, rainfall, humidity and crop combination. The four zones are Low -Hill Subtropical Zone; Mid Hill Sub Humid Zone; High Hill Temperate Wet Zone and High Hill Temperate dry Zone (Khan: 1996). The characteristics of these Zones are further elucidated in the table 1 of the annexure.

A study on the economic (anthronomic) activities of the villages² was conducted in 1991-92 in different set of villages selected randomly from the four agro-climatic zones of H.P. The group of villages was taken to be better reflective of anthronomic activities than unitary as both the number and chances of diversification got enhanced in the process. The household survey was conducted during 1991-92 in the Chamba tehsil (high hill temperate wet zone); Keylong (high Hill Temperate Dry), Bangan Tehsil (Low Hill) and Theog (Mid Hill). The study elucidates that in the low hills a mixed subsistence farming system exists, heavily supported by off-farm income (basically remittances). In the mid hills, a mixed farming system exists, where livestock, farm forestry, vegetables, and off-farm activities are equal contributors to household incomes. The climate of mid hill zone is suitable for of-season vegetables and stone fruits. Wherever the weather is favorable and there is easy access to roads and markets, these activities have emerged as the main sources of household income and employment. In such locations a farming system based on vegetables and stone fruits has become prominent. As far as type of best crop is concerned fruit cultivation (mainly apples) predominates in the high hill wet zone. In the high hill dry zone, livestock and off-farm activities are the main sources of sustenance. Due to the dominance of commercial crop cultivation the per capita income in the high hill wet zone is much higher than in other zones. (Khan: 1996)

The production of crops in Himachal has increased manifold over a span of last fifty years. The figures generated by the agriculture department of Himachal Pradesh reveal that the food grains production has increased from 200 thousand tonnes in 1951-1952 to 1397.98 thousand tonnes in the Year 2003-2004.

Table 7: Land utilization pattern in H.P

	<i>Area in '000 ha</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Total Geographical area	5,567	
Reporting area for land utilization	3,396	100.00
Forests	1,056	31.10
Not available for cultivation	331	9.75
Permanent pasture and other grazing lands	1,204	35.45
Land under miscellaneous tree crops and groves	46	1.35
Cultivable wasteland	123	3.62

² The economic activity in the respective villages has been termed as 'anthronomic' by the author

Fallow land other than current fallows	26	0.77
Current fallows	52	1.53
Net area sown	558	16.43

Source: State of Forest Report 1999, Forest Survey of India

It is estimated that 87 per cent of the population is dependent on agriculture, largely at a subsistence level. In the lower valleys agriculture and animal husbandry form the backbone of the economy whilst at higher altitudes, agro-pastoral systems predominate. Landholdings are small and agriculture is mainly rain fed. Wheat, maize, pulses, rice, sugarcane, vegetables, ginger, garlic, potato etc. are grown. Agriculture covers 60 per cent of the available private land. In fact agriculture and allied activities (including horticulture) remains the mainstay of H. P's rural economy, providing direct employment to 71 per cent of workers. Population density per unit area of agricultural land is very high compared to the national average, and landholdings are small – 64 per cent are less than 1 hectare. Only 20 per cent of the cultivated area benefits from irrigation; the rest is rain fed and productivity is low (though not necessarily in horticulture, which has enjoyed good yields). Marginal subsistence farmers, particularly those in high altitude areas, manage to be fully self-sufficient from agriculture for only about two to six months a year; consequently they rely on other livelihood strategies for survival.

The economy of Himachal has witnessed a move since 1980's from one of subsistence characterized by a diverse and self-reliant mountain agricultural system based on food-grains, to one that is mainly cash driven and market-oriented based on vegetable crops and fruits. Literature from the eon of 80's suggests that in the hilly state of H.P. mixed farming has been the common characteristic. The farmers had been growing cereals, pulses, and vegetables, fruits on the land available. However with the changes in the environment and with the increasing needs of the family, and with the expansion of roads and infrastructural facilities 'farmers are shifting to three dimension system, wherein agriculture including horticulture, animal husbandry and forestry are combined together' (Nadda: 1987). Today the economy of Himachal Pradesh is based mainly on agriculture, horticulture and forestry. There has been a shift from a semi-feudal type of economy to a market economy in many areas of H.P. (Cranney, 2001:125). Horticulture has become a key economic activity in HP in recent years. ³ Women mainly look after agriculture. Looks at the work force participation rate shows that women are bound to agriculture and work as cultivators where as men take up jobs outside in industrial sector or service etc.

Shifts to cash crop patterns have led to changes in the agricultural methods. Not all can afford the techniques for growing cash crops in large quantities. Besides this the pace of life has speeded with percolation of industrialization and tertiary sector. Therefore the newer generations are less patient and less interested in agriculture. This has been apparent in the 30yrs of experience from fieldwork gathered by the organization. Since most of the time for men has gone into educating themselves they are often not trained into methods of agriculture. Whereas the girls, even while they are studying, are made to do household and other tasks like cattle rearing, essential farm activities

³ Note that the term 'Horticulture' is used to mean fruit growing in Himachal Pradesh, and not production of flowers, which is termed 'floriculture'.

except ploughing, grass cutting, wood gathering, storage of fodder etc. Girls are made to leave education even before or soon after their 10th or 12th standards. Therefore girls have more experience and knowledge about tilling and cultivating than boys. This in turn forces them to look after land while the men go out to work in secondary or tertiary units.

Realizing the contribution of women as farmers the government of Himachal Pradesh had launched a scheme called “women in Agriculture” during 2004-05. An analysis of its outcome needs to be done to see how efficacious it has proved to be.

INDUSTRY

This section looks at the industrial growth in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

The literature on industry in Himachal Pradesh suggests that industry is a recent phenomenon in the state; it has started gearing up in the state in the past two decades only. A news report outlines that ‘During the past two years alone the state has succeeded in attracting an industrial investment of over Rs.11, 500 crore and all the major business houses were setting up their units in the state.’ (The Tribune, August 4, 2005)

‘The process of economic reforms initiated in July 1991 by the Govt. of India and the consequent industrial policy reforms/initiatives in the form of de-licensing and automatic approvals of foreign investment in identified areas have generated significant investor interest in Himachal Pradesh’, (www.laghu-udyog.com). The progress of industrialization can be gauged from the following figures

Table 8: Growth of Industry in Himachal Pradesh

Year	Units (No.)			Employment (No.)			Investment (in crores) Current Prices		
	SSI	L&M	Total	SSI	L&M	Total	SSI	L&M	Total
1979-80	6969	22	6991						
1990-91	20545	110	20655	86227	15125	101352	150.54	200.84	351.38
1991-92	21518	112	21630	89997	15280	105277	222.38	224.00	446.38
1992-93	22440	114	22554	93577	15747	109324	289.28	265.00	554.28
1993-94	23265	121	23386	96779	17824	114603	350.20	404.33	754.53
1994-95	24121	129	24250	100119	19693	119812	412.40	761.27	1173.67
1995-96	24845	147	24992	103269	22467	125736	465.10	1447.40	1912.50
1996-97	25617	160	25777	106665	23895	130560	485.34	1595.66	2081.01
1997-98	26378	173	26551	110112	25988	136100	518.78	2031.14	2549.92
1998-99	27253	174	27427	114491	26103	140594	564.43	2085.41	2649.84

1999-00	28045	182	28227	119618	28930	148548	613.56	2288.49	2902.05
2000-01	28731	188	28919	122745	29047	151792	643.50	2310.52	2954.03
2001-02	29479	191	29670	1265954	29382	155976	685.48	2363.34	3048.82

Source: Director of Industries Himachal Pradesh as cited in State Development Report, 2005:272)

The foregoing table shows that there has been an increase in the number of both the small scale industries as well large and medium industries in the state over a period of time, but it has been the small scale industries which are predominant in the state. In tandem with the growth of the industries, the employment and investment in the industries too shows an increase. The Economic Survey of Himachal Pradesh 2004-05, as conducted by Economics and Statistics Department, reports 'At present there are about 229 medium and large scale industries and about 31,384 small scale industries with a total investment of about Rs. 3,280,99 crores working in the state. These industries provide employment to about 1.70 lakh persons'.

Table 9: Medium & Large Scale Units - actual

Year	No of large & medium scale units functioning in the State	Investment (Rs in crores)	Employment
1991-92	133	350	15000
1992-93	136	500	15500
1993-94	140	532	17000
1994-95	146	867	21000
1995-96	153 (up to 12/95)	963	22629

Table 10: Small Scale Units - actual

Year	No of small scale units functioning in the state	Investment (Rs in crores)	Employment
1991-92	21518	248.08	84261
1992-93	22440	289.28	90802
1993-94	23265	350.20	94676
1994-95	24121	412.00	99504
1995-96	24587 (upto12/95)	436.00	101554

Source: www.laghu-udyog.com/policies/state/spolicies.htm

The foregoing table shows that there has been a rise in the number of industries of both small-scale units and large-medium units in the early 90's. Within 2004-05, more 18 large and medium scale units have been registered with and investment of Rs. 67.82 crore that shall employ 1000 workers. In the same year 545 small-scale units are registered (as on December 04) with an investment of

Rs. 753.32 that shall employ 3,759 workers. It is apparent that the large and medium scale industries are heavily invested into as their contribution in domestic product is more but the employment provided in these industries is low as compared to small-scale industries. Therefore it is evident that the pattern of industrialization that the state of Himachal Pradesh has adopted is largely designed on the lines of areas in plains and is not sensitive to cultural and geographic diversity of the state.

Much of the industrial activity in Himachal Pradesh is related to agro-processing and located in rural areas. Compared to the national average, industrialization indices are lower in Himachal Pradesh, as compared to the national average. (ISST, 2002:5)

There are acts and laws relating to regulation of mining activities but it still seem to be very difficult to stop uncontrolled mining. Materials mainly extracted are limestone, barites, rock salt, silica boulders, gypsum and shale as major minerals and brick earth, clay and building material like 12 sand, stone and minor minerals. Three cement factories are already functioning in the state and there are plans to set up a few more. Annually about 4.5 million tonnes of minerals, including about 2.7 million tonnes of limestone, is extracted from an area of 330 hectares that has been leased out by the state government to cement factories. Usually conventional open cast mining operations are followed except for two mines, one of rock salt at Drang in Mandi and other of barites in Sirmaur that are using underground methods.'(Gouri et al, 2004). The contribution of the industrial or manufacturing sector has grown significantly from Rs.774 crore in 1995-96 to Rs.1920 crore in 2001-02. In terms of percentage, the share of the manufacturing sector in the GDP has increased from 12.18 in 1995-96 to 14.38 in 1999-00.

The industrialization has speeded up in past decade however there has not been much diversity in the occupation and therefore the process seems to lack a promise for future employment for all the workers in the state. The women in particular do not have much choice of occupation that would cater to their work patterns, life styles and ensure employment to most women.

INCOME

It is observed through the Economic Survey of Himachal Pradesh of 2004-05 that the percentage of State Domestic Product since 2001 till 2004 has been comparable to that of the country as whole. TSDP at current prices from 2002-03 to 2003-04 has increased by 11.6%. The Per Capita Income from 2002-03 to 2003-04 increased by 9.8% (at current prices)

Table 11: State Domestic Product (S.D.P) / State Income at constant prices (1993-94) (in%)

Year	H.P	India
2001-02	5.4	5.6
2002-03	4.5	4.0
2003-04	8.1	8.5

The SHDR, 2002, outlines that in the wake of paucity of literature, the Department of Economics and Statistics of H.P attempted to estimate individual district incomes for the first time in 2001. The table below gives a vivid picture of the variations across the districts.

Table 12: Per capita income at 1990-91 Prices (in rupees)

District/State	1990-91	1999-2000	Annual Compound Growth Rate (1991-2000)
Bilaspur	4,515	7,547	5.27
Chamba	4,822	6,058	2.31
Hamirpur	2,753	4,243	4.42
Kangra	4,128	5,736	3.34
Kinnaur	8,746	7,930	-0.97
Kullu	6,039	6,098	0.10
Lahaul & Spiti	11,417	12,559	0.96
Mandi	3,394	5,313	4.58
Shimla	7,525	8,304	0.99
Sirmaur	3,934	5,650	3.69
Solan	6,052	11,231	6.38
Una	2,394	4,480	6.47
Himachal Pradesh	4,618	6,507	3.49

Source: Computed by the Department of Planning, Himachal Pradesh based on the information supplied by the DESHP (Pg. 81 in SHDR, 2002)

The differentials in the inter sectoral economic performance of the districts, particularly in the Primary Sector, are quite marked and ground for concern, although the compound growth rate of 7.38 per cent of the State as a whole indicates that structural transition is moving in the right direction. Plan wise the growth rate of the NSDP was very slow initially but since the Fourth Plan it has been rising consistently, hitting 8.8 per cent in the Seventh Plan and averaging approximately 6.5 per cent during the entire period. (SHDR, 2002)

The growth rate of Net State Domestic product for Himachal between 1990-91&1999-2000 has been 7.38% for the state as whole. The secondary sector recorded the highest growth rate at 9.75% followed by tertiary sector at 7.85% and the primary sector at 4.78%. Sectoral contribution to the Domestic Product in 1990-91&in 1999-2000 shows that the Primary sector contributed 37.45% to the state income in 1990-91 &in 1999-2000 the share declined to 29.32%. The contribution by secondary and tertiary sectors has relatively increased. Per capita income of the state in real terms grew at an average annual compound rate of 3.49% between 1990-91 and 1999-2000. The maximum growth rate was recorded in Una district at 6.47% while at the other end of the spectrum tribal Kinnaur which is prone to flash floods, frequent slips & slides had negative rate.

Table 13: Sector-wise Contribution to Total SDP

	1990-91	2003-04
Primary	35.1%	26.38%
Secondary	26.5%	33.23%
Tertiary	38.40%	40.49%

It is seen from the above table that there has been a considerable decline in the contribution of primary sector that includes agriculture and agro-based occupations. Where as the secondary and tertiary sector have shown a significant increase. In the tertiary sector in the year 2003-04 Community and Personal Services have contributed 18.55% percent of the total tertiary contributions; Transport, Communications and Trade contribute 14.28% and Finance and Real Estate contribute 7.56% of the tertiary share in Total State Domestic Product

The rate of growth of district income during 1990-91 to 1999-2000 has been less than the state average for the district of Chamba, Kangra, Kinnaur, Kullu, Lahaul - Spiti and Shimla. The highest growth rate in the district income was recorded in Una district, which was followed by Solan, Bilaspur, Mandi, and Hamirpur. The annual average growth rates of GDP/SDP per capita at 1980-81 prices (%) for year 1990-91 to 1996-97 in Himachal stood as 2.27% lower than the national average (3.47%). Sectoral share in GDP/SDP% for 1996-97 for the primary sector in the state stood as 33.56% higher than the national average of 28.80%; the share in secondary sector was 26.85%, lower than the national average 28.30% and in the tertiary sector also stood as 39.59% lower than the national average of 42.90%.' (Compiled from SHDR, 2002)

Table 14: Growth of State domestic product and Sectoral components

	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	2000-2001
GSDP growth rate(%) at constant prices	4.21	8.01	3.90	6.00
Per Capita NSDP(%)at constant prices	2.11	4.98	-0.40	4.10
Sectoral composition of GSDP				
Primary Sector	58.74	47.35	37.66	27.37
Secondary Sector	16.59	19.59	24.59	32.50
Tertiary Sector	24.66	33.00	37.82	40.13

Source: Economic Review (relevant issues) as cited by Kaushik & Karol, 2005:56)

If we look at the figures over a period from 1970 to 2000, the real GSDP growth has averaged slightly more than 5.53% a year in Himachal Pradesh. Along with this the real per capita NSDP

growth averaged 2.70%. The over all economic growth in total state domestic product during 2003-04(Q) was 8.1% as the total state Domestic Product at constant prices (1993-94) increased to Rs 9163crore from Rs.8473crore in 2002-03. As per the advanced estimates on the basis of economic conditions up to December, 2004 the likely growth rate for 2004-05 was expected to be around 7.5% (Economic Survey, HP:2004-05) Meanwhile, we can also see a movement in the economy from primary sector to one in which secondary and tertiary sectors have become predominant. The share of primary sector also shows a substantial decline from 58.74% of GSDP in 1970-71 to less than 30% by 2000. Although the share of agriculture and allied sectors showed not much fluctuation in nineties, the economy has shown a shift from agriculture and allied sectors in TSDP has declined from 57.9% in 1950-51 to 55.5% in 1967-68, 26.5% in 1990-91 to 21.71% in 2003-04. The share of industries and service sectors respectively has increased from 1.1 and 5.9% in 1950-51 to 5.6 and 12.4% in 1967-68, 9.4 & 19.8% in 1990-91 and 14.8% & 18.7% in 2003-04. In spite of the shift in agriculture the contribution of this sector cannot be undermined.

WOMEN AND WORK

'The primary & secondary sectors registered much lower growth in employment opportunities which stood at 1.39% and 1.29% respectively in comparison to the tertiary sector. The data on labour force participation rates suggests that the overall LFPR for the state has been 74.38% and for males stood as 87.58% relatively higher than for female (59.44%) for the labour force in 15-59 years. The rate of LFPR is considerably higher in rural areas. LFPR for males does not differ much in rural and urban areas though participation rate of females is significantly lower in rural areas.

The districts wise data suggests that LFPR is high in Lahaul-Spiti & Kinnaur both are tribal areas and Lahaul is entirely a rural district. Female Work participation Rate for 1991 stood as 34.8% higher than the national average of 22.3%.' (Compiled from SHDR, 2002)

The total workforce of the State registered an annual growth rate of 2.53 per cent from 1981 to 2001. While the percentage of male workers decreased from 62.93 per cent to 56.33 per cent, the female work force registered an increase from 37.07 per cent to 43.66 per cent. This reflects a possible out migration in the state specific to male workers. Another study revealed that full-time job opportunities in the State showed a 2.09 per cent growth in the decade 1981-91 with a maximum growth in full time job opportunities of 5.97 per cent recorded for the Tertiary Sector.

Table 15: Work Participation Rate for Women at the District Level

Districts	Total		Female	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Bilaspur	44.60	48.95	40.82	45.56
Chamba	48.58	50.04	42.89	45.94
Hamirpur	41.87	49.90	39.81	48.85
Kangra	34.37	44.04	22.94	37.01
Kinnaur	52.42	60.54	43.48	54.78

Kullu	47.93	57.05	41.28	53.20
L-Spiti	64.93	63.50	60.07	57.43
Mandi	45.72	50.44	42.38	48.23
Shimla	48.62	51.19	41.29	44.20
Sirmaur	46.59	49.30	36.50	41.32
Solan	45.05	52.70	35.06	42.60
Una	33.45	45.03	18.50	37.41
H.P.	42.80	49.28	34.80	43.69

(Compiled from H.P Development Report, 2005)

A view of the work participation rates based on the Census Reports across district of Himachal suggests that Lahaul-Spiti stands out with the highest WPR for female for both Census periods. Kangra has the lowest WPR.

'A study of labour inputs on farm households reports that women in Himachal Pradesh work longer hours than men, on the 'light' non-seasonal work in cultivation (e.g. sowing, weeding, hoeing, harvesting, cutting grass fodder). The study also found that women spend a lot of time tending animals, a way of supplementing the gains from small plots.

Traditionally the hill people had always to look for ways in which to diversify their occupational base. The government is the largest employer in Himachal. Location advantage of its contiguity to the prosperous states of Punjab and Haryana and its proximity to the capital city also adds to the opportunities of jobs. Hill women have a deep involvement in the struggle for survival. This labor-intensive agrarian economy has had to rely on the participation of women as well as men. In a land dominated by small and marginal farmers, women have to actively participate in the fields. (De et al, 2002). Jean Dreze too opines that 'a distinctive feature of H.P. has been a high level of female labour-force participation; women's involvement in economic activities outside the household is much higher than elsewhere in North India.'(Dreze)

POVERTY AND WOMEN

This section gives a brief outline of the state of poverty situation in Himachal Pradesh. It also provides a glimpse into poverty amongst the households headed by women.

The North Indian state of Himachal Pradesh has incidence of poverty of 28.44 %, which is lower than the national average. Even rural poverty at 30.34% is less than the average for all other Indian States. The incidence of poverty in rural tribal areas is higher at 63.74 percent than the all-India average of 51.94 percent. (<http://unpan1.un.org>).

Poverty Reduction in Himachal Pradesh

'The incidence of poverty expressed as a percentage of people living below the poverty line in Himachal Pradesh has witnessed a spectacular decline from 26.39% in 1973-74 to mere 7.63% in 1999-2000 which is much lower than all-India poverty ratio of 26.10% in 1999-2000. The credibility of this data is highly questionable as the field experiences of Sutra and various other studies have

shown that the poverty levels in the state have been on rise. The experiential data shows that there has been an increase in the demand for starting micro credit system in villages in past 10 years and the main reason for its popularity is the increasing need for loans. This reflects plausible poverty rise.

Rural Poverty

Himachal Pradesh ranks third in inverse ranking among major states of India.

The incidence of rural poverty dropped from 27.42% of rural households in 1973-74 to 7.94 % in 1999-2000. The bulk of reduction in rural poverty however occurred after the mid 1990's, due to a high growth of investment and employment opportunities in the secondary and the tertiary sectors.'(Kaushik, 2005)

Table 16: Poverty Ratio in Himachal Pradesh and India (percent)

Year	Himachal Pradesh			India		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
1973-74	27.42	13.17	26.39	56.44	49.01	54.88
1993-94	30.34	9.18	28.44	37.27	32.36	35.97
1999-2000	7.94	4.63	7.63	27.09	23.62	26.10

Source: Economic Survey, 2002 and Economic Review (relevant issues) cited by Kaushik, 2005; pp: 57)

A study was conducted in the Solan district to map the perception of the beneficiaries' socio-economic programmes in the state. The study attempts to assess the qualitative improvement in the living standard of the rural people and the disadvantaged groups in the society through the feedback on various socio-economic programmes implemented in the state and Solan district during 1996-97 to 1998-99. Kandaghat block, one of the five blocks in the district, was selected for Micro-level investigations as it has domination of rural population, high concentration of Scheduled Castes and highest incidence of poverty. Sample households numbering 449 from the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families' list prepared for the Eighth Five Year Plan were interviewed through a pre- structured Beneficiary Schedule-cum-Questionnaire (Family Profile). Reference period of the Study was 1996-97 to 1998-99. On the whole, centrally sponsored rural alleviation programmes, national social assistance and state sector social security and welfare programmes were being implemented to a large extent in true letter and spirit for improving the social and economic standard of living of the targeted. Secondary data made available by District Rural Development Agency, Solan and block administration at Kandaghat relating to physical achievement of rural poverty alleviation programmes and basic minimum services in the district and the selected block show that the progress is quite good. The primary data collected during the micro investigations in the study area did throw certain problems and difficulties being experienced by the people, which have been highlighted for example some of these are lack of irrigation facilities in the area, lack of marketing

network for the produce of vegetables and flowers, there is no established form of disseminating information about the poverty alleviation and social security schemes etc. (<http://unpan1.un.org/>)

Despite variations in Head Count Ratio for the state as obtained by using different poverty lines the poverty increased in Himachal between 1987-88 and 1993-94, and as literature suggests poverty is more pronounced in rural areas of Himachal. Population below the poverty line according to the Planning Commission estimate (percentage) stood relatively low for Himachal as compared to the national average as the 30 day recall period, the population BPL was 7.63% in the state far below than the national average of 26.10%. According to 7 day recall period also the population BPL in the state stood as 7.27% relatively low to the national average of 23.33%.

A household survey in the rural areas of Himachal Pradesh conducted by the Department of Rural Development of Himachal Pradesh to assess the number of rural families living below poverty line is the only information available to have an idea of incidence of poverty in the districts. The latest survey conducted by the Department is for the year 1998-99.'(Baru :2004)

Table 17: Survey of the Poor Families (1998-99) Rural

	District/State	No. of rural households	No. of rural families below poverty line	% age of families below poverty line
1	Bilaspur	65,532	17,448	26.62
2	Chamba	76,418	47,165	61.72
3	Hamirpur	83,505	20,179	24.16
4	Kangra	265740	63,972	24.07
5	Kinnaur	10,889	2896	26.57
6	Kullu	59,227	11432	19.30
7	L& Spiti	6446	2445	37.93
8	Mandi	169863	42012	24.73
9	Shimla	94316	21,755	33.67
10	Sirmaur	58,618	13,418	22.89
11	Solan	65,418	17,951	27.44
12	Una	81,014	15,439	19.02
	Total	10,36,996	2,86,112	27.59

(Source: Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh, as cited in SHDR, 2002)

The table shows that the maximum number of families in rural areas living below poverty line was in Chamba district. At 19.06% Una excelled in having the least number of families below poverty line.

Lahaul-Spiti (37.93%) and Shimla (33.67%) were the only districts besides Chamba with number of families below poverty line higher than the state average. Overall in Himachal Pradesh, 27.62% of rural families lived below poverty line.’(Baru, 2004)⁴

‘A survey of the rural households conducted by the Rural Development Department in 1998-99 revealed that 2,86,447 families constituting 27.62% of the total of 10,36,996 households lived below poverty line in the state. In the case of some of the districts like Chamba, Lahaul-Spiti and Shimla, the percentage of people below poverty line is over 61.00, 37.93 and 33.67 percent respectively, which is significantly above the national average’(Parmar,2004) Chamba District is one of the poorest districts of Himachal Pradesh and is in the list of 25 most backward districts in India. Of the total families Below Poverty Line (BPL) in the state, 16 % lie in Chamba district even though only 7 % of state’s rural Households fall in this district. In fact 61.7% of Chamba’s households are Below Poverty Line. (Ahal et al). This aspect is also corroborated by news reports which outlines ‘ Chamba district continues to be the most backward districts and ranked 51st in terms of ‘backward districts ‘ in the country despite launching of various centrally sponsored projects. The percentage of families below poverty line in the district has been recorded 61.72%, which is also the highest in the state. Out of 76,418 families, 47,165 families are living below poverty line.’(THE HINDU, 29th December 2003)

Considering the statistics prior to 1999 there has been a slight increase in the poverty. The table below shows the percentages of total families in rural areas that are below poverty line are 27.59% and as high as almost 15% households below poverty line are headed by women. These women also include the number of single women. One would expect the number of households headed by women to be under poverty line to be high even today considering the limited employment options they have and also the lack of economic support that would be discussed later in the report. However there should be a gender sensitive investigation in the status of poverty in Himachal as the data available is scarce.

Table 18: Rural households living below poverty line (1997-98)

Total No. of rural households	No. of rural households living below poverty line	Rural households headed by women below poverty line
10,36,996	2,86,447 (27.59)*	41,850 (14.61)**

‘*’ Percentage of total no. of rural households

‘***’ Percentage of total no. of rural households below poverty line

Source: Himachal Pradesh Fact Sheet, Himachal Pradesh Human Development Report 2002

LITERACY

Himachal Pradesh has notched up key successes on the literacy and elementary education fronts. The literacy level witnessed a quantum increase from 32 per cent in 1971 to 77 percent in 2001 with

⁴ This data has been taken from Himachal Pradesh Human Development Report , 2002, compiled for ‘Lessons Emerging from the State Human Development report-health’ submitted to UNDP,2004

female literacy trebling from 20 per cent to 68 per cent in the same period. Amartya Sen and the PROBE report (1999) have also recognized the progress in education. The Public Report on Basic, Education (PROBE) prepared by Jean Dreze et al and the Centre for Development Economics, in fact calls it a 'schooling revolution'. (Sood: 2003) In the earlier decades if we examine the position of Himachal in terms of literacy rates, it had a lamentable position in this regard. 'Only 7.5% of the male and 2.0% of the female population were literate (1951 Census). This literacy percentage works out to be 4.8%. It is to be noted that this percentage was the lowest among all the states and union territories of India. The ratio of the educational institutions was one of the poorest in the nation i.e. one school in an area of about 70 square kilometers inhabited by 2,700 persons in 1948. '(Khan, 1996: 60-61)

Table 19: Literacy Level in H.P: A Decadal Variation

Census Year	Literacy Percentage	
	Himachal Pradesh	All India
1951	7.7	16.6
1961	21.2	24.0
1971	31.9	29.5
1981	42.5	36.2
1991	63.3	52.2

(Source: cited in Khan, 1996:65)

The foregoing table suggests that literacy in Himachal Pradesh was far below the national average, and showed abysmal figures relative to the national average. During the period of 1961-71 literacy levels show huge leap and beyond the decade of 70's it shows a high growth as compared to the national average. 'During 1961-71 the literacy ratio of Himachal Pradesh rose up nearly by 85%, which was the highest growth rate recorded during the period by any state in India. (Singh '71 cited in Khan, 1996:65) 'The reason behind this phenomenal increase was partly boosted by the merger of those areas of Punjab, which were having high literacy rate with Himachal Pradesh. (Khan, 1996:65)

A study by Pathania (1997) on the literacy front makes an attempt to map the district level spatial temporal variation in different dimensions of literacy in Himachal Pradesh for Census period 1981-1991, also glances at the disparity in the literacy rates from different segments of population i.e. rural/urban, male-female and SC/ST at two points of time (1981-1991). Then author makes an attempt to study a tiny state's performance on literacy front taking a span of two decades. The findings of the author reveal that the state has fared quite well on literacy front as it has higher literacy rates for all the sections of population. Being the highest literate states of India it also follows the national pattern with low female literacy rate, as compared to male literacy rates. The difference between male& female literacy rates is higher in rural areas, than in urban areas. As the economy is more diversified, so literacy is prerequisite and also the education infrastructure is well developed thus increasing the enrolment rates. Even SC/ST population has quite higher rates though predominantly being as rural state. Many tribal development programs and schemes like literacy

campaigns and DPEP have been started at relevant time period to reduce the gap between male and female literacy rates.

The district level analysis shows that Hamirpur has had the highest literacy rates as it has the concentration of education institutions and in migration of literate population from attaining higher and professional education. Chamba has emerged as the lowest literate district in the state. Low literacy rates are prevalent in this district for all sections but worse for females. The backwardness of literacy in the district is also because of localized factors such as inaccessible terrain, harsh climate and migratory nature of its tribal population, Gujjars and Gaddis all lowering the literacy rates. There appears a clear clustering of the districts in terms of literacy in the state. The Northeast cluster shows low literacy values and comprises of the tribal areas of Lahaul & Spiti, Kinnaur, and Chamba & Kullu. Districts of the South West cluster have high literacy rates comprising of Hamirpur, Kangra, Una, Bilaspur and Mandi. The author highlights that localized factors are more pertinent in the kind of clustering of districts. Kangra district is a traditional place for out migration especially in the service sector, which in return brings motivation for other people to avail education, thus increasing the literacy rates.

Policies adopted by the state government, opening up many schools in far-flung rural areas and expenditure on education have been spent in good amount, which has cumulatively brought in higher literacy rates in Himachal.

Table 20: Literacy change over a period of time in the districts of Himachal Pradesh

Districts	Literacy Rates		
	1981	1991	2001
Bilaspur	44.69	67.17	78.8
Chamba	26.45	44.70	63.73
Hamirpur	52.70	74.88	83.16
Kangra	49.12	70.57	80.68
Kinnaur	36.84	58.36	n.a
Kullu	33.82	54.82	73.36
Lahaul-Spiti	31.35	56.82	73.17
Mandi	40.21	62.74	75.68
Shimla	42.74	64.61	79.68
Sirmaur	31.78	51.62	70.85
Solan	41.07	63.30	77.16
Una	50.05	70.57	81.09
Himachal	42.38	63.86	77.13

Source: Compiled from H.P Human Development Report, 2002 & H.P development Report, 2005

The table suggests that over a span of two decades all districts in Himachal have shown a rise in the literacy rates. Hamirpur emerges as the leader in literacy rates throughout, with literacy rates quite

above the state average. Chamba remains as the backward district in term of literacy rates.

'Census 2001 report reveals that literacy rate in district Chamba is 67.73%, while the female literacy is 49.70 %, the lowest in the state. The standard of education in the district is still low. The district was chosen for launching the central government sponsored by 'Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan 'with the sole objective to improve the literacy rate. However, the results of the project are not encouraging. The literacy in Hamirpur district is 86.13% while female literacy is 76.41%, the highest in H.P.' (THE HINDU, 29th December, 2003)

Female literacy remains a second to male literacy in both the Census periods of 1991 and 2001. Urban areas score over the rural areas in terms of literacy for both male and female except for Kinnaur & Lahaul-Spiti as both the areas are rural areas. The rural urban differentials in literacy stand more pronounced for districts of Chamba, Kullu, and Sirmour, the lowest rural-urban differentials are observed in Una district. (See table in annexure).

Although there are many reports on a commendable performance of Himachal Pradesh in improving its literacy levels, there is a paucity of data on the impact these rising levels have had on the socio-cultural and economic fabric of life in Himachal. It is apparent from the case studies of single women and the experience of NGOs on field in several years that increase in literacy levels of the girls have resulted in them opposing the practices like bigamy and polygamy. Most importantly it has increased the age at marriage for women. The success of the Mahila mandals in rural Himachal is directly correlated with the increase in literacy levels amongst women.

MIGRATION

This section briefly highlights the migration pattern in Himachal Pradesh.

Giving a detail of migration in Himachal Bisotra (2002) outlines, 'the migration of all types in Himachal Pradesh has not been very high. The decades 1951-61 witnessed in-migrants due to process of rehabilitation of refugees from West Pakistan following partition. This process affected Shimla, the capital of H.P. and its surrounding towns and villages. The shifting of offices of the Punjab government to Shimla also influenced and caused some migration from nearby towns/villages. The decade 1961-71 was the significant decade as the area and population size of the state almost doubled as a result of re-organization of Punjab in 1966. Migration also took place during this period. Males in Himachal Pradesh outnumber females in migration. The phenomenon of migration has always existed in Himachal, but it has accelerated during the last three decades. According to study conducted by Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India there were 4, 03,697(1971) and 5, 11,394) migrants in the state (both in- migrants and out-migrants.) Out of this male in-migrants were 24.59% and females 20.10% in 1971 and 24.02%, 21.20% in 1981 respectively. This little analysis indicates that more men migrated from one place to another than the women.

Within district migration the figures are skewed towards females. The migration within the district in respect of females has been more than 60%. This is mainly due to marriage. The inter-district migration caused by socio-economic factors like the growth of industries, agricultural horticultural development and urbanization has been about 33% of the total migration during 1971-81 decade.

This percentage is higher than the national average, which was 21.32 % (1971) and 24.48% (1981) of the total migration. This figure would have only increased since 1981 due to increase in tertiary and secondary sectors and emerging industrialization. The rate of migration whether within the districts or outside the districts has been more for the males. There seems to be a paucity of data that investigates the impact of migration on women. However it is evident from the on field experience that the men who migrate often leave their wives back at home to take care of their lands. Some of these men re-marry another woman from the place where they settle after migration. Their wives back in the village are kept unaware of this and very often the men do not return to their houses in the village. The women are thus left deserted and they who are the real tillers of the land are not given the rights to own the land. The case studies of single women as emerging from the field area of SUTRA spoke of the impact of the migration on women. The no. of the women deserted by their husbands is unknown however the on-field experiences say that there could be large number of women who have been deserted by their husbands. A proper study needs to be conducted in the state to enumerate such women. A situational analysis of Himachali women as done by Madhu Sarin in her report for UNICEF (1989) spoke of desertion in large numbers in the state of Hamirpur which is believed to have what Sarin calls “money order economy”. The report reflecting on the causes of desertion speaks of hefty dowries for the daughters of the migrated fathers especially if they have migrated in the urban areas. Apart from this personal preference of the men, less strict restrictions for men and sanction of their behavior under the garb of male superiority are some of the main reasons. Polygamy is still very prevalent in Himachal Pradesh and migration has strong correlation with the practice of polygamy.

There has been an increased incidence of migration from urban to rural areas particularly in the last two decades. This was noticed in the peripheries of towns which were rural areas but developing as urban areas. Most of these areas now form the part of statutory towns or have developed into areas having urban characteristics. Such peripheries of towns are around Shimla, Solan, Manali, Kullu, Dalhousie, district headquarters of many other small towns.

A collaborative study of The Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India and the East-West Population Institute, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA in 1989, to study the patterns of internal mobility in Himachal Pradesh by distance area and sex, concluded that, ‘urbanization in Himachal Pradesh is low as compared with other states. Female migration is higher than male migration. Males move longer distance for employment and higher education. The pattern of internal mobility is different than that of India and the neighboring states because of unique topography and predominantly rural character of the population. There are a number of hydel projects, roads and bridges works in tribal and rural areas where the number of skilled workers and casual laborers from urban areas are deployed. The state is an apple-state and grows huge quantity of seed potatoes. Many urban-based persons have become orchard farmers. They move to their orchards to supervise the crop and deploy much horticulture labor from outside the state.’⁵ (Bisotra, 2002)

⁵Notes: The labor performing work on apple orchards in Himachal now a days mainly comprises of Nepali migrants, most of them turn up during apple season from Nepal specifically for apple season and some of them keep shifting their bases within the state, and join in to reap the harvest of different crops like apple, potato, peas.

Observations made by a Praxis report elucidate migration in Kullu and Mandi districts of Himachal Pradesh. The report outlines that seasonal migration was seen to be common livelihood strategy pursued by men in Kullu and Mandi. Women rarely migrate for work. The popular migration destinations include the apple orchards, the potato farms in Lahaul Spiti, log-felling and sawing sites in Kinnaur, hospitality industry in Manali, construction sites in urban centers and sand mines in Solan. Work in hotels was estimated to fetch the best returns followed by work in the apple orchards. Preference for work in Solan sand mines appeared to be warning due to hazards involved, despite good returns. Work in PWD projects was popular but rarely available. Migration takes place amongst people belonging to all castes, except in places marked by cannabis economy. The phenomenon of permanent migration has also increased as fall out of a boom in the tourism industry. Migration was seen to be mainly a group phenomenon, except in the hospitality industry. Cases of deceit by contractors were also commonly found. For the SC migrants in Nirmand (Kullu district) returns from migration were believed to help them tide over indebtedness, without accruing any surplus' (www.praxisindia.org)

HEALTH CONDITIONS IN HIMACHAL WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

Burden of Diseases in H.P.

The Directorate of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Himachal Pradesh, entrusted a special study to the Department of Community Medicine, Post Graduate Institute of Medical education and Research(PGMIER)., Chandigarh, to assess the burden of disease in Himachal Pradesh. The findings of the draft estimation report show the top ten causes of the burden of Diseases (DALYs) in Himachal Pradesh classified by age and sex. According to it, the disease patterns vary with age and sex in Himachal Pradesh. Lower respiratory infections and diarrhoeal disease are the most frequent causes of the disease burden among the children aged 0-4 years irrespective of sex.

While iron deficiency anaemia is the most frequent among children in the age group of 5-14, diarrhoeal diseases, asthma and other unintentional injuries are also widely prevalent in this age group. Whereas road accidents and other unintentional injuries are also widely prevalent in this age-group. For the age group of 15-44, it is iron-deficiency anemia and other maternal conditions that account for most of the burden of disease among females in this age group. From the age 45 and above, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease constitute the largest burden of disease between both the sexes. Further tuberculosis, ischemic heart diseases, other unintentional injuries and asthma are widely prevalent among the males aged 45 and above, while other maternal conditions, asthma, iron deficiency anemia and other ischemic heart disease are prevalent among the females in the same age-group.(H.P. Development Report,2005) Women in villages (Ichasser and Devnagar in district Shimla) where the Cranney(2001)conducted research identified the following diseases that family members had suffered from- tuberculosis, jaundice, typhoid, pneumonia, diarrhoea and dysentery. The Voluntary Health Association of India (Shimla Branch) lists the same diseases, which the women cited as the most prevalent. In incidents of death due to diseases peculiar to infancy, diarrhoea and prematurity are responsible for 47% of the total (UNICEF 1991, cited by Cranney

2001:216). See table 2 in the annexure for a tabular distribution of the burden of diseases. In the table it is evident that mental health is not accounted anywhere. The case studies of single women spoke of depressions, hypertension, and sense of low self-esteem and very low confidence levels. Women have reported their mental conditions affecting their physical health. They speak of consistent illnesses to an extent that they affect their ability to work. Sadly the mental health is not accounted for while talking about the health status of women. Even the figures on medical institutions and state expenditure shows that the mental health of women and single women in particular is not paid any attention.

Anemia

According to the NFHS-2, nearly 67% of children in Himachal Pradesh were found to be anemic, a proportion that is higher than anemic women (41%) in the state.

The District Survey showed that for the year 1997, the proportion of girls suffering from anemia was as high as 63.2% in Solan, 27.3% in Shimla, 18.3% in Hamirpur, 12.1% in Lahaul & Spiti, the other districts ranged from 5% to 10% except Mandi (3.7%) and Sirmaur (2.4%). [SHDR, 2002]

In Himachal Pradesh, reproductive health problems are widely prevalent amongst women, especially amongst the poorer women and those living in the rural areas. Poor nutritional status during pregnancy and delivery thereafter increases women's susceptibility to these problems. 'SUTRA has identified the major health problems for women in terms of gynecological problems such as vaginal discharge, menorrhagia (excessive menstrual bleeding) uterine prolapse, sexually transmitted diseases and anemia.' (Cranney, 2001:205) Other NGOs have identified leucorrhoea as a major problem with women in different parts of Himachal Pradesh. There is no conclusive evidence as to why leucorrhoea is such a serious problem with so many women. Some NGO workers suggest that this is due to the lack of hygienic conditions as well as poor diet. (Ibid: 206)

Table 21: Life expectancy at birth for 1993-1997, H.P & India

LEB age in years	Himachal Pradesh			India		
	Overall	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female
0(Birth)	65.1	64.6	65.2	61.1	60.4	61.8
1	68.5	68.1	68.5	65.3	64.4	66.0
5	65.4	64.7	65.6	63.4	62.2	64.6
10	60.8	60.1	61.1	59.1	57.8	60.4
20	51.3	50.6	51.7	49.9	48.5	51.3
30	42.5	42.0	42.7	41.1	39.5	42.7
40	33.7	33.5	33.7	32.2	30.7	33.8

50	25.2	25.1	25.0	23.8	22.5	25.1
60	18.1	18.7	17.2	16.5	15.5	17.5
70+	12.2	13.9	10.1	10.8	10.1	11.4

Source: Abridged from statements 5, 6 & 7 pertaining to Experience of Life 1992-93 and 1993-97 made available by the Vital statistics Division, Registrar General Office, R.K. Puram, N-Delhi as cited in SHDR, 2002:101

Life expectancy in Himachal Pradesh is comparatively higher to the national average across all age groups, irrespective of gender categories.

Maternal Mortality Rate

According to NFHS-1, The Maternal Mortality rate is higher in Himachal Pradesh (453) as compared to the national average of 453.

Morbidity patterns

The data of NSSO, 52nd round shows that both in urban and rural areas of Himachal Pradesh females suffer more due to short term ailments than males; whereas males suffer more from long term ailments. As compared to other states, the incidence of hospitalization is very low in the state. A major factor for this low incidence could be the problem of accessibility due to the difficult terrain. (SHDR, 2002:135)

HIV/AIDS- RTIs/STDs

Like other states, Himachal Pradesh is also afflicted with HIV/AIDS. As on November 2000, out of 26837 persons screened, 267 were found as HIV positive which includes 82 AIDS cases. Over 80% of these cases are from District Hamirpur, Kangra, Shimla, and Bilaspur & Mandi. On the basis of HIV sentinel Surveillance data is collected in 1999, it is estimated that there might be around 3500-4000 HIV positive cases in the state.

The problem of RTI/STD is also quite high in the state. A community based study carried out in district Hamirpur in March 1997-revealed STDs prevalence through syndromic diagnosis as 23.9% and by etiological diagnosis as 3%. The prevalence is higher in women. However, seropositivity for Syphilis, which was 37.04% in 1952, has declined to 0.73% in 1999. Overall prevalence of RTI/STD is quite high.

'HIV/AIDS emerged in the state only in the early 90's, when the first AIDS case was detected in 1992. During the period March 2000-2003, the number of HIV- positive persons has increased from 201 to 531, and the number of AIDS patients from 72 to 143' (Director, State AIDS Control Society, H.P. as cited in the H.P. Development Report, 2005:167)

HIV/AIDS across districts of Himachal Pradesh

By 2001, HIV/AIDS cases reported from every district except the tribal district of Lahaul-Spiti. HIV-positive cases are concentrated in the five districts of Shimla, Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Mandi and Kangra. (SHDR, 2002 & Govt. of H.P, 2002)

The Multiple Indicator Survey (MICS 2000) focuses on awareness about HIV/AIDS. 64% of women aged 15-49 in Himachal-Pradesh have heard about HIV/AIDS of which 61% are in rural areas and 85% in urban areas. Awareness about AIDS was higher among the never married women (78%) than among the ever-married women (59%). (H.P. Development Report, 2005:167) Regarding the status of HIV/AIDS in Himachal Pradesh statistics reveal that 'As on 31st March, 05, 1212 HIV+ patients have been detected in random screening with 264 full blown AIDS cases. In sentinel surveillance conducted by HP govt. recently the serious indication of increasing prevalence in pregnant women has come which reflect the increased prevalence of HIV in children in near future.' (HPVHA)

On the basis of information gathered by the NFHS-2, Bist elucidates that 'in the state less than two – thirds (61%) of women have even heard of AIDS. Awareness of AIDS is particularly low among women who are not regularly exposed to any media, women from households with low standard of living and illiterate women. Among women who have heard of AIDS, 90% learned about the disease from television and 33% from the radio. 32% of women who have heard of AIDS, learned about it from posters and hoardings. Among women who have heard about of AIDS, 27% do not know of any way to avoid infection.' (Bist, 2005:76)

Health Vision 2020 (document of department of H&WF, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh) outlines that the state has not witnessed a major epidemic of communicable diseases since 1991, when only a few districts were affected by Cholera epidemic, which took a toll of more than 100 lives. However, the state is more prone to disasters due to its geographical features and its location in the seismic zone for earthquakes. Various health problems which constitute the burden of diseases include communicable and non-communicable diseases, trauma and under nutrition.

The routine data about Himachal Pradesh on morbidity profile for the year 1998 for ten leading diseases is given in the following table

Table 22: Morbidity profile for ten major diseases in Himachal Pradesh- 1998

Diseases	Number of patients in OPD	Number of patients in IPD	Total (%)
Acute Bronchitis	3,37,915	5118	3,43,033(17.18)
Anemia	3,12,070	3695	3,14,765 (15.81)
Ch. Bronchitis	2,30,620	6345	2,36,965(11.86)
Dental Diseases	2,23,139	119	2,23,258(11.18)
Gastroenteritis	1,83,301	11,361	1,94,662(9.54)
Skin Diseases	1,88,610	1901	1,90,511(9.54)
Tonsil, adenoids	1,29,536	13,788	1,43,224(7.17)
Wound, Injuries	1,30,153	2581	1,32,734(6.64)
Ill defined intestinal infections	1,02,504	2976	1,10,480(5.53)

Amoebiasis	1,02,785	3180	1,05,965(5.25)
Total	19,45,633	51064	19,96,697(100)

(Source: Himachal Health Vision 2020, Dept. of Health & Family Welfare)

This above table reveals that diseases like acute bronchitis; anemia, chronic bronchitis, and dental diseases gastroenteritis are largely responsible for the dominant morbidity in the state.

Health expenditure so far

Table 23: Total Expenditure on Public Health (Rs. in Millions)

	1981	1987	1991	1996	1998	1999
Himachal Pradesh	112.00	417.01	84.74	175.80	238.55	289.01

Source: For 1981 and 1987 is combined Finance and Revenue Accounts Comptroller and Auditor General of India GOI, respective years. Other years- Demand for grants, respective States: as compiled in 'Review of Health Care in India' by Prashant Raymus, January 2005, CEHAT Publications

Table 24: Health Expenditure as percentage of Total Expenditure

	1981	1987	1991	1996	1998	2001	2003	2005
Himachal Pradesh	6.63	13.50	3.32	6.16	7.04	5.64	4.50	5.08

Source: Upto 1987 is combined Finance and Revenue Accounts Comptroller and Auditor General of India GOI, respective year; For year 2001 is State Finance A Study of Budget of 2002-03, RBI; For year 2003 and 2005 is Public Finance November 2004, CMIE; as compiled in 'Review of Health Care in India' by Prashant Raymus, January 2005, CEHAT Publications

The tables above show that although there was an increase in the percentage of expenditure on health out of the total expenditure till year 1998, there has been a decline since then. As per the budget speech of March 3, 2006 the health expenditure proposed for the year 2006-07 is Rs. 365 crore. Although there is an increase in the proposed expenditure the expenditure to account for mental health is nil and doesn't find any mention in the speech or even in the figures so far.

From this the speech by the honorable chief minister it is known that the state is under a huge debt burden of 16,532 crore (as reported on 31st March 2005). At the same time the pension liability of the state is increasing very rapidly and is likely to touch about Rs.1, 000 crore by 2009-10. This has resulted into heavy reduction of investment in health sector especially in secondary and tertiary care sectors. With this reduction the state is failing to meet the requirements of certain segments of society for whom access to health services is difficult which includes single women and women in crisis situation. The concept of charging incremental user fee from primary to tertiary level disables single women to avail health services which were hitherto available free of charge or at nominal charge. This is apparent from expenditure on hospital and dispensaries reducing from 41.75% (1980-81) to 21.22% (1996-97) for further details follow the table below. The increased expenditure on Family Welfare and Maternal and Child Welfare has no consequences for single women's healthcare needs.

Structure of Public Expenditure on Health in Himachal Pradesh

Expenditure Items	1980-81	1985-86	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Health Administration	4.02	2.66	4.26	3.39	3.77	3.36	#	#
National Disease Control Programme	13.54	11.68	10.05	11.51	11.53	11.17	11.30	10.73
Hospitals/ Dispensary	41.75	63.79	23.81	21.97	21.79	22.06	21.06	21.22
Medical Education, Training Research	6.56	6.29	8.59	7.49	8.00	10.94	8.70	9.30
Family Welfare	10.30	18.06	16.50	15.59	18.51	15.44	18.82	17.45
Maternal & Child Welfare	1.03	1.18	1.14	1.59	2.17	2.42	1.59	2.17
Other Expenditure	11.78	14.13	27.63	26.75	28.11	27.34	32.88	32.56
Total Revenue Expenditure	88.98	90.79	91.97	88.28	93.88	92.73	94.35	93.44
Capital Expenditure	11.02	9.21	8.03	11.72	6.12	7.27	5.65	6.56
Total Expenditure on Health	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note #: Expenditure on health administration is included in 'other expenditure' for the years 1995-96 and 1996-97

[Source: Data compiled from Controller and Auditor General, Government of India, Combined Finance and Revenue Accounts (for 1980-81 & 1985-86) and the 'State Budgets' for years 1985-86 onwards) by CEHAT, cited in SHDR, 2002:154]

SUMMARY

At the very outset we started by giving a historical profile of the state. The historical profile of the state indicates that it has had a chequered history. The state witnessed different waves of migration; for a long period had a feudal set –up until the state was re-organized. 'Under the rule of the princes, the region of H.P suffered from the worst kind of feudal exploitation. The rulers did not consider it necessary to develop their territories by utilizing the wealth of natural resources.⁶The changes in size and the administrative structure that the state has gone through between 1948 and 1971 have influenced the level and pace of its development. Himachal inherited a primitive economic system from its feudal structure, and an inadequate institutional framework, which constituted a weak base for socio-economic development. Thus, at the initial stages the state was at disadvantage in relation to the rest of the country in pursuing the process of development. In this context, the institutional task of setting up an integrated administration, transforming a feudal system into a modern democratic one, necessitating the abolition of all feudal practices and laws, was certainly difficult.⁷

The state has been formed by a combination of different regions and different ways of life. Like any other region Himachal too presents a wide heterogeneous canvas, on one extreme we have the tribal areas like Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti evincing a borderline with Hindu and Buddhist cultural realms and on the other end are some areas integrated after the reorganization of the state way back in 1966, from the state of Punjab have a fair admixture of the *Pahari* and Punjabi culture. 'The state has three well-defined eco-cultural zones which are intrinsic to the understanding of various ethnic identities. For instance, the upper niches of the Himalayas are dominated by the communities following the *Mahayan* tradition of Buddhism or Lamaism, speaking languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family and practicing pastoralism (9.48% as against national average of 1.90%), horticulture (15.52% against 4.27%), animal husbandry(40.52% against 21.55%), etc. The middle belt is dominated by the communities following terrace cultivation (25.86% against 4.75%) and horticulture and some elements of pastoralism, following Hinduism (78.45% as against 76.35%) and folk religions. Ethnically they belong to *Khas, Kuninda and Kol*, speaking the languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan family. The lower belt consists of sub-mountainous ranges and plains peopled by the communities such as immigrants (61.21%as against 59.98%) with an exposure to the larger world practicing settled cultivation (21.55% against 35.12%), business and trade (43.97% against 33.59%), speaking Pahari languages.'⁸

Any investigation in the status of single women in Himachal Pradesh and the determinants of the status needs to be looked in the light of process of socio-eco, political, historical, geographical developments over time. In the wake of these processes, many aspects are cumulatively feeding into each other e.g. policies and programs, national policies & programs pursued with an aim of realizing development goals. However certain processes that have been pursued in sections that follow have an effect on social conditions, the quality of life and the mental health of population. The

⁶ M.G. Singh (1985); cited in State Development Report, 2005:40

⁷ L.R Sharma,(1985); cited in H.P. Development Report,2005

⁸ People of India, Himachal Pradesh, Vol. XXIV, ed. Sharma & Sankhyan, ASI, 1996)

cultural transformation, different waves of migration, natural calamities, and changes in political structure that accompany socio-economic development tend to bring shift in the existing patterns governing human behavior and lifestyles. In the wake of its course, these changes tend to produce new patterns of consumption, new conditions of morbidity, variation in access to resources, utilization pattern of resources.

The agro-economic profile of the state delineates that it is predominantly an agriculture-dominated state, which gets reflected in its workforce composition and the industry though still in a growing stage is also largely agro-processing based. Agriculture being predominant and apple cultivation being the core, migration is also pursued as livelihood strategy by many throughout the state. Literacy levels attest a good performance in the state. The health status indicators attest a fair performance, the health institutions too have shown a marked increase but what becomes evident is that regional imbalances, variation in concentration of health institutions, differences based on gender, on basis of rural urban divisions in the sphere of health still exist in Himachal.

While we made an attempt to glance at the Health Services and Health Service system in Himachal, we took large references from the State Human Development Report and a paper submitted to UNDP based on the analysis of the State Human Development reports ('Lessons emerging from State Human Development Report-Health', Baru with Pathak & Dhaleta: 2004). The disaggregated data for districts and across gender, rural-urban divisions has been provided for some indicators only. It also provides an insight in to the national programmes running in the state for malaria, leprosy, tuberculosis, blindness, AIDS with a brief preview of infrastructure (institutes/beds/treatment centers) available for these programs and the kind of intervention being implemented specifically in relation to HIV/ AIDS in the state. Aspects like patterns of the health expenditure, expenditure by systems of medicine across decades post 80's, utilization patterns (based on accounts generated by NSSO) and health care provision have also been looked at.

When we supplement the good indicators of economy and health with the actual data from the field several questions become apparent. There has been decline in the workforce of government sectors, reduction in social sectors as the state today is sunken in huge debts that have burdened the state to large extent. In order to repay these debts the state has welcomed private sector investment especially in the sectors of health and education. In order to avoid the pension liability the state has resorted to "contract labor" policy. The industrial policy laid by governments provides exemption of taxes for the private investors with the condition that 70% of the workers would be Himachalis. Although the condition is mandatory the trend has led to severe intra-state migration and also immigration from neighboring states. The promise of employment to the youth remains a matter of concern for coming years. The steep reduction in the investment in health sector has direct impact on accessibility and availability to marginal and vulnerable sections of society especially single women who have been hitherto neglected by the society, family and now the policy makers.

CHAPTER 2

STATUS OF WOMEN

Culturally Defined Attitudes Towards Women

There is considerable cultural diversity among sub-groups of Himachal's population. Given the tough hilly terrain and difficult communications between areas even within the state, different pockets have strong cultural identities, which have received little exposure to outside influences. The outer Himalayan zone is inhabited by descendents of people from the plains who were driven into the hills a couple of centuries ago due to persecution by the Moghuls. Here one finds a blend of Punjabi and 'Pahari' culture. The inner Himalayan zone has a much stronger 'Pahari' culture. However, attitudes towards women among most of the population are defined by strong patriarchal society norms. The parts that have been merged from Punjab and Haryana have brought in Himachal a strong feudal culture that has been strongly patriarchal in practice. This has undergone some variation in due course but the values have remained unchanged. The 'pahari' culture or culture of hilly people has also been patriarchal but the "pahari" women enjoyed more liberty than the women in plains in matters of marriage, inheritance of property, divorce, separation and even sexual liaisons before marriage. She held a supreme position in the family and was treated with respect and dignity. This does not rule out the fact that there existed domestic feuds on matters of 'reet' and compensation to the husband for separation from him.

Irrespective of her geographical location and culture specificity within Himachal, a woman's main capability of her body to produce an offspring especially a male child and being an obedient, uncomplaining wife cum manual laborer has always had greater importance. In her own right, she has little identity and is not expected to have any desire for self-fulfillment. From birth, she is socialized to make her life subservient to the demands of patriarchy. Her parents invest little in her development as she is 'paraya dhan' (someone else's property) who eventually has to be 'gifted' to another home. At her in-laws, she is an outsider, viewed with suspicion till she has established her complete loyalty to her new home and proved her worth by giving birth to a male child. The strength of this cultural attitude is reflected in the practice of ostracism of women unable to bear children who are compared to an infertile cow. People consider it inauspicious to be with, or eat in the company of, such women. The fact that it might be the husband who is infertile or unable to produce male progeny is socially unrecognized.

A case study of a woman who is barren as her husband is a eunuch...she is eventually divorced from him.

It is not only her body on which a woman has no control. She is not permitted to choose her own god or goddess either. In some parts of the state (e.g.) Sarkaghat, Mandi district), while in her parents home, the woman must worship the god/dess of her father's clan. At her in-laws, she must worship the god/dess of her husband's family but she is not permitted to do even this till she has produced a son! Thus, even her right to faith in a god/dess is conditional to her producing a male child.

Because of this social role assigned to the woman, her natal family's honour depends on delivering her to her home of marriage in an 'unpolluted' form. Should, through some accident, an unmarried girl lose her virginity before marriage, she not only brings dishonour to her family but becomes unacceptable to most 'respectable' males. The rest of her life is often spent as a piece of social rubbish. Chastity is a value to be honored and followed by a woman all through her life. It is even stricter for widows in some parts if she wishes to inherit the property of her husband. However the history of Himachal shows that although this is true there were some parts in the state where chastity was a value that was not mandatory on women. In fact women were valued more as a labor force on field and knowing their importance and usefulness as labor women often chose to have several sexual liaisons with men without actually getting married. Even the widows were allowed to be with their partners as long as they do not leave the house of the deceased husband whose property she can then claim.

In more remote areas such as Chauhar Ghati in Mandi district, the obsession with pollution of a woman's body takes a more bizarre form due to rigid caste differences. There, if a higher caste woman is found to have had a relationship with a lower caste man, her depollution involves an elaborate ritual. A deep ditch is dug in the ground and the woman is made to stand in it. The ditch is then covered with modern planks (with the woman still underneath), which, in turn, are covered with earth. Only after the earth on the planks has been ploughed is the woman allowed to get out of the ditch. She has to discard her old clothes and wear new ones before coming out. A higher caste man having a relationship with a lower caste woman does not need to be de-polluted. In fact, a man does not need to be de-polluted. In fact, a man does not get polluted no matter how much he indulges in violating social norms or abusing women. The entire burden of maintaining cultural values is placed on women's shoulders.

A saving grace of the Pahari culture is that a once 'honourably' married but later deserted or divorced woman is permitted to remarry. In fact, remarriage through the 'Reet' system involves the woman's new husband having to pay the old one a certain price for her - a kind of bride price. However, male members of the two families do all the negotiations and the money stays in men's control. There was also a custom in past where the women were allowed to dissolve the marriage at any point in time. However they had to pay the husband some amount as compensation for his loss of labor. It was often easier for men to remarry as their main concern would be to have some one to till their lands and plough it. Therefore in some places the census records as old as in 1800s show that there were fewer men who were widowers than widow women.

Attitudes towards widow remarriage, however, are harsh, particularly among the Rajputs of the lower belt in districts Kangra, Hamirpur, etc. Here, the woman is held responsible for her husband's death and made to feel that the rest of her life is worthless.

In Sangdaha block falling across the Giri River in Sirmour district, the adult woman seems to have greater freedom and can walk away from an oppressive husband to another man. There is no premium on a girl's virginity either and widow remarriage is not frowned upon. Possibly because of this freedom, she has greater value and is treated better. A study found that in Renuka tahsil of Sirmour district, men share the burden of agricultural, livestock and domestic work more equitably

with women than in all the other 3 districts of Mandi, Hamirpur and Solan.

Unfortunately, with the opening up of interior areas and universalisation of the dominant values through the formal educational system, national level policies and programmes like the family planning etc women even in such pockets are being made to renounce the limited freedom offered to them by the traditional culture on 'moralistic' grounds. 'Educated' girls look down upon women leaving oppressive husbands as a symbol of 'backwardness' or 'illiteracy'. On the other hand, the inflow of outsiders into such areas is resulting in increased sexual exploitation of women due to the more liberal sexual morality of the local culture.

This is not to say that the traditional culture of such areas has placed women on a pedestal. Even here, the birth of a male child is still celebrated with fervour while the birth of a female child receives little attention. Marriage of girl children between the ages of 10 to 14 is still widely prevalent and there are cases of girls having been forced to change 3 to 4 husbands by the age of 30 to 40. Such practices have their inevitable impact on the education and health of young women.

Pollution taboos related to childbirth and menstruation are a unique feature of hill cultures. In most parts of H.P., childbirth has traditionally taken place in the cattle shed with the mother and the newborn being kept there for several days due to being considered 'dirty'. Similarly, during menstruation, women are not allowed to enter the kitchen, cook or serve food, enter the temple or touch men. On reaching puberty, girls are not allowed to read the scriptures and are made to believe if that they will go mad if they enter the temple during menstruation. They are also made to refrain from some foods like milk, cream, curd, leafy vegetable etc during menses under various beliefs of foods being too hot or too cold and therefore harmful. Thus girls are deprived of important nutrients at the time when they need them the most. This affects their health greatly. In interior areas like Chauhar Ghati in Mandi district, women are not allowed to enter the house at all during their menstruation and have to live in the cattle shed during those days. Should they enter the house for any reason, they have to mud wash the whole house to purify it.

These values and customs are powerful tools of keeping women manipulability and subservient and keeping them afraid and ashamed of their bodies. They systematically create a sense of powerlessness among women through a process of internalizing these values from childhood. Girls are conditioned to not look up at men, not talk back, work without being heard and learn to adapt to their destiny from early age. It is in this light that one must understand the issue of the single women who are left vulnerable and groundless in circumstances that lead to their desertion, separation, divorce and their widowhood. Lack of social support, lack of economic security, social ridicule, discrimination, political dumbness and negligence by the government; these all lead to the deprivation of single women and damage their dignity of life.

MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN TODAY

Himachal women's major social problems are rooted acute sense of powerlessness inculcated in them through the socialization process from birth. The absolute preference for the male child in the patriarchal culture of the state and the combined force of local myths, practices and beliefs conditions the girl to believe in the meaninglessness of her life in its own right. Legitimacy and

fulfilment for the woman is defined only in terms of her subservient relationship to a man-be it father, husband or son. Woman is not supposed to have any desire of her own and any woman attempting to break out of this mould can easily be labelled a witch or a 'dakin' who must be destroyed or tamed by any means available. The fear of this fate prevents most women from even contemplating breaking out of the mould.

The power of these cultural values on the unconscious psyche has not been adequately discussed or considered while understanding the common predicaments in which a large number of women continue to suffer unending humiliation and misery without questioning the status quo. This is particularly important in the context of the structure of the state's agrarian economy, where, despite women playing a crucial and growing economic role, they have not experienced a better situation also makes it clear that women's participation in economic activities does not by itself imply an improved status for women.

The woman's subordination is rooted in her secondary position within the family and it is in the sanctified preserve of the 'home' that she experiences maximum oppression. From childhood, she is taught to accept discrimination against herself in terms of allocation of family resources be it food, clothing or opportunities to acquire new skills or literacy. Strict control on her mobility to protect her virginity gives her limited exposure to the outside world. And, she is taught not to look men in the eyes while talking to them, to not talk back or ask questions - simply continue working endlessly and accept and adapt to the situation in which she is placed through marriage. She is seldom given control of the family's productive resources and is particularly vulnerable in her home of marriage due to starting life there as a resourceless outsider. Due to her economic role being confined to subsistence production, despite her hard labour, she seldom handles any cash. And her whole world can come crumbling down if for whatever reason, her husband or her in-laws treat her badly. Totally isolated, with deep inhibitions against talking about the injustice being meted out to her, especially when she carries the burden of maintaining the family's honour in the eyes of the outside world, no resources to start life independently, she finds herself totally trapped. There is nowhere to go except back to her parental home if that option is still available. Recourse to legal action is beyond her reach because of ignorance about her legal rights and a strong, internalised fear of stepping out of the preserve of the home simply because the outside world is a frightening unknown.

Practice of Bigamy and Polygamy

The absolute preference for a male child in the local culture has been the major traditional reason for men bringing in second wives. If the first wife is unable to produce any children or produces only daughters; her husband has often made her an accomplice in justification of a second marriage, all the laws making this illegal act, notwithstanding.

At times, with the first wife's ageing or loss of youth, the husband picks up a younger second wife simply for his sexual satisfaction. In such cases, the age difference between the man and the young bride is considerable. Although this practice is not so widespread any longer, it still continues, particularly in the more remote areas. It is common in Nalagarh block of Solan district and in several parts of Sirmour district. In any case, there are a large number of adult women who were married off

as second wives in their childhood or whose husband brought in second wives several years ago.

According to the law, the second wife has no legal rights as a wife. But if she was married off as a child, who is to blame? what about the legal consequences for the husband or her parents? Unfortunately, it is she who has to face the consequences.

A case study of woman married at the age of 9 and remarried to a man 15yrs older to her... she is now widowed.

It is usually the girls of poor families who are married off as second wives to better off husbands. The parents' main consideration is that at least their daughter will not live a life of poverty and want. The first wife, who has often failed to produce a male child, is coaxed to give her consent on the ground that without a male child, the family lineage will stop and relatives will gobble up all the property. If she does not agree, she is afraid that a second wife will be brought in any case but due to her not agreeing, she might be thrown out. Where will she go if that happens? What will she do and where will she live? It is terrifying questions like that which have often forced first wives to give their consent. The younger wife finds herself landed with a husband who could be her father. Sharing few common interests with a much older man, she is also constantly confronted with the possibility of early widowhood.

In older times polygamy or bigamy were culturally accepted. There were several reasons for it the main one being that the wives made for good labor force on farms. Wife's usefulness as a labor was so eminent that compensation had to be paid by her if she chooses to divorce her husband. In some parts of ancient Himachal there would be more widows than widowers as the men would have to marry another women in order to maintain the supply of labor for fields where as a death of single husband would lead to many wives being widowed due to the practice of polygamy.

Polygamy in various parts of Himachal Pradesh

In Chamba State, 1904, it was reported that 'Polygamy is the rule both in town and country, each man if he can afford it, having two or three, and some times more wives. Polyandry occasionally common in hill tracts, is believed to be almost non-existent in Chamba'

In Sirmour state, 1934, 'polygamy is common both cis and trans-giri. A second wife is taken very often, and sometimes a man has as many as four. The main object is to obtain the wife's help in cultivation as they do much field-work, besides bringing home grass and fuel. In the Dharthi tract a second wife is often taken, because she can become a source of income by wet-nursing. Other motives also promote polygamy, and a childless man or one who has only girl children will often marry more than one wife. indeed a sonless wife will often insist on her husbands taking second wife. At the wedding the second wife is made to sit in one corner of the room, the first wife sitting in the opposite corner of the room, while a woman with a lighted lamp in her hand stands by each of them. Then the family Brahman or an elderly woman stands in the middle of the room and the co-wives, advancing slowly from their respective corners, approach the person in the middle of the room, and he or she joins their hands and they give each other a rupee. The lamps are lighted to prevent the shadow of the one falling on other. This custom is common in the hills of both sides of

the Giri..'

Amongst the Kanets of Simla District of 1904, 'A man may marry as he likes, the number among Kanets generally being regulated by the amount of work he can profitable assign to them (wives).'

In Kangra District, 1883-84, '...It is not uncommon, however, for a man to sell his wife to anyone who makes a fair bid for her. Sometimes such agreements are executed on stamped paper and presented for registration! Polygamy is considered allowable, and is more or less practiced amongst all the tribes. The difficulty of procuring wives acts, however, as a considerable check upon this practice.'

Source: Gazetteers of respective states and years as republished by Indus Publishing Company

Desertion

Desertion of their wives by men has been prevalent since long. The bond of marriage was so loosely held in many parts of Himachal that divorce was easy and accepted within the society. In such loosely held bond of marriage desertion could certainly have been a common practice. However it is seen that the social set up in earlier times allowed the women to have economic and social security. For instance the usefulness of women as labor made their options to remarry stronger. Besides this the women could inherit the property of their husbands as long as they were staying in their houses. This was irrespective of her sexual liaisons with other men. Also the women held respectable positions in both their natal as well as marital homes. Practices like polygamy and polyandry provided women with greater social security. Therefore desertion as we understand today was not so much a social problem.

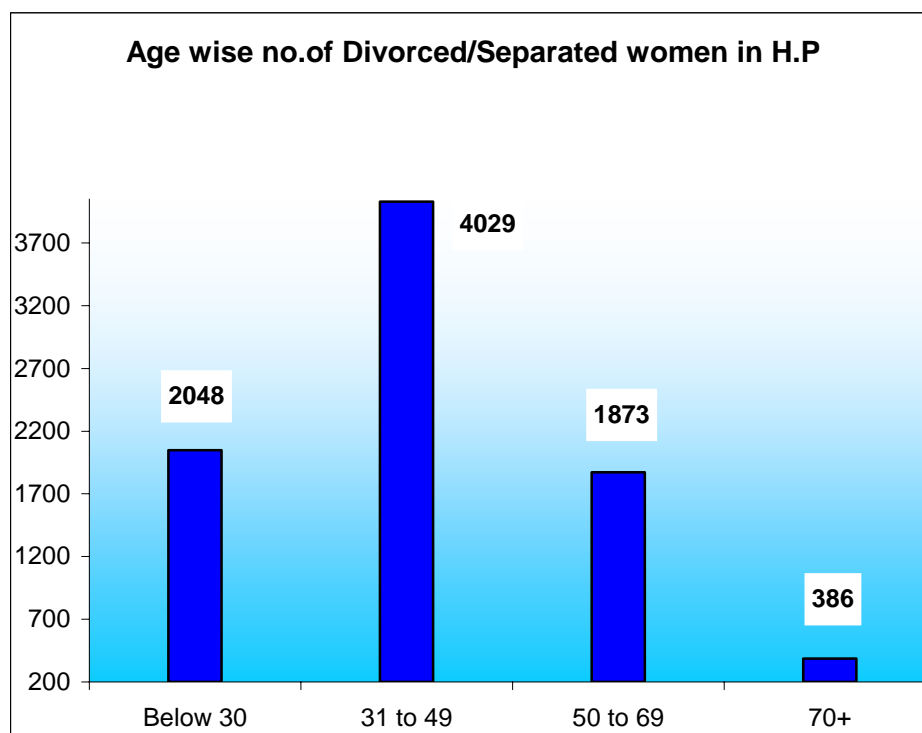
However, today, the practice is assuming new dimensions. This is partly because of increased physical and economic mobility among men while the women remain confined to rural areas with little access to legal advice or awareness about their rights. There are a large number of women whose husbands, after taking up jobs in cities or migrating elsewhere for work, settle down with new wives where they live without so much as informing their first wives about it or the second wife completely unaware about his marital status. The first wives, landed with little children, stop receiving any money from their husbands and are often thrown out by their in-laws who see them as an unnecessary economic burden. Such cases are widespread in districts like Hamirpur; Una; Sarkaghat Tehsil of Mandi district which are said to have a 'money order economy'.

Demands for more dowries are also beginning to percolate into the villages, particularly where the girl's father has an urban job. With rising materialism, the woman becomes a pawn in the man's desire to get rich quickly. Not just increasing demands for dowry but a considerable number of dowry deaths have been reported from Mandi; Una and Kangra districts. It is just so simple and easy for the man to abandon his wife and children and get away with it without the slightest sense of fear or shame. Not only does the typical deserted woman not receive any maintenance from the husband but is forced to bring up the children on her own. When the children, particularly the boys, have grown up, many husbands come and take them away.

Divorced/Separated

The graph below shows that many more women in the peak years of 31 to 49 are getting divorced or separated from their husbands. So far the reasons that are emerging for such behaviour from the perspective of women are violent conduct of their husbands, mental torture from in-laws and dowry. At times women are forced to give divorce to their husbands as they are pressurised for the same by their in-laws on the grounds of insufficient dowry. Having a second wife without the knowledge of the woman also holds a strong ground for divorce

The reasons for separation are often not known to women as well. One fine day after marriage the husband leaves home for work and never returns. Women in course of the movement report several cases of such kinds. Women have spent several years and as long as there whole lives waiting for their husband. The unfavourable social treatment that they have been subjected to through the time of their waiting has deeply affected their mental wellbeing.



Divorce in ancient Himachal...

Chamba 1904

'The customs as to divorce and remarriage are similar to those practiced in other hill districts. A man may divorce his wife by giving her a bill of divorce, generally at the instance of some other man who is desirous of marrying her. The deed is carefully written out and presented to the woman, and on the occasion of her remarriage the deed must; be shown to the brotherhood, who all collect to witness this second marriage with almost as much ceremony and solemnity as in the case of a first marriage. The second husband invariably pays a sum of money - anything from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 – to the first. This marriage is fully recognized by the community and the custom is exceedingly common. The first man is said to "sell" his wife to the second and no disgrace whatever attaches to

the transaction. Widow remarriage is customary in all castes in the State, except among the Brahmans and Rajputs of the capital and the Bhattiyat Wizarat.'

Gaddis from Chamba

'Divorce is permitted by mutual consent, but there is no special form. A divorcee may re-marry.'

Churahs from Chamba

'A husband may divorce his wife if he cannot get on with her. The divorce is complete if the husband receives back his ornaments and says: "I have divorced you, Baja ki durohi," i.e., "on the Raja's oath." The husband also breaks a stick in her presence. Divorced wives can remarry if they like...'

Pangwals from Chamba

'Women are allowed every freedom before marriage, and divorce is fully recognized. There are two forms, one in which the husband pays Rs. 6 to his wife for her man or consent and then breaks a dry stick in two pieces over her head: the other in which he accepts a certain sum for her release from her parents or lover, and then breaks the stick either over the money or her head. The wife cannot then be reclaimed, and is free to marry again, and her children will be regarded as legitimate. (1)'

STATUS OF WIDOWS IN HIMACHAL

Today, out of the total married women that are enumerated in 14,38,905, 15.96% are widows. Out of the widow women 10% are covered in the pension scheme of defense services and 0.46% are war widows and are covered under a special pension scheme for war widows. Widowhood was not a status that was subjected to humiliation or ridicule in society in the ancient Himachal Society. In fact widows had all the liberty to remarry a husband of their own choice and at many places the marriage was celebrated with as much pomposity as it was at the time of first marriage. However our experience with single women shows that the widowhood today exists in a form that could easily be called corruption of older forms. The widows at every walk of life are faced with challenges. Whether it is property rights, rights to re-marry or right to employment etc the widow woman has to struggle at every point and is not respected by society.

Following table gives the number of widow women in various age-groups:

Table 25: Marital status of women in H.P

	Married	Married	Widow	Widow
	Total (males and females)	Females	Total	Females
Total	27,92,645	14,38,905	289,703	229,664
Upto 19	39,461	31,119	1,160	879
Upto 29	651,469	422,165	4,842	3,814

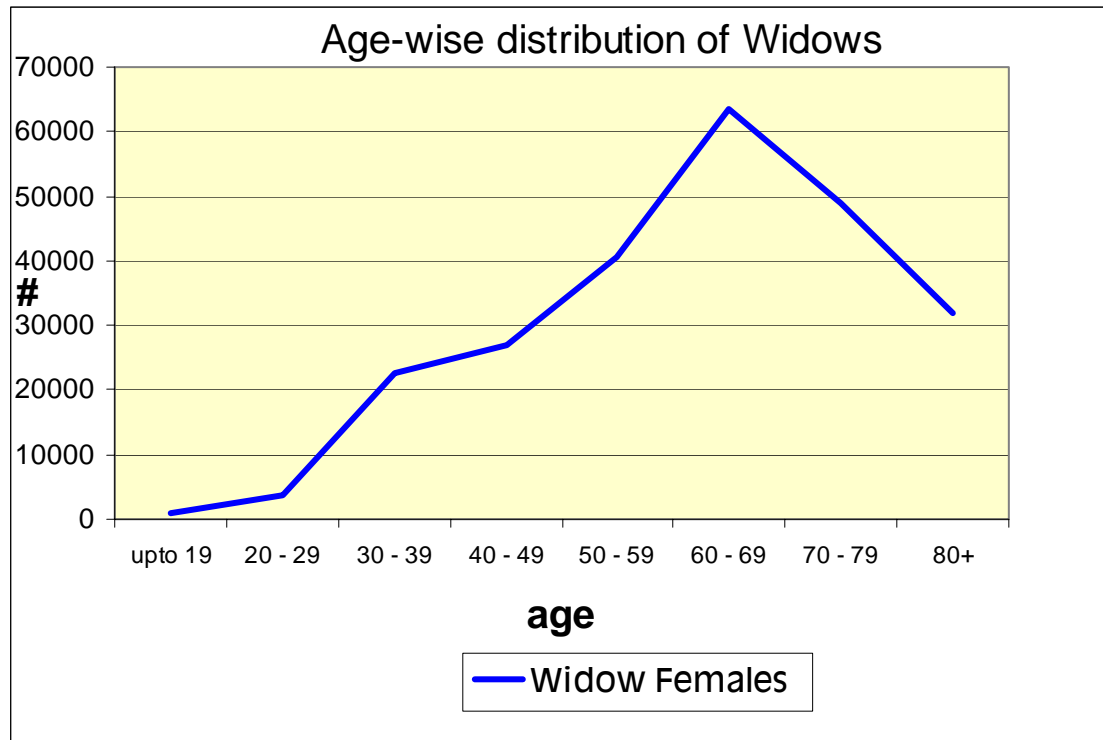
Upto 39	795,744	406,732	15,749	22,465
Upto 49	588,873	283,947	31,815	26,818
Upto 59	368,358	165,783	49,677	40,672
Up to 69	217,489	89,032	78,259	63,506
Up to 79	94,321	30,714	63,692	48,790
80+	34,161	8,312	44,167	31,850

The maximum number of widows is above the age of 49 whilst the maximum separated women belong to age group of 31 to 49, which is clear from the table given below:

Table 26: Age wise marital Status of men-women in H.P

Age Group	Married			Widows			Divorced/Separated		
	Persons	Men	Women	Persons	Men	Women	Persons	Men	Women
Below 21	74619	15338	59281	1392	327	1065	704	275	429
22 to 30	616311	222308	394003	4610	982	3628	2475	856	1619
31 to 49	1384617	693938	690679	47564	7667	39897	7066	3037	4029
50 to 69	585847	331032	254815	127936	23758	104178	4010	2137	1873
70+	131251	91124	40127	108201	27305	80896	1046	660	386
Total	2792645	1353740	1438905	289703	60039	229664	15301	6965	8336

In other words, every 7th ever-married woman is widow, which is a very high percentage.



What this did not reveal is the number of women who are informally separated or deserted. In fact having such a database seems to be impossible. Our Field experience shows that large number of women between the age of 22 to 30 are deserted and the number may be anywhere between 50,000 and 70,000.

Practice of Widow remarriages in Himachal Pradesh

Across Himachal widow remarriages were characteristics of lower castes and the upper castes of Rajputs, Brahmins, Khattris, Bohras etc did not permit it. In fact in the upper castes chastity, in theory was the 'condition attaching to the enjoyment of a life interest in the estate of the deceased husband. The Kanets in olden days believed that they are those people who have lost caste by the adoption of Karewa or widow marriage, while other accounts make them out to be the aboriginal inhabitants of the hills. In the gazetteer of Mandi State, 1920 it is said that 'there is a saying in the higher hills that a woman is never a widow and she certainly is rarely without a partner. If she so wishes then she has little difficulty in finding a new husband for her value in the fields as a worker makes her a profitable match. If she is disinclined to leave her deceased husband's home and land she can still take a consort to live with her without forfeiting her life-interest, which is conditional on her residence and not on her chastity. Such irregular unions are common, the man being known generally as Konsal... the issues are entitled to the full share in the property of the consort, but have no claim to the life-estate of the widow.'

Types of widow re-marriage permitted across the state with little variation were

'Sargudhi'

it is an inferior form of widow marriage was practiced mainly in Chamba State by the Churahis

'...She can choose her own husband within her own caste or sub-division... there are no dhamus (two messengers from the brides house who come to fetch the boy) and the bridegroom simply goes to the house with his putriar and brother. The bandha is given as at a regular wedding but an arti is not performed and there is less feasting and the cost is much less. The binding ceremony in this form was when an ornament is put on her, usually a nose ring...' related to these are yet other forms called Gari Bachara and Bandha Luaua (similar to Dharewa karewa).

'Dharewa Karewa'

When the woman cohabits with a brother or near relative of the former husband.

'Topilani'

'The inferior form of marriage is called topi lani. It is used in the case of a widow's remarriage, and is only permissible after a year has elapsed since the husband's death. The right to claim 'the widow's hand rests with the late husband's brothers or nephews, and in the presence of two respectable

men the second husband, who should be a brother, nephew, or cousin of the deceased, presents the widow with a new woollen pig-tailed cap. Her acceptance of this cap cements the union. If a stranger wishes to marry the widow, he must obtain her parents' consent and pay a sum of money and may then take her home. This is called randi rakhi lai, and is the only ceremony in this kind of hand-fastening'

'Jhanjarara'.

'The rite is called 'gudani or jhanjarara and also choli-dori and is solemnized with the pair made to sit down by the diva and kumbh, with some dhup burning. They worship both these objects, then the bridegroom places a dori (tape) on the widow's head and another woman combs her head and binds her hair with the tape. After this the bridegroom places a nose-ring (balu) in the woman's hand and she puts it on. This is the binding portion of the ceremony...if no priest presides at the ceremony the kumbh etc. worship is dispensed with, but the tape and the ring ceremony is gone through and the guests etc. are feasted. A widow used to be compelled to marry her husbands elder or younger brother, but the custom is no longer enforced by the state.'

Source: Gazetteers of Mandi, 1920 and Gazetteer of hamba, 1904; Vol XXII A; as republished by Indus Publishing company.

PROBLEMS PECULIAR TO SINGLE WOMEN AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR LIVES

Economic problems

Problems of employment

Single women often did not have any employment to support them economically. Whether divorced, deserted or widowed, women found it difficult to get an employment elsewhere. Most women's physical mobility was restricted to the four walls of their houses and therefore they were not allowed to work elsewhere. Even if they did work in factories or shops the women were looked down upon. Some women who worked in factories faced discrimination in the form that when there would be new workers employed in the factories their salary would be derived from the salary of single women. Thus the single women would not be assured a steady salary structure and when their salary gets divided between workers they would be left with very little salary. At the village level it was found that the jobs like that of the Anganwadi worker, water carrier at schools etc that should have been allotted to the needy single women in the village were given to the relatives of the panchayats members or people who had the political influence. In some places where the women would be assigned the tasks such as that of water carrier or anganwadi workers they would be denied widow pensions, which is rightly theirs. At times women expressed their will to start a small-scale business so that they could support themselves but they were not supported in this by their families and even the villagers would not support them. Due to lack of social and familial support the single women would not be able to raise money and start their businesses.

Unemployment amongst single women is the biggest hurdle to their upliftment. The women whose husbands have died due to illnesses had rendered huge loans and remained severely indebted after the death of their husbands. Due to unemployment these women find it difficult to pay back the loans and suffer from high tensions. Lack of social support adds to their deprivation.

Denial of Land and property rights

It was found that the Single women were very often denied any ownership over the land or other property assets both in their marital as well as natal families. Due to this they had no economic

security. In majority cases the women were not aware that they could claim for ownership in the land and property. At times the women completely lacked knowledge about no ownership, as they were not aware that their names were not even listed with the patwari. At many places in Himachal single women with no land ownership was denied pension. When women learnt about no ownerships and began to file legal suits their case would not be given importance and would be delayed unexpectedly. It was found that some women are aware of their land rights and property rights but the societal pressure doesn't let them exercise these rights. The people ridicule them saying that the women are eating up the property of their family and they are dividing the family by claiming their rights.

Property rights of Single women in past...

Chamba, 1904 *'Sons, whether by a wife married for the first time, or by a widow or divorcee re-married, succeed, but illegitimate sons do not, unless they are adopted in default of legitimate sons or heirs. The eldest son gets an extra share, called jaith~tnd, but he has per contm to pay a proportionately larger share of any debts. Among the sons the property is otherwise divided mundavand, i.e., equally, except in Kangra, where the chunda'mnd rule prevails among that small part of the tribes, which originally came from the southern Bide of the upper Ravi in Chamba)*

The Gaddis also have the custom whereby a widow's child (chau7eandh~t) born at any time after her husband's death succeeds to his property, provided that the widow has continued to live in his house and has worn a red dori (tape) in the name of his chula (oven) or da1'at (axe). Cases have even occurred in which the widow has retained her late husband's property without complying with these conditions, though the Gaddis consider her rights disputable.'

Sirmour 1934 *'A childless widow has a life interest in her husband's estate which she cannot alienate without lawful necessity. This is the general custom of Sirmur. A widow may make an adoption with the consent of her collaterals. She cannot make a gift of the immovable property. On re-marriage a widow loses her life interest in her deceased husband's property... Daughters are not heirs, but if there is no collateral with Daughters. The seventh generation, then a daughter's son, or, in his absence, a sister's son inherits. Both trans-Giri and in the hill tract of the cis-Giri a father or a brother can give a part of landed property to a daughter or a sister in charity. But there should be a written deed of gift... The custom of chundawand (per stripes) does not prevail here. The pagwand (per capita) is the prevailing custom. Grandsons inherit their father's property. 'Daughters cannot inherit, but trans-Girl a father can give a share of his property to his daughter for his lifetime only... Daughters, however, receive equal shares in the absence of any male heir or collateral.'*

Kangra, 1883-84

'With regard to a widow's right to inherit, the Rajputs, Brahmans, Khattris, Mahajans, &c., say that she holds for life on condition of chastity, The Kanets of Kodh Sogar say clearly that so long as she continues to reside in her late husband's house" she can not be dispossessed even though she openly intrigues with another man, or permits him to live in the house with her, This is die real custom also of the Girths and other similar castes in Kaugra, though they do not admit the fact so bluntly.'

Source: Gazetteers of the respective states and years as republished by Indus publishing company.

Lack of economic assets

Land is the biggest economic asset in Himachal Pradesh and denial of this asset severely hampers self-sustainability and upliftment of the single women.

Apart from land pension schemes provide for an economic security to the single women. However women cannot always avail for the benefits of this scheme. Some women lack knowledge about the scheme along with this the panchayats too don't provide them any information over the same. Women did not know how to get pension and what procedures are involved for the same. Those

single women who got pensions thought the sum of pensions to be inadequate and very low. Pension scheme doesn't recognize variation in the categories of single women on the basis of age, status, ownership patterns, progeny etc. Since the problems of single women especially widowed would differ across place and age and number of children, the pension scheme should be able to identify the neediest and should be able to provide economic security for all single women. where the women got the pension the money would remain in the custody of her family and she would not get to access it. Widows whose husbands worked in government service or defense services got some money as compensation apart from the widow pension but the marital family would use this money without giving any amount to her. If after the death of the husband the insurance money would go to the widowed wife then the marital family would force her to sign a letter transferring all the money to them. Thus she would not get any money.

Sometimes women who wanted to file legal suits had no legal aid to fight for their rights. They did not have money to even get their daughters married. Economic security could work as a great strength for women in times of their singlehood and lack of it can restrict their progress and growth and in turn affect their emotional well being.

Social problems

Social discrimination and Social humiliation

Single women are defined as divorced, separated, deserted and widowed women. All the terms mentioned mean a change in the status of women and in turn change in the roles they play. This change is not planned for or expected and often comes as a shock to the women. Their ability to cope with the change in the status depends on the reaction that they get from the society they live in. Considering the undue importance attached to marriage in Indian society the shift in the marital status is often not welcomed in the society. Their families and society as a whole blame single women for their status. They face lot of humiliation not only in the marital family but also in the natal family. The restrictions on physical mobility and social interaction get strengthened after the change in the status. Women are not allowed to work outside their houses. They are not allowed to participate in any matters within the family whether it is marriage, birth ceremonies, religious ceremonies etc. they are not involved in any decision making even not when matters concerns them. Where the women choose to work in factories etc they are ridiculed by the society. Single women are made to toil hard in the houses. They are burdened with work like cooking, looking after the other children in the family, all the household chores etc. when they are unable to carry out these tasks they are humiliated by the members of the family who curse them and at times even carry out physical violence on them. Humiliation was intense in case of women who had not borne any child in the period of their marriage. Childlessness was considered as the fault of the women and they were suspected of infertility that led to further ridicule.

Lack of social support

The women in spite of their singular status are willing to stay in their marital families but the families do not accept them. At the same time the natal family too is not ready to accept the woman and they ridicule her. There are cases where the women have informally separated or divorced because they

did not conceive a male child for a long time and therefore their in-laws including their husbands forced them to move out of the house or harassed them to the point that they separated themselves from the family.

Sexual harassment

Women in marriage are often seen as a property of their husbands. This belief leads to subordination of women by their husbands. However when the women are abandoned, separated or divorced from their husbands they are considered as the “betwixt” category in the Indian social set up. It means that they become a group of women that do not have any position in the social set up, as they do not belong to any particular category that finds acceptance in society. Due to this others wrongly perceive the women as “available” for any kind of sexual favors. This perception affects the single women who face sexual harassment at work places or family set up. There are several cases in Himachal where sisters are married off in a single family and when one of them becomes single under varied circumstances, she is coerced to have sexual relations with her brother-in-law without getting married to him. This is done so that the property that the woman would claim would remain within the marital family. One can only imagine the repercussions of such practices on the single women. If any single woman worked outside their houses they were suspected by the people as definitely engaging in sexual activities like flesh trade. Single women have narrated experiences of sexual harassment at work places by their seniors due to the single status of the women. The other members of the family at times ask women for sexual favors even in their marital families. The humiliation out of sexual harassment extends very often to the daughters of the single women. There are cases reported by single women of sexual molestation of their daughters by others. One of the cases of single women talked of a woman who was fighting a legal suit against her in-laws. While the suit was going on the in-laws persuaded the woman to withdraw her case and that they would accept her back in their family. The persuasion worked and the woman returned to her marital family. However after two months of returning the woman was declared as missing by the marital family. The natal family of the woman suspects that her in-laws have sold her off somewhere.

Laxmi's story...

I am 39yrs old and I am studied till Standard 8. My family is very poor. I have two brothers and two sisters. At the time of marriage with Rajkumar I was 28yrs old. He was from district Mandi and my sister who worked in Delhi at that time arranged our marriage. She too knew him from Delhi days but knew nothing about his familial background as he had told her that he was an orphan. He said he did not have any relatives and therefore he made his living by working in the factory.

After marriage I shifted to Delhi. At that time he would not let me socialize with anyone in our neighborhood. He would beat me up over small matters and at times he had even locked me in a room. Later I learnt that he succumbed to all vices including alcohol, bhang, Sulfa etc. Gradually he left his job in the factory and remained unemployed. This led to financial crisis at home and it became difficult to run the household. At this time I took up a small job at a Kothi where an old woman stayed with her two daughters. The old woman behaved nicely with me but one of her daughters would treat me badly. The old woman would say that her daughter would soon go to

Mumbai and after that she would make an increment in my salary. But before that itself the daughter got odds with me and sacked me from work. I had worked for 7 days in their house. My husband would sleep every night on a makhmal bed and I had to sleep on a carpet.

After some time I along with another friend of mine found a job at a beauty parlor. When we went to have a chat with the owner of the parlor she asked us if we knew how to do a massage. We knew indeed. On this she asked us if we could do massage to a man and we said we dint mind. So she sent one of us to a room numbered 4 and other to numbered 7. As we entered the room we saw a man sitting in his banyan and shorts. There was a bottle of liquor on the table and some money kept. As we entered the room they began to give us dirty talks. Both my friend and me ran away from the rooms and met our owner. She asked us whether we disliked the work. We denied this, saying that the work was fine and agreed to come the next day instead. She let us go and threatened us saying that if u reveal outside what happened here then you shall be murdered.

After this incident we never returned to the place. I went with my husband to my marital home. After returning to Mandi too he had not changed his behavior. He would lock me up in a room there as well and beat me brutally. After getting tired of these recurrent episodes I called for my neighbor through the window and wrote the address of my natal family on a piece of newspaper. I pleaded to her to write to my parents and ask them to fend for me. She wrote to my parents at once and my father along with other villagers came to look for me. When they had come I was locked in my home and learning about it very time my father took me back to my natal home. When my father got me back to my natal home I was pregnant. I gave birth to a baby girl. She is 9yrs old now. I am staying with my parents. My husband has not registered my name in the panchayats list as well. From the time I have started living in my natal home my brother and my sister-in-law have left the house to settle elsewhere. Now I work and earn for my living.

Socio-political

The women who are staying with their natal families are not registered in the panchayats of that village and the pradhan doesn't acknowledge their rights in the natal family. At the same time the panchayats of the marital village do not help the single women with any certificates. Single women when go to the government offices or panchayats to get their work done faced several problems. The officers did not hear them and completely ignored them. Women had no voice in public matters.

Problems of aged single women

The single women who are aged are not looked after their own family. Very often the sons do not take care of the women and leave them to look for themselves. On a meagre pension the women survive a hand to mouth existence. Very old women do not find themselves capable of working in the houses not even cooking. In such cases the women are left all alone uncared for.

Socio-legal

A Woman who had entered love marriages and was later abandoned by her husband, faced problems not only in her natal home but she found it difficult to file case against her absconding husband as she knew very little about his family.

Political problems

Problems of identification and Lack of knowledge about political rights

It was learnt that single women were not registered in panchayats list in their marital as well as natal villages. They did not have any ration card by their own name. The panchayats pradhan would not register the name of widows in the Below Poverty Line list. Hence the women would not be able to reap benefits of various schemes open to the category of BPL families. The single women would not know about their political rights and there was an initial reluctance on their part to participate in the politics at village level.

Problem of illiterate women

Single who were illiterate were denied participation in politics at village level, as they were considered dull and stupid. They were ridiculed saying that if they cannot support themselves then how they will do anything for others. Also since the women had no political contact they could not retort to such humiliation.

Denying participation in politics at village level

When the women began to attend the gram sabha meetings they were ridiculed by the villagers who taunted them.

Lack of information about proper procedure

Single women said that they had none or little knowledge about the procedures that needed to be followed for various things like getting the ration card, availing the benefits of pension schemes and other schemes, how to get check the ownership status over land etc. this lack of knowledge made them handicap as there was also to support from their families.

Emotional impact

The women have reported mainly a sense of low self-esteem, depression and feeling of loneliness due to their singular status and unpleasant experiences in the marriages. This has had an impact on their physical health wherein women report low immune system, consistent illness and weakness felt during work.

Mira's Story...

My village is Bagposh, gram panchayats Bagposh, tehsils Pachchad, Block Saraha, district Sirmour. I was married on 21st June 1998 in gram JubbadKoti, p.o Nainatikkar, Tehsil Pachchad, Sirmour. We were three brothers and three sisters in a family. I was the youngest of all. After my marriage my husband's behavior was alright for 2-3 months but soon he began to pick fights with me over very trivial issues like if I would not talk with anyone he would begin fighting over that. At times he would even beat me up. If there was even a slight delay in household chores that I did then he would beat me up. This went on regularly. For almost a year I kept mum about this but he did not change himself. Then one day I decided to return to my natal home. My health had worsened. I was pregnant by eight months but he still did not spare me. My parents looked after me very well and got me treated after which my health has improved. My son too was born in the natal home. After his

birth my husband came to the natal home and pleaded for forgiveness. I returned to my house with my husband. However as soon as we returned he started over his nasty behavior all over again. I went back to natal home once again. After 2-4 days he once again came to take me along with him. I refused to go with him this time. My father told him that I have asked for a divorce from him.

We went to Naintikkar panchayat there the pradhan too tried very hard to persuade my husband but he did not listen. When we were on our way from the panchayat he got into a tiff with us at the market place itself. He kicked me in my stomach and beat my brothers too. This led to a miscarriage since I was pregnant for three months. Now I have filed a case against him that is ongoing. I want to get divorced from him that is one of the reasons why I am so actively involved with Ekkal Nari Shakti Sangathan Movement.

The issues of single women were new for most activists in the movement and at the start of the movement the outcome was only speculated but there was no clarity over what could be the intensity of the issue. Also at the start of the movement the activists realized that they were not

always well equipped to handle some problems that emerged in due course. Therefore a need was felt to have regular trainings, workshops and meetings with the activists across the state in order to build their capabilities and strengthen their understanding of the issues of single women.

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