CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSIONS

Education, to an anthropologist, is a cultural process and he tries to understand and explain learning in terms of enculturation. A human child acquires knowledge about its socio-economic, religio-political values, roles and statuses, rights and duties, as it grows. Education is imparted formally and informally with definite aims, objectives and programmes to bring about desired changes in the society. Education is made compulsory by the Constitution to the children below the age of 14 years. By the time the child gets into the secondary schools and completes its education there it would get enough knowledge about the world in which he lives.

The present study aims to know in what way the new educational system has affected the life and living of a section of rural population, i.e., women. For this purpose a village in Karnatak was selected using the step sampling method and interviews were conducted using modern anthropological tools and techniques. To go deeper into the problem one hundred informants, fifty literate and fifty illiterate women, from different caste, status and age
background were interviewed. The data are analysed and presented along the anthropological lines.

The changes taken place in the opinions, values, status and roles of educated women in the village were studied in the total background of the village as a whole. The village was a nucleated one with houses built in cluster according to caste settlements. Each caste had its own locality and confined to that area in most of its activities with their own drinking water wells, temples, etc. There were a number of public places within the village like temples, wells, raised platforms. Besides the ritually low castes, women were also forbidden to appear in these places during certain times of the day in the village. Even in the house they were confined to kitchen or backyard and very rarely they were seen sitting in the main or central hall or on the raised platform at the entrance of the house.

The village has modern facilities like schooling up to the secondary level, electricity, bus service, postal service and flour mills. Owing to their backwardness the villagers have not the best advantage of these facilities. Girls formed only one tenth of the total strength in the school. Among the school staff, only two are women. In the village panchayat committee also women have a poor
representation. Hardly women members attend any public or panchayat meetings. Interestingly enough in the place of women, girls and in many cases the school going girls of the village formed most of the audience in any public function held in the village.

The formal education seems to have not changed the opinion of the women very much specially regarding the matters of family and kinship. Their ideal is still a big family and a joint family which is again regarded as a temple - abode of gods and ancestors. Family is also the ritual unit and each family (lineage) has its own family deity and the festivals and rituals are performed in its honour in common.

However, the trend is slowly changing. The educated informants are of the opinion that for today’s conditions the small, elementary family is suitable. They opined that its limited size, the greater freedom the members enjoy in it, are ideal for modern times.

The daughters-in-law coming from non-kin background do not like to stay with their in-laws and prefer to get separate establishments of their own. Old belief that strength lies in living together is also lost owing to
dowry, modern education, love marriages, etc. extra
territorial marriages have also increased the number of
elementary families.

People of the village observe a strict division
of labour in their respective families; men undertook
hard and outdoor work while women attended to light and
in-door work. Children are entrusted with less responsible
and easy tasks like keeping a watch on the fields, grazing
cattle, collecting firewood, etc. The old and the weak
are also assigned lighter, but more responsible and advisory
roles. However, the responsibility of earning and running
the family lies with the adult and the able bodied members
of the family.

In the past, it was the oldest male member of the
family who headed the family. But when the husband was
dead, disabled or disqualified the woman took over the
headship. Four informants, both literate and illiterate,
expressed that either the father-in-law or the husband
should be the head of the family. They expressed, however,
that other members of the family should have certain rights
and privileges of handling money and decide matters
pertaining to them.
Today the old values towards kinship-structure and obligations have changed. Though it is expected to rely on kin for help and support, the intensity has lessened very much. As a result the number of kindsred of co-operation are dwindling day by day and the same is sought from friendly families. However, in a closed society like an Indian village, they will be again kin of some type or caste members and not beyond that. The informants expressed that in these days it is better to be away from kin because they create more problems than helping each other.

It is found that the number of non-kin marriages are on the increase. It is mainly due to the modern education, employment outside one’s village and dowry system. However, the individual likenings and other personal considerations still play their role in establishing marriages. In the past a person not only married among his kin but also within certain range about five to ten miles from one’s village, so that the kin support was asked for at times of need. Today establishment of marital ties among the non-kin and away from home has resulted in limited cooperation and help among the affinal kin. Unlike in the past the age at marriage is also raised. The informants opined that late marriages have such advantages as education, physical and mental maturity and other benefits.
Now a days desertion of the spouse has become common. In the past, it was expected by the women to bear all types of hardship in marriage in order to safeguard the family honour. Now the women have become vocal about their problems in marriage and their family life and at times even demand to go separate if it helps solve the problems. This indicates the development individuality and self respect. This could largely be attributed to modern education and urban influence, etc.

Changes are also taking place in the field of politics and public life of women. Women now come out to vote in various elections. Two seats are reserved for them in the village panchayat committee. Although they do not appear in public meetings to settle disputes in the village and take leading part in community life, they acted as influential members in their own sphere of activities. Change is also witnessed in their political awareness. The leadership of Smt. Gandhi and her programmes for the villagers and poor have brought an awareness in them. Today they are found to think independently and vote and support the party and the candidate of their own choice.

The role of women in economic sphere is found more significant. She works both at home, and in the fields -
at the time of sowing, weeding, watering and harvesting the crop. She also engaged, often, in the secondary occupations and raises chicken, sheep, goats and brings additional income to the family. As a labourer she earns for the family along with men-folk of the family too. It is observed by the researcher that most of the grocery shops, tea shops, even the toddy shop in the village are run by women. The tailor, the washerman, the blacksmith, etc., took the help of their women-folk to the maximum extent. In spite of this woman was not having a free hand in handling money and she still depended on men. However, there is a change in their economic sphere since many of them are employed as teachers, peons and keep a part of their earnings for themselves.

There is also change in the values of women of the village. It could be seen in the folk religious beliefs and practices. The teachings of Virashaiva religion have brought the right and freedom for religious worship.

Education has also brought changes in the people's concept of health and hygiene. Now instead of taking vows to deities for cure the people go to medical doctors. Their belief in folk magical beliefs, evil spirits and black magic is fast disappearing. The traditional values given to the food and food habits is also changed to scientific one.
The changes taken place in the social, economic, political and religious fields and the value system of the women are mainly due to the modern education given to them. Acquisition of education has brought them new status in their familial, kin and community group. It has helped them to acquire jobs and has also made their marriage prospects easy. They also set examples for the illiterate women in the field of cleanliness and education.

We had four hypothesis to test in our study. Our first hypothesis - that education brings change in the interaction of rural women, was partially proved. It was assumed that the feeling of the caste and segregation among the women was due to illiteracy, ignorance and lack of contact with the outside world. But in spite of giving education the same old situation is continuing to be found even today. However, it was observed that education was able to bring some more opportunities and initiation for interaction to the women of different castes and communities. Today girls coming from different caste background sit together, study and play in the schools. Unlike in the past women sit side by side without any inhesion of high and low feeling while travelling by buses and trains. Except these forced situations, in daily life, they are not seen visiting each other's homes and also exchange
food, help or even advice; the way members belong to one caste do. However, we cannot blame the educated women because even today the residential pattern in the village is caste and locality based. Above all, exchange of food or help on reciprocity basis exists on the basis of levels — economic or social — and formed among the equals. Most of the low castes also being poor, were only at the receiving end and not at giving or lending end. However, when compared to the past the situation has much changed since the women-folk belong to different castes meet and move closely outside customary situations. This much change which has taken place can be attributed to modern education acquired by women.

Our second hypothesis is also partially proved. In Basavapura the education being a new phenomenon those who are educated are young. Those who are students, unemployed and young also depend on their families for financial help and guidance. It is only those educated who are employed and well settled in life, have adequate status in the community. Here again since the employed ones are settled outside the community they visit their native village only on special occasions like festivals, marriage, death, etc., in the family. Of them, many have strained their relations with their brothers and cousins.
owing to property matters. Since agriculture land is a
scarce commodity in the area there is a lot of demand for
it and any transaction regarding it brings a lot of
competition and conflict. Owing to this if an educated
brother demands a share in the family property his loyalt
to the family and kinsgroup is suspected and automatically
his status goes down in the village community. In short
the educated persons are considered young, immature,
dependent, etc., in the village context.

When this is the general situation it is rather
difficult to expect an educated woman to get good status
and position in the village. The first impression of any
body towards an educated woman is bad assuming that they
are arrogant, individualistic, etc. However, the obedient,
hard working, good natured ones always earn the attention
and appreciation of the villagers. On the contrary a
minor fault committed by an educated person brings a
lower opinion and also they become the object of gossip
in the village community.

In the past, women in general had insignificant
roles to play in the public life of Sarasvapura village.
But they had their own customary roles to play as wives,
mothers, mothers-in-law, grand mothers and so on. As
elderly women in the family, kin, caste and locality group they played significant roles at times of need. At times of crises like birth, death, marriage, illness, accidents, etc., they played an important role. They also served as a very effective means of social control on children and young women in the family and locality. Here they used public opinion as a means to mobilise support to their activities.

But now an educated woman is looked upon with some expectation. She is consulted in the matters of preparation of new types of foods and purchase of fashionable goods such as clothing. She is also taken as a model by a few illiterate young women. In a family an educated daughter-in-law or a daughter is treated with respect and her views and opinion are not easily ruled out. Her individuality, likes and dislikes are respected. These days educated women are persuaded to contest the elections to village panchayat committee and also participate in public life. All these things have gained her a new status in the family as well as in the community.

Our third hypothesis - that education brings a change in the values of women, is proved. In Basavamuru, and as a matter of fact in the society around the village,
the change noticed among the women, in a way, is the result of a craze in them for fashionable goods and status rather than the utility value. Acceptance of modern medicines, going to nursing homes, feeding babies with bottle milk, use of cosmetics have no doubt become status symbol to some. Similarly the use of terrilin and other artificial and costly clothing, craze for fashionable, cheap, plastic and tin goods have not only made them to go in for unhygienic things but also have cost them a lot in terms of their hard earned and most needed money. During our visits to the various families we saw lot of such things proudly displayed in each of these houses only to show that they possess such things. On the contrary, these new things are accepted by educated women due to their value and scientific reasons.

Other things caught in the wrong foot by the rural women are the new food items, modern medicine, etc. The traditional food consumption pattern of the village closely followed the ecological cycle, which had resulted in a food consumption cycle of the area. As the seasons rolled the villagers consumed vegetables and cereals available with them. Later it also became a custom to prepare certain foods on certain special occasions like festivals. In a way this also came close to the belief and experience
pattern of the people. Now in the name of fashion and modernity, the rural women are taken to a few urban and popular food items which are totally new to them. They not only spend lot of money to buy the required ingredients for these but also prepare these foods badly. During our field work wherever we went our informants made it a point to serve us with tea, coffee or certain type of estables only to show that they were capable of preparing them. The investigator found that many of these items were not only prepared badly but some of them were also hazardous to health. But the educated women accepted all these with the full knowledge of their utility value and to meet certain needs.

Our fourth and last hypothesis is also totally proved right. In the traditional context it was rather difficult to draw a distinction between work and leisure. Women had definite duties to perform in the family and society. Since the work chores was traditional there was nothing like leisure. However, what little leisure they had was spent in a manner which was found fit and fruitful - by indulging in such acts as gossiping, playing a number of indoor folk games and visiting relatives and friends.
Now the educated women are relieved of a number of domestic and outside duties and so get lot of leisure. Now at home many of them do not attend to preparation of food and cleaning of food grains, etc., (which are now considered dirty). In the fields they do not undertake such activities as transplanting of paddy, weeding, harvesting, etc., since these have been now undertaken by contractual and day labourers. It has also become common to employ domestic servants both boys and girls to attend to errand at home. In the past, the practice of employing annual servants who belong to the same caste of the employers, had also made it possible for the families to take their services to attend to such domestic duties as serving food to low caste servants and labourers, milking the cattle, cleaning the floor, looking after the children, fetching water, churning the curds and such other and jobs which cost not only the energy of the housewife but also her patience and time.

Now the hard job of pounding the paddy to get rice and grounding the food grains like jawar, rabi, wheat, etc., is taken over by the flour mills. Similarly a number of food items needed in powder form were earlier pounded by the housewife, and now many of these things can be bought from the market in ready form.
The modern means of transport had also brought some leisure to rural women. In the past, it took hours and even days by bullock cart or by walk, to reach places of pilgrimage or rites. Now the motor vehicles and trains have not only reduced the number of journey hours but also the journey strain. Further, in the past, a housewife was made to observe a number of food taboos if she was a wet mother. She also observed purity and pollution rules in the matters of food, work, etc. Now the knowledge of science and technology and the modern medicines have solved a number of these problems. All these have relieved her of time-consuming activities and so she gets ample leisure time.

In the past the concept of leisure was also not well accepted by the rural society and an all-time busy housewife was appreciated and taken as a model. However, now the concept of leisure is changed and spending of the leisure time in a more acceptable form and in proper time is accepted. So a number of leisure time activities like playing games, listening to radio, etc., are undertaken. Modern games like carrom board, chess, dice, etc. are bought and the family members play them leisurely. Similarly listening to radio for recreation or to pass
time, is also accepted since a few families listened to


dramas, folk songs and other particular programmes together.


Reading of daily news, weeklies, magazines, story books


and novels has also become common. These new leisure time


activities are not only accepted but also served as means
to enrich their knowledge. All these changes can be


attributed to the new education given to the rural women.


Today for the lack of expected amount of change


in the status, roles, values and leisure time activities


of women of Basavapura the societal pattern is also


responsible. The Basavapura society being patriarchal and


patrilocal, after marriage, girls from the village move to


their conjugal homes in other villages and girls from other


villages who are mostly illiterate, move in. Another thing


is that education to girls is realised only by economically


well-off families who can also give their daughters in


marriage to persons educated and employed in cities. As


a result the benefits of education to women are got by


outsiders and not Basavapura society. So also the


educational development in Basavapura cannot be taken as


a criterion to read the changes in the status and values


of women. This will be possible only when the society


around Basavapura also changes in its attitude towards


education. Further all those who had studied upto secondary
level cannot be taken as educated and education need not be formal since it can also be acquired informally. So to expect the same qualities, values, etc., from "just literates" is too much. Even in the secondary level schools, certain useful subjects like baby care, health and hygiene, moral lessons are not taught properly. In most of the cases they are only shown on the time table and are actually not taught. Above all these subjects are generally set for the last hour of the day. At this late hour either the teachers or the students do not take interest, because they are anxious to go home. Thus, we cannot just take the availability of education facility or passing a certain examination as the criterion to read the change in the status and values of the educated women of Basavapura. It certainly needs an allround change in the society to achieve this objective.