

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE STUDIES ON WOMEN

The study deals with the life and labour of women workers in a tea plantation of Darjeeling district in West Bengal. The main focus of the enquiry is to delineate the nature of their work participation in the industry and the consequent adjustment in home life. The study also reflects the changes in the status and roles of women employed in tea industry. Before I go into the details of the frame of this study I think it would be in order to present a brief review of the sociological studies on women which, although limited, may serve to develop the rationale for this study.

Since the last sixties although a good number of studies have been done on women sociological dimension, however, has remained virtually neglected. These studies have mainly highlighted historical, economic, political and psychological dimensions of women's role in society. However, the subject matters remain confined to the women in economic and political activities, history of ideology of domesticity, liberation of women, etc. Inevitably, aims of these studies are concerned with the nature of women's oppression, their pains and problems, etc.

The "Women Liberation Year" in 1975 has attracted a number of sociologists and social anthropologists to study women with various sociological perspectives. All these studies reveal three different interpretations of women, and they can be grouped under three broad approaches, namely, Marxist, functionalist and feminist. According to the Marxists the position of women will vary from society to society and time to time according to the prevailing economic and political relationships. The Marxists place women in the mode of production of a society and interpret them forming a class, a class which is subordinate to and oppressed by the superior class formed only by men under certain historical circumstances. At the same time they put little emphasis on the status differences between men and women. The Marxists consider the genesis of female subordination in the growing phenomenon of private property which, in their view, has made possible and necessary the exploitation of the biological differences. On the other hand, the functionalists are of the view that female activity in the home is essentially cultural. Their view has often been associated with a denial of the proposition that women do in fact constitute a subordinate group at all. Strictly speaking there is no theory of sex-linked stratification in functionalism. The feminists are however ~~of the~~ of the opinion that the system of male domination and female subjugation in the society arises essentially from biological inequality of sex. They believe that the

biological inequality of man and women provides the basis of the social institutions, particularly the family, which have developed to keep women oppressed. The feminists are much more concerned with the socio-economic oppression, exploitation and the liberation of women. There are two basic ideas which have emerged from the feminists' thought - one is egalitarianism and the other is liberationism. The first idea develops for the elimination of institutionally structured sex differences and sex roles. The second idea is based on the belief that the social institutions that oppress women as women also oppress people as people. In the following sections I shall make a brief review of the earlier studies made on women from these three perspectives.

Women studies : the Marxist perspective

The importance of the position of women in human history and their role in social change are mentioned in the writings of Marx and Engels. In the theory of evolution of class society they have analysed women's role in social production and their relations to the development of family and private property. Marx has also pointed out the condition of women both in family and in wage labour when he has discussed on the nature and working of capitalism¹. The form of family

1. Marx, Karl, Capital, Vol. I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1971, pp. 372-379.

and the nature of women's oppression within it depend upon the particular type of class society in which it belongs. "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" is more than an analysis of women's status. Set in an evolutionary framework, it shows how private property has originated, how the family has developed as an economic unit, how inequality of property ownership and finally exploitative class society have developed. It also shows how women's social position has declined as private property has gained strength. Engels has tried to establish the relationship between property, class and sex. Engels' idea about the public labour, private property and the family is very important for determining women's status. He presents a historical process by which women are transformed from free and equal productive members of society to subordinate and dependent wives and wards². Marx and Engels have shared the view that the status of women in pre-class societies was much higher than the class societies which have developed latter.

Classical Marxists argue that women are not an exploited group in the strict sense except in so far as they become wage labourers. Women are regarded as potential historical subjects only when they enter into the industrial labour force. It is argued by the classical Marxists that domestic

2. Engels, F., The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972.

labour do not produce surplus value. Since women as housewives and mothers are excluded from social production for the market, their subordination is not a constituent element of the class system in capitalist societies. Classical Marxists view that female emancipation must depend on the entry of women into social production³. Emphasis is now laid on how family functions to develop the capitalist order by the organized working class. Both the state and family may be seen as structures used to maintain and extend the class domination of property owners in order to control those who work but do not own. The Marxists view women as the proletariat.

The Marxist analysis of family under capitalism is twofold. One aspect is the role of the family in regulating property relations among the owners of the means of production. The other aspect deals with the part the family plays in the reproduction - both physical and social - and maintenance of wage labourers, the producers of wealth. The contradictory nature of capitalism lies in the fact that while industrial production is social, the ownership and control of property are increasingly concentrated in the private hands. Another contradictory aspect is while production is social, the reproduction and daily maintenance of the workforce is the private responsibility of each nuclear family. From these structural

3. Middleton, C., "Sexual inequality and stratification theory" in F. Parkin, (ed.), The Social Analysis of Class Structure, Tavistock Publications, London, 1974, pp. 186-187.

features the basic condition of the majority of women under capitalism is derived.⁴

Larguia explains the discrimination against women as the result of a hidden economic structure inherent to class society which can be defined in relation to the way in which surplus labour is extracted from class society. Larguia stated that class society is governed by two structural principles : (a) the division in the classes and (b) the family economic unit. The two structures are interdependent, and changes in one aspect bring changes in other. She further points out that the authoritarian nature of the family comes from the extraction of women's labour and the hidden economic activity within it absorbs half of human labour. Larguia considers that the unrecognized extraction of unskilled labour and the necessity of prolonging it is the basis for discrimination of women.⁵ In a society where labour power is a commodity to be brought in the form of wages, women work to maintain the members of a family without being paid directly. Not only are women rendered economically dependent but their exploitation

4. Schoepf, B.G. and Mariotti, A.M., "Politics of theory : Participant Observation in the United States" in R.Rohrlich-Leavitt (ed.), Women Cross-Culturally, Mouton Publishers, Hague, Paris, 1975, p. 393.

5. Larguia, I., "The Economic Basis of the Status of Women" in R.Rohrlich-Leavitt (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 281-282.

is often masked by the fact that their domestic work remains outside the commodity production.

Morton defines family as a unit whose function is maintenance and reproduction of labour power, i.e., the structure of the family is determined by the economic system for a certain kind of labour power at a particular time⁶. Following Morton's view Secombe and other Marxist - feminists have tried to establish the relationship between the wage labour and domestic labour. Thus she has elaborated Marx's formulation that the value of labour power is not only the value of subsistence necessary for the labourers but also include means necessary for the maintenance of the labourers and his substitutes, i.e., his children. She also tries to establish the relationship between the wage labour of women and their domestic labour. She formulates that married women enter into market place greater in number because the wage for their labour power is greater than the value that they can produce through domestic labour⁷. This analysis of the role of domestic labour, women's wage labour and the relationship between the two in capitalist society have been an important dimension in the Marxist theoretical understanding of women. It

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6. For details of female labour power in family as well as in society explained by P.Morton see R.Hamilton, The liberation of Women, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1978, pp. 78-86.
 7. Secombe, W., "Domestic labour - a reply to critics" in New Left Review, No.94, 1975, p. 87.

has also made important strides over the study of women from Marx - Engels' historical perspective.

Hamilton makes a thorough attempt to study the changing role of women in seventeenth century Europe from Marxist historical perspective. She examines how the rise of capitalism and the gradual acceptance of Protestantism have separately and together radically altered every aspect of women's life. She tries to work out the changes through a Marxist explanation and the deep rooted patriarchal ideology⁸ behind this transformation through a feminist explanation .

The family and women's role in it also make women a labour reserve. They are hired depending upon the needs of the economy. The position of working class women is characteristic of relations between the sexes throughout the society. The relation between men and women is always embodied in the capitalist mode of production. Even in the middle class family man is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat⁹ .

Firestone has made a comprehensive statement that the fundamental biological inequality has given rise to the caste like system in which men dominate over women. Thus the

8. Hamilton, R., op.cit.

9. Marx, K. and Engels, F., Selected Works, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1968, p. 510.

two sexes have hierarchical relationship. This institutionalised inequality is the basis of women's oppression. She emphasizes that the achievement of full self determination including economic independence of both women and children would require fundamental changes in our social and economic structure. Firestone's work is not dialectical because the notion of class contradiction is absent in her writing and the social universe is irreversibly split into two separate worlds, namely, material and cultural. It is a combination of crude materialism and ecological determinism but the class dialectic based on sex is not established in her writings¹⁰. Mitchell has criticized Firestone's attempt to incorporate Marxism within the "Radical Feminist" framework and advocates the search for a Marxist solution to the problems raised by the feminists. She further recommends a separate and independent analysis of structures of female oppression in different areas and in different societies and formulates to separate the conscious opposition from the unconscious opposition of women. According to her feminism is a conscious political ideology which arises in particular historical circumstances. Mitchell uses psychoanalysis for studying the classes and the position of women in human society. On the basis of Freudian findings, she has developed a theoretical analysis of patriarchy as a

10. For S. Firestone's "The dialectic of sex" see R. Hamilton, op.cit., pp. 84-87.

parallel theoretical analysis to her work on women and class. She emphasises that the capitalist mode of production and the ideological mode of patriarchy must be analysed separately ¹¹.

Sack tries to examine Engels's ideas about the importance of public labour, private property and the family for determining women's status. She explains the exploitative nature of class societies and the relationship of property to class and sex and separates two sets of ideas : (1) the material bases of women's status - that social or public labour makes men or women adult citizens in the eyes of society and that men's ownership of private property establishes their dominance over women in the family and society and (2) those about the evolutionary aspect - that women's status has become solely subordinate and domestic with the development of male private property, production for exchange, and class society. However, she does not support the second idea. According to her there are two aspects of women's position - women as social adults and women as wives. The two can vary somewhat independently. In class societies the subordinate position of women not only is derived from domestic property relations but from the male public power which denies women's social status. According to Sack the dichotomization of family and

11. Mitchell, J., "Women and Equality" in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley (eds.), The Rights and Wrongs of Women, Penguin Books, England, 1976, p. 330.

society is very strong in class society. This makes women responsible for production of private use value and makes men responsible for the production of exchange values. Wage work becomes an additional burden which in no way changes women's domestic work and responsibility ¹² .

Rowbotham has made an attempt for synthesising Marxism and feminism as these two are complementary to each other. She considers Marxism as a revolutionary weapon for encountering the oppression of women and considers women's work as that of wage labourers and houseworkers ¹³ .

The Marxist analysis of women helps to understand how the mode of production determines the lives of women within the household both by defining the internal structure of it and by locating their position in the social system. The position of women is better understood through the analysis of mode of production and their place in the class structure. It is common that the exploitation of women in capitalist society flows from the class relations. At the sametime Marxism recognizes the special oppression of women, its institutional

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12. Sacks, K., "Engels Revisited : Women, the Organization of Production, and Private Property" in R.R.Reiter (ed.), Towards and Anthropology of Women, Monthly Review Press, New York & London, 1975, pp. 211-234.
 13. Rowbotham, S., Woman's consciousness - Man's World, Pelican Books, Harmondsworth, England, 1973.

and ideological supports. Marxism offers a theory of functions of sexist institution, ideology and behaviour in supporting and maintaining the social system. The status of women, their domestic and non-domestic roles and the nature of family are central to the materialist theory of human social evolution. The sexual antagonism is one of the major social conflicts that helps to hold the society together.

Women studies : the functionalist perspective

The structure - functionalists try to analyse the interrelations between women's status and the nature of social system, and view the women's activities in home as essentially cultural. They often deny that women do in fact constitute a subordinate group. Women have one conceptual set of images which are moulded by value system. Likewise they have a set of images of men which are structured by the central value system. Durkheim and Levi-Strauss set up dichotomies between sacred and profane, and arbitrarily designated men as sacred and women as profane, or men as actors and women as acted upon objects. Such polarized view is challenged by Kaberry and Goodale. They focus on interaction between the quotidian and the ritual activities of Australian aborigines. They describe the crucially important economic role of aboriginal women and show how these determine the nature of the spiritual role of women, refuting

the male view that women are excluded from the sacred state ¹⁴ .
Malinowski states the division of labour by sex that the Australian aboriginal women are forced to do heavier work by the other (brutal) half of society and the relation of a husband to wife in its economic aspect is that of a master to its slave and according to him the husband has a definite 'over-¹⁵right' over his wife .

The functionalists' view is that women should be studied in terms of role, function and attributes and they should be treated as a social category. Mead thinks that there is hardly any sex-linked aptitude or abilities which are universally acknowledged. In all societies there are certain abilities and aptitudes which can be considered as typically male and other as typically female ¹⁶ .

In modern sociology the functional theory of family also expresses sexist bias. According to Parsons functionalism perceives a harmonious division of labour within the family between instrumental and expressive functions. The instrumental function is performed by male, head of the household and the expressive function by wife-mother. ~~the~~

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14. Rohrlich-Leavitt, R., B.Sykes, and E.Weatherford, "Aboriginal Women : Male and Female Anthropological Perspectives" in R.Rohrlich-Leavitt (ed), op.cit., pp. 570-71.
 15. Ibid., pp. 571-572.
 16. Mead, M., Male and Female, Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1948, pp. 288-289.

The tasks appropriate to the wife-mother are therefore those of pattern maintenance and integration. But pattern maintenance and integration prove also to be the major functions of the family as a whole, acting as a solidarity unit in the context of an always potentially non-solidaristic total society. This form of the wife-mother functions within the family, by the family itself in the wider social system, only serves to reinforce the identification of the women's role with that of the family. The Parsonian theory also states that the root of functions of the family and preeminently of the adult woman as the key personality in the internal family structure are those of socialization and the emotional stabilization of the adult personality .

Freeman analyses that female oppression in a society is particularly embodied in two core concepts starting essentially from the traditional belief. The first is that men are more important, more significant, more valuable and more worthwhile than those of women because men are the primary bread winners in the family. From the value comes the attitude that a husband must earn more than his wife otherwise he suffers from a loss of personal status. Secondly, women survive to please and assist men. Their role is complementary to that of men. They should fulfil the natural "feminine"

17. Parsons, T., Essays in Sociological Theory, Light and Life Publishers, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 69-88.

functions. As they are different from men they should not compete with them. From this concept comes the attitude that women are dependent on men for everything and more particularly for their social identities which defines the socially rewarded roles as wife, mother and mistress. Women cannot equal to men without the destruction of the interdependent and mutually parasitic roles of male and female. Therefore, integration of sex roles and the equality of sexes will inevitably lead to some basic structural changes of society .

In India studies on women are mainly influenced by structure-functionalism. This is perhaps due to the history of origin of the two disciplines - Sociology and Social Anthropology in this country which have been initially influenced by British functionalism. Most of the women studies have been done to examine the changing roles, attitudes and functions of family, and its consequence in marital adjustment particularly of the educated urban one. However, it is found that such studies rarely take care of comparative study of men and women in similar occupations .

Srinivas has studied a number of factors related to the caste system which clearly affect the position of women

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18. Freeman, J., "The Woman's Liberation Movement in the United States" in A.Rohrlich-Leavitt (ed.), op.cit., pp. 382-386.
 19. Singh, A.M., "The Study of Women in South Asia : Some Current Methodological and Research Issues" in A.de Souza (ed.), Women in Contemporary India and South Asia, Manohar, New Delhi, 1980, p. 67.

in Hindu society. Among the low castes the relationship between men and women are more egalitarian than among the higher castes. The lower castes also try to raise their status through sanskritisation, the consequences of which is the lowering of the status of women and making them subordinate to men in moral, economic and ritual terms .

According to Karve the system of caste, family structure, kinship and marriage affect the status of women in a fundamental way. There are a number of factors related to caste in India which clearly affect the position of women in society .

The traditional attitudes and practises related to the position of women vary from region to region and within a region from caste to caste. The regional variation is more important than caste variation. As Kolenda points out, the incidence of bride-price, divorce and remarriage varies in practice from region to region, despite differences in the ideals among castes within one region . The changing attitudes towards family and marriage provide an indicator of the

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20. Srinivas, M.N., The Changing Position of Indian Women, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 16-29.
 21. Karve, I., Kinship Organisation in India, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965.
 22. For P.M.Kolenda see A.M.Singh, "The Study of Women in India : Some Problems in Methodology" in A. de Souza (ed.), Women in Contemporary India, Manohar, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 194, 207.

changing position of women. It is assumed that the forces of modernization and urbanization lead to a decrease in the number of joint families. Whether or not a woman lives in a joint family may have important consequences for her position in society and the opportunities that are open to her.

Another interesting dimension regarding caste is the extent to which caste background affects women's self image and influences selection of a role model or reference group. Beteille also points out that there are a number of caste-related factors which clearly affect the position of women in Indian society. He also observes that among the poor and low castes the relationship between men and women is more egalitarian than among the higher castes ²³.

Devaki Jain contrasts feminists who deny that biological differences can be rarely extended to aptitudes. In all societies there are certain abilities and aptitudes which are typically male and others are typically female. She argues that research formulations will depend upon whether women are considered similar to or different from men ²⁴.

The system of arranged marriages appears to be core of the society's ability to sustain traditional images

23. Beteille, A., "The position of Women in Indian Society" in Devaki Jain (ed.), Indian Women, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1975.

24. Jain, Devaki (ed.), *ibid.*, p. XIII.

and role for women, except the revolutionary changes in the economic and political spheres of a wider society. The complex interrelationship of regionalism, caste, religion and joint family is a condition specific to the situation of Indian women .

Although marriage and kinship have been studied in relation to women in a society recently scholars have taken interests in studying position of women, their changing role, status and attitudes . Beliefs and practices regarding pollution have been widely studied as the scholars consider the concepts of female susceptibility to pollution to be central to the structure of the whole society. In the ritual sphere there is a dichotomy between male and female activities and rarely they share an equal ritual role .

Recently a good number of studies have been done on working women in India. These studies have concentrated on the changing status of middle class women and consequent

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25. Singh, A.M., "The Study of Women in India : Some problems in Methodology" in A.de Souza (ed.), Women in Contemporary India, Manohar, Delhi, 1975, p. 217.
26. Desai, N., Women in Modern India, Vora & Co. Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Bombay., 1957.
Dube, S.C., "Men's and Women's Roles in India" in B.E. Ward (ed.), Women in New Asia, UNESCO, Paris, 1963.
Hate, C.A., Changing Status of Women in Post-independence India, Allied Publishers Pvt. Limited, Bombay, 1969.
Kapadia, K.M., Marriage and Family in India, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1958.
27. Singh, A.M., 1975, op.cit., pp. 203-204.

problems of their marital adjustment . Kapur has studied the middle class educated urban working women for understanding their changing status, attitudes, marital and familial relationships. It is found that educated women workers are not only more tolerated and accepted in the society than before, but are even more respected and admired. Old prejudice against work in offices and shops are gradually declining. Unmarried and married women of middle and upper classes are increasingly entering into all types of office jobs both in public and private sectors. Women are getting into jobs and professions and continue even after their marriage not only out of sheer economic necessity but also out of various other socio-psycho-situational factors and motivation. Kapur explores the various factors affecting the marital adjustment of the middle class working women. The multiple factors studied are objective and subjective. The objective factors are the family composition, husband's income, number of dependents, types of wife's service and husband's occupation. The subjective factors are the agreement or disagreement between husband and wife on values of

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28. Kapur, P., The Changing Status of Working Women in India, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974. See also her, Marriage and the Working Women in India, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1970.
Khanna, G. and M.A.Varghese, Indian Women Today, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1978.
Srivastava, V., Employment of Educated Married-Women in India, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1978.

life, each others role and status, sharing of household responsibilities, etc. ²⁹ According to Srivastava the educated urban women work mainly for certain non-economic advantages. Employment has raised the status of educated middle class women and they have become more conscious and independent. As both husband and wife co-operate and share domestic responsibilities there is not much problems in functioning of the family. Therefore women's participation in work does not adversely affect the interpersonal relationship between husband and wife, and also the authority structure of the family. It is observed that working women belonging to the lower class groups, however, are not much in favour of women's employment, they face much difficulties to work both in home and outside. The educated employed women are favourably oriented towards freedom from traditionality. It is found that education and employment act as determinants of modernity ³⁰ .

Women studies : the feminist perspective

The feminists define the system of male domination and female subjugation in society and try to assert the position of women in sexual hierarchy. Women as housewives as

29. Kapur, P., *ibid.*, 1970.

30. Srivastava, V., *op.cit.*

well as mothers have some cultural functions which are often determined through the sex-based ideology of inequality. The feminists critiques start from the premises that differ completely from the traditional view of society. The feminist approach is completely different from the structural-functional approach of women study. The feminists consider that men and women are constitutionally equal and share the same human capabilities. Observed differences therefore demand a critical analysis of the social institutions that cause them. The analysis has been able to account for the differences in life chances between men and women in society, but there is a lack of differences among women. The whole theoretical edifice is founded on the concept of "Patriarchy" which is an universal system of political domination functioning with the realm of sex relationships. For the feminists the position of women is the question and issue and beginning. The twentieth-century feminism made its contribution to the women's movement.

Firestone has made the most comprehensive statement on feminism. She states that there is a caste like system of stratification upon the biological inequality of sexes. In such inequality men receive the ego gratification and enjoy creature comforts from their domination of women. Central to the analysis was the family. She insists that the achievement of full self-determination including economic

independence to both women and children would require funda-
mental changes in our social and economic structure .³¹

The central theoretical orientation of Millett's study is based on the concept of "Patriarchy". She argues that female has fewer permanent class association than male. Women form a dependent class who live on surplus and their very existence is parasitic on men who rule them .³² Millett contradicts herself on this point as she earlier points out that the pre-eminent arena of sexual revolution is within the consciousness itself.

Radical feminism has brought out a very important truth but it is a general non-specific truth .³³ The feminist approach lacks a particular analysis of the social relations of production. There is a lack of use of the method of history and psychoanalysis in its theory. The individual history, how a man or woman is made in social terms, how the biological differences are transformed into their social meanings, etc. have not been considered in the feminist approach. This approach is more concerned with asserting equal rights for both the sexes. In this sense it is more a socio-political

31. For S.Firestone's "The Dialectic of Sex" see R.Hamilton, op.cit., pp. 84-89.

32. Millett, K., Sexual Politics, Hart Davis, London, 1971.

33. Mitchell, J., Women's Estate, Penguin Books, Harmonds-
worth, England, 1971, p. 90.

movement than an effort to theorize the status of women.

So far, the approaches to the study of women, namely, the Marxist, the functionalist and the feminist have been discussed. The functionalist approach seeks to understand the place of women in the total social system. Such an analysis generally provides cultural interpretation of women in society. The feminist approach is much more concerned with the female oppression and their liberation having a political overtone. The Marxists interpret the structural location of women in capitalist society. At first, the Marxist analysis concentrated mainly upon a discussion of the articulation between domestic labour and capitalism, but more recently there has been a heightened interest in the role of female wage labour as a variant of the industrial reserve army. Contributors of both fields have urged that it is necessary to examine the inter-relationships between patriarchy and capitalism if one is to develop an adequate theory of the sources of female subordination.

The problem that is specific to the field of women studies is the female factors and female awareness. The female factors, e.g., women's complementarity to men, their conceptual positioning originates in a particular category of social relationships which generates culturally defined images held by one sex to another. The sociological significance of the female factors lies in the extent to which it determines the political and cultural structure of society.

THE NEED FOR INDUSTRIAL SOCIOLOGY OF WOMEN :
THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

It is revealed from the foregoing discussion on the approaches to the study of women that only the Marxist approach has shown a keen interest to look at the position of industrial women in the capitalist society. The studies made on women from various perspectives like their status and roles in the society, employment in new profession, their position, etc. have considerably ignored to study the women who constitute an important part of industrial work force. Even in industrial sociology study of women has been neglected. The term industrial sociology would ideally cover all sociological studies dealing with the production system or systems obtaining in a society in relation to one or more aspects of the total social system³⁴. It is true that production system of a society not only includes male workers but also women workers either directly or indirectly, either partially or wholly along with the other aspects of the system.

However, the study of women industrial workers has remained as an unexplored area. Specific studies bearing upon the problems of industrial women are almost rare. A

34. Sheth, N.R. and P.J.Patel, Industrial Sociology in India, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1979, p. 6.

sociology of industrial occupations which concentrated solely on the male workforce leads to a neglect of an important source of differentiation within the workforce as a whole. The area of study in which a total neglect is noticed is the plantation industry. Women plantation workers appear as a most neglected category in industrial sociology despite the fact that they constitute a numerical majority of the industrial employees in the organised sectors of industry in India. However, I shall deal with this aspect in some details in the next chapter.

A good number of sociologists have already worked in the field of industrial sociology. But most of them have not shown much interest in the study of industrial women workers. Most of the studies on industrial sociology examine specific factory population in developing countries. To Kerr, socio-economic development involves conflict between traditional and modern ways of life which can restrain the pace of development and has important implications for the development of industrial labour force. The worker is uprooted from the larger family and village. The immediate family at least for a period is left in the village. These dislocations are accompanied frequently with a new position and status for women, many of whom may also come to be wage workers in factories or service employment .

35. Kerr, C., J.T.Dunlop, F.H.Harbrison, and C.A.Myers, Industrialism and Industrial Man, Heinemann, London, 1962.

To Moore the workers in an advanced industrial society are expected to show better adjustment, reflect greater occupational and geographical mobility and possess a higher level of commitment than in a less developed society .³⁶

Nash has demonstrated a co-existence between workers' allegiance to the factory and their commitments to their traditional social structure in Guatemalan factory .³⁷

Lambert has found that the impact of technology varies according to the relative distance of the production system of a given factory from the traditional technology of the people .³⁸

Morris shows that the shift from traditional, rural, agricultural occupations to modern, urban, industrial occupations has not been difficult. He has suggested that there has never been a real shortage of labour in Bombay, and whenever job opportunities are available people have moved from near as well as distant parts of the country. In the factory situation, it appears that the language, the region and religion are more important criteria than the caste, to make distinction within the work force .³⁹

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36. Moore, W.E., Social Change, Prentice Hall International INC, London, 1963.
37. Nash, M., Machine age Maya : The Industrialization in a Guatemalan Community, American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 87, 1958.
38. Lambert, R.D., Workers Factories and Social Change in India, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1963.
39. Morris, Morris, D., The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force : A study of Bombay Cotton Mills 1854-1957, Berkley, California, 1963.

Sheth has studied the formal, informal and cultural relationship among the people in a factory. He emphasises the migratory status of the workers. He argues that the culture and values of a pre-industrial society often co-exist with those attributed to the industrial society, producing an intermixture of traditionalistic and rationalistic norms .⁴⁰

Sharma examines the problem of recruitment of workers to industrial jobs and their commitment to industry as well as the industrial way of life .⁴¹

Ramaswamy has studied employees' involvement in trade union activity in the context of their economic and political affiliations, work situations, the network of social relationships woven into trade union organization and employers' behaviour and attitudes .⁴²

Bhowmik has studied on class formation among plantation workers in West Bengal. He has seen the relation between the planter and worker as that of master and servant and not of employer and employee. The labourers had few routes of escape and they were forced into accepting the

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40. Sheth, N.R., The Social Framework of an Indian Factory, (2nd edition), Hindustan Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1981.
41. Sharma, B.R., The Indian Industrial Worker, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1974.
42. Ramaswamy, E.A. The Worker and His Union, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1977.

conditions of life and work imposed on them by the plantation. He has traced the growth of the trade union movement among the plantation industrial workers in West Bengal with special reference to a particular garden in Decars .

Apart from the above general studies there are a few studies exclusively on industrial women. There is a general neglect to consider women work participation in the labour market separately. However, the increasing work participation of women in industry has some sociological significance.

Piho has studied life and labour of women textile workers in Mexico city. Her study deals with the life of the Mexican women workers in general, and with the life of the textile women workers in particular. The study concerns with her working conditions, income, relationships with other workers in the factory, living conditions in the home, main problems, role in the family, etc. This study investigates the real economic and social situation of women textile workers in Mexico city. The findings show that the use of the working woman's income is directly related to the number of family members depending on her, although some of them help to pay the common costs of living for the whole family group. The working woman is used to a certain personal freedom and

43. Bhowmik, S. Class Formation in the Plantation System, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981.

therefore is willing to maintain her working status as long
as possible ⁴⁴ .

In her study on Puerto Rican Women Silvestrini-Pacheco shows that the development of the tobacco-growing industry and the rise of the needle-work industry have a considerable effect on the status of women because they help to incorporate large number of women as workers. Previously women had participated indirectly in agricultural activities such as sugar and coffee production, and their role was less important than that of the male workers. But both in the tobacco processing and needle-work industries women constituted a significant portion of the labour force and were directly responsible for the elaboration of the end products. Thus they had the opportunity to participate actively, together with male workers, in the labour struggle in the 1930's. Pacheco shows how the Puerto Rican women have raised their level of awareness and increased their collaboration with other social movements. After the strike in 1933, the women needed labour unions responsive to their social problems and thus began organizing their own labour groups. By their efforts the Puerto Rican women workers had begun a new chapter in the social history of Puerto Rico. Women's work and their participation in the economy of Puerto Rico certainly facilitated their engagement in political and social struggle of

44. Pihó, V., "Life and labor of the women textile workers in the Mexico city" in R. Rohrllich-Leavitt, (ed.), op.cit., pp. 199-246.

the island. Gradually, women also have become active in the pro-independence movement and in other political activities. ⁴⁵

Nash has studied women in Bolivian tin-mining communities. The special nature of the mining community cultivates a total participation of all those who live and work in it; in part because of the isolation and in part because everyone is directly or indirectly dependent on the same enterprise. The rate of pay directly affects men, women, and children. Men and women have joined together in economic and political actions to demand improvement. Mining women are not isolated from each other or from the scene of industrial struggle because the encampment is an extension of the industrial complex itself. As active participants in the work process, the women have developed their own organizations to defend their rights as workers. Women's entry into the resistance movement signals the breakdown not only of a normal social structure, but also of the personal relationships that underline it. Thus women's resistance of the Bolivian tin mining communities heightens the sense of social breakdown and shakes the very foundation of the dominant-subordinate hierarchy which has its roots in the home and family networks. ⁴⁶

45. Silvestrini-Pacheco, B., "Women as Workers : The Experience of the Puerto Rican Woman in 1930's" in R.Rohrlich-Leavitt, (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 247-260.

46. Nash, J., "Resistance as Protest : Women in the Struggle of Bolivian Tin-Mining Communities" in R.Rohrlich-Leavitt (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 261-271.

Boserup explains the low rates of female employment in industry. Often the women tend to prefer work in home industries or in service trades rather than in wage employment in large-scale industry. The more flexible working hours in home industries are a great advantage to married women, and particularly to women with small children. It is possible to obtain part-time employment in home industries but impossible or at least difficult in large industries with a more rigorous rhythm of works. A manpower survey in Philippines shows that among self-employed women in home industries and women who are helping in family industries, i.e., among those who could decide more or less freely their own working hours, only 36-38 per cent work about 40 hours or more per week, while 68 per cent of women wage workers in industry work about 40 hours or more per week. In Indonesia, modern industries attract women workers by offering part time employment. An official report of Calcutta suggests that a similar arrangement in the factories might be a suitable method to attract middle class women to industrial employment ⁴⁷.

It is however revealed from the history and development of industrial sociology both in the West and particularly in India that role of women workers has been neglected

47. Boserup. E., Woman's Role in Economic Development, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1970, pp. 114-115.

in the sociological study of industrial system. In the beginning, social scientists working on industrial problems were guided by two somewhat incompatible tasks : (1) concern with the industrial efficiency and productivity and (ii) concern with the basic democratic values of equality and justice. The scholars felt committed to the dual goals of productivity and social equality. The question of social equality in the industrial system has however remained somewhat vague to the scholars. They could not deal with the problem of social equality with totality of the system because of their sexist bias. While the women labour force is an important part of the total labour force their problems and inequality have not been considered under the studies on industrial sociology. Most of the industrial sociologists interpret their work behaviour in a simplistic manner. The position of women in the class structure, the role of women in the capitalist mode of production and structural inequality have often been neglected. Such neglect of women in industrial occupations cannot be usefully accounted simply in terms of a sexist orientation among male industrial sociologists. It is possible to speculate that the general neglect is due to the fact that the sociologists rarely offer any insight to study the women workers in industry. Many of the sociologists believe that women are mere transients in the labour force and they have no serious role in industry and no serious commitment to

collective organisation. But in all industrial societies women are increasingly entering in the labour force. Such increasing work participation of women in industry has some sociological significance. When women take working industry along with men, what is its impact on them and changes in their lives, i.e., status, prestige, responsibilities, roles, relations with others, kinship ties, etc. which might have altered considerably. A wide range of social system can be examined, i.e., family, workgroup, union, friendship network, neighbourhood, community, etc. in terms of industrial sociology. The study of industrial women will open an avenue in the study of industrial sociology. The study of sociology of industrial women should be linked to the analysis of the total social structure and the role of women in this particular structure.

The present study will try to fill up some of the gaps in the field of industrial women particularly concerning with the problem of women workers of tea plantation industry in West Bengal. The female work participation in tea industry in West Bengal as well as in India is much higher than in any other industry. Tea industry experiences regular increase of female labour since its establishment. West Bengal provides the largest chunk of non-agricultural female workers (being 19 per cent) of which almost 80 per cent are

labourers in tea plantations .

Plantation system has a social system with distinct class structure, economy and ways of life that separate it from the rest of the industrial society. The plantation is an organised industrial venture where men are the privileged group while to be women means to have a series of limitations. The problems which plantation women workers face have a specific colouring depending upon their socio-economic and cultural milieu in which they have been nurtured and moulded. There are certain limitations for them both in the working situation and in the family situation. Then what are such limitations ? Where do plantation women stand in their traditional social structure ? In order to analyse the status of an exploited group, this study deals with the major factors affecting the status of women workers in plantation.

The present study was conducted in Chandmoni Tea Estate in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The tea plantation has a labour force of which 43 per cent are from the women workers while rest of the workers are men. Most of them belong to various tribal groups and a few are non-tribals the details of which has been given in the Chapter:3.

48. Mitra, A., L.P.Pathak, and S.Mukherjee, The Status of Women - Shifts in Occupational Participation, 1961-1971, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1980, p. 106.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the role of women workers in the plantation, the nature of their work participation in the industry and the consequent adjustment in the home life. Tea industry is agro-based located in rural areas. The women workers, who have come mostly from villages of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa can, therefore, be expected to be better adapted to this type of industry with a consequent effect upon lessening the conflict between home and work life. In the plantation in most of the cases both husbands and wives are employed, and they are subject to constraints of various challenges in the working place as well as in their home.

In this study particular emphasis will be given on the role of women in the productive process in the plantation industry, their life and work in the work situation and within the household. A thorough attempt has been made to analyse plantation women's role as wage labourers and housekeepers. It is felt that an understanding of their work, the conditions under which they work, the way they experience these and their problems would be a necessary pre-condition for further understanding of the problems of the plantation women workers.

Thus study concentrates on the following specific issues : the ethnic background of the women workers and their place in the rural society, their household composition, education, place of origin, process of recruitment, working

facilities and prospects, income, etc. All these have some impact on their working life. The study concerns with the working conditions in the plantation and labourers' commitment to work, their relations with the management and the other workers of the plantation, the specific problems which the labourers face, their interactions with the outside world and common membership in a group, their kinship obligation, economic relations, trade union affiliation, etc.

Looking at the life of the plantation women workers two distinct aspects can be distinguished : the women workers at the work environment and at the home environment. The plantation women workers are mostly immigrated Adivasi people whose traditional occupation was agriculture. But in plantation they enter into the industrial working environment. Such changes have some important consequences upon the working life and home life of the workers. Therefore, it is necessary to know how far the Adivasi women have adjusted themselves to the industrial environment and what are their attitudes to the plantation work. Generally in plantation men and women perform different types of work. Naturally their wages also vary. Under such a situation then what is the inducement to work for both the sexes and what is the nature of their commitment to the industrial works ? What is the role of women in the trade union activities ? When the Adivasi women enter into the industrial work in plantation what impact is noticed

in their social life ? Is there any change of status of women workers due to their active economic participation ? How far their roles have changed. If so, then how they have adjusted themselves in the home life and in the intra-family relations with other members. How they manage the home situation. What is the nature of their marital adjustment ? In order to analyse the status of plantation women workers, this study deals with the main factors affecting the status of women workers in plantation.

This analytical study covers the following dimensions of the life of the plantation women workers :

- (a) The women at the work situation - attitudes of women workers to their work; the nature of commitment; differential work performance by women of different ethnic groups, if any; duty or task of women workers vis-a-vis male workers; wage-structure of women vis-a-vis male workers; inducement to work of both male and female workers; women's role in trade union activities.
- (b) The women at home - marital adjustment; husbands' attitudes towards wives' employment; childcare and socialization of the children; management of home; economic contribution and sharing of household responsibilities; changing role and status of women in the family, etc.

METHODOLOGY

The tea growing regions of West Bengal is situated ^{on} the northern boundary consisting of two districts, namely, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. According to the Tea Statistics, 1978-79 there were 298 tea plantations in these two districts in 1977. In this year the total number of labour force in tea plantation was 205,466 of which 96,255 were women labourers, 87,289 were men labourers, 8008 were adolescent and 13,919 were children. This working population is distributed among some major Adivasis and caste communities, namely, Oraon, Munda, Kheria, Nepali, etc. Besides there are a few minor communities like Mahali, Ghasi, Malpahari, Asur, Lohar, Turi, Ore, etc. All of them except the Nepalis are from Chotanagpur, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa regions. Only the Nepali (96 per cent) workers are found in the plantations on the hills. They are only 7 per cent in the plantations of the plain regions. Besides, a few local communities, namely, Mech, Rabha and Rajbansi are found as plantation labourers. However, in every plantation workers belong to most of these Adivasis and caste communities. The management of the plantation of this region is more or less same except some minor differences found in the British owned plantations. The hierarchy in plantation, process of recruitment, wage pattern, job opportunities, etc. are also same in all the plantations. Due to these reasons it is thought that study of any plantation will be a representative one. Keeping this view in mind

a tea plantation named Chandmoni Tea Estate is selected for the present study. Chandmoni Tea Estate is in Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling district.

The data were collected from published materials and field study. For writing the 1st, 2nd and 3rd chapters considerable library work was done to go through the historical records, theoretical aspects of women studies, etc. Besides, relevant sociological studies on women were also consulted. To obtain a first hand data a field work of about ten months was conducted in Chandmoni Tea Estate during the period 1979-80. For the primary information a census enumeration schedule was used. Then an intensive interview was followed using an interview guide. As the total number of women workers was only 221 all of them were interviewed. Out of 221 only 14 belong to caste groups and rest are from various Adivasi communities. However, as the number of non-Adivasi women workers are very insignificant I do not intend to make any comparative study between the Adivasi and caste women workers. Several case studies were conducted relating to the specific aspects of the life and labour of the women workers. The information collected through interview guide and case studies were supplemented by the data collected through observation. As the study concentrates upon the dual roles of women as plantation workers and housewives the respondents were mostly the

married working women. However, in some cases unmarried women and widow workers were also interviewed. In several cases both husband and wife of same household were interviewed. All these interviews were supplemented with the persons of resource who had a special knowledge of the community as well as industry. Most of the interviews took place in the informants' house and sometime in the working place also. Besides, various records related to the women workers as well as men workers, such as, pay, leave, absenteeism, turn-over, job opportunities and facilities, work rules, management, etc. were also collected from office of the Chandmoni Tea Estate. The data collected through all these sources are mostly qualitatively analysed.