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INTRODUCTION – THE PROBLEM – THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – AN OVERVIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF NGOs OF DARJEELING IN WEST BENGAL

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1.1 Introduction – The Problem

Since the Constitution of India has emphasised on welfare state, its primary responsibility is to improve the quality of the life of the citizens. Hence, the Government of India has implemented different types of economic strategies, schemes and programmes for the betterment of the people. Starting with the Community Development Programme (CDP), the Government of India later shifted to several other programmes under Five Year Plans. Despite all these, several significant outcomes were visible in 1970s. Among these, the most important were women, the highly neglected section of the society. Then, the policy-makers have focused their attentions on shaping the socio-economic development of the women. But history reveals that in many societies in India and the world, gender inequality was a part and parcel of an accepted male-dominated culture. The traditional mentality of India assumed that the place of women is mainly concentrated to the household activities like kitchen work and upbringing of the children. They had been considered nothing but a sex object and obviously inferior to men in different spheres of life and knowledge. The 'Sati Pratha', 'Pardah System', 'Child Marriage', 'Dowry System', etc. are some forms of atrocities and discriminatory attitudes against the women. Even after 65 years of India's independence, women are still considered to be powerless and marginalised sections of the Indian society. The 2001 Census shows that the sex ratio in India is 933, which is lowest in the world. Percentage of female literacy is 54.16 per cent against male literacy of 75.85 per cent (2001 Census). Moreover, women's representation in the Parliament and in the State Assemblies has never been more than 8 and 10 per cent respectively.

In order to bring the women in the same platform where the men are

standing, the Government of India is adopting many measures and formulating different types of plans and programmes. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the states to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided reservation of seats (at least one-third) for women in the local bodies such as Panchayats and Municipalities. The Indian Government has passed various legislations to safeguard Constitutional rights of women. These legislative measures include the Hindu Marriage Act (1955), The Hindu Succession Act (1956), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971), Equal Remuneration Act (1976), Child Marriage Restraint Act (1976), Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act (1986), Pre-natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Measure) Act (1994), etc. The Government of India has adopted different programmes and policies like the Swa-Shakti Project, Women's Economic Programme (1982), Support to Training and Employment Programme to Women (1987), Hostel for working women, Rehabilitation of Marginalized Women, Education of Women like Social Education, Farmer's functional literacy Programme (1967), Non-formal Education (1978), National Literacy Mission (1988), Total Literacy Campaign (1991), Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (2000), and organisation of Self Help Groups, formation of cooperatives of women, etc. to empower the women. Apart from these, various welfare measures like the Support to Training for Employment Programme (1987), Mahila Samridhi Yojana (1993), the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (1992-93), Indira Mahila Yojana (1995), DWCRA Plan (1982), Balika Samridhi Yojana (1997), etc. were introduced for the empowerment of women. The Government of India in 1953 established a Central Social Welfare Board with a nation-wide programme for grants-in-aid for women, children and under-privileged groups followed by the State Social Welfare Board in 1954. A separate Department of Women and Child Development was set up at the Centre in 1985 to give a distinct identity and provide a nodal point on the matters relating to women's development.

National Commission for Women was created by an Act of Parliament in 1992. Since 1980, the Government of India has shown an increasing concern for women related issues through a variety of legislation promoting the education and political participation of women (Collier, 1998). In 2001 National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was introduced.

But, the fact is that poverty, hunger and disease remain widespread among the women and women and girls continue to comprise the majority of the world's poorest people. The real conditions of women in international scenario are as follows:

- Of the 192 countries in the world, only 12 have a female head of state.
- Seventy per cent of the world's 1.3 billion poor-those who are living on the equivalent of less than US\$ 1 per day-are woman.
- Women spend twice as much time as men (or more time) on unpaid work.
- Worldwide, women on average earn two-thirds of what men earn.
- Women make up the majority of the world's part-time workers-between 60 per cent and 90 per cent. In the European Union, 83 per cent of part-time workers are women.
- In countries such as Australia, Canada, Thailand, and the United States, over 30 per cent of all businesses are now owned or operated by women, with Thailand topping the list at almost 40 per cent.
- In some countries of sub-Saharan Africa, most of the female labour force is in the informal economy; for example, 97 per cent in Benin, 95 per cent in Chad, 85 per cent in Guinea, and 83 per cent in Kenya.
- In Europe, women are the heads of household in nine out of ten single parent families.
- Women possess roughly one per cent of the land in the world.
- Today only six countries can boast the following: close to complete sexual equality in the area of secondary education, 30 per cent representation of women in elected government positions, roughly 50 per cent of non-agricultural jobs occupied by women.

- In nearly 100 years, only 24 women have been elected as head of state.
- Around 80 per cent of the 27 million refugees around the planet are women.
- Two-thirds of the 300 million children who have no access to education are girls.
- Out of almost a billion, people who are unable to read and write two-thirds of them are women.
- Over 200,000 women die every year as a result of back street abortions.
- Women produce 80 per cent of the food in the poorest areas in the world; in some places, this figure is as high as 95 per cent.
- Officially, 110 million girls worldwide between the ages of 5 and 14 work, and this do not include domestic tasks (Baylis, J. & Smith, S. 2005).

It is estimated that nearly 1300 million persons in the world are poor and nearly 70% of them are women. In the Developing Countries, women are getting an unequal share of the property, which has become a major hurdle for their empowerment. Today, 30 per cent to 35 per cent rural house-holds are women-headed and their meager income makes them more vulnerable to the extremes of poverty (Kant, S. Krishan, 2001).

Women in India have improved their well-being in the last 30 years in terms of increased expectation of life at birth, increased age at marriage, gross enrolment ratio at all levels of education, work participation rate in organised employment, reduced infant mortality rate and less gap between infant mortality rate for girls and boys. Yet, poverty in India is a deep-rooted problem. The number of women in politics at the local level had been very small, and their influence is negligible. As stated by Kumari and Kidwai (1996), "Prior to 1990, the women in local politics were generally either politicians who had lost membership of higher institutions, and those who were given such an opportunity to serve the purpose of publicity". The reason for low participation, as stated by Nath, Kamle (1997), is 'down the ages women have always been treated as subordinate to men in every aspect of life. Their place

of work was confined to the domain of the household and rearing of children. Her identity was attached to that of her father, husband or son, i.e. she was given a status in accordance with that of her male partner. It is not that the women in the past have not contributed substantially in politics, but because of their secondary status and low esteem, most of them were denied entry in political decision-making.'

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Darjeeling District is very peculiar in its character because it has a higher work participation rate of female than men as compared to both the central and the state levels. The District is divided into two parts i.e. Hills and Plains according to its physiographical condition. The District is politically disturbed since long time because of the agitation for the separate state of Gorkhaland. There have been a number of empirical studies about the NGOs and empowerment of women in different parts of the globe. Here, the NGOs are seen to play a crucial role in the field of empowerment of women. It is to be mentioned here that the researchers make some works on 'NGOs and empowerment of women' in the national level but there is no any serious study on the NGOs and their roles in the society in Darjeeling District of West Bengal. So, the proposed study seeks to analyse the NGOs in India in general and their roles in the field of empowerment of women in Darjeeling District of West Bengal in particular. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the position of women in the society and to develop an understanding of the socio-economic and political factors influencing the rise of NGOs in Darjeeling District of West Bengal.
2. To examine the roles and activities of NGOs in the society and whether they are able to empower the womenfolk as an alternative mechanism of empowerment.
3. To do an in-depth study of a selected NGOs starting from its history, organisational set-up, staff pattern, different activities, jobs satisfactions of the staffs, beneficiaries observation, perception of the

local parties, and to explore how far NGOs are able to empower women in the District.

1.3 Research Questions

Given the aforesaid objectives, the present study has sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the position of women in the society?
2. What are the main factors for the rise of the number of NGOs in Darjeeling District of West Bengal?
3. What are the main roles and activities of NGOs in the society?
4. Whether they are able to empower the womenfolk or not in the said District?
5. What is the history, organizational set-up, staff pattern, different activities of NGOs in the District?
6. How is the staff's job satisfaction, beneficiaries' and non-beneficiaries' observation, local parties' perception towards NGOs?
7. Does the participation of NGOs increase the women's influence over economic resources and participation in economic decision making?
8. Does the participation of NGOs influence the individual development and growth of women?
9. Is there an increase in women's decision making in the domestic matters?
10. Has participation of NGOs increased a woman's mobility, development of networks and interactions with other members of her group and community?
11. Does the participation of NGOs increase women's awareness and knowledge?
12. Does participation of NGOs increase women's participation and influence in social, community and political activities?

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Empowerment of women is one of the key issues in any socio-economic development programme. Women's empowerment can be viewed as a continued process which includes various interrelated and mutual reinforcing components. "Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identify and empowers in all spheres of life" (Pallai, 1995). Therefore, it was hoped through Constitutional and legal measures the process of development and also empowerment would be achieved. But despite various movements and legal supports and despite sanctioning of various development projects, the picture of women's empowerment is not satisfactory. Thus, it can be suggested in the theoretical framework that for the overall empowerment of women both governmental as well as non-governmental initiatives are necessary because NGOs have emerged as a new force contributing to social upliftment and economic development. They play a vital role in the shaping and implementing of participatory democracy and work at grassroots levels in the remotest of areas and their reach is much wider. Government too has accepted the role of NGOs in the development process.

1.5 Overview of the Existing literatures

The existing literatures, dealing with NGOs and empowerment of women in India is new, and is less attractive if we compare the same type of literature with the western one. Existing literatures on NGOs and their roles, especially in women's empowerment, are reviewed here.

Alsop, R. and Heinsohn, N. (2005) said that empowerment can be defined as a person's capacity to make effective choices and to transform choices into desired actions and outcomes. The extent to which a person is empowered is influenced by personal agency (the capacity to make a purposive choice) and opportunity structure (the institutional context in which choice is made). To determine the degrees of empowerment various indicators are suggested: for

personal agency - psychological, informational, organisational, material, social, financial or human; for opportunity structure- the presence and operation of formal and informal institutions, including the laws, regulatory frameworks, and norms governing behaviour. To illustrate how this analytical framework can be used, the paper describes the framework guided analysis in development interventions in Ethiopia, Nepal, Honduras and Mexico. The paper also presents a draft module for measuring empowerment at the country level. The module can be used alone or be integrated into country-level poverty or governance monitoring systems that seek to add an empowerment dimension to their analysis.

Altekar, A.S. (1959), a book analyses position of women in Hindu civilization from prehistoric times to the present day. The book highlights the main problems that confront the Hindu women and also suggests some solutions. There are twelve chapters in the book. Chapter one deals with the problems relating to the childhood and education of women. Chapters two and three deal with the problems connected with marriage and married life. In chapters four and five deal with position of widow in the society. Chapters six and seven deal with the place of women in public and religion life. In chapters eighth and nine right of property have been discussed. The Chapters ten and eleventh deal with fashions of dress, ornaments and general attitude of society towards women respectively.

Bagchi, Jasodhara, (1995) (ed.) - This edited volume analyses the current myths of Indian womanhood and explain how these influence the lives of the Indian women. The contributors of the book address the problems of all women, who strive to enrich their lives and surroundings and focus on the fact that whether urban middle class or rural poor, society always seeks to marginalise them through laws, media representations, social customs and economic deprivation. The contributors put forward some suggestions that no genuine social upliftment can be effected unless the material and ideological constraints on their lives are properly confronted.

Bagchi, Jasodhara, (2005) (ed.) - This is important and comprehensive volume vividly depicts the current status of women and girls in West Bengal. There are total eight essays in this volume and covers the following areas: demography, health and nutrition, education, economic development, political participation law, violence, and culture. The analysis has been conducted in the framework of the socio-economic and politico-cultural ambience. All the contributors of the volume have tried to show how women and girls of West Bengal have fared in the last three decades of the twentieth century and at the end of the volume some policy recommendation have been highlighted.

Batiwala, S. (1994) argues since the mid-1980s, the term empowerment has become popular in the development field, especially with reference to women. However, there is confusion as to what the term means among development actors. She analyses the concept of women's empowerment and outlines empowerment strategies based on the insights gained through a study of grassroots programmes in South Asia. The concept of women's empowerment is the outcome of important critiques generated by the women's movement, particularly by 'third world' feminists. They clearly state that women's empowerment requires the challenging of patriarchal power relations that results in women having less control over material assets and intellectual resources. Women participate in their own oppression so they must first become aware of the ideology that legitimises male domination. The empowerment process starts from within but access to new ideas and information comes from external agents. With new consciousness and the strength of solidarity, women can assert their right to control resources and to participate equally in decision making processes.

Charyulu and Natarajan (1980) had conducted a case study in Cuddapah district of Andhra Pradesh. They reported that flexibility, personal touch, easy accessibility of services for the client groups, capacity to initiate the experiment with new programmes, stimulation and mobilization of resources

of the community, sensitivity to field problem, self-help and self-reliance are the main points of concern of voluntary organisations. They had emphasised that the NGOs possess the terms of reference and enough resources to meet the needs of the human beings.

Deshmukh Ranadiv, J. (2008), (ed.) makes a compilation of diverse research methods on addressing justice in the family. It is based on the theme of the relevance of the ethos of democracy to a family. He makes a clear discussion on the implications of oppressive families on gender differences, and the ways in which these are being negotiated or transformed.

Deshmukh Ranadive, J. (2003) said that women's empowerment does not necessarily take place when incomes are generated, when livelihoods are enhanced or when groups are formed. This is because within families and households, hierarchies and structures do not alter. In fact, public interventions which result in new social activity or new avenues of income generation can actually accentuate tensions within households. It is at such times that supplementary interventions are required. 'Gender equity in the family' is an experimental intervention from Andhra Pradesh, which uses folk theatre to highlight traditional socio-cultural norms within the family. The performances do not blame the men or the women for gender inequality but show how both those who suffer from and those that perpetrate inequality are victims of social structure. The intervention shows that in order to change the socio-cultural space of women in the home, other members of the household need to be involved in empowerment processes.

Dolly Arora (1993), (ed.) argues that a discourse has underwent three major shifts in accent in the decade of 1980s, firstly, an increased concern for the protection of environment; secondly, an emphasis on people's participation, especially in the protection, management and regeneration of natural resources; and thirdly, the incorporation of gender as an important element of development concerns. There is a growing interest of international agencies,

non- governmental organisations and donor agencies as well as the state in the programmes of wasteland development on the one hand and increasing involvement of women in these programmes on the other hand. Both manifests the discursive transformation and creates further discursive space for subsequent policy actions and expectations. All the contributors to this book admit that there is a need of involving of women in wasteland development not because of women are instinctively closer to nature, but because of they suffer ecological degradation most and afforestation projects which are not planned around women's schedules and needs often deny them rights which they enjoyed before the project started. NGOs, it is suggested that, can motivate women to organise and take part in wasteland development or forest protection and in the process strengthen themselves. The NGOs can liaise with the governmental authorities and pick up the legal actions on behalf of the women of the village. The NGOs can educate, motivate and organise the people towards protection of the forest. For various reasons, thus, NGOs are assigned an important role in respect of women's participation in wasteland development.

Dr. Mathu, A., Dr. Pandya, R. (2006), (eds.) – This book is comprehensive synthesis of major problems and issues related to women and development. There are eleven chapters in this books and covers the programmes and policies for women in India, women and health, women and media, women and law, women and education, women and adult education, gender and socialization, women and environment, women studies cells and centers, women and widowhood and lastly women development and efforts of NGOs.

Edna Acosta-Belen and Christine E. Bose, (1990) argues that the condition of women in Third World Countries cannot be separated from the colonial experience since the power relationships that were established during the colonial era are still recreated through contemporary mechanisms. As a result and contrary to expectations, growth and prosperity still elude in the Third World. They also show that during the current international economic crisis,

women's unpaid or underpaid labour has become the basis of new development programmes and policies and is crucial to the recent phase of capitalist development. They discuss how the structural position and status of women and colonies closely resemble each other and have served as the foundations of the capital accumulation process and the development of industrial nations. The concept of women as a last colony thus becomes a compelling metaphor of liberation and leads us to stress the need for a worldwide process of gender decolonization, entailing the reformulation of power relations between women and men.

Femida Handy, Meenaz Kassam, Suzanne Feeney, Bhagyashree Ranade, (2006), (eds.) This book is a result of a five-year study of small NGOs that were started by women at the grass-roots level in and around the city of Pune in Maharashtra, India. This book provides an in-depth understanding of why grass-roots Indian NGOs run by women for women tend to be successful. The authors have discussed the social impact of the NGOs in promoting both development and women's empowerment. They showed the importance of small NGOs in the local communities and emphasised that these small NGOs can change the rural India and abolished the rural poverty effectively.

Fiona Leach and Shashikala Sitaram (2002) describe an NGO project intended to empower scheduled caste women working in the silk-reeling industry in India through the provision of microfinance. They documented the impact of the project and highlighted the negative consequences of excluding male relatives from playing any meaningful role. They have suggested the ways in which the project might have been made more male inclusive while still empowering women. At the same time, they acknowledge that even if the men's hostility to the project had been overcome, the women's micro enterprises were unlikely to have been viable commercially. This is because the project insisted that the women operate as a group in what was a high-risk area of economic activity, with no clear strategy as to how their work could be sustained.

G. Sreeramulu, (2006)- This book provides an in-depth study of empowerment of women through self-help groups. The study mainly focused its attention on empowerment of women, topography socio-economic background of the rural women in some selected district. The study covers the problems and perspectives of SHGs and suggested several measures. The book has evaluated the implementation of several schemes in Andhra Pradesh in general and Anantpur District in particular. The book covers each and every side of SHGs in the District.

Grown, C., Rao Gupta, G. and Kes, A. (2005) puts question that how can the global community achieve the Third Millennium Development Goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women. To be empowered women must have equal capabilities in the fields of education and health, and equal access to resources and opportunities such as land and employment. They said that the women must also have the agency to use these capabilities and resources to make strategic choices. This report, prepared by the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, identifies strategic priorities and practical actions for achieving women's empowerment by 2015. They emphasised on the following concepts: strengthening opportunities for post-primary education for girls; investing in infrastructure to reduce women's and girls' time burdens; guaranteeing women's and girls' property and inheritance rights; increasing women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies; and combating violence against women and girls.

Gurumurthy, A. (2003) emphasised that the progress in technology has encouraged the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan for social transformation and economic growth. He said that governments have to bridge the digital divide, and have set up information technology taskforces and e-governance initiatives to deliver public services, and have to shift state policy from a monopolistic regime towards a competitive framework. New business models

are emerging to alter the economics of hardware and connectivity and are targeting the rural markets. Some NGOs are using ICTs for development. However, many activities around ICTs for development in the region lack a clear vision and mission and on how to enable women to benefit from ICTs. This document looks at specific projects and programmes in the region which focuses on women's economic empowerment with the help of ICTs.

Ilkkaracan, I. and Seral, G. (2000) Women's sexuality remains a strong taboo in Turkey. Most women have little or no access to information on sexuality as because the issue is not addressed in either in the formal or in the informal education systems. This silence around women's sexuality can leave women ill-equipped to deal with sexual relations and develop happy sexual lives. Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) a Turkey based NGO runs a human rights training programme for women which seeks to facilitate an empowering perception of sexuality by emphasising the right to sexual expression, pleasure and enjoyment. The programme covers a wide range of issues encompassing reproductive rights and sexual violence against women as well as sexual expression and sexual fulfillment. Sexual violence and reproductive sexuality are purposely addressed in separate modules, thus allowing a separate space for the participants to focus solely on a positive understanding of sexual rights, including the basic right to know and like one's sexual organs, the right to seek sexual experiences independent of marital status, the right to orgasm, the right to expression and pursuit of sexual needs and desires, and so on.

Jaya Kothai Pillai, (1995) The book is in two sections, the first dealing with empowerment of women in general and the second section, empowerment of women professionals. The author of this book said that women have to empower themselves and have to take the initiative to change their status. The author has collected the information on women professionals of the world and makes a comparison with that of Indian findings.

Joel S.G.R, Bose, (2003) There are ten chapters in this book and attempts to examine the role of NGOs in the rural development. This book covers the all sides of NGOs starting from its genesis and evolution, theory, types and so on. This book thoroughly discusses the concept of rural development and the role of NGOs in it.

Kabeer, N. (1999) said that empowerment is a process by which those who have been denied power gain power, in particular the ability to make strategic life choices. For women, these could be the capacity to choose a marriage partner, a livelihood, whether or not to have children, etc. To attain these, three interrelated dimensions are needed: access to and control of resources; agency (the ability to use these resources to bring about new opportunities) and achievements (the attainment of new social outcomes). Empowerment, therefore, is both a process and an end result.

Kabeer, N. (2005) discusses the Third Millennium Development Goal (MDG), on gender equality and women's empowerment. He explores the concept of women's empowerment and highlights the ways in which the indicators has associated with this Goal can contribute on education, employment, and political participation.

Kabeer, N. (2005) has emphasised the impact of microfinance. The paper examines the empirical evidence on the impact of microfinance with respect to poverty reduction and the empowerment of poor women in South Asia. It becomes apparent that while access to financial services it can and does make vital contributions to the economic productivity and social well-being of poor women and their household and it does not 'automatically' empower women. Like other development interventions such as education, political quotas, etc. that seeks to bring about the radical structural transformation that true economic empowerment is possible with the help of microfinance.

Kapoor (1994) carried out a research project on 'Women and Welfare- A Study of Voluntary Agencies in Punjab.' The study is based on a historical survey of the status of women as determined or influenced, from time to time, by scriptural codes, social conventions, cultural traditions, political changes, economic and industrial development, constitutional provisions and humanistic ideas. He explored that the changing nature and dimensions of voluntary action towards women welfare by understanding the working of four voluntary agencies- Association of Social Health in India, Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Samiti, Nari Niketan and Sewa Sadan.

Kapoor and Singh (1977) initiated a study on 'Rural Development through NGOs'. They made this study in Himachal Pradesh and gave a clear representation that NGOs could do very little in areas of massive action and recommended for large developmental works.

Klugman, B. (2000) suggested the ways by which women can become empowered and can play a model role in the policy-making process in the society. The book presents two case studies which illuminate the issue of women's empowerment from different perspectives: the way in which processes of advocacy can empower women, and the way in which policies that empower women can be won through women's participation and advocacy. It first analyses the 1994 Women's Health Conference which, for most participants, was their first ever experience of a truly consultative process, and one which would later make a direct policy influence. This knowledge strengthened women's self-esteem and enhanced their belief in their own capacity to contribute to policy processes. The second case study focuses on the strategies used to change South Africa's abortion legislation and reveals the diverse tactics required to ensure that women's empowerment remains at the centre of policy content. Empowerment can be achieved through the implementation of the policy itself, for example the fact that access to safe abortion increases women's ability to control their lives in a context where it

may be difficult to access appropriate contraception, or to negotiate contraception use.

Lalitha (1975) conducted a study on 'voluntary works in India.' The study covered 390 voluntary organisations and 365 operational volunteers in nine cities of India, namely, Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Patna, and Amritsar. The study had thoroughly examined the socio-economic profile of voluntary workers, nature of works in which they were engaged in and so on. After examining the problems of the voluntary organisations and workers some sort of suggestions for improvement has been highlighted.

Leelamma Devasia, V.V. Devasia, (2004)- This book elucidates the struggle of women in some slum areas in Nagpur city to achieve social justice, economic independence and freedom through meeting their needs without compromising the ability of others to meet their own needs. The book emphasised the importance Community Action for Development (CAD) a NGO and the participation of women.

Longwe, S. (2000) said that the current NGO and development agency strategies to support women's political empowerment are based on two assumptions: firstly, that women's increased access to resources, especially education, will lead to their increased representation in political positions; and secondly, that governments are genuinely committed to leading national programmes of action for women's advancement. This article argues that both of these assumptions are seriously mistaken. All development organisations supporting women's empowerment must recognised the true obstacles that women are facing in gaining political power, and develop programme strategies to overcome them. The key problem is the covert and discriminatory systems of male resistance to women who dare to challenge male domination of the present political system. In addition to focusing on the need to get women into government, NGOs could also usefully support of

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organisations that are engaging in direct action is a key strategy which enables women to push for policy changes from outside government.

M L Dantwala, Harsh Sethi, Pravin Visaria, (1998), (eds.) The book constitute the six case studies of voluntary efforts which are taken from both urban and rural areas. The book highlights the viability of voluntarism as a social impulse suffused with the values of service and sacrifice, the significant change in the attitude of the people from apathy to active involvement when presented either unselfish leadership, and the evolution in the priorities of voluntary organisations from welfare and development to advocacy and the struggle for rights and entitlements and so on. The contributors argued that NGOs tend to view themselves as a separate sector and therefore note a caution.

M.P. Kishore, (2008) very beautifully discussed the contemporary women's righteous movement in India. With first-hand knowledge of the working of legislation and the law enforcement machinery in India, the author attempts to explain why laws enacted for the ostensible purpose of strengthening rights of the women ends with such dismal results. The book exemplifies a tenacious, logical and sincere effort to understand the measures of reform work and that which don't work in the real world. The author is very much in favour of revision of laws, legislations, and law enforcement machineries for the well-being of India's diverse women.

Malhotra, Anju's (2002) paper presents a review of current theories and strategies to foster women's empowerment in the development context. The paper defines empowerment as the ability of people to make strategic choices in areas that affect their lives. Two key factors in the process of empowerment are identified: control over resources (the conditions for empowerment) and agency (the ability to formulate choices). Section one outlines the conceptual framework. Section two discusses how empowerment can be measured in practice, with an overview of various frameworks which cover economic, socio-cultural, familial, legal, political and psychological dimensions.

Marcelle, G. (2002) has emphasised the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and has treated it a powerful tool for women's empowerment. It can create better opportunities for women to exchange information, gain access to on-line education and to engage in e-commerce activities. But, they are not given the same. This is often due to lack of connectivity, inadequate access, illiteracy, and to language and behavioural barriers. The paper highlights successful case studies from many countries on the use of ICTs as a tool for economic empowerment, participation in public life, and for enhancing women's skills and capabilities. It also explores strategies to integrate a gender perspective into national ICT policies. The report ends with a call to all stakeholders to work on improving connectivity, access to ICT skills training and eliminating negative behavioural attitudes to women's full engagement with ICTs.

Martinez, E. and Glenzer, K. (2005) have made a comprehensive studies of CARE programmes made to the empowerment of women. CARE defines an 'empowered woman' as women who enjoys bodily integrity, has positive images of her own worth and dignity, has equitable control and influences over strategic household and public resources, and lives in an enabling environment in which women can and do engage in collective effort. Some recommendations are also made to achieve the women's empowerment.

Mayoux, L. (2006) has emphasised the importance of microfinance programme and said that these programmes have the potential to initiate a series of 'virtuous spirals' of economic empowerment and increased well-being for women and their families. This paper challenges the assumptions of automatic benefits of micro-finance for women. For example, high repayment levels by women do not necessarily indicate that they have used the loans themselves. Men may take loans from women, or women may choose to invest loans according to men's priorities. Likewise, high demand for loans by women may be a sign of social pressure to access resources for in-laws or husbands rather

than an indicator of empowerment. Where women are unable to negotiate changes in intra-household and community gender inequalities they may become dependent on loans to continue in low paid occupations with heavier workloads. However, these shortcomings should not discourage microfinance programmes being undertaken. The experience of current innovations in many programmes indicates a range of ways in which contribution to women's empowerment can be increased. Suggestions include the need to provide services to reduce the burden of unpaid domestic work on women, including childcare, and to ensure that repayment schedules and interest rates reflect the reality of women's economic activities and life cycles.

Michael Edwards and Alan Fowler, (2002), (eds.) said that during the last decade, along with the rise of the voluntary sector as a formidable force of transformation in global politics and economics, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of courses and training programmes on NGO management. In the introductory chapter, the editors have clarified that the book focuses mainly on a subset of NGOs called non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs) which are “intermediaries working primarily on issues of poverty and injustice within ‘developing’ countries and at global level”. The book provides a cluster of challenges for NGO management in the changing global context and refreshingly reminds the NGO managers inter alia that (i) NGOs must continuously justify their presence in and value to society, as their fight against poverty, injustice, exclusion, or degradation of natural resources is voluntary and self-chosen, without any statutory authority; (ii) engagement with citizens and social mobilization should be of high quality, as it is a key determinant of voluntary sector legitimacy, effectiveness, power, and influence; (iii) the route to compliance of staff toward achieving goals and missions of NGOs lies in satisfying the self-motivation of staff and volunteers, as NGOs cannot rely on coercion or financial rewards as a means to coax staff to achieve targets; and (iv) establishing and sustaining the right connections lies in the heart of effective NGO management, as NGOs “constitute a crucial part of the ‘connective tissue’ of a vigorous civil

society". The first part of the book reflects the future roles of NGOs in an era of declining international aid, moving NGOs from agents of foreign aid to vehicles for international cooperation, emergence of newer, flexible forms of organization, and revising NGO strategy around value-based action. The next section deals with concepts and experiences of scaling up the developmental impact of NGOs and responsibilities in transnational NGO advocacy. The third and fourth sections of the book have highlighted the different strategies for 'managing growth, change and structure' and for 'strengthening governance and accountability,' respectively. Next chapter attempts to provide conceptual clarity on issues like 'participation, empowerment, partnering and capacity-building." The next section provides useful insights on a very relevant subject 'measuring achievements: approaches and methods.' Sections seven and eight contain papers on topics relating to the advantages of NGOs as learning organizations and mobilizing resources for sustaining organizations respectively. Section nine emphasizes the roles and requirements of gender sensitivities in the works of NGOs. The final section deals with the paper on the techniques for the management of human resources and the development of leadership.

Mosedale, S. (2005) briefly reviews how women's empowerment has been discussed within development studies, how the concept of power was debated and refined during the second half of the twentieth century and how power relations might be described and evaluated in a particular context. A conceptual framework of empowerment is then proposed which is based on women identifying their contextualised gender constraints, and the process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them.

N. Jayaram's (2005) edited volume contextualizes the discourse on civil society, state and democracy; explore the relationship between civil society, and specific institutions and processes; outline the cultural and power perspective on civil society; analyse the relationship between civil society and good society.

Neera Burra, (2005) (ed.) makes a full understanding on the various pulls and push factors under which micro-credit operates in the country. He said that in this particular sector most of the work that happens in spiral bound reports. He emphasised the micro-credit programmes and also give more importance on methodological issues and overall impacts.

Oxaal, Z. and Baden, S. (1997) point out that what does women's empowerment mean? If women are empowered, does that mean men have less power? They said that empowerment has become a new 'buzzword' in international development language but is often poorly understood. The need to 'empower' women responds to the growing recognition that women in developing countries lack control over resources and the self- confidence and/or opportunity to participate in decision making processes. At the same time, the realisation that women have an increasingly important role to play in social and economic development has become widely accepted. Unless women are 'empowered' to participate alongside men in the development process, development efforts will only have partial effect. Empowerment strategies must carefully define their meaning of 'empowerment' and be integrated into mainstream programmes rather than attempted separately.

Parpart, J. L., Rai, S. and Staudt, K. (2002) call for a new approach to empowerment, which recognises that empowerment approaches are always embedded in institutional structures and must be understood at that level. It argues for a clearer understanding of power, and rejects the simple opposition between those who have power and those who do not. Instead, it is important to think about language, meanings, identities and cultural practices when considering women's empowerment. Furthermore, empowerment should be understood as a process as well as an outcome. While attempts to evaluate outcomes in quantifiable terms are important, the achievement of stated goals cannot be taken as proof of individual or group empowerment. Instead, both

the process and outcomes of empowerment should be seen as unpredictable – rather than as linear, inevitable and easily understood.

Peter Frumkin, (2002) made an outstanding survey and synthesis of scholarly work on non-profit and voluntary organizations. The nonprofit sector is, in Frumkin's words, an "elusive mass of contradictions". Its inhabitants range from giant, fee-for-service health-care organizations to small arts organizations funded by donations. There is much uncertainty as the sector's defining features and boundaries. Scholarly exploration of the nonprofit universe has become a growth industry-albeit one without a fixed home in any one historic discipline. In an attempt to unify nonprofit research into a single framework, he focuses on four core functions and activities that he believes nonprofits perform: delivering needed services, fostering civic and political engagement, expressing values and faith, and facilitating social entrepreneurship. His selection of certain functions as core is both descriptive and normative: nonprofits serve many functions, but these four above all justify their elevated status in law and public esteem. These are, one might say, the virtues that nonprofits ought to cultivate—albeit within limits. He concludes by positing that "virtue in the nonprofit sector lies in moderation and balance among the four functions". The ideal nonprofit would "simultaneously deliver services, advocate for policies that are important to the community, express values through a unique and individualistic mission, and generate funding streams through the creative use of commercial ventures".

Pradhan, B. (2003) put some questions that includes -how do we decide empowered a woman or a group of women are? Do frequently used socio-economic indicators such as education, income, and labour force participation adequately capture the concept of empowerment? This paper argues that while these quantitative socio-economic measures of empowerment are useful indicators as a first approximation, they are not sensitive enough to capture the nuances of gender power relations. This is because quantitative methods alone are unable to capture the interactive processes through which those in a

weaker position strategies ways of gaining from the unequal relationship. Therefore in order to understand the socio-cultural context within which women's behaviour in social interaction and gender relationships takes place, an in-depth anthropological method is essential.

Prasad, K. (2001), (ed.) highlights the importance of NGOs in the field of socio-economic development processes in the society. The contributors of this volume throw considerable light on the nature, role and responsibilities of NGOs as a promoter of development, their comparative advantages and limitations vis-à-vis the role of the government, evolution of government policies towards NGOs, and contributions made by specific NGOs in promoting micro finance for the poor, providing health and other social services to the weaker sections, and helping in the overall multi-faced development of rural areas in backward region of the country.

Prasad, Narendra (2007) This book consists of twenty two chapters and has covered a wide field of socio-economic and political issues of Indian women. He beautifully discussed the status of women in ancient India. The book covers the demographic profile of Indian women, political participation, implication of Women's Reservation Bill, women's empowerment through Panchayati Raj, women's entrepreneurship, female agricultural labourers in India, Women's labour force, education of women, socio-economic condition of Dalit and Tribal women, women and environment, violence against women, social security for women workers, women's health, impact of economic reforms on Indian women and finally Indian women's rights and laws.

(PRIA), (1999) shows that in 1993, India passed the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which reserved 33% of Panchayati raj(village councils) seats for women. The Amendment enabled thousands of women to enter the political arena. While some women have created political spaces to voice their needs, concerns and priorities, others are still trying to grapple with the power and authority thrust upon them. If empowerment is seen as a process by which

women overcome the challenges of a patriarchal society then it is difficult to maintain that the 73rd Amendment has achieved it for women. What has emerged, however, is that women have felt empowered at different points through their experiences and at various levels. A number of women have challenged their roles as care-givers by entering the public domain, have gained new prestige, and have become role models for other women. Although it is difficult to measure how these experiences have impacted on the women in their personal lives, it is known that through participation in Panchayati Raj, women have acquired a critical gender consciousness on how they have been denied their rights.

Malhotra, M. (2004), (ed.) (In 3 Volumes) deals with the issues leading to empowerment of women with particular reference to rural Indian women. The volume one deals with issues like gender inequalities in labour market and in entrepreneurship and is mainly deals with empowerment of women labour in India. The volume two focuses on microfinance options for women empowerment. There are seven chapters in volume two and covers the role of microfinance, gendering microfinance, and microfinance in India, micro crediting, microfinance and social exclusion and the challenges and opportunities of microfinance in India. The volume three describes the various programmes and policies to empower women and bring them into the orbit of development network in details.

Rai, S. (2002) argued that the issue of power must be taken into account: empowerment of whom, by whom, through what and for what? There is also the issue of priorities – the question of whether this engagement with the state is appropriate at a time when the pressures of globalisation and liberalisation are increasing social inequalities within the country. Surely any debate on women's empowerment should focus on questions about improving women's life chances rather than increasing their political representation? Most significantly, the Indian case shows that there is no simple correlation between an enhanced visibility of women in political institutions and a sense of

empowerment of women in the country in general. The question of empowerment cannot be disassociated from the question of relations of power within different socio-political systems. The debates on empowerment, and attempts to put them into practice, need to be opened up to these questions.

Rajasekhar, D. (2004) observes that one of the greatest problems of modern world facing is the problem of poverty. This book closely observes the efforts made by the NGOs in alleviating poverty. The study was conducted in Vellore District, Tamil Nadu, and in Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh, India and had covered six villages. The study evaluates the strategies adopted by the poor in coming out of poverty.

Rajasekhar, D., Biradar, R.R. (2004), (eds.) describes the details of some NGOs starting from their organisation, objectives, developmental activities, number of villages covered and number of groups formed. The contributors of this book also discuss the strategies adopted in establishing interface and problems that NGOs as well as the people encountered in the process. There are 14 chapters in this book and the contributors suggest that the governments and NGOs are no longer reluctant partners. Each of the actors has realized the advantages of the other and weakness of its own.

Sarkar (2005) makes a clear distinction between voluntary organizations and NGOs. He clearly described the typology of NGOs and classified them according to the types and level of operations. He grouped the NGOs of West Bengal into five categories, such as religious organisations, service organisations, development organisations, research organisations and consultancy agencies. He discussed the district wise distribution of NGOs of West Bengal, distribution of NGOs as per the area of operation, organizational set-up, present activities of NGOs, and nature of programmes sustainability, staffs and their satisfaction, sources of funding, extent of people's participation, perception of beneficiaries towards the working of NGOs and so on.

Schwartz and Pharr's (2003) (eds.) provides a rich empirical detail on Japan's civil society and offers some provocative comparisons with other societies. The 15 essays selected for this volume were originally presented at a 2000 conference, "Civil Society in the Asia-Pacific," organized under the auspices of the Program of U.S.-Japan Relations at Harvard's Weather-head Center for International Affairs. Substantive essays address important aspects of Japan's civil society, drawing upon rigorous research, including many Japanese sources discussed here. In particular, it is enlightening to realize how dynamic Japan's civil society is, how it interacts with the modern state and the capitalist economy in ambivalent, and often contradictory, terms, and how inclusive it is of a variety of actors. Despite the notable omission of groups organized around such issues as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationalism, and despite the need for more primary data, the editors' methodological decision to apply the concept of civil society through a culturally and historically sensitive lens that has yielded a valuable, though not comprehensive, introduction to Japan's civil society. It is actually an effort to execute a theoretical inquiry based primarily upon Japan's case.

Sen, G. and Grown, C. (1985) said that Third World Countries are increasingly forced to rely on internal resource mobilisation to make up for sharp reductions in external aids and resources. Alongside this, development processes are often indifferent to the interests and the needs of the poor. In this scenario, women's contributions as workers and as managers of human welfare are central to the ability of households, communities and nations to tackle the resulting crisis. However, women suffer from decreased access to resources and increased demands on their labour and time. If human survival is the world's most pressing problem, and if women are crucial to that survival, then the empowerment of women is essential for the emergence of new, creative and cooperative solutions. As a part of the empowerment process, feminism and collective action are fundamental but feminism must not be monolithic in its issues, goals and strategies, since it should constitute the political expression of the concerns and interests of women from different

regions, classes, nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. There is and must be a diversity of feminisms, responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women and defined by women for themselves. The underlying foundation to this diversity is the common opposition to gender oppression and other forms of domination.

SIDA (2001) In October 2000, a conference was held in Sweden to create a forum for development practitioners and researchers to discuss the latest debates on gender and power. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) noted that in implementing gender policies in development, it was time to move from treating the symptoms of gender inequality to addressing the structural factors that cause it. This document comprises papers presented by Naila Kabeer, Patricia McFadden, Signe Arnfred, Edme Dominguez and Sherin Saadallah. The key issues covered include: the need to recognise how prescribed processes of empowerment may violate the essence of the concept; how culture excludes women from sites and statuses of power; the need to incorporate the language of political struggle into gender and development; how women in Mexico are changing political culture and gendered relationships, and the strategies Muslim societies can use to alleviate gender inequality and power imbalances.

Sinha, N. (2007) highlights the importance and the role of women in Indian democracy. She conducted this study in Bihar, India. She has emphasised the decision making capabilities of the women and for that she said social, economic, educational and political empowerment is necessary. The study examines and analyses importance of education, poverty, poor health, socio-economic status which have direct effect in the politics of Bihar.

Sullivan, O. (2004) said that the idea of 'doing gender' understood as the interactions between men and women in the domestic sphere, which bring about transformations in gender relations. Women and men's day-to-day negotiations and struggles around the domestic division of labour should be

understood within such a framework, as part of a wider social process that involves slow transformative changes in consciousness and practice.

Sumi Krishna (2004) (ed.) brings together different dimensions of women's livelihood, citizenship and development. Their study made a historical survey of the patriarchal structure of the natural resource policy in India and argues that the recognition of the ways of life and livelihood, so that women take their legitimate space as productive human beings, is entitled to dignity as a political right and not merely to protection and welfare.

Sunita Kishor and Kamla Gupta (2004) argue that there are several cogent and pressing reasons for evaluating, promoting and monitoring the level of women's empowerment in India. It is true that women empowerment is necessary not only for ensuring their self-welfare, but the well-being of the entire household. Empowerment of women is also critical for the very development of India, since it will enhance both the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development. Further, the success of development efforts are depends on the fruits of development reaching to both men and women. The extent, to which this happens, however, depends critically on gender relations within the society that set the worth of one sex relative to the other. A final, but one of the most fundamental reasons for promoting the empowerment of women is that failing to empower women as well as men to reach their full potential is a violation of their basic human rights.

T. Saliba, Allen, Carolyn and Howard, Judith A. (2005) (eds.) make a clear assumption on Muslim women and has said that they are the victims of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism. Their essay focuses on the complex relations of power that shapes women's negotiations for identity, power, and agency as participants in religious, cultural and nationalist movements. There essays exposes the short comes of the secularist assumptions of many recent feminist analyses, which continue to treat religion in general and fundamentalism in

particular as a problematic tool of oppression used against women, rather than as a viable form of feminist agency, that produces contradictory effects for women in particulars.

T.K. Oommen (2004) examines and presents a comparative analysis of social movements with special reference to France, India and Poland and in the process, recognizes the 'new wave of social movements'.

Townsend, J., Porter, G., & Mawdsley, E. (2004) said that Development NGOs have been accused by some of being instruments of control and domesticated by the neo-liberal project. This paper argues, however, that although the majority of women's NGOs have been co-opted to serve mainstream development agendas, such groups nevertheless bring women together away from men and create social spaces for women to set their own priorities. This space has been used for self-empowerment by millions of women around the world. This can happen even where the groups are planned to be purely instrumental, in terms of income generation, most often through microfinance initiatives. Drawing on work with NGOs in Ghana, India, Mexico and Europe, the paper explores various strategies deployed by 'independent thinking NGOs.

V. Kanesalingam, (1989), (ed.) examines the status of women and their role in development, their socio-economic conditions, education, role in history and services sectors etc. This book has tried to draw the scholars' attention on women's problems in South Asian Countries. Above all, it has given more emphasis on legislation for the improvement of womenfolk.

Vandana Desai (2005) focuses on gender mainstreaming in small grassroots NGOs in the Indian city of Mumbai. She identifies some of the gaps in activities and challenges that these organisations face, and explores the links between gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. NGOs working at community level can play an important role in supporting women to challenge customs, ideas, and beliefs which perpetuate unequal gender relations. This

role of NGOs becomes particularly challenging in the context of rapid social and cultural change. She further argues that despite commitments to gender mainstreaming, NGOs have insufficient understanding that they can facilitate the process of empowerment of women in such a context.

Waterhouse, R. and Neville, S. (2005) said that the concepts of voice and accountability form the core values of good governance. This evaluation makes a preliminary assessment of DFID's work since 1995 on issues of gender, voice and accountability and concludes that DFID has made a significant contribution through research and support to practical interventions. Achievements include: contribution to the opportunities for women to make their voices heard in government policy forums including locally and nationally elected bodies; increased capacity for gendered poverty analysis (e.g. through institutional support to Ministries of Gender, as well as Planning and Finance); increased capacity for gendered cost and budget analysis and formulation (e.g. through gender budgeting initiatives in Rwanda, India, Uganda); increased capacity for gender-sensitive monitoring systems (both at project level and in national processes such as poverty monitoring systems); and establishing mechanisms to ensure that women's voices are heard and that governments in particular may be held accountable to gender equality goals. The report makes recommendations for how to undertake a more systematic evaluation of this aspect of DFID's work on gender equality and women's empowerment.

1.6 Significance of the Study

From the overview of the existing literatures it appears that most of the studies mainly deal with women empowerment through the different initiatives of governments (both Union and states) and less emphasis has been given on empowerment of women through NGOs. More than this there are large number of researches on the NGOs and the empowerment of women in both international and national level, but the research work on the NGOs and the empowerment of women at the District level in its micro-coverage has been ignored. Here in lies the research gap. Thus, the present research work seeks to

make an in depth study of the empowerment of women through NGOs in the District of Darjeeling, West Bengal, India. The present research work will enhance the existing knowledge on NGOs and empowerment of women in India in general and empowerment of women through NGOs in Darjeeling District in particular. It will help to answers the research questions, evaluate the theoretical framework, identify the factors and sources of women empowerment, and finally suggest some measures for the future course of actions in the form of policy-inputs.

1.7 Methodology

The study is, as the objective of the study suggests, descriptive and diagnostic in nature. The present work being an empirical study, the materials were collected from different places through fieldworks in the district. For the collection of empirical and secondary data the University of North Bengal Library, National Library (Kolkata), District library, subdivision libraries of the District, etc. could be used. Apart from this, structured and unstructured interviews with government officials, NGO workers, beneficiaries, intellectuals, political leaders, common citizens were conducted. Literature and scanning survey were conducted to understand the socio-economic factors that influence the rise of NGOs in the District. Case study was also initiated on selected NGOs to observe and reveal various aspects pertinent to history, programmes, staffs and their job satisfaction and beneficiaries' perceptions, etc. Thus, the present study used both the explanatory and analytical design.

1.8 Types of Data Collected

In order to carry out this research work, the following types of data are required:

- (i) For the first objective, data related to the position of women in the society and the factors led to form numbers of NGOs in Darjeeling District are essential.

- (ii) To carry out the second objective, researchers are required to examine the roles and activities of NGOs in the society and to find out whether they are able to empower the womenfolk as an alternative mechanism of empowerment and for that we have to examine the factors that led the growth of numbers of NGOs periodically, their operational area, type of organisation, type of service, nature of starting programme, promoter's background, staff and their job satisfaction, etc.
- (iii) In order to fulfill the third objective, four NGOs are selected for case study from the four subdivisions of Darjeeling District (Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong and Siliguri), one from each subdivision. The historical background, organisational set-up and present activities, programme sustainability of the NGOs, programme's name, objectives, target group, various component, programme execution process, duration, area of operation, service cost, nature of infrastructure and resources required, staff, beneficiary's perception towards the working of NGOs, etc. are all very important data for the third objectives.

1.9 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data are necessary for carrying out this research. The data (both primary and secondary) can be collected by using the following methods: (i) through literature, that is Government report, NGOs report, Books, newspapers, reports of the State Level Society Registration Office, internet, etc. (ii) For primary source, informal interviews , mailed questionnaires, field survey, etc. shall be used.

1.10 Field of Study

The present study has covered the entire District of Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal. The name Darjeeling is believed to be a derivation of 'Dorje,' the precious stone or ecclesiastical scepter, which is emblematic of the

thunderbolt of Sakhra (Indra) and of 'ling', a place. It means, therefore, the place of the Dorje, the mystic thunderbolt of the Lamaist religion, this being the name by which the Buddhist monastery which once stood on Observatory Hill was formerly known (O'malley, 1907). It is a frontier district, running up between Nepal and Bhutan and stretching from the plains of Bengal in the south to the state of Sikkim in the north. The Darjeeling district lies between 26° 31' and 27° 13' north latitude and between 87° 59' and 88° 53' east longitude. Geographically, the District can be divided into two particular divisions, the hills and the plains. The hill covers the three hill subdivisions of Darjeeling District i.e. Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong and Kalimpong. The foothills of Darjeeling Himalayas come under the Siliguri subdivision and are also known as Terai.

1.11 Process of Data Collection

In the present study, data were collected in five phases. In the first phase, data (both primary and secondary) have been collected by using the following methods: (i) through literature, i.e. the Government report, NGOs report, books, newspapers, reports of the State Level Society Registration Office, internet, etc. (ii) For primary source, informal interviews, mailed questionnaires, field survey, etc. have been used and the researcher has visited different places from where the relevant data can be collected.

In the second phase, addresses of NGOs (registered) in the field of women empowerment processes were collected from various umbrella organisations. Having collected all the addresses, a comprehensive list of NGOs that are carrying their activities in the concerned District, was prepared.

In the third phase, prepared questionnaires were mailed to all the registered NGOs in the District. This was done to know various socio-economic, political and others factors that influenced the rise of NGOs and to get the required information.

In the fourth phase, forty (40) key informants were interviewed informally. This forty were categorized into two groups- (i) **Group I** - The twenty informants (both men and women) were bureaucrats, social activists,

beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, staff, politicians, common man, etc. (ii) **Group II** – The rest twenty informants- these were women directly associated with the organisation as beneficiaries and the staff members. They were interviewed separately to know the different roles, importance and activities of NGOs for the empowerment women in the District. But, to derive the following information all forty were interviewed informally: (i) socio-economic factors that influenced the growth of a large number of NGOs, (ii) the degree of satisfaction of the beneficiaries, (iii) the government's reaction and response towards the NGOs, (iv) the degree of job satisfaction of the staff members, (v) the degree of response from the non-beneficiaries, (vi) the problem of NGOs and (vii) the role of the NGOs for the empowerment of women in the District. In the final phase, case studies were made only in four NGOs, one from each subdivision of the District i.e. Darjeeling (Sadar), Kurseong, Kalimpong and Siliguri.

1.12 Sampling

A purposive random sampling technique was used to select the NGOs. For this purpose, a list of NGOs was collected from the districts. Out of the lists, the NGOs which are functioning in the field of women empowerment are separated out and selected for this study. For the present study, the sampling was not required in the first phase of data collection. In the second phase, addresses of NGOs (registered) in the field of women empowerment processes were collected from various umbrella organisations. Having put all the addresses together, a comprehensive list of NGOs that are carrying out their activities in the concerned district was prepared. During the third phase of data collection, questionnaires were mailed to all the NGOs in the district so that no specific sampling technique was required. But in the fourth phase forty (40) key informants were selected for the said purpose. So, purposive sampling technique was used here. Here minimum qualification, profession, experience, etc. of the respondents or informants was taken into account. In the last phase also purposive sampling was used for case study in selecting one NGO from each subdivision of the District. With a view to removing bias, the four NGOs

from the District are randomly selected. The sample pattern is representative of the universe. The names of the NGOs selected are:

1. Darjeeling (Sadar): **Hayden Hall Institute (HHI)**
2. Kalimpong Subdivision: **Hill Social Welfare Society (HSWS)**
3. Kurseong Subdivision: **Indian Forces Ladies' Association (IFLA)**
4. Siliguri Subdivision: **Balason Society for Improved Environment (BSIEN)**

1.13 Rationale for selecting Darjeeling District

Darjeeling District is very peculiar in its character because it has a higher work participation rate of female than men as compared to both central and state levels. Darjeeling District is economically backward in comparison to the other parts of West Bengal. The District is providing a different setting in terms of geographical, social, cultural, ethnic, environment and political. The different activities and the contributions of the Christians missionaries in the field of socio economic fields in the society should be taken into account. As such, the area under study has provided enough curiosity and interest. Therefore, serious study is necessary.

1.14 Limitations of the Study

It is necessary to point out the caveats to this study due to the small (and unequal) sample sizes of the organisation and respondents. Foremost, the use of some organisations, which has unique social, cultural, and geographical context, may make the findings less general. Furthermore, the samples, beneficiaries, respondents are not a systematic sample. The work has been prepared on the basis of data collected from the field and published secondary data. The study findings are based on the limited coverage of one District of West Bengal only and there is poor availability of secondary sources of data. More than this, it is very difficult to collect all the necessary information because of the limitation of time.

1.15 Analysis of Data

Once the data had been collected, the codebooks were developed, based on the responses in the interview schedules. Thereupon, the data in all the schedules, which had been duly filled in, were coded. The task included feeding in the data, verification, computation, validation and presentation of tables to facilitate data analysis and interpretation. The interpretation of the primary data was carried out keeping in view the overall perspective of the study and by comparing, correlating or regressing data, wherever possible. This quantitative data was now ready for interpretation and chapter writing. Efforts were made to integrate the data received from the different categories of schedules and also to achieve a harmonious blend of quantitative and qualitative data. For first objective, data were discussed qualitatively. For second objective, quantitative analysis was made. In the third objective, data related to NGO's history and existing activities were presented having followed qualitative method. To understand the nature of programme sustainability, data were also discussed qualitatively. In the third objective, qualitative analysis was also made to understand the perception of the beneficiaries. The collected data are processed by statistical tools like averages, percentages, ratios, tables and charts, will be used whenever possible and necessary.

1.16 Plan of the Study

The entire study has been divided into six broad chapters which include several sections and sub-sections covering the specific dimensions of the study. **CHAPTER-1** has provided for introductory information of the present study, discusses the Objectives of the Study, Research Questions, Theoretical Framework, existing literatures, Significant of the study, methodology, Types of Data Collected, Sources of Data, Field of Study, Process of Data Collection, Sampling, Rationale for the selecting Darjeeling District, Limitations of the Study, Analysis of Data and Plan of the Study. **CHAPTER-2** is mainly dealing with NGOs in India: Historical Roots, Meaning, Characteristics and Types – A Narrative and Conceptual Account. Here, the concept of Voluntary

organisations and NGOs, Meaning of NGOs, Characteristics of NGOs, Types of NGOs, Typology of NGOs in India, Brief history of NGOs in India, Voluntarism in the Pre-Independence era, Voluntarism during the post-Independence era, voluntary action since the early 1990s, Evolution of NGOs in India, Basic Facts on NGOs, Size, Sources of Funding in India, Types of Funding, Dominant activities in India have been discussed. **CHAPTER-3** focuses on the Idea of Empowerment: Conceptual and Operational Dimensions of Women Empowerment: A pan-Indian Perspective and here the concept of empowerment, Women Empowerment, Review of Literature, Women's Empowerment in Contemporary India, Darjeeling District of West Bengal and its milieu have been discussed. **CHAPTER-4** mainly dealing with NGOs in Darjeeling- Their Emergence, Growth, Types and Development: An Overview. Here History, Society, Economy and Polity of Darjeeling District and the history, growth and development, features, size, sources of funding of the NGOs of Darjeeling District of West Bengal have been discussed in details. In **CHAPTER-5** NGOs and the Empowerment of Women in the context of Darjeeling District of West Bengal have been discussed in details. **CHAPTER-6** is the concluding portion of this thesis and here the Major Findings of the study, Suggestions and Concluding remarks have been highlighted.

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