CHAPTER I:

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1.1 INTRODUCTION: With the development of economic activities in the post-Globalization era, the demand for women’s labour in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors has been on the rise (especially in the Third World Countries). Women may work on the farms owned by them or by the family or as tenants or wage earners and as such they form a large proportion of agricultural workers. Simultaneously, the rate of urbanization being high attracts population and job seekers for non-agricultural employment. So an intense pulling effect in the job market creates a pool of urban non-primary workers. Women in the urban scenario have emerged as justified contenders to their counterparts in non-primary jobs as well.

Almost everywhere in the world it is observed that women are expected and confined to perform the household chores, child bearing, rearing and caring for the entire family. In the urban industrial society women go out and share their economic responsibilities with their spouse apart from their daily duties. For all these there is no recognition like that of their counterparts. Moreover, the popular notion is that man yield power and authority both in home as well as in the public life. They are the bread winners of the family as well as the decision maker in all the family matters. On the contrary, the traditional idea also postulates that the women are primarily homemaker, wife and mother. Since Indian culture restricts women’s access to jobs in public sector at large, they tend to have a more deprived and subordinated status both in terms of access to resources and enjoyment of rights. The issue of women living singly and working outside to earn for herself has undergone social amelioration in the recent years. Few decades back it was difficult for a single woman to get an apartment on rent in the urban locales also. But as the consequential economic changes occurred due to inflation, the market prices soar high compelling women to step outside their private domain to earn and supplement the family income. Women with the aid of modern education legitimately became aspirant for the jobs in organized sector especially in the urban areas. Since their role in the residential premises of child bearing and rearing, caring for the sick and disabled apart from the domestic drudgery remained unchanged; this new phenomenon of working outside seemed to occupy whatever little leisure
they had. They get often confused by their ‘private’ and ‘public’ roles. They try to take up extra
work load so as to satisfy every end. But it is of great displeasure when they are detained from
decision making. Education and employment which have been expected to bring them economic
autonomy remains far from emancipation.

This study therefore aims to find out the actual social status of the urban working women who
are equipped with the dual power of education and employment.

1.2 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAME:

1.2.1 THE SOCIAL STATUS DEFINED & CONCEPTUALIZED: The word ‘Status’ has
originated from ‘stare’ which means ‘to stand’. The word came up in the late18th Century to be
referred to as a legal term meaning legal standing. The Oxford Dictionary defines ‘Status’ as
“relative social or professional position; standing” or “The situation at a particular time during a
process”. The Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary refers ‘Status’ to be as: “the position or rank in
relation to others” or “relative rank in a hierarchy of prestige; especially: high prestige” or “the
condition of a person or thing in the eyes of the law” or “state or condition with respect to
circumstances”. According to the dictionary.com ‘Status’ has been defined as: “The position of
an individual in relation to another or others, especially in regard to social or professional
standing” or “State or condition of affairs” or “The standing of a person before the law”. Social
Status or simply Status, according to www.britannica.com is ‘the relative rank that an individual
holds, with attendant rights, duties, and lifestyle, in a social hierarchy based upon honour
or prestige’. Menon (2008) explains the term ‘status’ explicitly in her work ‘Women
Empowerment and Challenge of Change’ where she says that ‘status’ was initially a legal term
referring to the legal standing of an individual enjoying certain rights or subject to certain
limitations. Later, the meaning of the word was extended to cover an individual or group’s
position in society in a more general sense. Singhal (2003) defines social status as “the position
accorded to the functionaries or role occupants placed in the same or similar situation”.

Status may be recognized in two senses viz. Ascribed Status, that is assigned to individuals at
birth without reference to any innate abilities; Achieved Status refers to requiring of special
qualities which may be gained through competition and individual effort. Ascribed status is
typically based on sex, age, race, family relationships or birth, for example elderly persons are
superior to youngsters, parents are superior to children, men are superior to women and the like. While Achieved Status are based on education, occupation, marital status, accomplishments, or other factors left out to be filled in by competition. They are not assigned to persons by birth. Status implies **social stratification** on a vertical scale as well. People may be said to occupy high positions when they are able to control, order or influence, other people’s conduct; when they derive prestige from holding important offices; or when their conduct is esteemed by others.

**Relative Status** is a major factor in determining the way people behave toward each other. Social stratification by Status has been a distinguishing feature in pre-modern societies. Classes or clans were stigmatized by the people belonging to higher strata. A striking manifestation of status group may be exemplified by the caste system in India.

This academic view of status has social practicability also and because of which it may create confusion and this may affect the familial relationship. For example, it is a norm in Indian society that a daughter-in-law by virtue of ascribed status remains in a lowered position. But if she has an employment or education, she has achieved status also. Therefore, a combination of both ascribed and achieved status will occur. The mother-in-law would try to control her activities and supervise her which may not be accepted by the daughter-in law and this may lead to confrontation and conflict in the family.

‘Social Status’ therefore mean the state or condition of an individual within the society; in other words, a person’s social standing. Similarly, for the women, social status would refer to their position in the social field: in family, society and work places. Most references to the status of women imply a comparison with the status of men but it is also possible to compare one group of women with another, or to examine changes in the status of women over time. While legal and political rights are one aspect of women’s status, other aspects concern their actual experience in practice (Menon, 2008: 214). Natarajan (2013) elucidates the meaning of status in her work where she opines it to be ‘the result of a pattern of relationship between men and women – a pattern composed of images they have of themselves and each other’. To some women, it is the access to resources that some women presently possesses or in the past; while others think of having something that men would respect. ‘So, Status really lies in the eyes of the beholder’ (Natarajan, 2013: 121).
1.2.2 STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE TRADITIONAL INDIAN FAMILY SYSTEM: Status and role of a person changes with time and through stages of life. Each episode of event in life is marked by newer behavior and has unique implication as well. The life-cycle events for the women have a great bearing upon them. As Menon (2008: 1) has opined that ‘Marriage and parenthood are culturally defined to be much more important stages for women than for men especially wherever women’s lives are centred on the home while men have a near monopoly of the public sphere’.

Sex, age, and generation were the three important parameters considered in the assessment of the status of an individual in the traditional Indian family while the status of women was ‘totally determined by the status of her husband occupied in the family. Women are controlled and commanded, guided and goaded by the male members of the household’ (Singhal, 2003: 17). In Indian social structure, a girl faces a lot of change to her status throughout her life. As an unmarried girl she gets little importance in the family; she gets some weight (importance) after getting married. She is valued a little when she gives birth to a child and with the increase in the child’s age, she attains a higher status in the family. In traditional societies aged women plays a crucial role in family matters owing to her chronologically-gathered experiences and also because of the number of years spent in the family to which she has been married.

Widowhood in most countries is the cause of becoming household heads although scant attention has been paid to the widows in the developing countries. Mention may be made of the brutal act of the Sati which prevailed in India. The reason for this might be accounted either to do away with the legitimate contender of the property of the deceased or to escape the dependence on the children in the absence of the husband. In many countries, the problems associated with the widowhood have been solved by remarriage (if the women belong to fertile age group) either by the deceased’s brother or any other male member of the family. The widows in some cases might return to their parental home if they reach the post-menopausal age. Traditionally, a high caste Hindu widow was not allowed to remarry, even if the woman had attained widowhood at a tender age. Modernization makes matters worse because poor people find it less easy to feed additional mouths and the rich are discovering new needs which make heavy claims upon their resources (Menon, 2008: 12). There has always been association of widows and begging. Instances from some countries might lead the way as the community takes care of the aged widows or unmarried.
1.2.3 STATUS OF INDIAN WOMEN IN POST-COLONIAL SOCIAL FRAMEWORK:

In independent India, slight improvement though not enough is visible with regard to women’s status. Theoretically, she is regarded to have equal standing with that of the males but in practice it is far away from egalitarianism as gender stereotyping of activities related to child bearing and rearing along with the household works still persist. As Singhal (2003: 19) rightly points out that ‘the social institutions, religious mores, value systems and ideologies, all continue to reinforce the spirit of male dominance, and the authoritarian pro-male values still shape the lives of large majority of women.’ Only for the women who are earning are a bit ahead of this observation. Economic contribution to the family has imparted power to them and they are in the process of becoming true partners to their spouses. Singhal recognizes Ramanamma’s findings that the role of the educated working wives has surpassed that of the mother who has been relegated to the secondary position. The reason might be that in the traditional setup it was seen that a girl in her tender age enters the groom’s family where by spending long years after giving birth to her offsprings and bringing them up gets a little recognition in her family; on the contrary, presently a girl by getting education and employment already earns a status and then enters the family life. This probably has made the difference what so ever to the precedence. Thus the urban areas become characterized by a pool of educated women.

The following table (Table 1.1) displays the literacy scenario of India through the census periods after independence. Post-independent India made provisions for universalization of education and it might be accounted for the enhancement in the life and living of the women particularly residing in the urban environments. Prior to the Independence (in 1941), the total literacy at the national level was only 16.10% comprised of 24.90% of Males and 7.30% of Females. With the commencement of the Plan Periods, the total literacy figure was 18.33% (21.16% of Males and 8.86% of Females) at the national level showing a slight increase from the previous decade. Women started to step outside to earn and to complement their family income. Slowly, with the progress of time and with the aid of different developmental programmes literacy level of the country progressed a lot. The 80s witnessed a rising trend with 43.53% as the combined figure, while the male literacy recorded about 56.38% and the female literacy showed a value of 29.76%. Presently in 2011, the literacy level has gone up to 74.04% with the males (82.14%) and the females (65.46%).
A simultaneous increase in the tertiary sector of economy providing scope for white collar professions like that of scientific, technical, medical, paramedical etc. proliferates. Natarajan (2013: 122) is also of opinion that some factors that having affected the role of the women urbanites in the national economy. These are:

- The general decline of the handicrafts
- Increasing population pressure on agriculture
- Increase of poverty in rural areas
- Development of modern industries with increasing technical advances (to have affected cotton textile, plantation, mining etc.)
- Spread of education
- Increased cost of living
- Social changes (withdrawal of taboos in case of women entering into some professions like nursing etc. where women require to stay outside the house at odd hours)
- Decline in the ratio in male-female employment especially in the urban areas

So, changes in the attitude to women’s employment among middle class become visible and it can be felt that a silent socio-economic revolution is taking place in the status of the working women in India like the other developing nations.

The detail on the changing Status of the women in India has been dealt in Chapter III.
1.2.4 MEASURING SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN: Menon (2008) opines that demographic indicators like mortality by age and sex are the important indicators of women’s status. Other important indices might be related to literacy, level of formal education received by women, occupational structure clearly defining the job categories of high, moderate or low job status etc.

Several methodologies can be adopted to quantify the qualitative aspect of social status for women. Morris (1979) has designed a Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) to measure the living conditions of the women of the economically poorer nations in ‘Measuring the Conditions of the World’s Poor’. The measure was based on few indicators like infant mortality, life expectancy at a particular age and literacy rate attaching some weights to them (https://www.popline.org/node/442996). Biologically speaking, women have a genetic advantage over their counterparts which they lose under strongly adverse social and cultural circumstances. The findings of the PQLI by Morris with the mentioned parameters revealed that majority of the country has lower literacy rates for women; but in some countries the mortality differentials were the chief cause behind the lesser values of the PQLI.

Menon (2008: 218) in her endeavor recommended four ways by following which women may achieve equality in both quantitative and qualitative terms with males:

(a) ‘Masculine Equality’ (where females become same as males) with intense work load on the females in the domestic as well as in work places but in practice females are seen to lose virtues and it may result into reduced fertility, higher stress among the females and accident related mortality;

(b)‘Equality of persons’(where as a result of a synthesis, males and females interchangeably work together) which may lead to redefinition of goals, reduced fertility and decline in mortality for both the individuals;

(c) ‘Separate but equal’ (where both the individuals live separately with their own identity and equally valued status) where traditional female spheres contract with development as industry takes over the familial role. This might result into high fertility and higher mortality associated with child bearing, it may strain their relationships as well;
(d) ‘Female equality’ (males become same as females) this is an utopian thought in the present day patriarchal set up almost throughout the world and may result in the loss of the so-called ‘male virtues’.

Of the four prescriptions as Menon has recommended, the first three might have some applicability in the present day world. The Masculine equality as the conditions it provides is the reality of the developing nations. In the patriarchal frame, the women set out to earn a living and sometimes to suffice her family income finds very difficult to cope with the private and public lives. She has to toil both in her house with domestic chores and in the work places with its own accountability. This way of becoming ‘Masculine’ for the working women might be detrimental for them. They would lose their leisure and pleasure due to increased work load. The ‘Equality of persons’, the next option is the ideal role of both the individual in the family. The partnership in the true sense develops between them and both of them interchangeably execute whenever situation demands. With proper education, perseverance, reduced egocentrism and respect for the institution of family and marriage this ideal condition is not impossible in the contemporary world. ‘Separate but equal’ policy might be applied to the society but it would yield a discrete or piece meal status and not a holistic development for the family as a single unit. As in the case of the Swedish government, men are encouraged to take up child care; also the women’s organizations of the Occident, looking after the issues affecting them demands equal rights for them rather than a totalitarian betterment embracing both.

1.2.5 WORK DEFINED: ‘Work’ may be designated as getting something in lieu of service. This something is related to pay, personal profit or family gain which a person requires for sustenance. The term ‘work’ is very commonly used but it has different meanings associated with itself. To some it means only wage earning activities; to others it means all the activities by which economic goods and services are produced and sold. Bhandari (2004: 4) quoted Fox in her book regarding the context of work. She cited that “work is an activity or expenditure of energy that produces services and products of value to other people”. Work or employment may be broadly defined as labour participation in gainful activities. The NSSO defines gainful activity as value to the national product which normally results in production of goods and services for exchange and that the activities in agriculture in which a part or whole of the agricultural production is used for own consumption and does not go for sale are considered gainful (Astige, 2006: 35).
The current Census has defined work and other key concepts related to it. Work is defined in 2011 Census as ‘participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit. Such participation may be physical and/or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work but also includes effective supervision and direction of work. It even includes part time help or unpaid work on farm, family enterprise or in any economic activity. All persons (irrespective of age and sex) who participated in any economically productive activity for any length of time during the reference period are defined as workers. Normally, production for self-consumption is not treated as ‘economic activity’ (http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/HLO/Metadata_Census_2011.pdf). For the purpose of census a separate designation has been made in the case of persons who are engaged in growing of crops (except plantation crops), rearing of animals and milk production for self-consumption. These persons have been referred to as economic activity (16). ‘Reference period for determining a person as worker and non-worker is one year preceding the date of enumeration’ (Ibid).

Main Workers are those ‘who worked for more than 6 months (180 days) in the reference period are termed as Main Workers’ (Ibid).

Marginal Workers are those ‘who worked for less than six months (180 days) in the reference period are termed as Marginal Workers. Marginal workers are further bifurcated into two categories i.e. those who worked for 3 months or more but less than 6 months and those who worked for less than 3 months’ (Ibid).

Non Workers have been referred to as ‘the persons who did not work at all in any economically productive activity during the last one year preceding the date of enumeration. This category includes students, persons engaged in household duties, dependents, pensioners, beggars, etc. provided they were not engaged in any economically productive activity during the last one year preceding the date of enumeration’ (Ibid).

1.2.6 WORKING WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY: The concept of working woman is of recent origin, the post- globalized socio-economic structure has provided the women with optimum environment to take up modern education and become eligible for employment. This phenomenon of working women in Indian society has obviously contributed to a wider implication on the part of the women themselves. They now get a scope to tread into the men’s world, can enjoy economic autonomy and their kin- societal relations get redefined.
Men and women have always worked. Only the differences lie in the field of area of work, location of work, execution, performance, use of tools and technology and motivating factors. Women’s work sustains society. Women have always donated to the nation’s economy but their activity remained unrecognized. Women looks after the family, does the domestic drudgery, bears and rears the children, cares for the sick and aged, toil on farms and factories and performs economic and non-economic activities within the family (Desai and Thakkar, 2005: 18). They are seen everywhere but remain invisible, unrecognizable and most taken for granted in the society. Bhandari (2004) opines that since women’s contribution in their households and domestic produces remain far from recognition and appreciation, their work remain underestimated. Astige (2006) remarks that women’s engagement at home is often termed as ‘use-value’ rather than ‘exchange value’. She may do activities but are treated as non-productive.

In the Pre-industrial society, the familial, social and economic roles of women were tied together. Family was in the pivot and every other activity revolved round it. In the subsequent industrial period, women got permitted to occupy independent jobs as they earned their eligibility. But the patriarchal structure prevented them to occupy so. It was after the independence, the slow but steady increase of the number of women in the job market created a new role of the women as a confident, versatile and matured personality. Work participation increased but remained far from equal than their counterparts. At the rural sector, although the work participation of the females is more than those in the urban areas, yet the household chores still stay at their disposal. The Female Work Participation Rate for the urban India, the urban West Bengal and that of Koch Bihar district remains appreciably low but they are showing signs of progress from the past decades.

The lacuna though narrowed down yet remains associated with the universal participation of the females in the employment sector in our country. More and more educated women aspiring bright jobs should stride into the job market and contribute to the national progress.

1.2.7 TREND OF WOMEN WORKERS IN INDIA: According to the current census of 2011, the work participation rate at the national level for the females is 25.51% against 53.26% for the males. Rural sector has a slightly better picture of female workforce participation rate of 30.02%
compared to that of the males 53.03% whereas in the urban sectors it is 15.4 % for the females and 53.76% for the males respectively (Table 1.2). The census data shows a slow progress in the

Table 1.2: Working Population in India through Censuses (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Years</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42.98</td>
<td>57.12</td>
<td>27.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33.08</td>
<td>52.61</td>
<td>12.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>34.03</td>
<td>53.62</td>
<td>13.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>29.34</td>
<td>48.82</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36.70</td>
<td>52.62</td>
<td>19.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>38.79</td>
<td>53.77</td>
<td>23.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>29.99</td>
<td>49.06</td>
<td>8.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>51.61</td>
<td>22.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>40.09</td>
<td>52.58</td>
<td>26.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>30.16</td>
<td>48.92</td>
<td>9.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.10</td>
<td>51.68</td>
<td>25.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>41.75</td>
<td>52.11</td>
<td>30.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>32.25</td>
<td>50.60</td>
<td>11.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.79</td>
<td>53.26</td>
<td>25.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>35.31</td>
<td>53.76</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

total employment in the national scenario. It has slightly increased from 39% in 1951 to 39.79% in 2011. The Male work participation through the mentioned time period showed progression at the initial phase, lowering during 1971 and then again a gradual increase in the following census years (Fig. no. 1.a) finally reaching to 53.26% in 2011. The Females also shows a similar trend of progression but at much lower rate compared to the males. The following figure (Fig. no. 1.a) displays the linear trend of work participation also with a huge gap created by the drop in percentage of the women workers during 1971 (12.11%) from 1961 (27.96%). Though the increase in their representation in the work force have been discernible but it did not touched the level of 1961 census as far as women workers are concerned. The female workers in the Rural and Urban scenario through the census years from 1971 to 2011 show an increasing trend (Fig. no. 1.b).
As per the expectation, rural female workers outnumbered their counterparts at the urban areas. But both the spatial units have recorded the increasing drift. For the Rural Females it has increased from 13.42% to 30% in the mentioned period of time. For the Urban Females it is 6.68% to 15.4% from 1971 to 2011.

An important aspect can be noticed from the linear representation particularly concentrating on the rural and total workers from 2001 to 2011. It depicts a gradual decrease indicating a simultaneous increase for the urban workers among the females. So, this trend for non-primary activities among the females is of recent origin. In the present study also, this trend is corroborated through the respective facts and figures (refer to Table 6.12 in Chapter VI).
In the above figures (Fig. no. 1.c and 1.d) if the linear representation is compared for the Rural and Urban areas, it is clearly seen that the primary activities in showing a slow decline thereby giving a boost to the non primary activities in the urban areas for both the males and the females.

The inter-sectoral shift in occupation is more clearly seen when the sector wise occupational data is viewed. The following table (Table: 1.3) displays the relative share of population in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary occupations from 1951 to 2011. It can be observed that a gradual decrease in the Primary Sector of economy is the trend at the national level. This obviously gives way to the increase of Secondary and Tertiary occupations. Had the increase been at the Secondary level, it would have indicated income generation by industrial augmentation. But actually, the increase in the Tertiary sector to be precise, in self employment category in informal
sector of employment relates to the increase of occupations like in informal shops & workshops; domestic workers or workers in open public spaces as rickshaw pullers, street vendors, rag pickers and so on. This shift in the job market essentially lowers down the qualitative aspects of formal sector of employment wherein, the incumbent loses employment.

Table 1.3: Occupational Transformation in India through Censuses (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>47.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>24.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>20.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

generated supports like pension, gratuity, job security and other benefits. So, in due course of time large pool of unemployed and underemployed persons would affect the economic status of the country. In both the section of population this trend is visible. With regard to the women workers in the study area however, this trend is not being found. Women in the study area have adhered more to formal occupations compared to other job types which may indicate that there remains scope for generation of gainful employment in the study area.

1.2.8 ASPECTS OF INQUIRY TO SOCIAL STATUS OF WORKING WOMEN: Ever since a child is born, he is exposed to socialization process. By inheritance, he develops certain traits, status (ascribed) and cultural attributes having some innate qualities inherent to his family and culture milieu he belongs. Gradually he attains qualification and economic status (achieved) and experiences the life cycle events. Education, marriage, family and employment have greater implication to everyone’s life and working women in particular. All these have cause and effect relationship to each other as well.

Education, to begin with is a process rather than an end that an individual goes through as he learns to cope with and adapt to his physical and social environment. In a broader sense, it refers to all the influences that have implication to one’s life and living; in a narrower sense it refers to the special influences organized and devised by instructors at different institutions. Education in India has always been associated with a different philosophy from that of the Occident. It aimed at all round development of a person, his personality and attainment of spiritual enhancement. It
has remained responsible for social transformation and progress in India. The social revivalism was escorted by the educated handful and their inexorable efforts have led to the milestones in the chronological antecedents of our country. The educated people though in a limited number, in the pre-independent India made avenues for female education because they realized that educated wives and mothers would lead to better nurturing of children and prosperity of the society. Literacy is taken as the most important indicator of education. The level of education and the proportion of literate population especially among the females determine the extent of social progress in terms of: greater job opportunity, increased age of marriage, reduction in family size and lowering of fertility rate, better living standards and the like. So, educational qualification may be considered as basic determinant of socio-economic aspects of the current study.

Marriage is of utmost significance in a country like ours as a social institution. The concept of ‘Marriage’ in the Indian society acts as a cementing factor complementing the basic social unit i.e. the Family. Marriages in Indian society is a sacrament and irrevocable. This characteristics of irrevocability gives a firmness and permanence to the societal foundation. Especially with regard to women, marriages are linked to translocation and mobility from paternal house to the spouses/in-laws house. A transformation in the process of mate selection especially in the urban society among educated youths belonging to middle and upper economic classes has been taking place. The parents select the partners for their children and they are permitted to meet before marriage in order to know each other. The process of interaction helps them to perceive about the personality, choice, tolerance, joviality, attitude towards family etc. and this helps them to take decision for undergoing marriage with him/her. The more they interact, the more they become confident about their future married life. The other form of mate selection by own choice is also commonly found in the society.

The concept of Family in our country holds the idea of great cohesion and permanence. Ahuja (2013: 24) defines the Family as a social unit, constituted by a group of persons of both sexes, related by marriage, blood or adoption, performing roles based on age, sex and relationship, and socially distinguished as making up a single household. It has been found through time the traditional joint family especially in the urban areas have become rarer now. The reasons for such a change may be attributed to two causes; firstly, the change in the structure of the family
and secondly, the change in the inter-personal relations of the family members. As a result, the Joint Families have given way to the formation of Nuclear Families or even Neo-Joint Families (explained in Chapter IV). The Neo-Joint Family is of recent origin and is common in all urban areas. Irrespective of the structure of the family, the family fulfills some basic functions always and the substitution of family has not yet been possible especially in the country like India. These irreplaceable functions are: economic, sexual, reproductive and educational. Therefore, it becomes important to analyze the functional aspects of the families in the study area and also to adjudge the efficiency of the working women in performing the household duties.

Employment broadly means labour participation to gainful activities. Employment has a significant connotation to every one’s life. It is also a factor determining the livability conditions, purchasing power and emancipation to the working women of particular reference. Employment generates confidence and grants economic status to women. Better educational qualification helps in the occupancy of better quality jobs. Women with employment can have proper articulation of their needs and necessities. So, employment also acts as a determinant of the status of the women in the society.

To summarize, these conceptual underpinnings have been the stimulus to examine the impact of women’s employment on their social status among the urban working women in the Cooch Behar town area.
Location of the Study Area

Map No. 1.1

Base Map of Cooch Behar Town

Map No. 1.2
1.3 THE STUDY AREA: The district of Koch Bihar lies in between 25° 57' 47" N to 26° 36' 20" N latitudes and between 88° 47' 44" E to 89° 54' 35" E longitudes respectively. The total area of the district is 3387 square kilometers. The district of Cooch Behar is devoid of natural boundaries except on the western and the southernmost extremes. To the west, River Tista forms the boundary between Mekhliganj P.S. and Haldibari P.S. The southern tip of Tufanganj Sub-division (C.D. Block I) is almost touched by the River Raidak. Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar districts border the whole of the northern and the western margin of the district. The southern boundary is much indented and is bordered by Bangladesh. The eastern fringe is delimited by Assam and Bangladesh (displayed in the Location Map of the study area in Map no. 1.1).

The study has been conducted in the Town area of Cooch Behar. The latitudinal and longitudinal extension of Cooch Behar Town is 26°17'40"N to 26°20'30"N and 89°26' to 89°28'30" E and it encompasses an area of 8.29 square kilometers. The geographical location of the study area is conspicuous since it occupies a meander core of the Torsa River, one of the major rivers of the district (evident in Map no. 1.3 & 1.4).

Portion of Topographical Sheet No. 78 F/7 showing the Study Area
Satellite Imagery showing the location of Cooch Behar Town area

Map No. 1.4

Table: 1.4 Population by Residence & Sex, Koch Bihar District and Cooch Behar Town, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>2,819,086</td>
<td>1,451,542</td>
<td>1,367,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2,529,652</td>
<td>1,304,916</td>
<td>1,224,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>289,434</td>
<td>146,626</td>
<td>142,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBM</td>
<td>77,935</td>
<td>39,014</td>
<td>38,921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LITERACY</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>1,850,504</td>
<td>1,028,733</td>
<td>821,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1,617,223</td>
<td>9,06,392</td>
<td>7,10,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>2,33,281</td>
<td>1,22,341</td>
<td>1,10,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBM</td>
<td>66,404</td>
<td>34,054</td>
<td>32,350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORKERS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>1,127,977</td>
<td>8,45,308</td>
<td>2,82,669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1,024,717</td>
<td>7,62,301</td>
<td>2,62,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1,03,260</td>
<td>83,007</td>
<td>20,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBM</td>
<td>27,399</td>
<td>21,627</td>
<td>5,567</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Report, 2011
The Cooch Behar Town (CBT) area is comprised of 20 wards under the Cooch Behar Municipality (CBM). The total population of the urbanites of the CBT according to the 2011 Census is 77,935 persons representing 26.93% of the district’s urban population of which 49.94% are constituted by women (evident in Table: 1.4). The study has been concentrated on the ‘Working Women’ of the CBT area befitting with the subject matter of the investigation.

The reasons which made the researcher to select the CBT as the study area are mainly because of the familiarity with the township, its people and the surroundings. The peculiarity of Cooch Behar Town being an urban unit of a limited scale far flung (about 700 Kms away) from Kolkata, situated at the peripheral areas of the state of West Bengal, is maintaining its own identity as a very well knit and planned town having a royal imprint attracted the attention. Moreover, studies related to the social status of the working women, their problems, needs and necessities pertaining to this area has not yet been dealt with.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: The probable answer to the frequently asked question: ‘why women go out for paid employment?’, may be accounted by the fact that it is the effect of the market forces that decides what work they should go for and thereby pays her a low wage segregating her in the labour market. The contribution of women to the national income of the developing nations has been ignored largely. Their economic contribution to household, farm/ off farm, community and nation is always neglected and undervalued. Such avoidance is detrimental to the economic development of any country. Some researchers also opine that the historical growth of capitalism has successfully found different ways of exploiting women both in the family and in the market. Employment in the backdrop of patriarchal capitalism gives the woman an illusion of liberation but actually exploits her more. Stereotyping of work in the social structure has given rise to a polarized condition where women are expected to look after their family first, engage themselves in the daily toil and then go for their career. The patriarchal control is such that the educated urban working women engaged in a decent employment think a number of times before taking any decision. Sometimes she may not have control over the money she earns although her earning has immense significance to the family. She seeks her husband’s permission before any purchase. This happens because she remains as an independent earner in the same patriarchal set-up where the basic social infrastructure has hardly changed.
The committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) had been appointed to study the different factors that contribute to their status. They had mentioned that their status remains intimately connected with the economic position which depends upon rights, roles and opportunities to work. So, economic independence is now accepted as an indicator of their status. By the attainment of modern education, women especially in the urban arena have obtained the eligibility of getting prestigious jobs. But she suffers as her dual role in private and professional life collides. Since her attachment to child bearing, caring and domestic duties remained unaltered, at the same time professionally she also engages herself in her job. She tries to cope with this situation by spending ‘quality time’ with her off-springs and takes up extra work load. This might lead to a vicious-cycle of a new form of sophisticated and disguised oppression of patriarchy. So, a search on this ground became necessary to find out the reality of the socio-economic status and role of the working women of CBT area; their attitude, performances in domestic activities and experiences of family life as well as presentation in the professional arena also; their ability of balancing the private and public lives and above all their perception to life and life-cycle events. This study has also been undertaken to find out whether employment has been able to bring significant changes to their economic condition, social status and their acceptability in the families.

1.5 REVIEW OF THE AVAILABLE LITERATURE: A review of the available literature related to the issues and subject matter is very important and integral part of any research work. A careful note in this respect becomes indispensible for:

(a) Better understanding of the aims, objectives and methodology of the present study and

(b) Findings of the researches in the past.

A survey of literature thus helps one to find out the research gaps, the relevance and necessity of the present study.

Bridget Hill (1989), in her work entitled ‘Women, Work and Sexual Politics in 18th Century England’ offers a reassessment of how women’s experience of work in England during 18th Century was affected by industrialization and other elements of economic, social and technological change. She took into account various kinds of functions a woman performed apart
from the house work viz. agriculture, manufacturing, livestock raising, apprenticeship etc. She also noticed the increasing sexual division of labour and its implications. She even showed how the changing nature of women’s work has influenced courtship, marriage and relation between the two sexes. In conclusion, the author questions about the extent to which the Industrial Revolution has changed the overall position of the women and opportunities extended in their favour.

Dorothy Schneider and Carl F. Schneider (1993) in the ‘ABC – CLIO Companion to Women in the Work Place’ highlighted the overtime changes from Colonial era to the present day world of the U.S. The book examines the events, working conditions, concepts and major issues that is confronted by women in non-traditional occupations and entrepreneurs.

Elizabeth Higginbotham and Mary Romero (1997) in their edited volume ‘Women and Work – Exploring Race, Ethnicity and Class’ have remarked that the subject of ‘Women and Work’ has got social relevance but the areas like colour of the skin, issues of social class, structure and rational origin is inadequately addressed so far.

Ruth Woodfield (2000) in her book ‘Women – Work and Computing’ opines that though computers have been regarded as the Twentieth Century artifact, yet it has brought positive changes to us. This book also views the optimistic relationship between women and the computers.

Social economist Naila Kabeer (2000) examines the lives of Bangladeshi garment workers to focus on the question of ‘fair’ competition in international trade. Here the Bangladeshi women workers who are under the study have been compared to the British female working force who are veteran and had a long tradition of female employment. With regard to the former case, the author examines the background of the female workers who have just stepped into the secondary economic sector having a long tradition of seclusion, poverty, conservativeness and above all a religious opposition.

Marie Goetz (2001) in her book ‘Women Development Workers – Implementing Rural Credit Programmes in Bangladesh’ writes to promote Women’s rights in development. She finds that the development agents can either promote or undermine gender equality goals. She conducted a study amongst the development workers and their interactions with the poor women in Bangladesh and concluded that the female development workers were more critical than their
male colleagues regarding the issues like domestic violence, reproductive health, children’s wellbeing and property rights; moreover they were able to bring more participants to the schemes. Thus the women development agents could become an important resource for the empowerment of women also. Her study also reveals that gendered nature of organizations can undermine or promote women’s interests.

Irene Padavic and Barbara Reskin (2002), in their book ‘Women and Men at Work’ have discussed about ‘gendered work’. They have narrated the history of gendered work in the occident. The authors have thrusted upon ideas like sexual division of labour, devaluation of women’s work and the construction of gender on jobs. They also have focused their study on the causes of workers’ segregation, wage pay gaps on the basis of race, ethnicity as well as sex. The book also examined work- family conflicts especially which centres round the question on equal division of labour.

The analogy ‘Women, Gender and Work’ edited by Martha Fetherolf Loutfi (2002) contains a selection of twenty two articles that have been published in the International Labour Review between 1996 and 2000. This book examines the equality and equal opportunities between the genders, gender disparity with regard to work, managerial styles, sexual harassment and the changing nature of the family.

Paula J. Dubeck and Dana Dunn (2002) presented an analogy titled ‘Work Place/ Women’s Place’ containing five units. This volume deals with the changes and challenges of the women’s world especially in their work place. Obviously, the main challenge comes from the very own ‘family’, the interest of which has to be balanced by the homemaker. Special attention is given to the experiences of diverse groups of women, recognizing race, ethnicity and class shaping women’s work place experiences. Women’s work experiences and opportunities have been highlighted in the 2nd Unit. Unit 3 assesses the impact of women’s active and continuous presence in the work force by probing changes in the definition of a good manager, by incorporating emotional labour as part of work demands, and by challenging the myth of gender differences of work values. Unit 4 explores the various challenges in the work – family interface. Unit 5 evaluates the capability of women in various occupations surmounting the obstacles.

The edited volume of Brigida Garcia, Richard Anker and Antonella Pinnelli (2003) titled ‘Women in the Labour market in changing economies: Demographic Issues’ focuses one of the
most relevant issues of the present day world i.e. changing demographic patterns and its implications in the labour market especially related to the increased female work participation. The authors inferred that there are certain factors which determines labour market conditions for women and their income levels, these are: migration in the developed world and transition economies, family formation and dissolution, the autonomy of women migrants, household composition, the evolution of gender systems and contraceptive behavior and so on. The case studies have been drawn from a wide range of extremities – from societies with a strong patriarchal ideology to more liberal industrialized countries with policies designed to assist women to maintain their private and public life.

Wendy Simons, Barbara Katz Rothman and Bari Meltzer Norman (2007) updated the pioneering sociological analysis of the paradoxes and contradictions of the contemporary American birth ways in their book ‘Laboring On – Birth Transition in the US’. They also analyzed the daily working lives of the medical practitioners. This book also portrays a comprehensive picture of socio-historical context of health care practices, the current state of affairs and its future.

So, it is clear from the works of the above mentioned authors that the problems the women face are ubiquitous – they are not only found in the developing nations but also concerns the developed realms irrespective of society, culture, economy, polity and so on.

Work related issues of women have been dealt in Indian context with general and particular approaches. Numerous writings and researches have been observed in this area. A number of them helped in understanding of the problem, guided in building of concepts and approaches of investigation.

I.S.A. Baud (1992) studies the changing pattern of women’s employment during the process of industrialization. The author’s research is based on the detailed case studies on agro-industrial sectors of India and the shoe industry of Mexico. Baud has shown the differences in women employment in large, small scales and artisanal forms of production and its implications on the status of women in their house hold. The author concludes that women consider their employment more important when the wage level and the job security are high. The major finding is that the increased sub-contracting has increased the number of women workers in casual forms leading to less security of jobs and lower incomes.
The book ‘Women and Seasonal Labour Migration’ has been edited by Loes Shenk – Sandbergen (1995) focuses on the women migrants. This study also states that most of the researches views women as mere followers of their counterparts in a trail of migration (i.e. ‘dependent migrants’). The case studies have been drawn from the states of Orissa, Kerala, Gujarat and Maharashtra involving the domains of forest, sea and land showing the transformation processes related to the different socio-economic, cultural, ecological conditions and livelihood systems. Different categories of women (viz. married, unmarried, abandoned, tribal women ‘staying behind’) who are involved in the process of migration have been interviewed. The case studies reveal a grim picture of the consequences of survival migration; the contributors show that there is negligible improvement of their economic status and reinforcement of traditional gender roles – increased subordination of women. Thus as a solution the contributors emphasizes reduction of seasonal labour.

Peter Custers (1997) compares the currents of international feminism by conducting a prolonged field research in India, Bangladesh and Japan. He highlights the labour conditions in the readymade garment industry with special reference to women seamstresses in Bangladesh and female home workers in West Bengal. The process of agrarian modernization and its impact upon rural women has also been dealt with. By using both Marxist and Feminist concepts, Custers tries to give an account for the circumstances which has promoted the employment of the middle-aged part-time women labourers in Japanese companies. The concepts of Ecofeminism, German school of Feminism and Socialist Feminism have also been addressed.

Anuja Agarwal (2006) edited the book ‘Migrant Women and Work – Women Migration in Asia’ wherein the chief focus has been laid to the conditions leading to female migration, their motivations for migration, changing gender composition of migration streams, outcomes and emergent patterns of female migration. One of the striking attributes of this edition is the ‘solo migrant women’. It also studies the consequent changing house hold division of labour and gender relations in the societies of both the migrants and the hosts. It even shows how it shapes the choices of the migrant women.

‘From Heroines to Beneficiaries; From Beneficiaries to Heroines’ has been written on a small scale bilateral (between Indian and Dutch Governments) irrigation project namely, the North Bengal Terai Project in 2003. The authors Loes Schenk – Sandbergen and Niren Chowdhury
noted that the aforesaid project contributed to the empowerment of women of marginal and small farmers’ households. Mere installation of simple hand pumps has improved the income and health of the families. This was also successful in eradicating the household drudgery and bringing in the decision making power of women regarding the household and professional (agricultural) matters.

The edited book of Ronnie Vernooy (2006) titled ‘Social and Gender Analysis in Natural Resource Management – Learning Studies and Lessons from Asia’ speaks of the transitional period of the Asian societies in the wake of Globalization and Privatization. Issue of gender, class, caste, ethnicity and age are central to understanding power relations, decision making processes concerning the access to the use and management of natural resources. This volume reflects on the matters and challenges identified by the research teams; these include: organizational change, mainstreaming social and gender issues, the enduring inequities facing women and improving the quality of participation. In other words this book tries to give a better understanding of the society and the social transformation in which one works and lives.

Santosh Mehrotra and Mario Biggeri (2007) edited a book named ‘Asian Informal Workers – Global Risks, Local Protection’ consisting of observations based on wide ranging survey of the nature and extent of home work in Asia. The contributors have carried out their surveys in five Asian countries. Of these, two (India and Pakistan) belonged to the economically low income group and three (Indonesia, Thailand and Philippines) belonged to the economically middle income group – where subcontracted production usually by women and children has been widely practiced. The authors have observed that home based work has become the most favoured source of income but has at the same time widened the scope of exploitation for the vulnerable groups. This volume examines their need for social protection and as a part of that it calls for the promotion of social works in favour of them so as to give rise to a new labour – intensive growth strategy in the developing countries.

Shobhita Jain and Rhoda Reddock in their edited collection of essays ‘Women Plantation Workers – International Experiences’ (in 1998) have tried to present a description and analysis of women workers engaged in plantations on a global scenario. By using the case studies aptly, the editors have narrated the history of female labour in the colonial and post-colonial periods. The essays also accounted for the degraded status of the women workers and in some cases have
portrayed that the women gradually moving out of their traditional family roles. Irrespective of all the cases the prominence of Capitalist and Patriarchal control prevailed. A contrast to the patriarchal control has been portrayed by the socio-cultural features of a tribal caste group of Nimari village of Assam. The gender relations in this laboring community are glossed with loss of patriarchal authority. Jain (‘Gender relations and plantation systems in Assam, India’ in ‘Women Plantation Workers – International Experiences’ pp. 107 - 127) has found a fair degree of sharing and exchange of traditional family roles between the sexes. She concludes that the people of Nimari were subjected to utter poverty and showed least patriarchal influence (this does not mean that in order to get equity on has to become poor) but contrary to this, women elsewhere in the affluent societies with education and power has low status.

Dealing with Indian context furthermore, particular attention has been attributed to organized and unorganized sectors of women workers in the rural and urban realms.

Medha Dubhashi Vinze (1987) conducted a study among women entrepreneurs of Delhi and tried to find out a future strategy for their development. Selecting a sample size of 50 women entrepreneurs of the National Capital Region, Dr. Vinze came up to a conclusion that entrepreneurship among women could not be developed as they lacked confidence to start their own venture. Moreover, social pressure, social attitude along with lack of reliance of the financial organizations were the other resistances.

A. Ramanamma and Usha Bambawale (1987) share a similar kind of experience in their book ‘Women in Indian Industry’. In the wake of the UN’s declaration of the women’s decade in 1975, this study was done to find out the scenario of women employment in industrial sector. The book describes how the worlds of women (work in electronic industry and life at home) are being balanced by them and if more women can find suitable jobs in this setting. This study also reveals special problems of occupational segregation and exploitation of women.

G. Vidya Rani (1990) in her book ‘Status of Women Employees in Government’ studies that though more and more women are entering into the white collar employment, yet they are concentrated in the lower levels of administrative jobs. Working women might enjoy a satisfaction of being employed in white collar jobs but it has very little significance in a traditional-bound exploitative society having a powerful background of ‘culture’ and ‘patriarchy’.
Anita Sharma (1990) in her book ‘Modernization and Status of Working Women in India – A Socio-economic Study of Women in Delhi’ has empirically studied by taking a sample size of about two hundred working women of various professions. Her basic objective was to evaluate the position of working women in India in the backdrop of modernization. She concluded that with the aid of education and employment the working women shared a different view about the existing society. Moreover, they had developed a marked attitudinal change especially with regard to the status of women in the society. In addition to this she further finds that the working women have been more exposed to westernization than their non working counterparts.

A. B. Saran and A. N. Sandhawar (1990) in ‘Problems of Women Workers in Unorganized Sectors’ tries to identify and understand the problems of the working women in the brick factories, quarries and mines of Bihar and West Bengal. It focuses the conditions and exploitation by the employers. This is a study made to unveil their grimy chronicle and upgrade their condition.

This volume depicts a holistic approach towards the female workers engaged in agriculture. Tracing their role and status through history, situational analysis and future projections are the main sub themes of ‘Women in Agriculture’ edited by R.K. Punia (1991). The activities of women workers have been focused under different agro ecological settings such as hill agriculture, agriculture in plains; rice based farming practices, dry farming, tribal agriculture, plantation systems and livestock farming. Papers on technology has brought out the situational analysis based on working conditions in home and farm, wages etc. The future projections included the changing techno-economic context that calls for the displacement of the unskilled female workers if they failed to upgrade themselves with the changing technology.

A.D. Mishra (1994), remarked that the urban middle class working women, a recently emerging social group, is an indicator of a changing socio-economic and politico-legal conditions of our country. His study deals with the problems of the urban working women. He finds that the women folk are the deprived section in the society who is the victim of discrimination throughout their lives. The author analyzes the government policies and locates the anomalies and finally prescribed some suggestions.
Dr. U. Kalpagam (1994) gives an analytical study of labour, gender and survival strategies among the urban poor in India. She strongly argues that gender issues and dynamics of economy should be viewed simultaneously.

Debal K. Singha Roy (1995) examines the broad social processes initiated with the advent of the Modern Agricultural Technology (MAT) and the consequent change in the role and status of the women. The study highlighted the growing regional disparity and sharpening class inequality. It focuses on to the phenomenon of marginalization of women in terms of increased work load and segregation in the upper strata of the socio-economic ladder; on the contrary, low wage, economic insecurity, gender based wage discrimination, class based exploitation and casualization in the work force in the lower strata. The study reveals that new technology has strengthened the base of patriarchy through gender subordination and gender role stereotyping. Along with this environmental degradation especially linked to the deforestation and indistinguishable rural – urban continuum have adversely affected the drudgery of the tribal women.

Sujata Gothoskar (1997) in her edited volume ‘Struggles of Women at Work’ shows that the most basic struggle of women centres round procuring the most basic necessities of life like food, water, fuel, fodder and shelter. In this process, her survival and elementary human dignity has gone at stake. As women they have very little control over the resources. Their struggles whenever becomes organized, glorious and intense get documented and known to the world outside the area where they had taken place. The author finds that recently there has been an increasing focus on the issues of personal and political struggles in private and public spheres of life.

Vijay Kaushik and Bela Rani Sharma (1998) in ‘Planning for Women’s Development – Encyclopaedia for Human Rights and Women’s Development’ calls for concrete effort for women’s development. Both the developed and the developing nations are paying sufficient attention to the plight of women and are planning to achieve certain targets by a specified date. This book provides a comprehensive view of these efforts.

Leelamma Devasia and V.V. Devasia (1999) have assembled two participatory researches. They emphasized on rural and tribal women’s access to the basic amenities like safe drinking water, health facilities, sustainable development etc. so that they can come together and share their
problems, ideas, desires in their own social setting. Environment and empowerment are the chief concerns of this book. The authors have realized that even the illiterate and exploited can generate ‘women friendly’ knowledge. They have also agreed that sustainable development is inseparable from environment and women’s participation.

Ranjani K. Murthy (2001) has tried to exemplify capacity building for women for their empowerment. The author is aware of the facts that the position of the rural women of our country has barely improved inspite of the constitutional guarantees and development and that the phenomena of Globalization and Liberalization has likely to marginalize the women. The contributors to this edition described the challenges they encountered in gender training and participation and in building gender transformative capacities. Women’s empowerment has not been viewed as an isolated phenomenon but as part of a wider process of social change. Several areas like women’s control over resources and decision making processes have also been touched.

A. N. Singh (2001) in ‘Women Domestic Workers – Socio-economic Life’ views the problems associated with the domestic workers who are mothers also are forced to take up domestic work. The study examines their working conditions, family life and effect of the work on their health. This book also suggests some approaches directed to human resource development, employee-employers’ relationship, qualitative improvement in work performance of the women domestic helpers.

Piya Chatterjee (2001) deals with a sophisticated examination of the production, consumption and circulation of tea with special thrust on the inclination of women who laboured under the colonial, post-colonial and now under neo-feudal conditions. While exploring the different dimensions of local practices of gendered labour, Chatterjee also reflects rights and sarcasm of her own ‘decolonization’ as a third world feminist anthropologist.

“Women in Indian Society” has been written by Neera Desai and Usha Thakkar (2005) which is of great help in building the knowledge base regarding the status of women in India. The authors discussed about women’s work, empowerment, there role in the family, their political participation, legal benefits and the emerging trends.

S. Murty and K.D. Gaur (2002) are of opinion that the women are the worse sufferers of the economic and social problems of any country due to a tendency of sex discrimination towards
them. Their main objective was to study the success and failure of the different government policies, women’s share in the labour market and their status in the capital, organization and entrepreneurship market etc.

Jawahar Lal Singh, Ravi Kumar Pandey and Arun Kumar Singh (2002) had a number of objectives in mind while dealing with the women workers in the unorganized sector. They examined the overall socio-economic status and socio-economic transformation of the women workers in the unorganized sector, their problems and constraints especially with the migrants, their living standards, children, family, education, longevity and status in the family. They even suggested measures for further employment opportunities.

Usha Sharma (2003) strongly believes that economic and political empowerment of women does not refer only to some improvements in their position in the social hierarchy. It also directs to the intrinsic changes within the women along with their counterparts. She has shown that organized movements for women’s rights in the society at large never get opposed by the men. It matters only at the individual level whenever any women raises voice against the practices and challenges men’s control over them. She prescribes that consciousness is required for both men and women; social customs must be altered in order to eradicate discrepancy among them.

Sunita Singh-Sengupta (2003) searches for the ‘bottom-line’ of business i.e. how efficiently work and family would be repositioned so as to benefit both the ends. Her study aims to examine the socio-cultural determinants which affect professional recognition of women leadership in the S.E. Asian countries. House work and childcare are the two areas which compels a woman to go for compromises in her professional life. As a consequence of which there is low representation of women at the managerial position. In this backdrop the author questions the relationship between culture and economic development.

Savita Aggarwal, Kumud Khanna and Surjeet Malhan (2003) in the book ‘Quality of Life of Farm Women’ remarks that though women in the society performs the triple role of productive, reproductive and household works yet their contribution is often subverted. The overall quality of life is very important for the welfare of the family. So their study highlights the quality of life enjoyed by the rural agricultural female workers who raises animal and also does household chores for the family.
Tara Singhal (2003) in her work “Working Women and Family” presents an empirical study based on 300 women workers in Jaipur of Rajasthan engaged to professions in hospitals, government or semi-government organizations, banks, departments, colleges, schools etc. The change in traditional behavioural pattern, economic independence of women, women’s employment and changes in urban family are some of the issues which have been of great significance in this respect.

Nadia Tazi (2004) takes up the diversity of cultural traditions in an era characterized by the homogenizing effects of Globalization. This edited volume comprises four schools of thought – Truth, Gender, Identity and Experiences. Though these words are much common in every day usages yet their philosophical and cultural roots as viewed in the society is very interesting.

Mala Bhandari (2004) observes very closely the quality of life of the working women in Delhi and tries to find out the linkages and support mechanisms between their private and public life. Bhandari is also of opinion that the professional and personal life does not always confront each other.

Shruti Banerjee (2005) commented on the concepts like women’s autonomy or employment. She speaks in favour of women’s education and employment in the contemporary world. Male dominancy is found in prominence almost in every society, thus women’s autonomy becomes indispensible to strike a balance between the two sexes. Banerjee stressed on women’s empowerment a socio-economic determinant of induced abortion and development.

Amal Mandal (2005) in his book ‘Women Workers in Brick Factory – Sordid Saga from a District of West Bengal’ focuses his study on the women workers of the brick kilns in one subdivision of Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. He wanted to document their socio-economic background, working conditions and wage structure in which they struggled. He found that the work is seasonal and the employment is contractual with no security. The women workers were deprived of all statutory benefits and amenities like maternity leaves and crèche; they are forced to work without provisions like rest shades, drinking water and toilets.

V.M. Rao (2005) has examined the ‘Women’s Dairy Project (WDP) with special reference to Orissa’ launched during 1986 – 1987 as a part of the Support to Training and Employment Programmes for Women (STEP) of the Dept. of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India. His study was based on 64 Women Development
Corporations (WDC) and 320 women members drawn from 6 milk sheds of Orissa. He found that though at the beginning women were discouraged to join a democratic organization like this, later on they came together and expressed solidarity. Assured milk marketing, regular payment, supply of quality inputs at a reasonable rate, and continuous monitoring helped them to repose faith in WDCs. Further on the women were found managing a business enterprise and also entering politics. Despite their increased work load, they were happy for their increased status both within the family and society (village). Thus the WDP was successful in empowering rural women of the study area.

Seema Sharma and Kanta Sharma (2006), opines that with the growing consciousness, spread of education and industrialization women have started to move from subjection to economic freedom; they have liberated themselves from the ‘biological rhythms’ since technology has enabled them to have control on birth and fertility. The authors further questions about the basic structure of the society which remains unadoptable to modern views on women and work and predicts that reconciling home and career will remain a problem (p.118). Regarding the trends in female employment Sharma and Sharma views two basic patterns – teaching and medical professions referred to as ‘traditional organized sector’ is mostly preferred; polarization of women in the organized sector is seen in the low paid and low prestige jobs particularly in the secretarial and clerical services (p.97).

Dr. Shanta B. Astige (2006) in ‘Role and Status of Working Women’ provides an integrated, insightful and empirical findings thrusting on to the functional and attitudinal aspects as well as the philosophy and tragedy of private and public lives faced by the Indian Working Women. Dr. Astige has rightly captured the emerging trends of aspirations, achievements, challenges and constraints among the working women taking to gainful employment of 350 samples. She has included valuable discussions about the issues of marriage, family, work etc. significant to the contemporary social milieu.

Vinita Singh (2007) has studied about the female domestic workers and has compiled the book named ‘Women Domestics – Workers within Households’. Her sample size remained confined to 200 domestic workers and 50 employers of Ranchi Town. She meticulously learned about their socio-economic condition. She also noticed the two spheres of women’s life the house and the work place and their overlap in their households, social space, and position as underclass
workers as well as being women. This book also tells about the exploitation and struggles of the
women folk.

Dr. M. Lakhshmi Narasaiah and Smt. S. A. Haseena Sultana (2007) studied vividly the poverty
alleviation programmes started by the government with respect to Kurnool. Their objective was
to study the present socio-economic status, to review the development programmes and their
effects, to study the nature and extent of capacity building. Accordingly, they made elaborate
study regarding women and development, five year plans and progress of the SHGs. They also
gave importance to social mobilization and empowerment of women in developmental aspects.

Latika Menon, in the second edition of her book (2008) attempted to furnish the basic parameters
to women’s development issues in the context of awareness, emancipation, social status, sexual
liberation and professional achievement. Her valued work extends the areas of contemporary
issues like life transitions and development particularly highlighting the psychological and
sociological paradoxes. Feminism and gender awareness, sexual exploitation, demography and
women development were also been focused.

‘Women and Social Change’ is an edited book by Dr. Krishna Chandra Pradhan (2010), wherein
a number of issues related to women have been dealt. This book emphasizes on subject matter
like Rural development, Self Help Group, Panchayati system etc. Women empowerment through
micro-entrepreneureship and agribusiness are worthy to mention. Women and gender relations in
tribal society have also been discussed.

Bandana Singh (2013) in her work entitled “Working Women” is written to address various
aspects like the quality of working life of the women, women work participation, agriculture and
working women, government policies and working women, women scavengers etc. in Indian
perspective. Her work has revealed an emerging trend of the working women towards service
sector of economy especially in the urban areas. She also recognizes that employment has been
successful in bringing about changes in the financial position of the working women, but still
they are found subjected to discrimination at various levels.

Samitha Rani Natarajan (2013) speaks about the conditions which pushes women to hunt for
jobs. She holds the socio-cultural changes to remain responsible for female employment. Her
work highlights the attitudinal changes of the women through economic independence. She also
studies the women workers in unorganized sectors, the problems of urban working women, living conditions of informal women workers etc.

Neelam Joshi (2013) in her work discusses about women and national development; women, democracy and gender development; historical development of women with particular reference to India; economic and social status of women; women’s employment and so on.

Rajiv Azad (2014) emphasizes on critical issues related to women in India pertaining to their status. He tried to draw the attention of the readers by presenting instances of crime and atrocities imposed upon women and causing a threat for their survival. The patriarchal social set up has been held responsible for such discrimination and derogatory attitude towards women.

Therefore, considering all the above mentioned pioneering works conducted on different levels highlighting the socio-economic position of the women, her changing status through the chronological periods and life experiences therein; it was seen that substantial gaps have remained in those inquiries concerning the working women especially of Cooch Behar Town area. Hence, a necessity was felt for a detailed study pertaining to the working women in CBT area entailing their socio-economic condition, social status, role in the family & society and perception towards different facets of life. So, Cooch Behar Town area has been selected for the in-depth study.

1.6 CENTRAL QUESTIONS: A host of research questions that helped in the formulation of the objectives of the study are as follows:

- Why does a woman go for employment?
- What are the different types of occupations taken up by women?
- What is the present socio-economic status of the working women?
- What is the trend of occupational sectors of women in India?
- Are the working women treading into the men’s world?
- What types of jobs are preferred by them?
- Does education is imparting confidence among women to lead a decent life?
• Does the working women find difficult to bridge the gap between house work and outside work?

• What are the effects of employment on personal relationships especially to the husband and children?

• Does the family co-operate with her in doing the household chores?

• What is the attitude of the family towards working women?

• Has she gained popularity of becoming a much sought after bride?

• What are the expectations of the family from the working women?

• Does the working woman have developed preferences for a nuclear family where more autonomy can be exercised?

• Does the working woman have developed preferences for marriage by their own selection?

• Does employment manifest a negative relation to age of marriage and fertility?

• Does economic empowerment enables a working woman to participate in decision making in child bearing and family matters?

• How much she can spend on the family and on herself?

• Can she enjoy her salary or her employment has become another source of social oppression?

• What are the safeguards (constitutional and legal) to the working women?

• How far the development programmes safeguard the working women’s interests and wellbeing?

• How has employment remain successful in bringing a significant change to the social status of the working women in Indian society which continues to be traditional?
1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: A. The main objective is to study whether employment has brought a significant change in the social status of the working women.

B. Other objectives are as follows:

- To know about the present socio-economic status of the working women.
- To find out the reasons that has led the women to go for employment.
- To find out the job preferences and job varieties to which the working women are engaged.
- To study the attitude of the working women towards the family and vice versa.
- To find out the Constitutional and Legislative support for Women in India and also to discuss the Developmental Programmes related to them.
- To study the perception of the working women towards education, marriage, family structure and employment.

1.8 HYPOTHESIS: A hypothesis may be defined as “a proposition or a set of proposition set forth as an explanation for the occurrence of some specified group of phenomena either asserted merely as a provisional conjecture to guide some investigation or accepted as highly probable in the light of established facts” (Kothari, 2011: 184). In other words, hypothesis is the central part of an investigation which leads to new experiments and observations. In a generalized form, it relates to some assumptions or suppositions which require getting proved or disproved in the course of research. But technically hypothesis is a formal question that a researcher intends to solve. In the present study, attempts for proving the following hypothesis were undertaken.

- Financial necessity is not the sole driving force behind female employment for all cases.

Rationale: Attainment of Education in society refers to the ability of reading, writing and comprehension. The level of Education and Literacy, the population attains is indicative of the level of social development. It is also a fact that education gives a better connotation to life events especially concerning the women. As a consequence, it acts as the major determinants of demographic components. Thus a country with educated mass is indicates
the social progress. The study area shows the incidence of high literacy level among the working women. Moreover, a trend of attainment of higher education is also found among the respondents. It was evident that this would affect the age of marriage, fertility and employment among the respondents. The findings of the present study show that after the accomplishment of their educational career, the women go for jobs and then marriage. So, it was presupposed that achievement of higher education is possible and feasible if there remains no pressing financial problem to support them. In addition to this, the work participation rate for the females of the urban areas usually remains low than their counterparts in the rural areas and it is also a fact that the women in urban sector do not require to earn a living as they maintain a better living standards. Therefore it was thought that financial necessity might not be the sole driving force for the women to get employed. The findings of the present inquiry matches with the assumption in that, although most of the working women under study (86.89%) opined that it was the financial reasons (complementing the family income in the backdrop of soaring market prices) that acted as the push-pull factors for their employment, some of the respondents (9.90%) stated that it was to attain a social position they have taken up jobs. Some others (3.21%) told that it was to continue with the family tradition and to occupy leisure they went for jobs. Therefore, it may be said that for all the working women in the study area financial inadequacy has not acted as the cause behind getting employed.

- The ‘private’ and ‘public’ lives of the working women are likely to be in conflict.

Rationale: It is no denying that employment has imparted a positive implication upon the family life of the respondents in CBT area. Besides augmenting the family income, by virtue of their jobs the respondents have attained a better status in their families so far as decision making is concerned. About 79.90% of the respondents do have a say in the family matters but they lag behind to contribute over the property and child centric matters.

Majority (83.23%) of the working women engage themselves to cooking for their families; Marketing including grocery and green grocery is the area of the male members of the family, nevertheless the working women (35.79%) also take on as and when required. With regard to cleaning & washing of clothes and utensils, the highest labour is contributed by the respondents (61.68%); the respondents excel in caring of the aged persons in the family
(78.28 %); the respondents contribute 69.11% in taking care of the children, 57.46% of the respondents also drop their children to schools and 26.84% of the working women was also found to engage themselves in paying of the bills. Therefore, it is observed that the household chores are mostly shouldered by the respondents and hence they remain as the most responsible in their families. Although 97.69% of the working women reported that their families have helping attitude towards them but 54.59% of the sample admitted that they receive actual co-operation from their families. However, the most commendable endeavor comes up from the findings which concern the husbands of the respondents. The husbands of the working women have shown their co-operation and a helping attitude wherever possible. So, the support from the husbands might help in the psyche of the working women and as a result they are found to get onto excessive work load in the family.

Employment has not posed hindrance to family life according to 92.91% of the respondents. Furthermore, 93.30% of the sample declared that they did not feel distanced from their husbands and their employment did not come in between their conjugal life. Even in matters of child rearing the respondents remain highly aware (88.91% of the sample) inspite of the pre-occupation by their jobs.

In their workplaces they show their prominence. 89.53% of the working women are satisfied with their job. 86.44% of them participate in the office related functions and recreational programmes. This reflects that they have a developed good relation and have a congenial work environment. However, a small proportion (7.03%) of the working women has upheld dissatisfaction related to their workplaces and has demanded modification there upon.

This clearly shows the workload taken up by the working women under study in addition to their profession. So, the working women of the study area are seen to have confident attitude in their families as well as in their workplaces. They are found very much involved with family matters as they contribute their earnings to attain the common goals. Apart from working outside, they are found to shoulder much responsibilities especially concerning household duties and tasks. The relentless efforts and continuous labour to keep both the household and workplace ever functioning are really praise worthy. Though it seems that the ‘private’ and the ‘public’ lives of the working women remain smooth sailing but actually the cost is paid by the working women by her inexorable efforts to maintain both ends. So, it
revealed that the ‘private’ and ‘public’ lives of the working women are likely to be in conflict.

- **Employed women are able to attain a better standard of living and financial autonomy.**

**Rationale:** The study has been intended to unveil the conditions to which the working women of the CBT are being exposed and also to analyze their role in the family, society and work places to arrive at the conclusion about their current social status. It is found that the working women are mostly (61.11%) engaged to organized employment and the proportion of women working in the unorganized sector belongs to 38.89%. Incidence of white collar jobs (41.14%) among the working women is higher than other job statuses. There also remains a dominance of permanent job holders (56.73%) among the sample. As a consequence to this, about 37.25% of the sample shows a high level of monthly income (20,001- 50,000 and ≥50,001 INR). In this connection it is to be kept in mind that the working women of the study area have an affinity towards attaining higher education also. So, all these statistical findings pinpoint to a good standard of living for the majority of the working women of the study area.

Regarding financial autonomy of the concerned group under study it is seen that 90.88% of the sample are free to spend their own income. A small proportion of them (18% of the respondents) face interference regarding money management from their husbands, in-laws and other family members. Furthermore, 82.95% of them can freely do savings as well (whatever little amount it might be). About 97.41% of the respondents spend their income for procurement of domestic consumable goods; 40.51% spends their income on their children’s education purposes; 48.51% solely contribute to shopping during the festivals. So, it is easily discernible that the working women enjoy financial autonomy.

Turning the attention towards the sample of the non-working women it may be commented that these women are not engaged to gainful activity at all hence, their remains no scope of their personal financial resource. They are wholly dependent on the income of their spouses most of whom (83% of the family of the non-working women) earn a high level of family income (20,001- 50,000 INR per month). Perception to life and living of the non-working women has also been marked during the interview. 87% of them believed that employed women enjoy better status in their family by taking financial decisions independently.
98.33% of the sample of the non-working women opined that women should go for employment in order to attain a better living standard.

Therefore, it is true that the employed women are able to attain a better standard of living and financial autonomy.

1.9 SOURCES OF DATA AND MAPS: The investigation on “THE SOCIAL STATUS OF THE WORKING WOMEN – A CASE STUDY OF THE COOCH BEHAR TOWN” is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data have been collected from door to door survey by running a research schedule prepared by the investigator. In addition to this, field observations, practical experiences and unofficial records also deserve special mention contributing to the study. The secondary data includes Statistical data from District Statistical Handbook of Cooch Behar (2008), District Census Handbooks (1991, 2001), Census Reports of India (1951-2011, District Gazetteer of Koch Bihar (1976), Topographical Map covering the Study Area (Map no. 78 F/7 ), the location of the study area, Ward Maps and Landuse Map from the Draft Development Plan (2008-2013) by Cooch Behar Municipality. Other relevant data and information have been considered from various sources at different levels as applicable to the study.

1.10 METHODOLOGY: The study on the working women of Cooch Behar Town (CBT) has been conducted by adopting a methodology for the collection and the analysis of the data which is as follows:

1.10.1 SAMPLE SIZE: As mentioned earlier in Table: 1.1, that there are 2,89,434 persons (10.27% of the total population of the district) urbanites in Koch Bihar district according to the 2011 Census. 49.34% of the urban population is constituted by women. The census population for 2011 records a figure of 77,935 persons as urban residents of the Town area of Cooch Behar under Cooch Behar Municipality. Of this figure, 38,921 are women representing 49.94%.

The number of the female working force in the urban sector of Koch Bihar district is 20,233. The female workers of the CBT area are only 5,567 representing 27.51% of the female urban working women. The study was essentially conducted on the ‘Working Women’ of the CBT area
befitting with the subject matter of investigation wherein, a total of 1,777 working women have been interviewed representing 32% of the Universe by adopting Multi-stage Sampling Technique. The Female Population of the Koch Bihar District has been selected as the first stage of the sample. Then the Female Population of the CBT area was chosen for consideration. Out of this, the working women of the CBT area were taken up for the interview. This represents a Two-stage sampling design. The samples were then selected by adopting Simple Random Sampling without Replacement (SRSWOR). Therefore, this may be referred to as ‘Multi-stage Random Sampling Design’ (Kothari, 2011: 66). Out of the total sample (1777 working women) 1086 working women representing 61.11% belonged to the Organized sector engaged in salaried

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<tr>
<th>Ward Numbers</th>
<th>No. of female Workers (Census, 2011)</th>
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<td><strong>5567</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
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</table>

Source: Census, 2011 and Field Survey (2014)
employments. The rest 691 working women belonged to Un-organized sector who are Domestic helpers, Bidi binders, Self-employed & Part-time workers and the Sex workers represents 38.89% of the sample.

In addition to this, a number of 60 non-working women have been interviewed so that it would complement the findings of the study. The survey of the non-working women stands important as it reveals their experiences, innate views and perception to life and living.

1.10.2 OPERATIONAL DESIGN: The aim of the study was to collect secondary and primary data in order to generate the current information, viability and problems associated with the urban working women in the study area. The entire research work focused on three steps: (i) Pre-field, (ii) In-field and (iii) Post-field sessions.

(i) The Pre-field session included:

- The entire planning of the course of action.
- Survey of the available Literature.
- Formulation of the Objectives and Hypothesis of the study.
- Preparation of a detailed Research Schedule so as to fit in the aim of the study.
- A pilot study was made so that the research schedule can be administered properly. Since the present endeavour is based on qualitative research, hence it was felt that thorough interactions between the researcher and the respondents were desired.

(ii) The In-field session:

- Collection of primary information by a rigorous field survey was carried during 2014 – 2015 for the working women and during 2016 for the Non-working women.
- Since the nature of the study is based on Qualitative Assessment, thorough interactive sessions following Exploratory Survey Method were adopted.
- Since the study is intended to unveil the social status of the working women in the urban area of Cooch Behar Town, hence ‘Multi-stage Random Sampling Design’ have been incorporated for a better representation of the samples from the universe.
- Gathering of secondary information and maps was done next.
(iii) The Post-field session:

- Tabulation of collected data and preparation of other tables for presentation of the data, statistical and cartographic calculations were done.
- Data analysis followed the next.
- Finally, report writing completed the post-field activity.

1.10.3 RESEARCH SCHEDULE: Since the socio-economic aspect of the working women is under investigation, hence a schedule was prepared for the collection of the primary data befitting with the aim of the study. The schedule was designed to get information regarding demographic condition, economic status (occupational, income, expenditure etc.), educational qualification and perception about education, health status, social status (concerning marriage, involvement in household activities, experiences in family life, professional performances and experiences and so on) along with the general information about the working women under consideration. The research schedule contains both open ended and close ended questions. The close ended questions enhanced the process of tabulation and quantification of the qualitative data. In order to expedite the post-survey tabulation process, the close ended questions like optional, affirmative/negative, multiple choice based questions were given importance while building up of the research schedule. A separate schedule was also prepared to get information from the non-working women for comparison of the different aspects of the inquiry.

The collection of the qualitative data involved Exploratory Surveys in the study area.

1.11 VARIABLES USED FOR THE STUDY: In order to suffice the present subject matter, the following variables have been used:

Family size of the Respondents, Caste Diversity and Religious Affiliation of the Respondents, Age Groups, Marital Status, Age of Marriage, Age at First Pregnancy, Type of the residence (own/spouse’s/others), Translocation of the Respondents and Reasons (Marriage/ Employment/ Others etc.), Literates, Level of Education, Age Groups and Educational Level of the unmarried working women, Type of Marriage undergone, Preference of Marriage Type, Type of the Family
where the Respondents resides (Joint/ Nuclear/ Neo-joint), Preference for the type of the Family, Dowry Taken, Opinion regarding Dowry, Families in support of Dowry, Occupational Diversity among the working women, Income Levels of the working women, Job Status of the Respondents, Job categories (Government/ Non-government etc.), Occupational Sectors (Salaried/ Non-salaried), Job Permanency, Respondents engaged in Jobs related to Decision Making, Husband’s Occupation, Family Income, Level of Family Income, Dependents on the Working Women, Diseases affecting Respondents, Popular Treatment Sought, Treatment of sick persons in the Family, Vaccination of the respondents during child bearing period, Expenses during child birth, Vaccination among children, Intension for Children, Family Planning Awareness and Decision for Child Bearing, Adoption of Birth Control Measures, Preference for Male Child, Husband’s and In-laws Choice for Children, School Expenses of the children, Popularity of schools for Kid’s Admission, Preference for Medium of Instructions in Schools, Confrontation regarding Child’s Admission, Working Women spending Own Income, Nature of Expenses by Respondents, Working Women addressing to Own Needs, Savings by Respondents, Popular Savings Schemes taken up by the Respondents, Interference of Family Members faced by the Working Women regarding Expenses, Household Attire of the respondents, Contribution to ‘Puja’ Shopping by the respondents, Employment of the respondents posing hindrance to family life, Distanced with the Husbands, Neglecting Children, Fatigue of the respondents, Co-operating Attitude of the Family towards the respondents, Actual Family Co-operation received by the respondents, looking after children in respondent’s absence, Performance of Household Chores (Cooking, Marketing, Cleaning of the Utensils and Washing of the Clothes, Care of Aged Persons, care of Children, Dropping Children to Schools and Paying of Bills) by the Respondents and Other family members, Attitude of the Family Members towards Working Women, Attitude of the Family Members towards the Respondents, Family Preference for the Working Women as Brides, Family Expectation from the Working Women, Harassment of Working Women in their houses, Steps taken for its eradication, Decision making in the Family, Possession of Property by the Working Women, Decision of the respondents for Jobs, Reasons for getting employed, Job Satisfaction of the respondents, Problems and harassments in the Work Places, Modification of the Office intended, Preference for the Higher education and job type for women.

Many of the relevant variables pertaining to the Non-working Women were also taken up for comparison with that of the Working Women as applicable.
1.12 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:

1.12.1 Location Quotient: A statistical analysis of the Female Literacy based on the basis of 2011 census data has been represented by Location Quotient (LQi). ‘When the proportion of any characteristic in an area is studied in relation to its proportion in the region, the ratio used is known as the Location Quotient’ (Mahmood, 1993: 104). The use of this technique is significant for an area of small spatial extent like that of the present study area, wherein the concentration of female literates may be considered as a higher concentration when compared to its counterparts in a larger spatial unit (i.e. comparison of individual ward wise data with that of the Municipality

\[ LQi = \frac{\left( \frac{fli}{fpi} \right)}{\left( \frac{FL}{FP} \right)} \]

Where, fli= number of female literates in each ward, fpi= number of female population in each ward, FL= Total number of Female Literates in the CBT and FP= Total number of Female Population in the CBT.

The general outcomes may be explained in the following manner:

1. L.Q <1 means the area has less of a share of literacy condition than is more generally and regionally found. In other words, the literacy situation is not up to the mark and hence requires more attention for its augmentation.

2. L.Q = 1 refers to the optimum condition regarding the parameter. In other words the area has an equal share of literacy in accordance with that of its base. Hence, those areas would not be able to produce surplus proportion of literates.

3. L.Q >1 relates to the fact of having surplus condition in terms of the variable under study. Furthermore, this refers to a condition where the variable (here Literacy) is found in greater concentration than expected and can be transferred to places having deficiency.

1.12.2 Female Workers’ Intensity Index: Spatial distribution of things or phenomena at all levels of regional subdivisions tends to follow the norms of inequities. It is these inequities gauged in terms of gainful employment that concerns itself with levels of development, degree of urbanization and sectoral composition of income derived in different areas contributing to balanced regional growth. Exceedingly marked unevenness in the level of female employment at
the municipality level has been tried out with the help of Female Workers’ Intensity Index based on the census data of 2011. This has also been represented spatially in the map of Cooch Behar Town (Map no. 6.12 in Chapter VI). The variables used for the statistical analysis are ward wise number of Female Workers and ward wise Female Population of CBT for 2011. The Female Workers’ Intensity Index has been computed by the following formula:

\[
\text{Female Workers’ Intensity Index} = \sqrt{\frac{x+y}{2}}
\]

Where,

\[
x = \frac{\text{No of Female Workers in each Ward } \times 100}{\text{Total no of Female Workers in CBT}}
\]

\[
y = \frac{\text{No of Female Population in each Ward } \times 100}{\text{Total no of Female Population in CBT}}
\]

Inspired by Mandal and Peters (1982: 322-327) in their work “Urbanization and Regional Development”, where they have used Rural and Urban Intensity Indices to find out the inequalities in terms of nature and degree in the respective spatial connotations, the present study on Working Women in CBT might throw some light in measuring the inequalities in terms of nature and degree of work participation among the respondents. The scale of Female Workers’ Intensity may range from ≤1.5 to ≥2.51 and four levels of intensity may be recognized such as: ≤1.5, 1.51 – 2.00, 2.01 – 2.50 and ≥2.51 which are designated as very low, low, moderate and high respectively.

1.12.3 Regression Analyses: Correlation refers to the relationship: to be precise, the closeness of two or more variables. It generally measures the degree or extent to which two variables fluctuates with reference to each other. Correlation analysis deals with the association of co-variation between two or more variables. Correlation is classified into positive and negative; simple and multiple; partial and total and linear and non-linear. ‘Bivariate methods are used when the variation of two variables is simultaneously considered; where both are measured on each object in a sample…these methods yield information about the relationship between variables’ (Sarkar, 2013: 102). Of the two variables, the independent one is taken on the x-axis while the dependent variable on the y-axis a scatter plot is drawn either on paper or on computer.
The trend of the plot refers to a systematic relation between the two variables. The straight line of regression may be described by an equation of

\[ Y_c = a + bx \]

Where, \( x \) = independent variable; \( y \) = dependent variable; \( a \) = intercept (its value is the point at which the regression line crosses the \( Y \)-axis i.e. the vertical axis); \( b \) = slope of line (it represents the change in \( Y \) variable for a unit change in \( X \) variable).

'\( a \)' and '\( b \)' in the equation are called numerical constants because for any given straight line, their value does not change. If the values of the constant '\( a \)' and '\( b \)' are obtained, the line is completely determined. The 'Least Square' method is used to obtain the values of '\( a \)' and '\( b \)'. According to the method, the line should be drawn through the plotted points in such a manner so that the sum of the squares of the deviations of the actual values from the computed \( Y \) values is the least, that is to say, in order to obtain a line which fits the points best \( \sum (Y - Y_c)^2 \), should be minimum. Such a line is known as the line of 'best fit'. The values of '\( a \)' and '\( b \)' is determined by solving the two normal equations simultaneously, which is as follows:

\[
\sum Y = Na + b\sum x \\
\sum XY = a\sum x + b\sum x^2
\]

To identify the causal relationship between Female Literacy (%) and Female workers (%) at the National, State and District levels from 1951-2011; Female Literacy (%) and Average Age of Marriage (in Years) and the Level of Education (converted on a Likert’s scale) and that of Average Monthly Income (Rs.) of the working women of CBT, regression analyses have been used.

**1.12.4 Composite Index:** When some single parameters become insufficient to portray complex characteristics, then all the related parameters may be taken up together to get the composite picture. A Composite Index is therefore sought to represent the properly chosen variables. The computation of Composite Index involves the recognition of a host of variables which may be designated as \( X_1, X_2, X_3, \ldots, X_n \). These variables on the first hand are made value free to remove
the biasness of scale. The biasness of scale may be eliminated by following any of these procedures:

a. By ranking the observations.

b. By dividing the observations by Mean or by Standard Deviation or by any other suitable value.

c. Standardization of variables.

Here the observations have been divided by their respective Mean values, so that their scale effect gets neutralized; the Mean of new variable (after the division by their Mean values) equals unity; this new transformation retains the relative variability of the original variable. Then the results are added row-wise. The sum of these figures is then put in the last column and it is known as the Composite Index Score. The higher value of the Composite Index Score indicates the higher level of development. Then these are spatially represented by employing chloropleth method. Composite Index method has been employed in this inquiry to assess the social status of the working women of the study area. The variables chosen for the computation of the Composite Index for the present study are No. of Working women under study, Literacy, Average monthly income, Family Co-operation received, Respondents spending own income, interference in money handling, Amount of Savings by the respondents and participation in the professional arena.

The statistical analyses particularly for the Location Quotient, Female Workers’ Intensity Index and Composite Index have been represented spatially with the help of GIS tools. While the regression analysis have been displayed by the help of Microsoft Excel 2007.

1.12.5 Multivariate Analysis: All statistical techniques that simultaneously analyze more than two variables on a sample of observations are regarded as Multivariate Techniques (Sarkar, 2013: 228). These help one to find out the simultaneous changes in several properties. It is referred to as an advanced statistical method for simultaneous analysis of multiple variables for exploring properties of dependence, interdependence and classification. Though it remains as a complicated tool when theoretical and practical methodologies are concerned, it is helpful for the researcher to manipulate more variables that he can assimilate by himself. The conceptualization and graphical representation is difficult and therefore the reduction of dimensionality of the data to imaginable and possible dimensions (such as 2D or 3D) is the main focus.
In social sciences any variable is rarely explained by only one independent variable. Therefore, for a better explanation of any dependent phenomenon, it is necessary to explain it by all of its possible explanatory variables. In Multivariate Analysis, a large number of socio-economic and other variables through some smaller number of underlying dimensions and while doing so, large number of unobservable dimensions like urbanization, industrialization etc. could be explained (Mahmood, 1993: 153). Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is a branch of factor analysis – a technique designed primarily to synthesize a large number of variables into a smaller number of general components which retains maximum amount of descriptive ability. PCA requires an orthogonal transformation of a set of interrelated structural variables (designated as $X_1, X_2, X_3, \ldots, X_v$) into a new set of independent variables (to get the linear function as $Y = a_1X_1 + a_2X_2 + a_3X_3, \ldots, a_vX_v$). ‘The first principal component is defined as the linear combinations of variables which has the maximum variance of all linear functions derivable from the given variables. The second principal component is the linear combination of variables having the maximum variance of all linear functions of the given variables that are orthogonal to the first Principal component and so on. The coefficients of the principal components are termed as principal component loadings while its measurements upon each of the individuals are called principal component scores’ (Sarkar, 2013: 234).

1.13 CARTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES USED: Cartographic depictions in the form of Bar graphs, Pie-graphs and Choropleth Map to represent the socio-economic aspects of the study have been employed. The spatial patterns and distribution of these aspects have involved the use of GIS softwares like Arc GIS 10.5, Erdas 2015, SPSS 23 and supported by Microsoft Excel 7 & 16.

1.14 CONSTRAINTS OF THE STUDY: While conducting the survey in the study area, the researcher confronted a few problems as well.

- Some of the working women belonging to the non-creamy socio-economic level could not state their problems clearly especially those related to their psychological well being. Therefore, they remain non-conscious about their rights and quality of life they endure.
Some of the working women did not co-operated with the researcher as they were reluctant to divulge their identity especially about their income and harassments in their households and work places, as the cases were. Those working women were not surveyed.

1.15 RESEARCH DESIGN:

1. Chapter I: Introduction

2. Chapter II: General Background of the Study Area

3. Chapter III: The Changing Role and Status of Women through History in India

4. Chapter IV: The Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents of the Study Area and their Status & Role in Family, Society and Work places

5. Chapter V: Constitutional and Legislative Support For Women in India & Related Development Programmes


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