THE SOCIAL STATUS OF THE WORKING WOMEN –
A CASE STUDY OF THE COOCH BEHAR TOWN

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BY
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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "The Social Status of the Working Women – A Case Study of the Cooch Behar Town" has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Sushma Rohatgi, Professor of Department of Geography and Applied Geography, University of North Bengal. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

Date: 19.11.2018

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PREFACE

Status of Women had been largely in a state of subjugation when historical records are being consulted particularly in Indian scenario. Apart from the Vedic Era, no historical references could be found where women were held high in the society. Since the Post-Vedic Period, women in Indian society have faced derogatory and most taken-for-granted status. This is because of the supremacy of the patriarchy in the social milieu. As the civilization progressed, humans got exposure to new inventions and cultural diffusion. The advent of the Colonial Rule did not make any difference to the fate of the women of the country at large. It was after the social awakening during the 19th Century, women started a new journey towards improvement. Gradually, they stepped outside their domain and started to shoulder responsibilities like that of their counterparts. Modern education and employment ushered in significant changes to their lives and living.

The traditional role of women associated with that of procreation and homemaking remained intact and along with it became added the new phenomenon of ‘working women’ in the society. The workload of the women increased, the responsibility became doubled; they now required to strike a perfect balance between their roles at the workplaces as well as in their households. So, the present study has been intended to understand the socio-economic conditions of the working women of the Cooch Behar Town area especially throwing light to their life experiences satisfying both the public and private ends. The researcher also wanted to know that whether employment has made any difference to the livability conditions and given a positive boosting to the psychological set up of the urban working women. Since the society is always at a state of flux, hence the status and role of the women in general and working women in particular is a matter of great concern. The attitude of people also changes with time – a normative behaviour might not be accepted today may have some significance tomorrow. Therefore, an assessment of the status and role of working women in family, society and work places for the study area has been attempted. Four aspects of a woman’s life such as: Education, Marriage, Family and Employment may be considered as the core stones. Thus, this effort has also been intended to illuminate the perception of the working women towards these phenomena.
The inquiry is largely based on qualitative data derived from extensive field surveys which have been quantified for analysis and inferences. This enquiry was essentially sociological in aspect hence primary survey was given due importance. Besides this, secondary materials included census reports and statistical data from authentic sources were also considered as major inputs.

The study has been represented in 7 chapters including the introduction and conclusion. Chapter I is the introductory chapter; Chapter II deals with the General background of the study area with emphasis on historical settings as the study area has got a significant historical antecedence; Chapter III portrays the Changing Role and Status of Women through history in India; Chapter IV deals with the socio-economic profile of the respondents of the Study Area and their Status & Role in Family, Society and Work Places; Chapter V discusses about the Constitutional and Legislative support for women in India & related Development Programmes; Chapter VI delves into the perception of the working women of the study area towards Education, Marriage, Family and Employment and Chapter VII summarizes the research work and draws the conclusion.

Date: 15. 11. 2018

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGIES USED

AFSPA- Armed Forces Special Power Act
ANP- Applied Nutrition Programme
Art- Article in Constitution
ASHA - Accredited Social Health Activities
AWW- Anganwadi Workers
BOS- Beneficiary Oriented Schemes
CD Block- Community Development Block
CAPART-Council for Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Technology
CBD- Central Business District
CBM- Cooch Behar Municipality
CBT – Cooch Behar Town
CGWB & GSI- Central Ground Water Board
CMBS- Conditional Maternity benefit Scheme
CSSM- Child Survival and Safe Motherhood
CSWB- Central Social Welfare Board
DMSC- Durbar Mahila Samannoy Committee
DPA- Dowry Prohibition Act
DRR- Disaster Risk Reduction
DWCRA-Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
EDP- Entrepreneurial Development Programme
EDP- Entrepreneurship Development Programme
EWRs - Elected Women Representatives
FWPR-Female Work Participation Rate
GPU- Gram Panchayat Unit
GDI-Gender Development Index
GIS- Geographic Information System
GRC- Gender Resource Centres
HDI- Human Development Index
HSAA- Hindu Succession Amendment Act
HYV- High Yielding Variety
ICAR- Indian Council of Agricultural Research
ICDS- Integrated Child Development Services
IGMSY- Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana
IMY- Indira Mahila Yojana
INR- Indian Rupee
IRDP-Integrated Rural Development Programme
ITIs-Industrial Training Institutes
JNNURM - Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
JRY- Jawahar Rozgar Yojana
KVIC- Khadi and Village Industries Commission
LIC- Life Insurance Corporation
LQ-Location Quotient
MAT- Modern Agricultural Technology
MCH- Maternity and Child Health Centres
MGNREGA- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Gurantee Act
MIS- Monthly Investment Scheme
MMR- Measles, Mumps and Rubella
MoWCD- Ministry of Women and Child Development
MSY- Mahila Samriddhi Yojana
MWPR- Male Work Participation Rate
NAPAs - Nation Adaptation Program of Actions
NBSS & LUP- National Bureau of Soil Survey & Land Use Planning
NCW- Commission for Women
NDVI-Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NFE- Non Formal Education
NFSB-National Food Security Bill
NGOs- Non Governmental Organization
NH 31- National Highway no. 31
NMBS- Maternity Benefit Scheme
NMEW- National Mission for Empowerment of Women
NNP- National Nutrition Policy
NOAPS- National Old Age Pension Scheme
NREGA- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NREP-National Rural Employment Programme
NRHM- National rural Health Mission
NRLM- National Rural Livelihood Mission
NRLM- National Rural Livelihood Mission
NRY- Nehru Rozgar Yojana
NSSO – National Sample Survey Office
NULM - National Urban Livelihood Mission
OBC A- Other Backward Class (Non Creamy Layer less considered as wealthy and less educated than OBC B)

OBC B- Other Backward Class (Creamy Layer, wealthier than OBC A)

PS- Police Station

PCA- Principal Component Analysis

PC-PNDT - Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act

PLHIV- People Living with HIV

PMGY- Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana

PMIUPGP- Prime Minister’s Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme

PMRY- Prime Minister’s Rozgar Yojana

POW- Progressive Organization of Women

PQLI- Physical Quality of Life Index

PWDVA- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act

RCH- Reproductive and Child Health

RFUs - First Referral Units

RGGVY- Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana

RLEGP- Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme

RMK - Rashtiya Mahila Kosh

SC- Scheduled Caste

SEWA- Self Employed Women’s Association

SGSY- Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana

SHGs- Self Help Groups

SJSRY- Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana

SRSWOR- Simple Random Sampling without Replacement
SSA- Sarva Siksha Abhiyan
SSH- Short Stay Home
ST- Scheduled Tribe
STEP- Support to Training and Employment Programmes for Women
TEPC- Training cum Employment cum Production Centres
TLC- Total Literacy Campaign
TRYSEM- Training for Rural Youth for Self Employment
U.S- United States America
UBSP- Urban Basic Services for the Poor
UDC- Upper Division Clerk
UIP-Universal Immunization Programme
UN- United Nations
VAW- Violence Against Women
WBCS -West Bengal Civil Service
WCP- Women Component Plan
WDC- Women Development Corporations
WDCs -Women Development Corporations
WDP- Women’s Dairy Project
WPR- Work Participation Rate
CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION
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INTRODUCTION

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%).
Table 1.1: Literacy Scenario in India through Censuses (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Years</th>
<th>Literacy (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>28.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>34.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>43.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>52.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>64.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>74.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

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 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).

### 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)
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) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Primary                       | 72.1 | 71.8 | 72.1 | 63.8 | 66.8 | 56.7 | 47.22 |
| Secondary                     | 10.6 | 12.2 | 11.2 | 13.5 | 12.7 | 17.5 | 24.65 |
| Tertiary                      | 15.6 | 16.0 | 16.7 | 17.7 | 20.5 | 25.8 | 20.13 |

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’E 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>8,21,771</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 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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 back ground 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 around 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 indispensable 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 creche; 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. Lakkshmi 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-entrepreneueship 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 work.

Table: 1.5 A Display of ward wise Sample Size of CBT (Study Area)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward Numbers</th>
<th>No. of female Workers (Census, 2011)</th>
<th>No. of female Workers Surveyed</th>
<th>Sample Size (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>54</td>
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<td>104</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5567</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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, Cooperating 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).

\[
LQi = \frac{\frac{fli}{fpi}}{\frac{FL}{FP}}
\]

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 \(\leq1.5\) to \(\geq2.51\) and four levels of intensity may be recognized such as: \(\leq1.5\), \(1.51 – 2.00\), \(2.01 – 2.50\) and \(\geq2.51\) 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-varyation 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.
screen. 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 $X_1$, $X_2$, $X_3$, $X_v$) 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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CHAPTER II:

GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA
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2.1 INTRODUCTION: The Koch Bihar district is situated in the north eastern part of India and is included in the Jalpaiguri Division of West Bengal. Until the 28th day of August 1949, the princely state of ‘Koch Bihar’ was ruled by the Maharaja, who had been a feudatory prince under the British Government. By virtue of the ‘Cooch Behar Merger Agreement’ dated 28th August 1949, Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan ceded the territory of ‘Koch Bihar’ to the Dominion Government of India. The transfer of administration to the Government of India appointed a chief commissioner who ruled ‘Koch Bihar’ as the Chief Commissioner’s Province. Since 1st January 1950, ‘Koch Bihar’ was annexed to West Bengal by an order under section 290A of the Govt. of India act of 1935. Thus ‘Koch Bihar’ became a district of West Bengal.

2.2 LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES: 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 (displayed in the Location Map of the study area in Map no. 1.1).

The district of Koch Bihar 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.

The latitudinal & longitudinal extension of Cooch Behar Town (the study area) is 26°17′40″N to 26°20′30″N and 89°26′E to 89°28′30″ E covering an area of 8.29 square kilometers. The location of the study area is conspicuous as it occupies a meander core of the Torsa River, one of the major rivers of the district (evident in Map no. 1.3 and 1.4).
Besides the congregated area, there are Indian enclaves or ‘Chhitmahals’ which are outlying tracts of lands detached from the mainland situated amidst the district of Rangpore of Bangladesh similarly there are presence of Bangladeshi Chhits found in the district of Koch Bihar in different blocks along the international border. During the merger of the Indian state of Koch Bihar with that of West Bengal, there were about 130 Indian enclaves situated in the Bangladeshi territory and about 95 Bangladeshi enclaves within Indian mainland (Koch Bihar Gazetteer, 1976: 5). A strange feature is also noticed regarding the enclaves is the presence of enclaves within enclaves (i.e. parent enclave of Koch Bihar have Bangladeshi enclaves set within). Of recent on 6 June 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi ratified the agreement during his visit to the Bangladesh capital Dhaka. In the presence of Modi and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the foreign secretaries of the two countries signed the instruments of the land exchange. The enclaves were exchanged at midnight on 31 July 2015 and the boundary demarcation was completed by 30 June 2016 by Survey Departments of the respective countries (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India_Bangladesh _enclaves).

2.3 ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS: During the merger of Koch Bihar with West Bengal (i.e. at the time of signing of the Cooch Behar Merger Agreement on 28th August 1949 and the subsequent transfer of power to the Government of India on 12th September 1949), it had eight (08) Police Stations (P.S) (Koch Bihar Gazetteer, 1976: 6). The Police Stations of Koch Bihar are Mekhliganj, Haldibari, Sitalkuchi, Sitai, Mathabhanga, Tufanganj, Dinhata and Ghokshadanga. Currently, there are 11 Police Stations, Kotwali, Baxirhat and Kuchlibari have been added to the above mentioned list. There are five (05) Sub-divisions in Koch Behar district, namely- Cooch Behar Sadar (with Kotwali P.S), Dinhata (with Dinhata and Sitai P.S), Tufanganj (with Baxirhat and Tufanganj P.S), Mathabhanga (with Ghokshadanga, Mathabhanga and Sitalkuchi P.S) and Mekhliganj (Kuchlibari, Mekhliganj and Haldibari P.S).

Cooch Behar was established as a planned town since 1885 during the reign of Maharaja Jagadipendranarayan. His father Maharaja Nripendranarayan, the former king planned for the modern Cooch Behar Town as the ‘City of Beauty’. A Town Committee was constituted in 1885 to supervise the amenities of the urbanites and later on it was transformed into Cooch Behar Municipality (CBM) in 1946 (Draft Development Plan, CBM, 2008-'09 to 2012-'13: 41). The
CBT area has the latitudinal extension of 26°17′40″N to 26°20′30″N and longitudinal extension of 89°26′E to 89°28′30″E and is bordered by Takagach Anchal in the west, Chakchaka village in the east, Guriahati in the south and Khagrabari village in the north. The area of the CBT is 8.29 Square Kilometres. The CBT has 20 wards (Map no. 2.1 to 2.20) at present with a total population of 77,935 persons (Census 2011). In response to the overwhelming population growth, the CBT is likely to engulf the surrounding areas within its boundary. The upcoming extension to the CBT would include the Khagrabari G.P.U situated to the north, up to the cancer treatment centre at Chakchaka village present in the east, up to Chakir Bazar to the south east and up to Harinchawra located far south east forming another five wards in addition to the present twenty wards.

Map no. 2.1: Ward No. 1

Map no. 2.2: Ward No. 2

Map no. 2.3: Ward No. 3

Map no. 2.4: Ward No. 4
Map no. 2.5: Ward No. 5

Map no. 2.6: Ward No. 6

Map no. 2.7: Ward No. 7

Map no. 2.8: Ward No. 8

Map no. 2.9: Ward No. 9

Map no. 2.10: Ward No. 10
Map no. 2.11: Ward No. 11

Map no. 2.12: Ward No. 12

Map no. 2.13: Ward No. 13

Map no. 2.14: Ward No. 14

Map no. 2.15: Ward No. 15

Map no. 2.16: Ward No. 16
2.4 THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF THE DISTRICT: As mentioned earlier Koch Bihar was annexed to West Bengal as a district since 1st January, 1950 which had an areal coverage of 3386 Square Kilometres. Earlier it was known as ‘Kamta Behar’, ‘Behar’, ‘Nij Behar’ and ‘Kuch Behar’ respectively through different phases of time. In English, references for this place have often been found as ‘Kutch Bihar’/ ‘Koutch Behar’/ ‘Cooch Behar’ etc. the formerly mentioned names like ‘Kamta Behar’, ‘Behar’, ‘Nij Behar’ got changed along with the changes in the spatial extent of the territory: Kamrup and Goalpara was annexed to Assam; Darjiling, Jalpaiguri and Rangpore also became separated. From the British Period it came to be known as ‘Kuch Bihar’.

The earliest mention of this area has been found in the Allahabad Inscription of Samudragupta as Kamrup. In Blaev’s map of 1650, Koch Bihar was named as ‘Comotay’. Baharisthan-i-Ghaibi
designated this region as ‘Kamta’ (Koch Bihar Gazetteer, 1976: 1). Koch Bihar was also sometimes been referred to as ‘Koch Rajar Desh’ or the land of the Koch king. The Ain-i-Akbari refers to a Koch country which was parted into two kingdoms namely, the Kāmatā and the Kāmrupa (District Census Handbook, 1961:3). Some historians are of opinion that the north eastern part of the ‘Kamata Rajya’ was occupied by Koch people, who are non-existent now - a days. One cannot deny the probability of a Buddhist connection owing to the presence of the raised mounds at the old ruins at the capital of the Khen kings popularly known as the ‘Rajpat’ (located near present Dinhata).

The name ‘Koch Bihar’ was first used in Shah Jahan Nama during about mid 17th Century. Major Rennell prepared maps in the 18th Century and referred Koch Bihar simply as ‘Bihar’. In the Treaty between the East India Company and the ruler of Koch Bihar in 1773, the kingdom was referred to as ‘Behar Fort’ (Koch Bihar Gazetteer, 1976:1).

According to a popular version since Koch Bihar was located near the banks of River Sankosh, the word ‘Kosh’ might be altered to ‘Koch’ and ‘Bihar’ means abode of sport, place or land; finally ‘Kosh’ meaning ‘Koch’ and ‘Bihar’ meaning ‘place’ or abode of sport.

Another explanation of the word is ‘Kochor’ which might refer to the location of Koch Bihar in the Sub-Himalayan region or in the lap of the Himalayas which got changed to ‘Koch Bihar’ (Das, P. 1990). Maharaja Nripendranarayan in 1886 renamed this region as ‘Koch Bihar’, though the British given Spelling of ‘Cooch Behar’ still remained. Therefore, both ‘Kuch Bihar’ and ‘Koch Bihar’ are accepted in Bengali vocabulary.

The study area i.e. the Cooch Behar Town (CBT) is of recent origin, the year of establishment is just prior to the Indian Independence, in 1946. Prior to this, a Town Committee had been functioning to look after the necessities of the urbanites since the rule of Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan (1885) (Draft Development Plan, CBM, 2008-’09 to 2012-’13: 39-41).

2.5 PHYSIOGRAPHY: Koch Bihar is essentially a flat country. The general slope of the land is oriented from north-west to south-east along which the main rivers have traversed. Basically, the land is undulating with occasional ups and downs. The lower reaches get flooded during the rains. There are no mountain ranges, peaks or hills within the district. The height above the mean
sea level is 57 metres. It covers the Terai (Mekhliganj and Haldibari area) and Duars plains (Koch Bihar Duars). Physiographically, this portion of West Bengal belongs to the North Bengal Plains. The North Bengal Plain region is constituted by the districts of Darjeeling (Southern portion), Koch Bihar, Uttarakhand and Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda. Following the terrain characteristics, the North Bengal Plain region may be parted into (1) Terai-Duars region and (2) Ganga-Brahmaputra Doab region respectively (Dey Sarkar, S. 2012: 146-147).

2.5.1 TERAI-DUARS REGION: The undulating land immediately present to the south of the Himalayas of West Bengal continuing up to the western bank of the River Tista is designated as the ‘Terai’ region. While, the eastern part of the Tista valley is known as the ‘Duars’. Koch Bihar in particular is drained by the rivers Tista, Jaldhaka, Torsa, Raidak and Sankosh. The average elevation of this area varies from 75 metres to 150 metres. The slope orientation is from north to south. This region is entirely veneered with river borne materials.

2.5.2 GANGA-BRAHMAPUTRA DOAB REGION: The interfluvial area between the Ganga and the Brahmaputra rivers is designated as the Ganga-Brahmaputra ‘Doab’ region. The Doab region extends from the southern limit of the Terai region to the northern bank of the River Ganga. The Doab region is further subdivided into (1) ‘Barendra Bhumi’ or the ‘Barind Land’, (2) ‘Tal’ and (3) ‘Diara’.

2.5.2.1 ‘BAREN德拉 BHUMI’ OR THE ‘BARIND LAND’: The left bank portion of the River Mahananda having 30 metres of elevation on an average, is a part of the Old Ganga Plains comprising the districts of Dakshin Dinajpur and eastern Malda is designated as the ‘Barendra Bhumi’ or the ‘Barind Land’. The old alluvium of this region is reddish in colour, hard and infertile.

2.5.2.2 ‘TAL’: The southern reaches of Jalpaiguri district, almost the whole of the Koch Bihar district and a few portions of the Malda district comprise the Tal region. The Tals are low flood plain regions which get frequently inundated during rainy season. Many swamps (bils) and marshy lands remain scattered over the Tal areas (Rashik Bil in Koch Bihar etc.).

2.5.2.3 ‘DIARA’: The south western part of Malda district adjacent to the River Ganga forms the ‘Diara’. The ‘Diara’ on the contrary is made up of new alluvium and is preferred for agricultural activities.
2.6 GEOLOGY: Geologically, India can be divided into three (3) regions: (i) The Peninsular Region, (ii) The Extra- Peninsular Region and (iii) The Indo- Gangetic Plains (Khullar, D.R. 2005: 29).

2.6.1 The Peninsular Region includes the Meghalaya Plateau of the north east and the Kutchh – Kathiawar region of the west. It is one of the oldest land masses of the earth.

2.6.2 The Extra- Peninsular Region includes the Himalayas and its eastwards extensions and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This portion represents the most youthful relief as evident from the presence of the Himalayas.

2.6.3 The Indo- Gangetic Plains lies between the Peninsular and the Extra- Peninsular regions. The alluvium filled Indo- Gangetic Plains represent flat, featureless and monotonous topography. The study area belongs to the north eastern section of the country (i.e. the north eastern pocket of the state of West Bengal) occupying a portion of the ‘Great Plains’ of the northern India which have been covered by a thick mantle of Indo-Gangetic Alluvium. The most important, extensive and recently deposited materials are found in the Indo-Gangetic Alluviums which have filled the great depressions between the foot of the Himalayas and the northern edge of Peninsula. The older alluvium is called the ‘Bhangar’ (formed in the Middle or Upper Pleistocene time). The newer alluvium occupies the lower areas of the river valleys which are prone to annual floods is called the ‘Khadar’ (originated in the Upper Pleistocene Era.) (Khullar, D.R. 2005: 38). Besides this, the district is noted for occasional seismic disturbances.

2.7 GEOLOGICAL HISTORY IN AND AROUND THE STUDY AREA:

2.7.1 FORMATION OF THE HIMALAYAS AND THE RAJMAHAL HILLS: It was during the Cretaceous Period the present Indian sub-continent along with the other continents came into existence with the rifting and drifting action of the Gondowana Land. The plate techtonic activities in the shield area (Gondowana Land-Angara Land- Tethys sea region) compelled the Indian Plate to move first to the North West and then to the North covering a distance of 7000Kms. It confronted the North Asian Plate. The Indian foreland became subducted below the North Asian or the Tibetan Plate and the enormous sediments collected in
the Tethys Geosyncline crumpled upwards to form the mighty Himalayas. The Plate movement which commenced in this region since the Tertiary times is still in action.

**Geological Characteristics of the North Eastern India After Alam et. al (2003)**

![Map no. 2.21](Image)


**Map no. 2.21**

The Rajmahals were created by the fissure eruption along the northern fringe of the Indian Plate (foreland). Later, a stupendous tectonic movement resulted in the separation of the eastern portion of the Rajmahals (by Dauki Fault, see Map no. 2.21) and settled down about 250 Kms away to the east which is known as the Meghalaya Plateau. As a result to this upheaval, the River Brahmaputra changed its course, instead of bending southwards near Sylhet (present Bangladesh), it began to flow westward for about 300 Kms and took a sharp southward bend near Dhubri (present Assam). The rise of the Himalayas in the Miocene Era has uplifted the Meghalaya Plateau further.

**2.7.2 FORMATION OF THE BENGAL BASIN:** The course of the River Ganga has divided West Bengal into two divisions, North Bengal with six (6) districts and South Bengal with the rest thirteen (13) districts. The Ganga and the Brahmaputra with their innumerable tributaries have entered Bengal (erstwhile, undivided) traversing almost a stretch of 250 Kms of plain land, keeping the Rajmahal Hills to the west and the Meghalaya Plateau in the east. The five major rivers of North Bengal originate from the Himalayas and flows through the region between the
Rajmahal Hills and the Meghalaya Plateau. Of these, the Tista, the Jaldhaka, the Torsa and the Raidak with their numerous tributaries carry huge quantities of load (water and silt) to the Brahmaputra and later on to the Jamuna of Bangladesh. The Mahananda is the only exception which is a tributary to the Ganga System. Both the Tista and the Mahananda have dissected the dome Structured ‘Barind Land’ while flowing down (Rudra, K. 2008: 1).

**Physiography of Ganga- Brahmaputra-Meghna Delta After Goodbred et. al (2003)**


**Map no. 2.22**

The Ganga- Brahmaputra- Meghna deltaic region is being referred to as the ‘Bengal Basin’ by the Geologists. These three (3) mighty rivers have contributed in the accumulation of silt in the vast stretch (about 2 lakh square Kms of area) of land between Chotanagpur and the hilly tracts of East Chittagong and Tripura. The Bengal Basin has an eastward tilt (in other words, along 87° E longitude the depth of the silt is only 120 - 160 metres, whereas it increases to about 22 Kms along the borders of the deltaic region of Bangladesh to the east) and the underlying rock bed is subducted below the Myanmar (Burma) Plate. It was during the Miocene era, the Myanmar Plate moved westward and confronted the northern and eastward moving Indian Plate obliquely. The Indian Plate got slowly subducted below it and the ‘Bengal Basin’ originated. The Bengal Basin
as a consequence provided the foundation for the development of the world’s largest deltaic region.

2.7.3 THE DELTA BUILDING ACTIVITY: Structurally, the Ganga- Brahmaputra deltaic region can be divided into two parts. The delineation is possible along an imaginary line called the ‘Eocene Hinge Zone’ present obliquely from Kolkata extending in north east direction up till Maymansingh (Bangladesh). The structural slope also increases in the same direction and is thickly covered with silt forming the delta. The slope at the north western portion is only 2º - 3º and it increases to 6º - 12º on to the south eastern portion. Further south it again reduces to 1º -2º. Actually, this Hinge Zone is the boundary area between continental and oceanic plates, whereby the north western part is relatively stable and the south eastern part having a huge amount of pressure exerted by the silt load is slowly subsiding (underneath the Myanmar Plate) (Map no. 2.22). Consequently, the depth of the silt is more towards the east. Since Cretaceous Era, this region was subjected to eustatic fluctuation in the form of inundation by sea water and retrogression of sea for several times following the rhythm of global warming and cooling. During the Pleistocene Era, global cooling engulfed the entire planet. The sea level dropped about 90 – 100 metres. Consequently, the mighty rivers like the Ganga, the Brahmaputra and the Tista carried lesser quantity of water with prolonged tracts. The present coastline was still to develop.

Another important phenomenon occurred during this period, the upper layers of silt in the Gangetic Delta got oxidized and vast stretches of land developed lateritic soils. Presently it can be found superficially in the Rarh region of West Bengal, Barind Land (left bank of Mahananda), and Madhupur Garh (Bangladesh). Later, about 15,000 years ago, global warming enhanced the flow of water through the big rivers fed by both melting of glaciers and heavy rainfall initiated by the advent of South West Monsoons. This increased the volume of load in rivers and deposition started (almost at the rate of 250 crore tons of silt/ annum). The next 1,500 years saw heavy riverine deposition and resulted in the burial of the lateritic soils. During the latter half of Pleistocene period, enormous erosional activities of the Jamuna (Brahmaputra), Tista, Atrayee, Punarbhaha, and Mahananda separated Barind Land from Madhupur Garh(Bangladesh). On the other hand the Maurakshi, the Ajay, the Damodar and the Rupnarayan also became active in the accumulation of the river borne materials to form the Rarh region (on the flanks of the Chotanagpur plateau). But this process of delta building on the west was slow in comparison
with the increasing sea level (at the rate of 10 millimetres/ year). After the sea level became static (around 7,000 years ago) the delta building activity in the southern most portions started.

2.8 CLIMATE: Koch Bihar belongs to the Tropical Monsoon climatic regime. The climate of this place is characterized by humid atmosphere with abundant rains. The average annual rainfall is 3042 millimeters. The mean maximum and minimum temperatures are about 37°C and 5°C respectively. The cold season begins from mid-November to the end of February. January is the coldest month of the year. During the cold spells in association of the passage of western disturbances, the night temperatures may drop to 4°C. The period from March to May is the summer season. The summer season temperatures are rarely excessive. The dampness of the air makes the weather rather unpleasant. This is followed by the rainy season which commences from June and stays till early October. Maximum concentration of rains occurs in June and July. The post monsoonal period can be designated to October and mid-November months.

2.8.1 SPECIAL WEATHER PHENOMENON: During monsoons, the region experiences cyclonic storms and depressions having their sources to the Bay of Bengal. Both the arrival and the departure of the rainy season are marked with thunderstorms and widespread rains. Thunderstorms may culminate into violent turbulence. Fogs occur in winter months. Dews are common during summer nights.

2.9 SOILS: The soil of Koch Bihar is mainly composed of alluvium of very recent origin. The alluvial soils are acidic in nature and the soil depth varies from 15 – 50 centimetres on an average. The alluvial soils are also sandy and unconsolidated with low bonding. As a consequence, water retaining capacity is poor. In some places, the top soil has a loamy covering with very low depth (about 3 feet), but these regions are restricted to the riverine areas namely, east of the Kaljani River on the borders of Goalpara; area between the Jaladhaka and the Tista rivers etc. The level of Nitrogen in the soils is low; the soils are even deficient in Boron, Zinc, Calcium, Magnesium and Sulphur. The Potassium and Phosphorous content is however moderate. The soil condition of Koch Bihar therefore is not convenient for extensive agricultural practices.
2.10 FLORA AND FAUNA: Climatically the region is a part of Tropical Monsoon climate and situated in the north eastern section of the country. Rainfall being abundant (next to Cherapunji) supports moist deciduous vegetation. The commonly found species are palms, bamboos, plantain, fruit trees (mango, jackfruit, olive, black berry, litchis, custard apple, guava, coconut, beetle nut etc.), spices (like ginger, garlic, turmeric) and herbs like fern, orchid, creeper; timber wood trees, flowering plants, aquatic plants, grasses etc.

The study area i.e. the CBT area and its surroundings face deforestation due to increased demand for fuel wood and timber as well as air pollution from vehicular traffic.

The migratory birds are found in the vicinity of ‘Sagardighi’ (CBT), ‘Rasikbil’ and other ‘Tals’ of Koch Bihar especially during winters.

2.11 DRAINAGE: Rivers of Koch Bihar have important bearing on the physico-cultural aspect of the district. The rivers from the west are the Tista, the Jaldhaka, the Torsa, the Kaljani, the Raidak and the Gadadhar (or the Sankosh) having conspicuous characteristics (refer to Map No. 2.21). All the rivers owe their origin to the Himalayas and flow in a south-westerly direction to discharge their waters into the Brahmaputra (in Bangladesh). Since Koch Bihar is situated in the foothill region, the rivers essentially show seasonal character. Their courses are ever changing. During the rains they get flooded and collect colossal amount of load (silt, pebbles, gravels etc.) and carries them down stream. While in winter and summer they become lean and even dry up. Thus, seasonality of rivers has made them non-navigable. The piedmont area is very dynamic with regard to the river courses, as the rivers debouch from the hilly sectors; they lose the steep gradient which retards their speed and velocity affecting their discharge. In order to adjust with the change, numerous channels are created; several are discarded along with repeated shift of courses to facilitate the transportation activity. Thus, a large number of tributaries are found along with the main courses. The dual problem of seasonality and frequent change of course has failed to contribute to the development of intra-regional communication system and growth of dense settlement unlike that of South Bengal. Commercial development also suffered augmentation owing to the least developed communication system.
Map No. 2.23

Map No. 2.23 shows the drainage map of the study area in which the juxtaposition of the Torsa River and Mara Torsa River is evident. The location of the CBT in the meander core is conspicuous in character.

2.11.1 A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE RIVERS:

2.11.1.1 THE TISTA SYSTEM: The Tista is by far the largest river of the district. Though it forms a large system elsewhere, within the district a very small portion is discernible (about 15 miles only) separating Mekhliganj and Haldibari blocks to the extreme west. Three channels namely, the Buri Tista (oldest channel) used to flow along the then important ports like Bibiganj, Sahebganj, dewanganj; the Mara Tista (discarded or left out channel) flows along the present-day Mekhliganj which was the main tract during the first half of the 19th Century; the Tista (the present tract) is the main channel at present. The port of Mekhliganj was one of the busiest ports in the past and had trade relations extended till Burma (Myanmar). Tobacco was the main commodity which used to reach first to Kaliganj of Rangpore district (presently in Bangladesh) and then to Chittagong and finally to Burma through the river routes. Thus, the Mekhliganj port
along with the Tista River was the life blood of trade in Koch Bihar. A small stream named Shaniajan unites with Khutamara near Bhotbari taluk which flows parallel to the Tista past kuchlibari taluk and joins it near the borders of Kakina and Patgram (Bangladesh) are the only tributaries to the Tista in Koch Bihar.

2.11.1.2 THE JALDHAKA SYSTEM: the Jaldhaka with its right bank tributaries (from north to south), the Sutunga, the Dharla, the Khutamara or Gidari and the left bank tributaries (from north to south) like the Kumlai, the Gilandi, the Duduya, the Mujnai and the Dolong form the Jaldhaka System within the Koch Bihar district. The Jaldhaka River is called in a variety of names as it flows through the different areas of the district. It is known as the Singimari when it passes through the relics of ancient Kamtapur. The local name of Mansai is given to this river, when it passes through Mathabhanga sub-division. Before its confluence with Brahmaputra, it meets with the Torsa and is called the Dharla or the Dhalla. But this is distinct from the other Dharla which joins the Jaldhaka- Mansai- Singimari at Sibpur (two miles downstream of Mathabhanga).

2.11.1.3 THE TORSA SYSTEM: Etymologically, ‘Toya - Rosa’ means angry waters. As evident from the name, the Torsa River is very capricious and very energetic in character. Fed by the rivers Amo Chu and other streams like Chimkifu, Tanka, Namuchkhola, Jak Ripley Khola, Tromo, Priyuna Khola and Pandi; the Torsa flows through Bhutan hills, with enormous volume and load. The Torsa can also be recognized by a number of names with its changing character. For instance, Buri Torsa – the left out channel/ old channel; Shil Torsa – the actual or present tract through which the river is flowing currently; Mara Torsa – the branch of river with feeble strength and Choto Mara Torsa – even smaller branch with very low water content. The Torsa bifurcates into two branches near Hasimara of Alipurduar district whereby the south eastern branch is known as the Shil Torsa. The Shil Torsa reunites with the main stream later on. Choto Torsa joins the main course at Madaribhat Rail Bridge. The Buri Torsa, a ditributary of Choto Torsa joins Jaldhaka at Falakata(Alipurduar district)(Rudra. K, 2008: 77). The river again gets bifurcated past Koch Bihar, turning south east it receives Ghargharia and Kaljani in Tufanganj Sub-division; to the east it retains its name while reaching further south it is called the Dharla. The Dharla joins Singimari (Jaldhaka) far south near Dinhata. The Torsa joins the Brahmaputra in Bangladesh at Junkhawa village.
The Torsa had been a significant river for Koch Bihar through history. Firstly, because of its unpredictable character since it had mostly changed its course and oscillated through this region. Secondly, it had contributed to the development of the port of Tufanganj at its confluence with Kaljani (in Tufanganj Sub-division). History had witnessed trading relations through the water routes with Bangladesh. But floods were unavoidable especially speaking with reference to the Kaljani; the port activities at Tufanganj were worst affected.

2.11.1.4 THE KALJANI RIVER: the Kaljani is formed in the western Duars and it is a tributary to the Sankosh River. It enters Koch Bihar at Kholta mouza. It provides a natural boundary between Koch Bihar Sadar and Tufanganj Sub-division. The Jayanti River flows down the Bhutan hills to the east of Buxa Duars and takes up the name of Gadadhar and joins the Kaljani. This confluence is visited by numerous people who take the holy dip in the river water during the auspicious date of ‘Astami’ (the 8th day) in the Bengali month of Chaitra every year. With the progression of the river further down, the Kaljani receives streams like Ghatajani (or Katajani). At Panishala village, the Ghargharia and the Torsa meets the Kaljani. The river enters the Rangpore village of Bangladesh downstream. The Kaljani re-enters Koch Bihar to get united with the Sankosh, which releases its water to the Brahmaputra far south.

The Kaljani is a quick flowing river having good depths. Before the partition of Bengal, salt, rice, spices were imported through this river route. The business community of Balarampur, Ghoramara and Natabari exported jute, tobacco, paddy, mustard seeds, and oil through this route.

2.11.1.5 THE RAIDAK RIVER: Due south of Koch Bihar, the Ghargharia, the Kaljani, the Gadadhar and the Raidak I confluences with the Torsa. From this point the river takes its name as the Raidak. Raidak I debouches from the Bhutan hills from the Akung Chu peak (about 6400 metres high). The Raidak is found splitted into three branches at Indo- Bhutan border. The two western most streams are the Dhauila and the Raidak I and the eastern most stream is known as the Raidak II which meets the Sankosh River far east (Rudra, K. 2008: 77). Popularly, the Raidak and its tributaries are also referred to as the Dipa Raidak, the Mara Raidak and the Raidak. The Raidak is mostly navigable and it had supported the growth of business-trade through the port of Phulbari.

2.11.1.6 THE GADADHAR RIVER: This river has its mention in the ‘Kalikapuranas’. The mythological name is ‘Jatodaya’ or ‘Jatoda’. On the eighth day in the month of Chaitra of the
Bengali calendar, a holy dip in the waters of the Gadadhar or the Gangadhar brings goodness and sanctity. The Gadadhar also had changed its course many a times through history. It was used to delimit the western kingdom of Kamtapur from the eastern kingdom of Kamrupa in the Fifteenth Century (Koch Bihar Gazetteer, 1976: 14).

The Gadadhar River owes its origin to the Bhutan hills near Buxa Duars. It enters the Koch Bihar district from the north at Laukuthi village. It flows to the south east and crosses Dhubri Road and progresses towards Rangpore district of Bangladesh and meets with the Sankosh River. Basically, the Gadadhar River is a tributary to the Kaljani. After the union of the Gadadhar and the Kaljani the river ends up releasing its waters to the Sankosh.

2.12 A BRIEF HISTORY OF ‘KOCH BIHAR’:

2.12.1 THE PRE-HISTORY AND THE PROTO-HISTORY: The vast region of north eastern portion of our country subtending from the Himalayan foot hills, drained by the Tista (on the western most part) and the Brahmaputtra (on the far east) has been recognized as the abode of the ancient Indian civilization. Through history, this portion has been named and renamed many a times as ‘Pragjyotisha’, ‘Lauhitya’, ‘Kamrupa’ and ‘Kamata’ whose boundaries have also fluctuated. Mention of ‘Pragjyotisha’ may be found in the two great Indian Epics, the ‘Ramayana’ and the ‘Mahabharata’; and other literary works like ‘Vishnupurana’, ‘Harivamsa’, ‘Yoginitantra’ and even in the writings of the Chinese traveler Yuan Chwang.

According to the mythological understandings, Naraka was born to Mother Earth by the grace of Lord Vishnu in his ‘Boar’ incarnation. Naraka defeated the Kiratas (hunters) and was ordained the king of Pragjyotisha by the divine will. Later, Naraka fell into evil ways and was killed by Lord Vishnu himself in his ‘Krishna’ incarnation. Naraka was succeeded by Bhagadatta.

2.12.2 THE ‘GUPTAS’: As per the inscriptions on the Allahabad Pillar, Kamrupa had been mentioned to remain under the rule of Samudragupta. But the period of his rule was not mentioned. The last Gupta king was ‘Mahesanagupta’.

With the rise of Yashodharavarman, the reign of the Guptas came to an end. Meanwhile, Shasanka, the king of Gour/Gauda attempted the subjugation of Kamrupa but he did not succeeded. On the contrary, Bhaskaravarman subjugated Gauda for a short period of time in the
mid Seventh Century. After the death of Bhaskaravarman, the Mlechchha lineage of kings ruled Kamrupa till the end of Tenth Century. The people elected Bramhapala, who was the descendant of Bhagadatta. The name of Kamrupanagara came to the forefront as the capital. This Kamrupanagara was most probably the same as the Kamata or the Kamatapur, whose ruins lie at Gossanmari (near present Dinhata) in Koch Bihar.

2.12.3 THE KHEN KINGS: Although local tradition says about the presence of the Chandra lineage of kings after Dharmapala, but it may be dismissed as a myth. After the Pala kings, there prevailed a period of anarchy. Niladhwaja acquired power, declared himself as the king and made Kamtapur as his capital. He extended the fortifications and erected the Kamteshwari temple and further assumed the title of Kamteshwar. After his rule, his son Chakradhwaja ascended the throne. He was succeeded by Nilambara.

2.12.4 THE MUSLIM RULE: Kamtapur during Nilambar’s rule experienced Mughal siege and was annexed to the kingdom of Allauddin Hussain Shah (A.D.1498). Kamata did not remain in the hands of the Muslims for long. They were defeated by the Ahom kings during the rains.

2.12.5 THE BARA BHUINYAS: After this the Kamata kingdom was engulfed by anarchy and was further split up into small chiefs who were collectively known as the Bara Bhuinyas.

2.12.6 THE KOCH KINGS: After the expulsion of the Muslims, the Koch chiefs became powerful. One of them was Hajo, whose daughters namely Hira and Jira were married to Hariya Mandal (who was the resident of Chikangram in Goalpara district). Jira gave birth to Chandan and Madan. Hira gave birth to Sishu and Bishu. Though there is enough debate over the lineage of the Koch kings, yet one account states that Chandan was proclaimed king after the defeat and death of Hariya Mandal. After Chandan’s death, Bishu became the king and was known as Biswasingha. The period of Biswasingha’s proclamation as the king had also remained highly debated. Some believes that ‘Raja Saka’ was promulgated during his ascent as the king, but the year noted for the beginning of the Raja Saka was 1510 A.D. which was 14 years earlier than Biswasingha’s rule. An account also says that Biswasingha ascended the throne in 1496 A.D. H. N. Chowdhuri gives the date of Biswasingha’s reign as 1510 A.D. which appears more probable. E.A. Gait in his history of Assam assigns the reign of Biswasingha from 1515 A.D. to 1540 A.D. (Koch Bihar Gazetteer. 1976: 15). According to H. N. Chowdhuri in “The Koch Bihar State and
its Land Revenue System”, states that Biswasingha ascended the throne in his 22nd year in the 14th Raja Saka corresponding to 1522 A.D (Pal, N. N. 2010 :234).

2.12.6.1 BISWASINGHA: Biswasingha assumed the title ‘Kamteshwar’. The name Sishyasingha was given to his brother Sishu, who assumed the title of ‘Raikat’(meaning the head of the family and the hereditary of the chief minister). Sishyasingha was said to be the ancestor of the Raikat family of Baikunthapur. Biswasingha was a systematic administrator. He subjugated Bhutan and compelled the Devraja to pay him tribute. He conquered the Soumara country, Bijni, Vijayapur and further attacked Ahom territory. He fell short of provisions and retreated. The next step of Biswasingha was to subjugate Gauda. The invasion of Gauda was the last act of warfare undertaken by him which he did not succeed. By this time Sishyasingha settled at Baikunthapur(Jalpaiguri).

After the death of Hira (Biswasingha’s mother), Biswasingha diverted his attention to domestic affairs of the state. He shifted his capital to Koch Bihar (Hingulabasha) where he built affine city. Biswasingha died in 1553.

2.12.6.2 NARANARAYAN: Maharaja Biswasingha had three sons: Narasingha, Naranarayan or Mallanarayan (since he was a wrestler) and Chilarai (or Sukladhwaja); of whom Narasingha abdicated the throne to Naranarayan in order to keep his promise to Naranarayan’s wife during their marriage. Thus, Naranarayan became the king in 45th Raja Saka corresponding to 1555A.D. Coins were struck in gold and silver and were named after him in his honour which became known as the ‘Narayani Mudra’. Naranarayan along with his brother Sukladhwaja set for the expansion of their kingdom. Their valour swept away powers from Tripura, Kachhar, Manipur, Jayantia, Dimru in the north east. They extended their empire even to the Chittagong sea board. After the alliance with Akbar, Chilarai and Raja Man Singh attacked Gauda and invaded it. According to Gait’s “Koch Kings of Kamrupa” the kingdom of Gauda was divided between the Koch king and the Emperor of Delhi. Naranarayan and Sukladhwaja erected the temple of ‘Kamakshya’ having inscriptions testifying this fact. During his rule, ‘Madhupur Dham’ – a sacred place for the Vaishnavas was built.

Naranarayan did not have son till his old age. Raghudeva, the son of Chilarai believed that he would succeed after king Naranarayan, but the birth of Lakshminarayan shattered his dreams. Meanwhile the eastern most portions (i.e. east of River Sankosh) of the empire were given to
Chilarai and he ruled the eastern Kamrupa (Pal, N. N. 2010: 237). Raghudeva rebelled against Naranarayan and the latter made peace with him.

2.12.6.3 LAKSHMINARAYAN: After the death of Naranarayan, his son Lakshminarayan ascended the throne. He was a weak king. Raghudeva proclaimed himself as the independent ruler of Kamrupa. This led to warfare. Raghudeva allied with Isa Khan while Lakshminarayan sought alliance of Man Singh, the then Mughal Subhadar of Bengal. The Mughals were ushered into Koch Bihar with this very act. Parikshitnarayan, the son of Raghudeva joined Lakshminarayan and assassinated his father. Later on, he rebelled against Lakshminarayan and got defeated and died in 1616.

After the death of Islam Khan (who helped Lakshminarayan to defeat Parikshitnarayan), Kasem Khan became the new Subhadar. He conspired against Lakshminarayan, who was called to Dacca (i.e. Dhaka of present Bangladesh), made captive and sent to Agra. He was released by Emperor Jahangir after the acceptance of the Mughal suzerainty. He died in 1627 (Koch Bihar Gazetteer. 1976: 32).

Maharaja Lakshminarayan had 18 sons he built ‘Athara-Kotha’ or eighteen houses for his sons. Bajranarayan, Birnarayan and Mahinarayan became powerful among the sons. Mahinarayan was made the first Nazir (an administrative post of the commander of the army) and the ancestor of Nazirdeo family of Baikunthapur.

2.12.6.4 BIRNARAYAN: Birnarayan became the king after Lakshminarayan as he was born of the queen consort. His rule was short and was of less significance. He was mostly engaged in pleasures. He transferred his capital to Athara Kotha. He died in 1632 (ibid, 32).

2.12.6.5 PRANANARAYAN: Prananarayan ascended the throne after his father Birnarayan’s death. At that time, the Mughal Empire was almost at its termination. He grabbed this opportunity and took possession of Kamrupa and even occupied Dacca. After Aurangzeb became the king, Mir Jumla (the then Governor of Bengal) was ordered to attack Koch Bihar. Prananarayan fled away to the Bhutan hills and took refuge there. Vishnunarayan, the eldest son embraced Islam and treacherously co-operated to Mir Jumla against his father. Mir Jumla took over Koch Bihar on December 19, 1661 and the city’s named was changed to Alangirnagar (ibid, 32). He settled the revenue of the state at 10 lakh Narayani Mudra and made Isfandiar Beg the in-charge of Koch Bihar. Mir Jumla went Far East to conquer Assam. The oppressive attitude
and tyrannical rule of the Muslims made the people rebellious. Prannarayan returned with much valour and drove the Mughals back. Mir Jumla was coming back to re-conquer Koch Bihar but fell ill and died. Shaista Khan in 1664 decided to conquer Koch Bihar but Prannarayan paid a handsome amount of 5.5 lakh Narayani rupees and was taken as a tribute by the Mughals.

Prannarayan was a learned man and excelled in Sanskrit Literature; he was a poet and also patronized singing and dancing. He erected temples at ‘Jalpesh’ (in present Jalpaiguri), Baneshwar (at Koch Bihar) and Sandeshwar. He also rebuilt the temple at Gossanimari (1665). He gave his concern for the building of roads and highroads. He had 3 sons, Vishnunarayan, Modnarayan and Vasudevanarayan. Of them, Modnarayan succeeded his father in 1666.

2.12.6.6 MODNARAYAN: Modnarayan’s period began under the influence of the Bhutan kings. After Prannarayan’s death, Mahinarayan, the Nazir wanted to occupy the throne. Though Modnarayan was put on the throne, all the powers were retained by Mahinarayan. Modnarayan came to know about the political betrayal and Mahinarayan’s secret plans. A death sentence was passed on Mahinarayan. His sons did sought help from the Bhutan king and fought a war against Modnarayan. Mahinarayan was killed in the war and the war ended as Yajnanarayan was made the next Nazir by Modnarayan. Modnarayan died in 1680 without a male heir.

2.12.6.7 VASUDEVANARAYAN: After the death of Modnarayan, Yajnanarayan became anxious to ascend the throne. With the Bhutiya assistance, the kingdom was looted, some people were made captives and some other died. The Raikats of Baikunthapur advanced with their army and the Bhutiyas were laid down. Vasudevanarayan was placed on the throne by the Raikats. As the Raikats went back, Yajnanarayan stroke back with the Bhutiyas and Vasudevanarayan was killed in a minor battle. Yajnanarayan declared himself king. The Raikats returned with a force and a fierce battle followed whereby Yajnanarayan got defeated and fled to the Bhutan hills. Mahindranarayan, the 5 year-old grandson of Vasudevanarayan and the great grandson of Prannarayan was declared as the king by the Raikats.

2.12.6.8 MAHINDRANARAYAN: He was a minor when he was made the king. He was backed by the two Raikats (Jagadeva and Bhudeva), but his reign was not at all in peace and he faced constant disturbances from the two sons of Nazir Mahinarayan. After two years of the crowning, the two Raikats died. Mahindranarayan was left helpless. In this situation, the provinces located at distant site gave up their allegiance one after another. District after district
accepted Mughal suzerainty. In this sheer crisis, the minister of the king made peace with Jayanarayan, who was re-appointed as the Nazir. But Jayanarayan was unsuccessful in stopping the Mughals. Later even Baikunthapur was subjugated by the Mughals. Jayanarayan died and his son Santanarayan was made the Nazir. Mahindranarayan died in 1693. With his death, the main lineage of the kings came to an end.

2.12.6.9 RUPNARAYAN: After Mahindranarayan, Santanarayan aspired to become the king but since he was made the Nazir, he was declared non-eligible for the throne. His brother’s son Rupnarayan was made the king and Satyanarayan another brother became the Dewan. The Mughals continued with their attack on Koch Bihar and in 1711a treaty was concluded and Mughal suzerainty was accepted for the Chaklas of Boda, Patgram and Purvabhag. From Rupnarayan’s reign, the kingdom of Koch Bihar remained confined to the present boundary of the district. Rupnarayan shifted his capital from Athara Kotha to Guriahati comprising of portions of the present Town area of Koch Bihar.

2.12.6.10 UPENDRANARAYAN: Rupnarayan died in 1714 after a reign of 21 years. Upendranarayan’s (Rupnarayan’s son) rule was constantly interfered by the Bhutiyas. He could not resist their entrance to the plains. Upendranarayan was childless till then so he adopted Dinanarayan, the son of Satyanarayan (the Dewan Dinanarayan wanted a written record in his own favour as the heir of the throne. But the king did not agree as he hoped for a son. Dinanarayan conspired with the Mughals, deserted the king and alleged a war against the king. Upendranarayan was defeated and Dinanarayan was made the king in 1736. Upendranarayan sought help and came back with newly collected army and attacked the Mughal Fouzdar from all sides. The Mughal Fouzdar was defeated and defeated and fled to Rangpore. Dinanarayan died in exile. He built a palace at Dhalia bari. At his old age, Upendranarayan had a son Devendranarayan. Upendranarayan died in 1763.

2.12.6.11 DEVENDRANARAYAN: In 1763, Devendranarayan was made the king. He was a boy at the time he ascended the throne. Upendranarayan assigned Radhiya Brahman Satananda Goswami as the Rajguru. After his death, his son Ramananda Goswami became the Rajguru. Ramananda started conspiring against the minor king but was driven out of the palace by the queen. Ramananda continued with his activities and conspired with the Nazir Deo. He appointed Rati Sharma to assassinate the boy king. Rati Sharma beheaded Devendranarayan.
Chhatra Nazir Rudranarayan wanted to make his son Khagendranarayan the king, but he was laid down by a young officer Gourinath Karji who told that if Khagendranarayan was made the king, people would say that Rudranarayan had complicity in killing Devendranarayan. So, Dhairyendranarayan, the third son of Dewan Kharganarayan was made the king.

2.12.6.12 DHAIRYENDRANARAYAN: In 1765, Dhairyendranarayan was declared as the king with popular support. But the actual autonomy of the king was lost. During his rule too much of Bhutan’s interference especially in official matters had been noticed. The Nazir became very powerful and even collected revenues from the zillas in the name of defense without the king’s consent. The rise of Dewan Ramnarayan (the elder brother of Dhairyendranarayan) was also significant in the familial matters of the Royal household. Ramnarayan took lion share of the booty which fell in his hands during the war of Vijaypur (between the Bhutan and Morang Territory) without the king’s knowledge. He even got involved in the marriage of the king’s sister without the consent of the king. Dhairyendranarayan became apprehensive of his growing powers and killed him in a scheme. Since Ramnarayan was friendly towards the Bhutan king, the latter planfully made Dhairyendranarayan captive at Chekakhata and later on sent him to Punakha via Buxa.

2.12.6.13 RAJENDRANARAYAN: Rajendranarayan was the elder brother of Dhairyendranarayan (who was greatly associated with the murder of Ramnarayan) went to Balarampur and as advised by the Nazir Khagendranarayan, told everything about the murder to the king of Bhutan. Rajendranarayan was made the king by the Bhutiyas. None of the former ministers joined the administration owing to the fact that Dhairyendranarayan was still alive. Bijendranarayan who was the son of Ramnarayan was made the Dewan. After a nominal reign of two years and a few months Rajendranarayan died. Pensu Toma (the representative of the Bhutan king) tried to put Bijendranarayan on the throne, but the Chhatra Nazir Khagendranarayan installed Dharendranarayan (son of Dhairyendranarayan) as the king. Pensu toma was driven out of Koch Bihar.

2.12.6.14 DHarendranarayan: He was also a minor when he ascended the throne and was sometimes referred to as the ‘Naib Raja’ or the temporary king. Since he was a minor, Maharani Kamteshwari took over the administration. She became close to Rajguru Sarbananda
Goswami whose authority in administration became evident (Silsharma, A. 2011, 16). This annoyed Nazir Khagendranarayan who himself sought a place in the administration. Meanwhile, Pensu Toma reported about the situation to the Bhutan King and the latter sent a large army. Kamteshwari Devi and the King were removed and they fled to Rangpore. Khagendranarayan sought help from the East India Company. The Company sent soldiers under Lieutenant Dickson to Koch Bihar and they occupied Gitaldaha, Dinhata, Baladanga and Mowamari. The English army also occupied the Fort of Koch Bihar (December, 1772). On January 12, 1773 Nazir Khagendranarayan and king Dharendranarayan met with Charles Purling (the then Collector of Rangpore). The occupancy of Koch Bihar by the Britishers drove Raikat Darpadeva (who took refuge under Bhutan King). A fierce battle took place at Rahimganj between Captain Jones and Darpadeva. The fort of Rahimganj was conquered by Jones and Darpadeva fled to the forests. There he reconstructed the army and tried to attack. His group (referred to as the ‘Sanyasi’) fell before the Company’s army. A treaty was finalized between the East India Company and the young king Dharendranarayan in April 5, 1773.

After this, Purling went to Bhutan and explained the consequence of enmity with the company. He further requested for the return of Dhairyendranarayan. The king of Bhutan asserted his desire for peace. The king dismissed himself from the throne and a new king was appointed. A peace was concluded thereafter between the Company and the Bhutan king on April 25, 1774. Dhairyendranarayan was released and became angry to know about the deal with the Company (made by Dharendranarayan). On his return to Koch Bihar, he did not take up his rule. But after the death of Dharendranarayan in 1775, once again he became the king. He died in 1780 leaving behind his only heir, his son Harendranarayan.

2.12.6.15 HARENDRANARAYAN: Harendranarayan was only 3 years 9 months old when he was declared as the king. Since he was a minor, Maharani Kamteshwari produced documents of being the guardian to the king. For the next thirteen years, there were internal skirmishes between the two contending parties- Maharani Kamteshwari backed by Sarbananda Goswami and Kasikanta Lahiri vs. Nazir Khagendranarayan. This internal conspiracy led to the kidnapping of the king. East India Company came for the rescue of Harendranarayan. Henry Douglas was appointed as the commissioner of Koch Bihar. Harendranarayan ruled from 1801 to 1839 and he
died in Varanasi. In the meantime the Company stopped the use of Narayani rupee once for all in 1800.

2.12.6.16 SIVENDRANARAYAN: Harendranarayan was succeeded by his eldest son Sivendranarayan. The new devoted his entire attention to administration and state affairs. The boundary dispute with Bhutan was agreeably settled by arbitration of Campbell, the then Superintendent of Darjeeling. Sivendranarayan did not have son so, he adopted the grandson of Nazir Khagendranarayan but the boy died in 1845. Then he adopted Chandranarayan as his son and was renamed as Narendranarayan. Narendranarayan became the king after Sivendranarayan’s death in 1847.

2.12.6.17 NARENDRANARAYAN: Narendranarayan was only 6 years when he ascended the throne after his adoptive father’s death. Sivendranarayan wanted that the Company would look after his son’s education. Although the Maharani and the Dewan did not liked this matter, the Company convinced that the boy king would be admitted either to Dacca or to Krishnanagar at the queen’s discretion. Narendranarayan was sent to Krishnanagar and admitted to the collegiate school. He was later on sent to Calcutta where he studied in Ward’s Institution. He remained under the guardianship of Raja Rajendralal Mitter till 1859 till his attainment of majority. In 1861, Narendranarayan established the first English School in Koch Bihar and named it after Colonel Jenkins, the Agent of the Governor General. Narendranarayan died in 1863.

2.12.6.18 NRIPENDRANARAYAN: Nripendranarayan was a little over one year old when he succeeded the throne of his father. The Governor appointed a commissioner who took the charge of the state till the king’s attainment of adulthood. From Nripendranarayan’s reign, the administration of Koch Bihar entered into the Modern Phase. The king attained majority and was installed to the throne on November 8, 1883. Nripendranarayan was married to Sunity Devi (daughter of Keshab Ch. Sen, the renound social reformer who founded the Naba Bidhan Brahmo Samaj). By 1887 the construction of the new palace was completed. In 1893, the Koch Bihar State Railway was publicly opened. He died in 1911.

2.12.6.19 RAJARAJENDRANARAYAN: Rajarajendranarayan succeeded Nripendranarayan as he was the eldest son but he died very soon after his ascent to the throne. He died in 1913 in England. He got his education in India as well as in England and he remained unmarried.
2.12.6.20 JITENDRANARAYAN: Rajarajendranarayan was succeeded by his brother Jitendranarayan. He took concern about the welfare and civic amenities of the people of Koch Bihar. He was married to Indira Devi (the daughter of Gaekwad of Baroda). He died in 1921 and his minor son Jagaddipendranarayan was made the king.

2.12.6.21 JAGADDIPENDRANARAYAN: Owing to his minority, king Jagaddipendranarayan’s mother Indira Devi took up administration as the regent. He was the last king of Koch Bihar. On August 28, 1949 he transferred the State of Koch Bihar to the Dominion Government of India vide ‘The Cooch Behar Merger Agreement’. The transfer of administration to the Government of India appointed a chief commissioner who ruled ‘Koch Bihar’ as the Chief Commissioner’s Province. Since 1st January 1950, ‘Koch Bihar’ was annexed to West Bengal by an order under section 290A of the Govt. of India act of 1935. Thus ‘Koch Bihar’ became a district of West Bengal.

2.12.6.22 VIRAJENDRANARAYAN: Jagaddipendranarayan did not have any heir; after his death, Virajendranarayan (son of his brother Indrajitendranarayan) was declared as the crownless and throne-less king w.e.f April 11, 1970 vide Government Order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India (D.O. No. F 12/1/70- Poll. III, dt. 24.06.1970) (Pal, N. N. 2000: 98). With his death on August 24, 1992 the Narayani dynasty got terminated.

2.13 THE CULTURAL SET-UP: Culture of a particular society or civilization is considered as a habitual practice in relation to the way of life. The popular notion goes – ‘what man does is his culture’. So, the cultural component of Koch Bihar entails information related to Population, Educational level, Language, Religion, the popular culture and the livelihood pattern of the people (including Dwelling, Dress-up, Dietary habit etc).

2.13.1 POPULATION: The total population of the Koch Bihar district according to 2011 Census is 2,819,086 persons of which 51.49% is represented by Male population while the rest i.e. 48.51% is represented by the Females. The total population of the Study Area i.e. Cooch Behar Town (CBT) for 2011 is 77,935 persons. Of this number, there are 39,014 Males (50.06%) and 38,921 Females (49.94%). About 13.19% of the urban population of Koch Bihar district alone resides within the CBT area. A population density map (Map no. 2.24) has been prepared on the basis of the ward wise Census data for 2011. It shows that population density is highest in the ward nos of 5, 6, 7 and 15 (15,703-23,182 persons/sq. kms.). It is moderately high (12,996-
15,703 persons/sq. kms.) in the ward nos 2, 3, 11, 12, 14 and 16. It is moderate (8,548-12,996 persons/sq. kms.) in ward nos.1, 13, 18 and 20; it is low in ward nos. 4, 8, 9, 10, 17 and 19 (2,752- 8,548 persons/sq. kms.). So, the density of population in the study area is quite high. Inter-state and inter-district migration is also very common.

The district of Koch Bihar after its merger to the Dominion of India had experienced demographic change significantly. Besides its own population, a trail of migration had been noticed. People from the adjacent districts of Bangladesh i.e. Rangpore, Maymansingh (erstwhile and undivided), Pabna and Bugura migrated to Koch Bihar; simultaneously some also out-migrated to the industrial districts of 24 Parganas, Kolkata, Hugli, Barddhaman and even to Jalpaiguri. While some of the business communities of North India from the states like Bihar, Assam, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odhisa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Punjab were the chief emigrants.

**Population Density of CBT- 2011**

![Population Density Map](image)

**Map No. 2.24**
The Rajbangshis or the Kochs form the bulk of Scheduled Caste. They are of mixed origin arising out of a Dravidian stock with marked features of Mongolian blood (Koch Bihar Gazetteer. 1976: 51). Besides the Rajbangshis, the other Scheduled Castes commonly found in Koch Bihar are Badgi, Chamar, Kaibarta, Jhalo, Malo etc. The Rabhas, Meches, Oraons, Garos and the Santhalis constitute the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of the district. Koch Bihar has the highest concentration of the Scheduled Caste population (50.17%) among all the districts of West Bengal. The Study Area however shows 13.50% of Scheduled Caste population among the urban dwellers. The Scheduled Tribes are insignificant in their presence; only 0.52% people in the CBM belong to this category. The district level almost shows a similar reflection of 0.64% of ST population.

2.13.2 EDUCATIONAL LEVEL: According to the 2011 Census, the Koch Bihar district shows 65.64% of literates (the Male Literacy Rate being 55.59% and the Female Literacy Rate being 44.41%). The Study Area records 85.20% of literates for the same census period. The Male Literacy Rate in the Study Area amounts to 51.28% while 48.72% is represented by their counterparts. The district level figures are almost reflected in the figures pertaining to the Study Area.

2.13.3 LANGUAGE: Bengali is the principal language spoken by the bulk population. The next major language of the district is Hindi spoken by the Hindi speakers, who are mostly people of North India, who have migrated to Koch Bihar and settled here for trade and commerce. Besides these two, Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Assamese and Nepali are also spoken here.

The Rajbangshis speak their own dialect which is a diversion from Bengali greatly influenced by one of south West Bengal and the other of Mithila. Apart from the Rajbangshi, Rabha, Oraon and Santhali are also being spoken.

2.13.4 RELIGION: The Rajbangshis inhabit this place the most who are Hindus by religious belief. They claim themselves as the Kshatriyas following the ‘Varna’ system; but some of the kings were found to get influenced by the Brahmanical rituals. Towards the end of the ‘Koch Rule’, some of the kings were seen to get influenced by the ‘Brahma Samaj’.

The chief God of the Rajbangshis is ‘Mahakal’ or ‘Shiva’ besides him, Vishnu as Madan Mohan, Manasa and Kali are also being worshipped throughout the district. The two main sects of the
Hindus i.e. the Vaishnavas (the worshippers of Lord Vishnu) and the Saktas (the worshippers of Mother Goddess like: Kali, Durga etc.) are found largely.

Though minor yet the Muslims also occupy important position as a religious sect. Islam had spread to this region almost at the beginning of 13th Century A.D., as many saints came to Kamrupa for preaching.

Some of the business community especially from the other North Indian states follow Jainism as evident from the presence of the Jain Temple situated in the ‘Marwari Patty’ of Ward No.8 of the CBT area near the vicinity of the main market or ‘Burra Bazaar’ area. As per the 2011 Census, the following table shows the Religious Groups represented by their percentages at the district level:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Groups</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>74.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>25.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jain</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Report, 2011

2.13.5 LAND USE: Presently, the land use patterns are being minutely investigated at the regional or micro levels rather than national level. Looking at the current Land Use Map of CBT (Map no 2.26), one finds that the road layout has a checker-board pattern, where every road meets at right angle with the other roads. This trend is still very much pronounced in the main built up area surrounded by the Maharaja S. N Road to the north, Nara Narayan Road to the east, Kalika Das Road to the south-west and the Palace itself on the west.
Transport Routes of CBT (Draft Development Plan 2008-2013 by CBM)

Map No. 2.25

Land Use Map of CBT (Draft Development Plan 2008-2013 by CBM)

Map No. 2.26
The Land Use Map of Cooch Behar Town (Map no. 2.26) brings out the following salient features in respect of its spatial distribution of different uses of land (Table: 2.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAND USAGE</th>
<th>% OF TOTAL AREA COVERED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public and Semi Public use</td>
<td>6.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>53.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Belt</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational</td>
<td>12.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>7.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Bodies</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed use</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other uses</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Draft Development Plan, CBM, 2008-2013

The central market (Bhawaniganj Bazaar) is located almost at the central part of the town with an outlier in the south, the central square is bounded by four principal roads and is almost completely built-up, having the buildings of various institutions and organizations from transport to community services.

The town lacks any large and medium size industrial complex but the small size units are extremely isolated in respect of their locations.

The Palace being located on the western part of the town has attracted the high class residences at its vicinity; while the middle class residences have developed mainly in the north. The town has a greater tendency to expand south and south-east wards which are mainly residential areas.

The principal types of land uses of CBT are as follows:

1. Residential use
2. Public and semi-public uses
3. Recreational purpose
4. Transportation
5. Commercial centres
6. Water body etc.

Other type of land use includes Agriculture, Green Belt and miscellaneous purposes have also been observed in a small scale in this town.

**2.13.6 THE POPULAR CULTURE AND THE LIVELIHOOD PATTERN:** The cultural fabric results as an outcome of the evolution process defining human civilization. The cultural heritage of Koch Bihar also has a long historical antecedence. The cultural characteristics are prominent, unique and diversified in nature. Far flung from the rest of Bengal Koch Bihar occupies the remotest north eastern corner of the state of West Bengal. Cultural overlapping is inevitable and is evident as it is juxtaposed to Assam, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Koch Bihar may be ascribed as the melting pot of culture where different racial traits and cultural groups have intermingled. Thus, the cultural setting of Koch Bihar is an admixture of different cultural elements which have resulted in a cultural diffusion.

Many eminent scholars opine that Koch Bihar also provided a strong foundation to the Bengali Literature. This region was even settled prior to 3000 years while the southern part of Bengal (i.e. the Deltaic Bengal and the Rarh Bengal) was undergoing its geologic construction. The elements of ancient verbal literature belonging to the Bengali Folk Culture lay its origin in this region. For instance, mention may be made of the ‘Songs of Maynamati’ *(Maynamatir Gaan)*, the ‘Songs of Gorakshanath’ *(Gorakshanather Gaan)* and even the ‘Charjiyapads’. The folk songs like ‘Bhawaiya’; songs related to the customs and rituals (especially the marriage songs) like the ‘Jari’ and ‘Heto’ all stories of the livelihood patterns of the local people of Koch Bihar. The cultural elements portray the vivid socio-economic scenario. The folk plays like the ‘Dotora’, ‘Kushan’, ‘Manasha-Bishahari’ deserves special mention which attracts peoples’ attention even today.

Besides this, Bengali Literature also received a royal patronage from the Narayani Dynasty. The royal support helped the development of literary culture with its own identity. The kings were interested in the study of regional dialect (the Rajbangshi language). The ‘Kirat Parva’ is the oldest hand written verse found in Koch Bihar. During the reign of Maharaja Prananarayan, the Royal Poet named ‘Srinath Brahman’ translated the great epic of *Mahabharata*. The pious Shankar Deva (1543- 1568) illuminated the ‘Raj Sabha’ during Maharaja Nararan’s reign. Jayanath Munsi wrote ‘Rajopakhyan’ in Bengali in 1846 *(Dey, Dilip Kumar 2007, 33)*.
ancient literature of Koch Bihar was translational in character. Lord Shiva was worshipped almost everywhere in Koch Bihar. The Narayani dynasty (especially Biswasingha) established Hinduism as the state religion. Generally, the tribal and the racial groups like the Koches, rabhas, Meches, Garos etc residing here have transformed their deities to Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati as an effect of ‘Brahmanization’. The Royal Poet Radhakrishna Das Bairagi wrote ‘Goshani Mangal Kavya’ to describe the grace of Goddess Gosani (the Royal deity) during the rule of Maharaja Harendranarayan.

The songs, plays, fables, folk tales, verses etc are also in practice; along with Lord Shiva, Goddesses Shitala and Chandi, local popular deities like Hudum, Shaitol, Mashan etc are also worshipped in the same platform in the rural environs of Koch Bihar. Though urbanization process is inevitable yet these are important artifacts to the cultural milieu of Koch Bihar.

2.13.6.1 DIETARY HABITS: Bengali culinary traits are commonly found here. The staple food of the local people is ‘Rice’. The delicacies like green leafy vegetables (Shak), aurum (Kochu), dried fish (Suntki), Boroli fish (sp. Aspidoparia morar – a riverine small fish) are consumed almost everywhere. The local people usually have rice-meal thrice daily. The consumption of other food as breakfast or evening snacks is not so popular. But drinking of tea is very common. People greet guests with tea, betel leaves and betel nuts (Gual Supari). Chewing of betel leaf and betel nut is very popular among all age groups.

2.13.6.2 LOCAL CUSTOMS AND FAIRS: Although modernization has set in, yet local customs are seen prominently during the household occasions like Marriage, Initiation (first rice-eating), and Shraddha (last rites) ceremonies.

Like the rest of Bengal, Durga Puja is the most important festival observed here. Bara Devi, the Royal Goddess equivalent to Goddess Durga is worshipped during the Navaratri at the Devibari Temple. Lord Krishna is named as the ‘Madan Mohan’ who is the Royal Deity as well is also worshipped. The festivals like Dol Yatra, Rath Yatra, Janmashtami, Rash Yatra etc are also observed centering Madan Mohan in his honour. Apart from this the holy dip at rivers Gadadhar, Sankosh, Kaljani and even Brahmaputra at Dhubri (Assam) during the eighth auspicious day of ‘Chaitra’ - the last month of the Bengali Calendar, is also very popular.

Among the fairs, ‘Rash Mela’ is most worth mentioning. It has been celebrated throughout more than 200 years. It was first patronized by Maharaja Harendranarayan in 1812. He had built a
palace at Bhetaguri (near Dindata) since his palace got dilapidated. He went into the palace on the auspicious day of ‘Rash Purnima’ and he was accompanied by priests and businessmen whose assemblage took the configuration of a fair (Dey, Dilip Kumar. 2007: 199). This is now being named as ‘Rash Mela’ and presently is held in and around the Madan Mohan Temple and the Rash Mela Ground in the Koch Bihar Town.

Other than this ‘Huzur Saheber Mela’ – a fair of the Mohammadans usually held every year at Haldibari on the fifth and sixth day of the Bengali month of ‘Falgun’ to commemorate the demise of the Hazrat Moulana Shahsufi Ekramul Hoque. The ‘Madhupur Mela’ held during the fifth day of the month of the ‘Magha’ of the Bengali Calendar is an example of Assamese culture. Besides these mention may be made of Shivaratri mela at Baneshwar.

2.14 CONCLUSION: Koch Bihar is unique as far as its location, history, and culture is concerned. Geographically, its location is very significant. It lies entirely in the Duars region at the foot hills of the Eastern Himalayas. Being located in the eastern margin of the sub-continent, it receives huge amount of rainfall next to Cherapunji. Several mighty rivers traverse through this region with conspicuous characteristics. Phenomenon like flash flood and shifting river courses are very common. Since most of the rivers debouch from their mountain course to the plains, they cannot control their flow with the abrupt change in the gradient and therefore give rise to flash floods. The climate over here (though gradually getting modified owing to the global warming) is also very striking with three distinct seasons: the dry summer, the monsoons with torrential rains and the severe winter. Climatic extremity during summer and winter months may be attributed to continentality.

Koch Bihar belonged to the ‘Ratnapitha’ of ancient Kamrupa Kingdom (Dey, Dilip Kumar. 2007: 27) according to the mythological and proto-historical accounts. It has a long and complex historical linage whereby gradually the Narayani Dynasty (the Kochs) got established who ruled for about 450 years. Internal politics of the royal family provoked by Bhutiya and Mughal interference resulted into skirmishes, assassination and gradual deterioration. Meanwhile, the social revivalism ushered in development and annulled the initiation of a new era by the mid 19th Century. The educated and enlightened royal family supported modernization and took interest
in designing the socio-cultural field. After independence, the feudatory princely state of Koch Bihar merged to the dominion of India.

The geographical and the historical uniqueness have contributed to the cultural characteristics of this area. Though this place was inhabited long back, but most of the present population has migrated from Bangladesh during the freedom struggle and partition. As evident from the current statistics, about 50% of the district’s population belongs to the Scheduled Caste category. Indeed, the Rajbangshis form the majority of the population. The people of Koch Bihar show individuality in their culture such as in their language (Rajbangshi, a diversion of Bengali), customs, rituals, food habits and livelihood pattern. The people of Koch Bihar are very fond of music especially the ‘Bhawaiya’ sung in the local Rajbangshi language. The traditional plays (Jatras), songs sung during different festivals and marriages, folklores present the socio-cultural condition and simple living of these people.

Thus, Koch Bihar has undergone metamorphosis in its culture through time. It has gradually become cosmopolitan in character especially in the urban areas. Presently, modernization has enhanced the pace of development. Being situated one-sidedly, it has formed a pocket economy but with the natural bounties and resource endowments it may soon get developed into a more prosperous region in the future. People would become more enterprising and dynamic in resource utilization.

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CHAPTER III:

CHANGING ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN THROUGH HISTORY IN INDIA
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3.1 INTRODUCTION: The history in our society is not undemanding though it has remained largely disorganized. The Earth and one’s own country is always referred to with the prefix ‘Mother’ added to it. This reflects that consciously or unconsciously women have been given a dignified status in India.

On the contrary, they are treated as second to men in all regards. Popularly, it goes that behind a successful man there is a woman; but she is never placed alongside of a man. Even in the conjugal relationship, generally it is the husband who commands power over a wife (excepting a few stray cases). Thus, the Indian society holds a strange attitude towards women full of contradiction and conflicting situation. They are abandoned, divorced, bought and sold or killed at the whims of men.

Howsoever, high the status of women might have been raised under law, in practice they continue to suffer from discrimination, harassment, humiliation and not given due respect. Therefore, the status of the Indian women could be adjudged if one takes a quick look at the position of the women through history.

3.2 STATUS OF WOMEN THROUGH HISTORY: A TEMPORAL ANALYSIS

The socio-economic the political situation of the country have a profound influence upon the livability condition of its residents in general and the women in particular. Thus, a temporal analysis would be a useful method to ascertain the position of the women in Indian society.

3.2.1 STATUS OF WOMEN IN ANCIENT INDIA (1500 B.C. - 600 B.C. – 1260 A.D.):

3.2.1.1 THE VEDIC ERA (1500 B.C. – 1000 B.C.): According to the scholars of Hindu social organizations and ideologists like Cormack, Prabhu and Altekar – Women in India during Vedic Period were accorded with equal status. They did not lead a secluded life. They enjoyed freedom
in movement and never used *purdah*. They were also free to choose their mates. Women could also remarry. Marriage was not a problem since the dread of widowhood did not bothered the parents as marriage and other custom of *Niyoga* (liverate) were there. *Niyoga* allowed the widow to have conjugal relation with her husband’s younger brother or other near relation till she gets some children (Joshi, N. 2013: 105). The custom of ‘*Sati*’ was unknown to them.

In the household, women enjoyed complete freedom. Home was the place of production where they participated in spinning and weaving activities. They also helped their husbands in the fields. Since education was not a bar to the women folk, they usually spend the period before marriage for education and used to learn Vedic Hymns. Some of them even contributed to their composition also; for instance, learned women like Lopamudra, Visvavara, Sikata, Nivavari, Ghosha deserve special mention. Learned women took part actively in conferences along with male learned exponents. The conferences dealt with philosophical discussions: Brahmavadini Gargi Vachaknavi participated in the conference convened by the king Janaka of Videha for codifying the scientific religious doctrines and practices. References of *Vidushis* (learned women) are found in the then society. Some of the *vidushis* also engaged themselves in teaching. The great Indian epics mention the presence of women warriors. For instance, Kaikeyi in the *Ramayana* accompanied king Dasharatha in wars. Thus from the professional point of view, women also enjoyed freedom.

In social and religious functions, women used to occupy prominent position. They were treated as ‘*Ardhanginis*’ (better halves). In the social arena they were treated with fairness and justice. Women could even perform sacrifices independent of men, as men were not indispensable for the purpose.

With regard to property rights, women faced a general prejudice to hold property. As a daughter she had no share in her father’s property but the unmarried daughters were entitled to a quarter share of the patrimony received by their brothers. Mother’s property was equally divided among sons and unmarried daughters. Married daughters received a token of respect. As a wife, a woman had no direct share in her husband’s property. A forsaken wife had no wealth; her husband had to provide everything required by her. If any person wishes to divide his property during his lifetime, his wife and his sons enjoyed equal share of his property. A childless widow never had any property right but a widowed mother had some rights (Ahuja, R. 2013: 92).
Women did not have any separate political status since the political system was based on monarchy; so presence of voting rights, legislatures, political parties etc. did not arise.

To conclude, it can be said that women by and large enjoyed a high status equal to that of men at home, in the society up to 300 B.C. i.e. reaching till the middle of Post- Vedic Period (Astige, S.B. 2006: 44). The Vedic Age was marked by the establishment of the rural settlements. Society was patriarchal in nature. In the later part of the Vedic era, the Varna system got popularized and the socio-economic classification into Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra became noticed. The Vedic life followed the ‘Chaturashrama’.

**3.2.1.2 THE POST-VEDIC ERA (1000 B.C. – 600 B.C.):** Post- Vedic Period may be designated from the Rig Veda Age upto the birth of Lord Buddha. This period may also be regarded as the period of second urbanization, which was marked by the rise of urban centres referred to as Nagaras like Hastinapur, Kaushal, Kausambi, Vidharva etc. Apart from the four Varnas present in the society, there stood two important classes namely Bratyas and Nishadas. The Bratyas were those who were not allowed in the Brahmanical way-of-life; while the Nishadas were non-Aryans (presently known as the Bhils). During this period, the socio-economic scenario and the politico-legal changes started bothering women’s status in the society. Men solely began to hold power and authority. Marriages became irreversible and indissoluble institution. Women were generally given lower position. They were thought to be inferior and subordinate to men. They lost property rights. They even lost eligibility for participation in political and religious matters. Child marriage, polygamy and dowry came into practice. Education was not completely denied but women were discouraged to study Vedic literature. Inspite of this, a privileged few became stalwarts like Maitrayee and Gargi.

**3.2.1.3 RISE OF BUDDHISM:** During the later part of the Vedic Age, the common people especially those belonging to the lower Varnas suffered a lot owing to the pressure created by the brahmanical regulations imposed upon them. This somewhat created a negative repercussion for ‘Brahmanism’. Slowly, trade and commerce occupied the socio-economic arena as important activity and hence merchant communities began to flourish. The non-Brahmins (i.e. people belonging to the lower Varnas and women) became agitating as a result of the social oppression and became disinterested in Brahmanical society. They got easily attracted to the ideology of Buddhism and Jainism which preached in favour of egalitarian society. Moreover, the Aryans
used Sanskrit as their principal language which was difficult to follow than that of Prakrit and Pali supported by Buddhism and Jainism. Apart from this, the two religions did not lay any restrictions upon overseas trade and voyages unlike the Brahmanas; this attracted the Vaisya community the most. Since women’s status got lowered in the later Vedic period and they suffered very much from the severe restrictions imposed upon them. The women followers of Buddhism and Jainism experienced liberty and freedom. So, these two religions brought a better option for the women folk to lead a decent life.

### 3.2.2 Status of Women from the Initiation of Imperialism to the End of Sen Dynasty (600 B.C. – 1260 A.D.):

#### 3.2.2.1 The Rise of Sorasa Mahajanapadas:

The Brahmanical system thus faced a setback from the society and this had finally paved the way for rapid urbanization throughout the subcontinent around 600 B.C. Kabul in the North West till the banks of the Godavari River in the south. Sixteen big towns or ‘Sorasa Mahajanapadas’ came up based on non-agricultural activities. These centres were also the hubs of trade and commercial activities. These Mahajanapadas were Kashi, Kuru, Kamboj, Koshal, Gandhara, Avanti, Anga, Asmaka, Matsya, Briji, Malla, Vatsya, Chedi, Magadha, Surasena and Panchal. All these except Briji and Malla were under monarchy. Briji and Malla was republic in nature. Of all these, Magadha became very important and occupies a significant place in Indian history. Magadha was ruled by four dynasties – Haryanka, Sishunag, Nanda and Maurya under which Magadha excelled in power and prominence. During the reign of Dhanananda, the last king of Nanda dynasty Alexander of Macedonia attacked India (327 – 326 B.C.).

#### 3.2.2.2 The Maurya Rule:

After the termination of Nanda dynasty, Chandragupta Maurya ascended the throne and founded the Maurya dynasty (321- 185 B.C.). This period has been referred to as the ‘Golden Era’ in Indian history. Megasthenes came to Chandragupta Maurya’s kingdom and wrote a detailed account named ‘Indica’.

The decadence in the women’s status which was initiated during the early phase of the Post-Vedic period continued throughout the Maurya’s rule. Women were not given any kind of freedom and had to abide the strict rules. On one hand polygamy was in practice and on the other hand widow remarriage was highly criticized. ‘Sati’ came into existence and became almost mandatory. Since then the country started facing foreign attacks, hence freedom to women
totally ceased. The female ascetics who followed Buddhism and Jainism were granted freedom of movement. However, the ruling families supported military and administrative trainings to the royal ladies. Evidences of queen governors, officers and dowager queens who have successfully administered during the minority of their sons are also found. The royal families recruited women as bodyguards and spies. The Buddhist *Jatakas* give account of the presence of prostitution in the then society and the prostitutes commanded certain amount of respect also! Vasanta Sena and Amrapali are worthy to mention. Kautilya’s ‘*Arthasashtra*’ discussed about their social position, duties and liabilities. They were housed in the harem of kings or provided with separate quarters.

After the downfall of the Maurya dynasty, the Kushana dynasty in the North Western part of the country rose to power. Kanishka ascended the throne in 78 A.D. Parallel to this, the Satavahana dynasty surrounding the area of the mouth of the Krishna River rose to power. The Satavahana dynasty was established in 106 A.D. and continued up till 220 A.D. After this the Gupta dynasty (320 A.D.) came up. During the Gupta Period, there were evidences of queens who were efficient rulers. For instance, Prabhavati, the daughter of Chandragupta II deserves special mention in this regard. Education was in access to women of privileged class. They used to study History and were authors of verses. There were provisions for co-education system in some institutions. ‘*Amarkosha*’ written during this period provides account of lady teachers. However bright the picture might look, the actual scenario was quite different. Common women remained under full control of their counterparts. Freedom was enjoyed by only those women who were either Buddhist or Jain ascetics or actresses or even prostitutes.

After Skandagupta the Gupta Empire fell and gave way to the rise of different independent kingdoms like: Yashavarmana of Malwa (530 A.D.), Maukhi dynasty of Kanauj (initiated by Ishanavarmana around 554 A.D.), Gour of Bengal (established by Sasanka around 606 A.D.) etc.

**3.2.2.3 HARSHAVARDHANA’S REIGN:** Harshavardhana ascended the throne (606 A.D.) and took up the administration of Kanauj and ruled up to 647 A.D. Women’s education was in practice during Harsha’s time. Women received training in art, dance, playing instrument and music. Princess Rajyashree, sister of Harsha was a learned woman of her time. She looked after the administration along with his brother. The Chinese traveler Huen Tsung did not mentioned the prevalence of ‘Sati’ in his account, but it is popularly known that Harsha saved his sister
from jumping into the funeral pyre of her husband. Widowhood was of hardship and a tough life. Widow re-marriage was not in practice according to Huen Tsung. Even he did not mention the use of ‘purdah’ but he discussed about the ‘Devadasis’ of the Surya Temple.

3.2.2.4 THE RASHTRAKUTAS: The Deccan area was ruled by the Chalukyas (of Badauni situated in Bijapur district of Karnataka) till 753 A.D. and by the Rashtrakutas till 973 A.D. After the decline of the Chalukyas, a new dynasty known as the Rashtrakuta dynasty came up which ruled over the Deccan area (i.e. covering Maharashtra and Karnataka region) and reached the epitome of power. The Rastrakuta dynasty was established in the early part of 6th Century A.D. in and around Vidharva and Hosangabad. The kings of this dynasty were tolerant to the Muslims. Evidence of co-existence with the Islam followers had been recognized by Sulaiman, a contemporary Arabian traveler (851 A.D.). According to him, the kings used to have portfolio of ‘kazi’ in order to give justice to the Muslims (Gangopadhyay, D. 2011: 291).

Marriages were determined by parental negotiation though ‘Swayambara’ was practiced amongst the royal families. Different types of competitions were held in Swayambaras and the victorious deserved marriage. The custom of inter-caste marriage was less frequent. According to Al Beruni, ‘Anuloma’ marriage did take place in which the groom belonged to the higher caste than the bride. But ‘Pratiloma’ marriages (brides from higher caste married to groom of lower caste) were banned. Child marriage was prevalent. Generally girls got married before 12 years of age while boys before 16 years. Polygamy was in full swing whereby husbands possessed upto four wives. Purdah was not in practice. In high profile societies, widow remarriage was totally absent. ‘Sati’ was not in practice in South India, but there were few stray cases of child less widows who did sacrifice their lives in the funeral pyre of their husbands. Widows had property rights.

3.2.2.5 THE GUJJARS: After the period of Harshavardhana, some of the early Gujjars – Pratihara dynasties ruled considerable areas in Northern India. Though their rise had been earmarked during the middle of 6th Century A.D. in Jodhpur of Rajasthan by the founder king Hari Chandra, yet there was another dynasty of the Gujjars which came up at the end of the 6th Century A.D. at Broach region of Gujarat. Later, during 8th Century and 11th Century A.D. the Gujjars of Jalor (Rajasthan) and Ujjaini (Madhya Pradesh) resulted as the dominant group. Birth of a girl child was not welcomed by any family. The parents were apprehensive of their
daughters getting married to unsuitable grooms. Moreover, if the daughters became widowed, they used to return to their parent’s home, which created familial problems. So, parents remained very careful while selecting groom for their daughters. Marriage took place between same ‘*Varna*’ but with other ‘*Gotras*’. Generally, monogamy was the usual custom but polygamy was not uncommon. ‘Sati’ was in practice; those who opted for widowhood led a very arduous life. Widow re-marriage took place in *Sudra* family but never within the upper *Varnas*. The widowed women either returned to their parent’s place or joined a religious cult.

There were few learned women in the then society; mention may be made of Avanti Sundari, wife of Rajsekhar. She was the author of many literary works but due to lack of documentation and proper preservation, they are lost forever (Gangopadhyay. 2011: 333). In Rajsekhar’s books women have been portrayed as artists, poetesses, dancers and vocalists. He admired their creative nature. Some of Rajsekhar’s works are ‘*Kavyamanjari*’, ‘*Biddhyasalbhanjika*’, ‘*Kavyamimansa*’ etc. ‘*Jowhar*’ was initiated during this time and got enormous popularity. The custom of ‘*Jowhar*’ was like that – when the forts became fully under invader’s control, then men used to attack the enemy with full force while their wives used to jump into fires and committed suicide.

**3.2.2.6 THE PALAS AND THE SENS OF BENGAL:** After Sasanka’s rule, Bengal under the Pala Dynasty and the Sen Dynasty is worthy to mention. The Pala dynasty was established in the mid 8th Century A.D. They originated in some places of North Bengal but established their capital at Bakharganj in present Bangladesh. Their rule brought success to political, literature, religious and cultural arena.

Women did not possess any significant position during this time. They were expected only to become wives. The kings and the affluent people maintained polygamous life. ‘Sati’ was in full swing. The widows led a miserable life. Besides all these hardships, women had access to education during the Pala rule. As per the periodic writings, women used to write love letters to their beloved. They had sound knowledge of *Music, Dance and Art*. Use of ‘*Veena*’ among women as musical instrument was very popular. Womenfolk used to participate in dance-dramas and entertained people. Women used to dress up nicely with accessories and ornaments. With the death of Ramapala (1130 A.D.), the last significant ruler of the Pala dynasty, the Pala period came to an end by the second half of 12th Century A.D.
The rise of the Sens was responsible for the decline of the Pala rule in Bengal. Samanta Sen the founder king of the Sen Dynasty came from the Deccan area and settled in Bengal within a small territory. The next rulers expanded the Sen’s territory and invaded North Bengal, Kamrupa, Kalinga and Mithila. Lakshman Sen deserve special mention among all the Sen Kings and was well known for his military activities. By 1201, the Muslim invader Bhaktiar Khalji intruded into Nadia (penetrating the thick forests of Jharkhand) all of a sudden and old Lakshman Sen fled to his second capital situated at present Bangladesh. He died in 1205. The Sen’s rule ended in 1260 A.D. ‘Devadasi’ system became prevalent during the Sen’s rule.

3.2.2.7 THE CHOLAS OF SOUTHERN INDIA: South India was on the other hand ruled by the Pallabs (upto 891 A.D.) and the Cholas (upto 1120 A.D.). The Cholas founded their independent kingdom during mid 9th Century A.D. under Vijayalaya (850 - 871 A.D.) in and around Thanjavur of Cauvery River basin area. The social scenario almost corroborated with that of the Northern India besides few exceptions. In general, women were expected to remain submissive and sometimes referred to as ‘Pativrata’ i.e. worshipper of their husbands. Common people had a monogamous marital status, but affluent and royal families were polygamous. Women labour engaged themselves in less strenuous jobs and they were paid less compared to their counterparts. Women used to hold property and had the rights of buying and selling them. Some areas of South India had matrilineal society where women earned some respect. After the termination of the Gupta Dynasty, the kingdom of Orissa, Canara and Andhra were ruled by queens. Though ‘Sati’ was in practice, yet it was not a popular custom. Instead of ‘Sati’, Southern India depicted the prevalence of ‘Devadasis’ as a form of women oppression. Devadasis were women who remained in the temple premises to serve Gods. These devadasis learnt special training of music and dance particularly Bharatnatyam - a traditional dance form of India. Ideologically, they were treated as the daughters of the deity in the temple. They could marry and lead a social life also. Many devadasis engaged themselves in social works too. Slowly, with passage of time, the Devadasi system became a symbol of satisfaction of lust and greed of the priests, kings and even aristocrats. The devadasis used to serve the kings. Some of them were granted freedom by the rulers also. The instance of Kulatunga I deserve mention in this regard, who in 1088 A.D.
returned back some of the *devadasis* from the palace to the temple again. Those *devadasis* had been marked ‘*Trishula*’ (a holy emblem) on their bodies.

Therefore, on the whole, women during the entire Post- Vedic period generally experienced a low status (with few exceptions). Apart from the royal families, the privilege of education was not granted to common women. Property rights were limited to a handful, especially in matrilineal societies (that remained in small proportion). Widowhood was of atrocious experience. ‘*Sati*’ was more popular in North India. *Devadasi* was another form of women oppression. The only way to escape oppression was either to become a Buddhist or Jain ascetic or even to become a prostitute (since they earned some kind of respect). Nevertheless, there were few learned women whose wisdom and intelligentsia has brightened up the cultural heritage of India.

### 3.2.3 WOMEN IN INDIA DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD:

Sultan Mahmud the king of Ghazni, conquered India in 9th Century A.D. For seventeen times Mahmud attacked India and finally succeeded in 1008-’09 whereby Ananda Pala, son of Jaipala of Punjab got defeated by him and lost Punjab. The basic motive behind Mahmud’s attack was to spread Islam and to rob the enormous wealth of India. According to the English historian Smith, ‘Mahmud was simply a bandit operating on a large scale’. His rampant activity not only obliterated the temples and sacred places which were significant historical artifacts, but also generated fear among the Hindus. From this period till mid 19th Century with the establishment of the British authority in India, i.e. for about 700 years, there was a break down in the socio-cultural and economic arena. In this backdrop, women’s life also experienced a depression.

The Pre-Modern Indian society was undoubtedly oppressive to women. The nature of oppression varied depending on the nature of communities in different spatio- temporal contexts. Right of inheritance was not similar throughout the country. Even for lower classes where legally allowed, inheritance were often disregarded. In Bengal, particularly widows and daughters without sons could be forcibly taken as chattel by the *zamindars* and *jagirdars* of the area. The Muslim women could claim the dower settled at marriage and inherit property. With regard to marriages, women were often married in infancy i.e. before the attainment of puberty; but child marriages were absent in Muslim families. Payment of bride price was in practice among the poor and also in Muslim families. On the contrary, higher castes received dowry from bride’s
parents. Widow re-marriage was absolutely prohibited within the upper castes, while it was prevalent in the pastoral and peasant classes like the Jats, Ahirs and Mewatis (Habib, I. 2007: 162). Muslim widows could re-marry. The socio-economically middle and upper class Muslim families used to have upto four wives and any number of concubines to a man but there are instances of resentment also. As an evidence, a marriage contract can be cited which was reproduced in an administrative manual negotiated at Surat in the first half of 17th Century, which obliged the husband not to marry a second time or maintain any concubine. The contract further sought to prevent the husband from badly beating up the wife and to ensure to the wife a minimum amount of subsistence (Ibid: 164). The fearful practice of ‘Sati’ was prevalent amongst the Rajput warriors and Rajput royal families. Ibn Batutah mentioned with horror the scene of a woman burning herself to attain ‘Sati’. Though permission of the Sultan was mandatory for the performance of the ‘Sati’, yet the Mughal administration discouraged the act. According to Ain-i-Akbari by Abul Fazl, Akbar criticized ‘Sati’ strongly on ethical grounds.

During the Muslim Rule, female literacy went down rapidly. Female education was confined to the cultural elite. At the initial phase of the Muslim Rule, Purdah was unknown in the country. For example, mention may be made of women and queens in Ahom kingdom (Assam) who could appear in public without covering their faces and heads. After the Muslim conquest, Purdah became popularized especially among higher and richer classes in North India to provide protection to beautiful ladies against abduction and kidnapping by the Muslim rulers, nobles and officials. During the conquests, thousands of Hindu women were forcibly taken and either married after religion conversion or kept as concubines. What so ever be the reason, this insecurity affected women adversely and made them more dependent on men. In South India however, the impact of the Muslims remained limited, Purdah was not so much popularized. A matrilineal social system prevailed among certain communities in Kerala and in far South and also among the Garos and Khasis of Meghalaya in the North East.

With regard to the occupational categories, women during this period used to carry water, spun yarn, mill corn and help in agricultural operations too. In the Himalayan communities, they even did agriculture to the strict sense of the term. Women of certain castes even went out to sell milk, ghee etc by hawkery. In ‘Akbarnama’, paintings show that women were engaged in masonry construction (Ibid, p163, Figure 3.1). On the contrary, in Bengal the picture was grim as women had to bear a large burden of work. Thus, it is evident that women’s position more or less
remained less impressive in terms of education, occupation as well as in social life. They did not get enough scope to upgrade themselves and prove their importance in the society. Commonly, people treated them as their property and could do whatever they liked at their whims. A remarkable collection of documents from Gujarat in ‘Lekhapaddhati’ dated 1230-’31, shows that those women who were sold as slaves lost their family ties, caste status and could be forced to do all kinds of works in the household as well as in the fields under constant threat of physical violence and torture (Ibid, p. 8). Even in the Royal Household during the Sultanate period, the evidence of male control could be traced. The most important officer concerned with the Royal Household was the ‘Wakil-i-dar’. He controlled the entire household and supervised the payment of allowance and salaries to staffs of Royal Kitchen, Wine Department, Royal Stable etc. Even he remained responsible for the education of the Princes. The Sultan’s private servants, Princes and Queens had to approach him for various favours. Other important officials at the Royal Household premises were ‘Amir Hajib’ (who used to look after the ceremonies at the court) and ‘Barid-i-khas’ i.e. the head of the intelligence department (Chandra, Satish.2003: 139-140).

Contrary to this picture of male dominancy, there were exceptional cases like that of Gulbadan Begum, who was Humayun’s sister who remained highly educated while her husband was illiterate. Mention may also be made of ‘Jayamati’ in ‘Rajtarangini’ written by Kashmiri historian Kalhana (1151), who has been mentioned to have opportunistically changed her male partners, ultimately became the Queen of Uchcha Kashmir and earned repute for her benevolence and wisdom.

3.2.3.1 BHAKTI MOVEMENT AND SUFISM: The genesis of Bhakti cult took place most appropriately at the time of sheer necessity, especially when rigid Hinduism was losing its popularity. Bhakti movement was able to generate a new spark in Hinduism. It bridged Hinduism with Islam during the later part of the Sultanate Period about 14th - 15th Century A.D.

The Bhakti movement spoke against the strictness of caste differentiation, untouchability and adopted a more humanistic approach which helped in the social progress. The pioneers were Ramananda, Kabir, Sri Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, Guru Namdeva, Meera Bai, Dadu so on and so forth. The main ideology was concerned with the spread of love for everyone irrespective of caste, creed and religion. It also taught religious tolerance and believed that different religions lead different paths to reach the same goal i.e. the Almighty.
During the Bhakti movement, another cult developed in medieval India which deserves special mention to have influenced the cultural arena, which is known as Sufism. Sufism brought important changes to the realm of Islamic ideas and beliefs. Sufism propagated the belief of equality, love and co-existence among people and also inculcated the feeling of togetherness (unification) with the ‘Almighty’. Sufism was popularized by Kwaja Moinuddin Chisti towards the end of 12th Century A.D. By the dawn of the 13th Century, the Sufi cult became divided into two sects: the Chisti and the Suhrawardy. Nevertheless, during the 15th and the early part of the 16th Century, the Sufi and the Bhakti saints had worked out remarkably in the common social platform on which people belonging to different caste, creed and sect could meet and tried to understand each other.

3.2.3.2 TOWARDS THE END OF MEDIEVAL PERIOD: The Mughal Empire which had captured all attention owing to its extensiveness with regard to its territory, military might and cultural achievements showed signs of decay towards the beginning of 18th Century. The decadence geared up with the quick succession of nine Mughal Emperors one after another within fifty years following the death of Aurangazeb. Mughal governors of Awadh, Bengal and Deccan freed themselves from the control of the central government and the Hindu powers rose. ‘Baji Rao I’s raid of Delhi in 1737 and Nadir Shah’s invasion in 1739 exposed the hollowness of the Mughal Empire and by 1740, the fall of the empire was an accomplished fact’ (Grover, B.L. & Grover, S. 2002: 1).

Satish Chandra (2003) remarks that the reason for the decline of the Mughal Empire might be attributed to the: a) Medieval Indian economy; b) The stagnation of trade, industry and scientific development in the economic arena; c) the lacuna in the finance sector that took the shape of crisis (as an outcome of the jagirdari system) which affected all the corners of state activities; d) The disability of the ambitious nobles to realize the circumstantial matters and their eagerness in the attainment of an independent dominion; e) The failure of the Mughals to accommodate the Marathas to adjust their claims within the framework of Mughal Empire; f) The insecurity of the North-Western mountain passes.

3.2.4 THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCENARIO IN THE 18TH CENTURY: Though political upheavals and instability affected the society and there was failure in the social progress in terms of economy and culture, yet in general it retained the traditional features. The increasing
demands of the state; the oppression of the officials; the greed and rapacity of the nobles, revenue farmers and zamindars; and the depredations of the numerous adventurers roaming the land made the life of the people quite wretched (Chandra, Bipan. 2011: 41).

Even the then India was the land of contrasts. Extreme poverty existed amidst utmost luxury. There was the Emperor at the apex of the social order followed by the nobility who led an extravagant and luxuriant life with weaknesses for wine, women and entertainment. The contrast was upheld by the presence of poor agriculturalists and the artisans in the rural environment living at the bare subsistence level who bore all injustices and inequities. In between these two extremes, the ‘middle class’ occupied the middle position in the social order comprising of the small merchants, shop keepers, lower cadre of employees, town artisans etc.

Inland communications were backward but overseas trade during the Mughal Period was extensive. India imported pearls, raw silk, wool, dates, dried fruits and rose water from Persian Gulf; coffee, gold, drugs and honey from Arabia; tea, sugar, porcelain and silk from China; gold, musk and woolen cloth from Tibet; tin from Singapore; spices, perfumes, arrack and sugar from Indonesian Islands; ivory and drugs from Africa; woolen cloth, metals like copper, iron, lead and paper from Europe. India’s chief item of export was its cotton textiles which were famous worldwide. India also exported raw silk and silk fabrics, hardware, indigo, salt petre, opium, rice, sugar, pepper, and other spices, precious stones and drugs (Ibid: 42). Owing to the political convulsions, constant warfare and disruption in law and order, the internal trade suffered a lot. Many trading centres were looted and many caravans were robbed regularly. Moreover, the autonomous provincial regimes imposed heavy custom duties on goods entering their territories (for their extra income). Political unrest affected the urban industries adversely. Many prosperous cities along with their trading centres were plundered and devastated. For instance, Delhi was plundered by Nadir Shah; Lahore, Delhi and Mathura by Ahmad Shah; Agra by the Jats; Surat and other cities of Gujarat and Deccan by the Marathas; Sarhind by the Sikhs so on and so forth.

Despite the deplorable situation, India remained a land of extensive manufacturer of handicrafts also whereby the artisans enjoyed worldwide fame. Cotton fabrics from Dacca and Bengal; Silk fabrics from Murshidabad (in present Bengal) and Agra; woolen shawls and carpets from Kashmir; jute articles; sugar; metallic works like arms, utensils, vases, shields etc deserve special
Friendly relation between the Hindus and the Muslims was a very healthy feature in the 18th Century India. Even though nobles and chiefs fought with one another incessantly, their fights and alliances were seldom based on religious biasness. Common people shared one another’s joy and sorrow irrespective of religious affiliations. The development of Urdu language and literature provided a new base for religious blending.

Though many historians agree with the restless situation during the aftermath of the Mughal Empire, yet many of them still opine while comparing with that of the British Era that Indian Economy was quite resilient and there was certain continuity in economic life in this pre-British 18th Century India. It somewhat led to the preconditions for a rapid growth of capitalism. The only thing that the country lacked was the technical approach especially in the fields of agriculture and transportation which have resulted in a different standing with that of the occident.

**3.2.4.1 PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY IN THE 18TH CENTURY INDIA:** Social and cultural life in 18th Century were marked by stagnation and dependence on the past. People got divided by religion, region, tribe, language and caste (Ibid: 45). Caste system played a vital role in the society. The *Brahmins* were the highest of all *Varnas* who monopolized all social prestige and privileges. Society was patriarchal (except certain areas of Kerala and Malabar region) in nature. The will of the male head of the family usually prevailed. Inter-caste marriages were forbidden. The menace of untouchability crept into the society. Child marriages were common among boys and girls. Dowry system was prevalent among the upper classes of Bengal and Rajputanas. Polygamy was common to ruling princes, big *zamindars* and better offs.

Commonly, women were denied her social position. They were expected to live as mothers and wives only. But these two roles were adorned and honoured in general; especially during wars and anarchy, women were seldom molested. *Purdah* was common to both Hindus and the Muslim women. Women belonging to lower socio-economic strata could not observe *purdah*, as they went out to earn their living. Women of the upper classes were not allowed to work outside.

Peasant women usually worked in the fields and the women of the poorer classes often worked outside their homes to supplement their family income.

Apart from all these, some of the social evils which affected the women most are as follows:
- Custom of ‘Sati’
- Forced celibacy of the widows
- Slavery and slave trade among women
- Seclusion of women
- Child marriage
- Female infanticide

3.2.4.1.a THE CUSTOM OF ‘SATI’: With regard to ‘Sati’, the most horrible, inhuman, barbarous act (sacrifice one’s life in the funeral pyre of her husband) which became a blind faith during this period had least possibility of eradication. The origin of ‘Sati’ remains in mystery. Probably, it resulted from a misinterpretation of the Vedas. Once it gained social recognition, the priestly class took advantage of it. Perhaps this was the method by which property and inheritance could be denied to the beneficiary (widow) and the family could retain its wealth. It was the hope of attaining the heaven which originally led the widows to experience the supreme ordeal. The family members near and dear ones, society and the leaders also did not objected in the performance of the ‘Sati’ out of similar belief.

It was the Europeans who revolted against this custom. The Danes at Serampore, the Dutches at Chinsurah and the French at Chandernagore did not allowed ‘Sati’ in their jurisdiction. The East India Company at Bombay tried to stop it during 1770-’80. The real opposition campaign against Sati began in the British occupied territories in the last quarter of the 18th Century. The Christian Missionaries along with some English officers raised their voices against it, but the Company’s Government was unprepared to offend the Hindu sentiment by their interference, so it continued.

3.2.4.1.b FORCED CELIBACY OF THE WIDOWS: Widow re-marriage which prevailed in the ancient times was abandoned and came to be regarded as a sin. A widow could either become a ‘Sati’ or had to lead a life full of restrictions and harsh rules which few could defy. Following ‘Manusamhita’, Chopra et al (1974) writes about the strict duties of the widows, which were defined as ‘Let her emaciate her body by living voluntarily on pure flowers, roots and fruits but let her not when her lord is deceased, even pronounce the name of another man; let her continue till death forgiving all injuries, performing harsh duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure and
cheerfully practicing the incomparable rules of virtue which have been followed by such women as were devoted to only one husband’. Thus the life of a widow was colourless, adjusted to the routine of fasting, devotion, prayer and pious works.

So far as the austere celibacy of the widows was not a social evil. But things became real problem with the spread of ‘Kulinism’ leading to child marriages with the consequent increase of child widows. Kulins were those Brahmins who were honoured by the king of Bengal (as early as 11th Century) who possessed excellent qualities of head and heart. Their families became known as ‘Kulin Families’. In due course of time, the descendants of these Kulin Families had nothing to do with the past virtues of Kulinism yet occupied superior position in the social ladder. So, to achieve Kulinism, inferior Brahmins had temptation of giving their daughters to them along with a handsome dowry amount. Thus, the Kulin groom fell into material lust and married a host of brides. As Chopra et al (1974: 86) writes “By the 18th Century, such an observed system of polygamy assumed monstrous proportions. On a single day a Kulin could marry two, three or four wives. In his life time he could marry dozens of wives, even a hundred…there was no upper limit for Kulin; he could be of any age. Similarly, the brides of the same man could be as tender in age as possible.” Little girls did not even know about their husbands during marriages, became widows on death of those unknown or even unseen persons. For them the laws of widowhood constituted a code of tyranny. Although, virgin widows were allowed to re-marry earlier, but with the passage of time, this practice was abandoned. Old widows commanded some kind of respect in the Hindu joint family. But the younger widows received ill treatment. They were thought to be in auspicious. Bengal and Bombay Presidency showed most unbearable conditions of the widows.

3.2.4.1.c SLAVERY AND SLAVE TRADE AMONG WOMEN: Another social evil which had its prevalence during this period was ‘Slavery’. Slaves were of two categories – the domestic and bonded labours (those who were tied to the lands). The latter could be sold along with the sale of the land from one owner to another. It was due to utmost poverty, natural calamities, economic distress, famines etc. people sold their children in lieu of money. But these slaves remained in a better position than their counterparts in Europe and America. Slaves were treated as hereditary servants. They were allowed to marry among themselves but their children were considered as free citizens. The Rajput Kayasthas and Khatris usually kept female domestic slaves.
Grover and Grover (2002: 27) opine that slavery and slave trade got a new dimension with the entry of the Europeans in India, particularly the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English. The prices of slaves varied with age. Adult slaves were high priced (@ Rs. 15 - Rs. 20), Rs. 12 – Rs. 20 for a boy of 16 years, Rs. 5 – Rs. 10 for a girl of 10 years. Slaves were purchased from Bengal, Assam and Bihar and were sent to European and American markets for sale. Trafficking of slaves got abolished by a proclamation issued on 1789.

3.2.4.1.d SECLUSION OF WOMEN: The position of women during 18th Century was far from being satisfactory. Total seclusion resulted in their physical and mental degeneration. Purdah system was common to both the Hindus and the Muslim women. The freedom and status which the Indian women enjoyed in ancient times were beyond the range of imagination (Chopra, Puri and Das, 1974: 82).

Apart from the Rajputana elites, girls were not allowed to go to the educational institutions. Generally, in the richer Rajputana families girls received some kind of elementary education. Among the Vaishnavas of Bengal, girls were imparted some education so that they could read religious texts. Women belonging to lower socio-economic strata could not maintain seclusion since they had to go out to earn. Women in towns and cities were more confined to their homes. Complete dependence upon men was encouraged in order to have the control over paternal property. So, in congruence goes the famous saying – ‘protection of women by their father in the childhood; by their husbands in their youth and by their sons at the old age’ – dwelled in the minds of people through centuries. The system of denial of rights and property to women made them economically weak and dependent on men. Thus, their low economic status in the society remained responsible for their misery and suffering.

3.2.4.1.e CHILD MARRIAGE: In ancient India, girls used to select their husbands and exercise their discretion. Child marriages were not the general rule. But as the society started following ‘Manusamhita’, wherein the prescribed age of marriage for girls was 8 -12 years, the child marriages became an established custom. Parents felt assured and comfortable with the custom of early marriage so far the moral purity of the society was maintained. Moreover, the grand parents or even great grandparents remained keen to see the marriage of the younger ones, also acted as a strong factor in favour of child marriages.
Emperor Akbar disliked the custom and tried to abolish it but was not successful as it got deeply rooted. As a result of the custom, the growth of the population and physical degeneration of women proceeded simultaneously. As Chopra et al (1974: 85) writes, ‘Motherhood at the tender age, with numerous sickly children around her, made the Indian woman the epitome of misery and distress…..there was no concept of a proper match as is understood in modern times. The difference of age between the bride and the groom was of no account’.

Child marriages also remained responsible for generation of another social evil i.e. a large number of child widows in the society. These widows received scant attention and had to abide by harsh rules of forced celibacy. Some of them could escape the misery by becoming ‘Sati’ or self immolation while majority had to toil their miserable life.

3.2.4.1. FEMALE INFANTICIDE: Killing of girl child at their birth was not a common custom but the most worst aspect was that it was practiced secretly. It prevailed among the wealthier section of the society in certain areas of India. It was common to the Royal family of Benares; the Jadejas of Kathiawar and Kutchchh; Kuchwah Rajputs who resided near Allahabad; the Chauhan Rajputs and the Pathak Ahirs of Mainpuri. The Bedis of Jalandhar were so accustomed to it that anybody who kept daughter was excommunicated (Chopra et al, 1974: 83-84). The chief reason behind female infanticide was primarily economic. Parents killed their girl child as it was imperative to spend large amount of money for the marriage of a daughter. To some it was of great disgrace to have a female child in the family. The menace of dowry/bride price was also a driving force for crime. To some, it became a method to maintain the racial purity also.

The methods of killing the female infants were extremely barbaric and brutal. Sometimes the child was killed immediately after birth by filling her mouth with cowdung or by immersing the head in cow’s milk or even by coiling the umbilical chord around her neck. Several other methods like administration of a pill of opium or a juice made from poisonous plant extract or by causing a naval injury were employed.

3.2.4.2 THE SCENARIO OF EDUCATION IN INDIA DURING 18TH CENTURY: Education was not completely neglected in the 18th Century India, but it was on the whole defective (Chandra, Bipan. 2011: 44). It was vocational and based on Varna system. Education revolved round the ideology of culture not literacy and remained far away from the rapid
development of the occident. Knowledge was confined to Literature, Law, Religion, Philosophy and Logic. There were no scope to study the Physical and Natural Sciences, Technology and Geography. Ancient learning was encouraged. Among the Hindus, higher education was based on Sanskrit learning which was imparted through ‘tols’ in Bengal, Kasi and Benares area. Persian education was popularized since it was the official language. Elementary learning was imparted through town or village schools known as ‘Pathsalas’. Among the Muslims, the ‘Maktabs’ were situated in mosques. The school level learning included three fold training of reading, writing and arithmetic. Even Warren Hastings appreciated the educational scenario in general; he remarked in 1813 that ‘Indians had in general superior endowments in reading, writing and arithmetic than the common people of any nation in Europe’. Thus education though inadequate by the modern standards yet sufficed the way of the then social living. But the darker side of this was that the girls were given scant attention regarding education. Only those of the higher classes were rarely given education.

Vernacular languages like Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi, Marathi, Telugu and Tamil greatly flourished. The Christian Missionaries set up the printing press in India and brought vernacular editions of the Bible in the 18th Century.

3.2.5 PENETRATION OF THE EUROPEANS TO INDIA AND THE BRITISH CONQUEST: As the old overseas trade routes between Orient and Occident came under Turkish control after the Ottoman conquest of Asia Minor and the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the merchants of Venice and Genoa monopolized the trade between Europe and Asia and refused to let new nation states of Western Europe (particularly Spain and Portugal) to have any trade share through these routes. Therefore, in order to bypass the Turkish hostility, they wanted to open new trade relations with the east. The new advances of the ship building and the science of navigation generated the spirit of adventure and it was followed by an era of geographical discoveries. In 1492 Columbus (of Spain) reached America and in 1498 Vasco da Gama (of Portugal) discovered new route to India. This led the doors open for the western traders who carried on with the trade for the next two centuries. The Portuguese occupied Goa and established trade centres at Cochin, Daman and Diu in India. They established their dominion over the entire Asian coast from Hormuz in Persian Gulf to Malacca in Malaysia and Indonesia. The Portuguese control over the seas in India survived for a century because their establishment was outside the dominion of the Mughal Empire and hence was out of Mughal influence.
During the latter half of 16th Century, England, Holland and France waged fierce struggle against Portuguese and Spanish monopoly of the world trade. The English and the Dutch managed to use the ‘Cape of Good Hope’ route to India. The Dutch paid much attention to spice producing lands of Indonesia (Java, Sumatra etc.) while the British were interested in India, Sri Lanka and Malaya. The English merchants were swayed by the lucrative trade in spices, silk, gold, pearls, drugs, porcelain and ebony and wanted to participate in the trade. Thus, this led to the formation of the East India Company by Queen Elizabeth on 31st December 1600. In 1608, Captain Hawkins was sent to Jahangir’s court to obtain royal favours in establishing a trading depot at Surat. The Company was granted permission to open factories at several places on the West Coast. The English were not satisfied with the concession and Sir Thomas Roe reached the Mughal court (1615) and succeeded to get an ‘Imperial Farmaan’ to trade and establish factories in all parts of the Mughal Empire. By 1623, the East India Company had established factories and trading posts at Surat, Broach, Ahmadabad, Agra and Masulipattam. From the very beginning, it tried to combine trade and diplomacy with war and control over the territory where their factories were situated. Hostilities between the English and the Mughal Emperor broke out in 1686 as the English sacked Hugli (Bengal) and declared war against the latter. The English misjudged the Mughal strength and got disastrously defeated. Once again they appealed for trade concessions and expressed their willingness to trade under the protection of the Indian rulers. Aurangzeb permitted them to resume trade on payment of 150,000 rupees as compensation. In 1698, the East India Company acquired the zamindari of the three villages of Sutanuti, Gobindapur and Kolkata; Fort William was built and the three villages grew up into a city which came to be known as Calcutta. In 1717, the privileges in favour of the Company were extended to Deccan and Gujarat by the Mughal Emperor Farukh Shiyar. In Bengal, the Company was neither allowed to rule Calcutta independently nor were they granted to strengthen fortifications at the city. Here, the East India Company remained a mere zamindar. Meanwhile, the trade excelled beyond their imagination. Entrepreneurs, merchants and bankers were attracted to the cities of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. The population over these places also grew rapidly.

The decay of the central authority (after the downfall of the Mughals) was revealed by the invasion of Nadir Shah. But the powerful Marathas did not let foreign penetration to the western India. In Bengal, the strict rule of Alivardi Khan restricted the foreigners either. Only it was in the Southern India situations were becoming favourable. After the Dutch and the Portuguese
were eliminated, the contest regarding trade became polarized between the French and the British. Though there was initial success under Dupleix, the French Governor General at Pondicherry, but later on the British excelled and took over the former. During their struggle with the French and their Indian allies, the British learnt a few lessons:

- Owing to the absence of nationalism in the country, the internal quarrels among the native rulers could make them advantageous to materialize their political schemes.
- The western trained infantry could easily defeat the Indian army who lacked the skill of handling modern artillery.
- Since the Indians lacked nationalism, their men could be employed or hired by any one paying well.

With this experience, the Britishers set out to create a powerful army consisting of Indian Sepoys (soldiers) officered by Englishmen. With this army and the vast resources of Indian trade and territories under command, the East India Company embarked on an era of wars and territorial expansion.

3.2.6 THE ERA OF SOCIAL AWAKENING AND SPREAD OF MODERN EDUCATION: For the first sixty years of the British Era, the chief aim of the East India Company was to excel in trade and to pocket off the profit. They took little interest in administration. Thus, their efforts were also very meager for bringing reformation to the Indian society.

The British were more successful in introducing modern education aided by the Christian Missionaries and a large number of enlightened Indians. Modern schools, colleges and hospitals were opened in the country. Warren Hastings set up Calcutta Madrassa in 1781 for the study and teaching of Muslim Law and related subjects. In 1791, Jonathan Duncan started a Sanskrit College at Varanasi to study the Hindu Law and Philosophy. Both of these institutions were designed to provide a regular supply of qualified Indians to help in the administration in the Company’s Rule (because cheap supplies of clerks to the Company helped in the expansion of the markets for the British manufacturers in India). The Missionaries believed that modern education would destroy the faith of the people in their own religions and would lead them to adopt Christianity. The British wanted to use modern education to strengthen the foundation of
their political authority in the country. On the contrary, the enlightened Indians believed that modern education would be the best remedy for social, economic and political ills of the prevalent Indian society. In 1835, the government of India made English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges particularly in Bengal (following the ‘Macaulay’s Minute’). A few schools and colleges were opened thereby. Wood’s Dispatch of 1854 was another important step in the development of education in India. The Dispatch directed into the establishment of the departments of Education in all provinces and affiliating Universities were set up in 1857 at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

The Indian traditional system of education gradually withered away for lack of official support and a particular official announcement (in 1844) which defined the eligibility criteria for government employment that the applicants should possess the knowledge of English. The then literacy level was hardly better. Moreover, the emphasis on English language as medium of instruction in place of Indian Languages also prevented the spread of education to the masses. Furthermore, the students had to pay fees in the schools and colleges, so education was costly and became a virtual monopoly of the richer classes and city dwellers. Apart from this the total neglect of women’s education was the lacuna in early education policy. The Government probably did not wanted to hurt the orthodoxies of the Indians regarding female education and also because of the fact that they could not be employed as clerks in the Government jobs; they took least interest in educating the girls.

3.2.6.1 THE BENGAL SCENARIO: In 1928 Raja Rammohan Roy founded a new religious society, the ‘Brahma Sabha’, later came to be known as the ‘Brahma Samaj’, whose purpose was to purify Hinduism and preach Monotheism (i.e. belief in one God). The Brahma Samaj laid emphasis on human dignity, opposed idolatry and criticized the practice of Sati. The principles of Brahma Samaj were based on ‘reason’, the Vedas and the Upanishads. Rammohan Roy also condemned the subjugation of women and opposed the prevalent idea that women were inferior to men. He also rebelled against polygamy and the miserable life of the widows. To raise the status of women he demanded that they be given the right of inheritance and property. It was only after Rammohan Roy and other enlightened Indians and Missionaries who agitated against the pathetic and monstrous custom of ‘Sati’. William Bentinck deserves praise for outlawing ‘Sati’ in 1829. Regulations prohibiting infanticide had been passed in1795 and in 1802 but they
were sternly enforced only by Bentinck and Hardinge. In the field of education Rammohan was helped by David Hare, Alexander Duff, Dwarkanath Tagore and many more.

A radical trend arose among the Bengali intellectuals during the late 1820s – 1830s. Its leader and inspirer was an Anglo-Indian fellow named Henry Vivian Derozio, who taught at the Hindu College from 1826 – 1831. Though he was young, yet he attached to himself a host of bright adoring students. He inspired the students to think rationally and freely; praise the quality of truth, liberty and freedom. His followers were known as the Derozians and Young Bengal. The Young Bengal was passionate advocates of women’s rights and demanded education in favour of them. The Brahma Samaj included the followers of Rammohan and Derozio and other independent thinkers like Debendranath Tagore, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Akshay Kumar Dutta. The Brahma Samaj actively supported the movement for widow remarriage, abolition of polygamy, women’s education, improvement of the ryot’s (peasants) condition and so on.

Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the great scholar and reformer dedicated his entire life to the cause of social reform. He was a great humanist who possessed sympathy for the poor, unfortunate and oppressed. He evolved a new methodology of teaching Sanskrit. He wrote a Bengali Primer which is followed till date. As a principal, he opened the gates of the Sanskrit College to the non-Brahmin students. He introduced western thought in Sanskrit to make it modern and contemporary. He contributed a lot to uplift women in the social arena. He waged a long struggle in favour of widow re-marriage as he was moved by the sufferings of the Hindu widows. In 1856 the government of India passed the Widow Re-marriage Act enabling Hindu widows to re-marry. As Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and other reformers carried a prolonged agitation in favour of this measure, under his supervision, the first widow remarriage took place in Calcutta on 7th December 1856, after the enactment of the Widow Re-marriage Act. Vidyasagar also protested against child marriage and polygamy. He was in favour of women’s education. As a secretary to the Bethune School, he was one of the pioneers of higher education for women.

3.2.6.2 THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN THE WESTERN INDIA: Bal Shastri Jambekar was one of the first reformers in Bombay who attacked the bramhalical orthodoxy and tried to reform Hinduism. The ‘Paramhansa Mandali’ founded in 1849 believed in Monotheism and was opposed to the caste system. They were in favour of widow re-marriage and women’s education.
In this regard, Jotiba Phule, Vishnu Shastri Pundit, Jagannath Sarkar Seth, Bhau Daji and Karsondas Mulji deserve special mention. Dadabhai Naoroji was another leading social reformer in Bombay. His association with the reformist activities related to the Zoroastrian religion and Parsi Law Association was significant. He raised voice for women’s status and for uniform laws of inheritance and marriage for the Parsis.

The significance of the 19th Century reformers lay not in their numbers but in the fact that they were the trend setters with a vision of making a new India.

**3.2.7 THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE 19TH CENTURY INDIA:** So far as the status of women in India was concerned James Mill observed that the degraded condition of Indian women was taken as an indicator of India’s inferior status in the hierarchy of Indian civilizations (Bandyopadhyay, S. 2015: 381). Thus the degraded condition of the women in Indian society became the major focus for social progress and modernity. The movement for female education was started by three groups of people (according to Geraldine Forbes): the British rulers, Indian male reformers and the educated Indian women (Ibid: 383). The initiative was taken in Calcutta by men like Radhakanta Deb and the School Book Society, later on by Keshab Chandra Sen and Brahma Samaj; in Western India by Mahadev Govind Ranade and Prarthana Samaj; in the North by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj and in Madras by Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society.

Meanwhile the first spark of the National Movement was kindled by the ‘Sepoy Mutiny’ in 1857. As a response to that Rani Laxmi Bai, the queen of Jhansi rebelled against the ‘Doctrine of Lapse’. Another resentful step was put forward by Begum Hazrat Mahal, the queen of Awadh and the first wife of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. She took the charge of Awadh, seized Lucknow and rebelled against the East India Company. Later she retreated to Nepal. The Begums of Bhopal were notable female rulers of this period who did not use *Purdah* and were trained in martial arts. Chandramukhi Basu, Kadambini Ganguly, Anandi Gopal Joshi, Pandita Ramabai, Sister Subbalaksmi, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain were most prominent women of this period.

**3.2.8 WOMEN IN THE 20TH CENTURY INDIA IN THE BACKDROP OF NATIONALIST MOVEMENT:** By the turn of the century, a number of middle class women became educated though their existence in the social milieu did not improve. As Sekhar Bandyopadyay (2015: 384-385) writes ‘The colonial government wanted female education as it
wanted the Indian civil servants to be married to educated wives, so that they did not have to face the psychological trauma of split household. Also English educated mothers were expected to breed royal subjects……this new concept of womanhood was a fine blending of self sacrificing Hindu wife and the Victorian helpmate. Education thus far from being emancipatory, further confined women to idealized domestic roles as good wives and better mothers…..the colonial state too wanted to confine women to domesticity.’ In the lower-middle class ‘Sanskritization’ did have an adverse effect. Purity of women became an index of caste status. Purity was attained through seclusion of women, forced celibacy and ascetic widowhood especially evidenced in Bengal and Maharashtra. In the cultural sphere, women were marginalized and they gradually lost their autonomy. In the early 20th Century, the migration trail had a rural to urban trend. Males migrated to the cities in search of industrial employment. Their families remained at home. When the rural resources failed to support them, the females migrated. In utmost poverty they took up jobs at the cotton and jute mills, in tea plantations and even in coal mines. In the service sector also their domestic role had been figured as most vital – their work was considered as ‘supplementary’ to the family income and less important. This had a reflection in the wage rate – eventually women were paid less than their counterparts. Vehement protests against the deprivation of rights and inequality yielded no result. Motherhood and domesticity were valued more than their economic autonomy.

In 1875 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote the song ‘Bande Mataram’ which was later on incorporated in his novel ‘Anandamath’ (1882) which invoked the feeling of ‘Motherland’ among the nationalist devotees. Later on the potentiality in this phrase was perceived and was used by the leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru to signify the country and the nation. Abanindranath’s painting of the ‘Bharat Mata’ (1904-’05) symbolized the cultural essence of Indian spiritualism. The Mother Goddess has been figured as more serene and gentle, offering prosperity and protection.

The Swadeshi Movement gradually involved women in its purview. The boycott of foreign made articles and goods for example nylon sarees, clothes, glass bangles etc and observation of non-cooking days as a ritual of protest revealed the hidden power of the women in this arena. Reference of Smt. Basanti Devi, wife of Chittaranjan Das would be very appropriate regarding this issue. As she went along the streets of Calcutta convening people to participate in the ‘foreign goods boycott’ movement, thousands of people responded to her call. After World War
I, two ladies made prominent appearance in Indian politics. Annie Besant who was the president of the Theosophical Society and the founder of the Home Rule League was elected as the President of the Congress in 1917. Sarojini Naidu, the England educated poet in the same year led a delegation to London to meet secretary of state Montagu, to demand female franchise. In 1925, she was too elected as the President of the National Congress. M.K. Gandhi realized women’s power of self less sacrifice and tried to harness it in the service of the nation. When non-cooperation movement started in 1921, Gandhiji prescribed a limited role to the women, but they claimed for a better active role. In December 1921, Basanti Devi, Urmila Devi and Sunity Devi participated in open demonstration on the streets of Calcutta and were arrested there upon. Till then the ladies from respectable middle-class families got themselves associated with the national movement. Now, Gandhiji tried to entail the marginalized down trodden Devadasis and prostitutes in the freedom struggle. During his Dandi March, it was noticed that his meetings were attended by thousands of women. Particularly in Allahabad, Lucknow, Delhi and Lahore hundreds of women got involved in the nationalist demonstrations. Women movement was most organized in Bombay, most militant in Bengal and limited in Madras. Among the women, some of the prominent figures were Bhikhaji Cama, Pritilata Waddedar and Kalpana Dutta under Surya Sen; Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kriplani, Kasturba Gandhi, Capt. Latika Ghosh, Lakshmi Sahgal, the entire regiment of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose deserve special mention. Women’s active participation in the nationalist movement (i.e. in public space) became accepted by 1930s and 1940s. Women successfully earned a change in the mindset and attitude of the people as they were now being accepted socially without any stigma even after they were released from imprisonment during the course of freedom struggle. Bandyopadhyay (2015) has rightly explained that ‘Men felt confident that their women would be safe in Gandhi’s hands….women participated because their male guardians wanted them to. In most cases women came from families where men were already involved in Gandhian movement. So, in their case, their public role was an extension of their domestic roles as wives, mothers, sisters or daughters…. ’. He further has observed that though the nationalist movement has touched the entire nation in all the spheres but women’s participation remained largely as urban phenomenon. Many women organizations starting from educational institutions, local organizations to a number of political bodies for example Des Sevika Sangha, Rastriya Stree Sangha etc came up. In 1917, Women’s Indian Association
(Madras) was initiated by enlightened English ladies. In 1925 National Council of Women in India was formed as a branch of the International Council of Women. In 1927, All India Women’s Conference took place as a non-political body addressing women education. In Bengal, the Bangiya Nari Samaj raised voice in favour of women franchise, Bengal Women’s Education League demanded compulsory elementary and secondary education against illicit trafficking of women (Bandyopadyay, 2015: 393). By the turn of the 1940s, the nature and role of Indian women in the nationalist movement shifted from the mythic ‘Sita’ as portrayed by Gandhiji to the more heroic ‘Rani of Jhansi’ fighting as comrade-in-arms with male soldiers.

Among the Muslims, women too participated in the ongoing trend. Feminist Urdu literature contested traditional boundaries. The Muslim women also got a new political space and claimed for their rights like female suffrage. As the Pakistan movement gained momentum in 1940s, more and more Muslim women were sucked into it as election candidates. To many of them it was a liberating experience. Though it did not emancipate the women, nevertheless, it brought an acceptance of a public role for women in the Muslim society.

During the partition, worst moment for the sub-continental womanhood was brought in. women both Hindus and Muslims entered into the ‘continuum of violence’, where they could either be conquered or destroyed. They were ruthlessly raped, mutilated and humiliated by men of ‘Other’ community. To prevent the honour of their community, the stigmatized women either committed suicide instigated by their own family members or lived with a permanent memory of shame which they endured in silence.

Thus, it seems that women’s question in colonial India hardly received any priority that it deserved. Although a handful were able to attain education, got into the freedom struggle and were successful to attain a position in the public arena, yet emancipation in the true sense of the term was not reached. Nevertheless, towards the end of the Colonial Period many women got into higher professions like Medicine, Law, Education etc earning lucrative salaries and enjoying social respect. They oscillated between their public and private lives (chiefly oriented towards the household chores and child care). For the rest of the Indian womanhood, changes were even less perceptible and voices less audible.

3.2.9 THE WOMEN OF THE ROYAL FAMILY OF KOCH BIHAR (STUDY AREA): Far away from the rest of Bengal, Koch Bihar holds a unique and a diversified culture which owes its
origin to the long historical antecedence. Many scholars opine that Bengali Literature received royal patronage especially from the Narayani Dynasty which ruled ‘Koch Bihar’ for about 450 years (approx). The royal support had helped in the development of a strong literary culture with its own identity.

The rule at Koch Bihar did not remain interference free. Too much of Bhutiya and Mughal interference had been evidenced. The Bhutiya interference reached its height during the rule of Maharaja Dhairyendranarayan as he was made captive and sent to Punakha via Buxa (mentioned in Chapter II). After some years, the young king Dharendranarayan (son of Dhairyendranarayan) and the Nazir Khagendranarayan met Charles Purling (the then collector of Rangpore) and sought help for the recovery of the fort at Koch Bihar and the release of Dhairyendranarayan. A pact was signed between Dharendranarayan and the East India Company in April 5, 1773 for this purpose. This treaty was a stepping stone towards the English influence in Koch Bihar. This had opened the door of British interference to administration and modern education for the youngsters of the royal family. Although the British influence had ushered in the process of ‘Westernization’ yet this cannot be designated to bring total goodness to the royal household. The wave of Social Revivalism during the 19th Century swayed Koch Bihar. As a result, women in Koch Bihar like the rest of the country started coming out of their confinement. In this connection mention must be made of the Queens and the Princesses who have contributed both in the field of Education as well as Administration. The womenfolk were good administrators; out of interest and sometimes out of compulsion, since many of the kings were minor. The queens were the real guardians to the minor kings looking after their education as well as the state affairs. Mention may be made of Bhanumati who kept her prominence by becoming the political advisor to king Naranarayan. Other women proficient in administrative works and politics were Kameshwari Devi and Gayatri Devi.

Their activities have mostly remained behind the ‘purdah’ which might be the manifestation of patriarchy. Though the age old traditional ‘purdah’ system was in practice yet there was a wonder world behind it where the ladies lived. Many restrictions were imposed on women and they required abiding by them in order to maintain their stature.

After mid 19th Century, the social progress and development touched their world. They started to denounce their confinement of the concrete walls of the Palace. Education became important for
all irrespective of gender. The royal family was fortunate enough to become enlightened with the 
power of education as the youngsters were given equal opportunity to pursue education outside 
Koch Bihar especially at Shantiniketan (for the girls) or even outside India (popularly in London 
and occasionally at Paris). The ladies now became efficient enough to write biographies and auto 
bioographies portraying the innate picture of their family as well as the then social scenario at 
large. Brindeshwari Devi deserves special mention since her ‘Beharodanta’ laid the path. Sunity 
Devi, Nirupama Devi and Gayatri Devi were the luminaries representing the perfect combination 
of education, chaste and royal dignity.

Initially it could be seen that the marriages were usually fixed by the mother figures of the royal 
house hold but gradually there came up instances (of Indira Devi and that of Gayatri Devi) which 
reveals that decision making ability with regard to marriages were slowly creeping into the royal 
court yard. Gayatri Devi writes in her autobiography about the free environment within the Palace 
where the princesses could learn outdoor sports like polo, horse riding, elephant riding apart 
from the training of home management. Occasionally, they even went out for hunting. The ladies 
often visited foreign countries too. They also travelled all over India.

The internal scenario of the royal palace of Koch Bihar may be parted into two phases: (1) upto 
Brindeshwari Devi (i.e. till 1876) and (2) After Brindeshwari Devi till the termination of the 
Narayani dynasty and the merger of the state of Koch Bihar with the Dominion Government of 
India (The Cooch Behar Merger Agreement dated 28th August 1949 by Maharaja 
Jagaddipendranarayan).

3.2.9.1 THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD UPTO THE TIME OF BRINDESHWARI DEVI 
(1876):

HIRA DEVI & JIRA DEVI: Hira Devi and Jira Devi were married to Haridas Mondal, who 
resided at Chikangram (Goalpara district of present Assam). Thus polygamy was in practice in 
the then society. Both the sisters gave birth to two sons each. Jira gave birth to Chandan and 
Madan while Hira became the mother of Bishu and Sishu. Hira was a pious lady and worshipped 
Lord Shiva. A popular belief also says that ‘Bishu’ was born out of Lord Shiva’s grace. Bishu 
became known as ‘Biswasingha’ and was proclaimed king after Chandan’s rule. Though 
Chandan was the king prior to Biswasingha, yet he has been regarded as the founder king of the
Narayani Dynasty. Biswasingha did married to many women from kingdom far and near like Nepal, Kamrup, Kashmir, Kashi, Shanitpur, Mithila etc.

**Bhanumati:** He had three sons of whom Naranarayan got married to Bhanumati of Pandu near Gauhati in Assam. Bhanumati was very beautiful and intelligent at the same time. Narasingha, the eldest son of Maharaja Biswasingha was about to ascend the throne after his father’s death, but Bhanumati reminded him about the promise that Narasingha had made during her marriage. Narasingha thus abdicated the throne and Naranarayan became the king with Bhanumati the queen consort. Bhanumati took interest in administration and warfare. Even she acted as the political advisor to the king Naranarayan. Her assistance to the king resulted in the expansion of a very large empire which extended till the Chittagong sea board on one hand and up to Gauda on the other. She was a caring mother too. She gave special attention in the matters related to the education of her sons.

After Naranarayan’s death Lakshminarayan ascended the throne. He had 18 sons, therefore this indicate that he also had many wives.

After Lakshminarayan, Birnarayan became the king. Then Prannarayan, Modnarayan, Vasudevanarayan, Mahindranarayan, Rupnarayan, Upendranarayan, Devendranarayan ascended the throne successively. The detail of their family life especially about the queens has remained obscured.

**Kamteshwari Devi:** Kamteshwari Devi the wife of Dhairyendranarayan deserves special mention since she was known to have looked after the administrative matters as Dhairyendranarayan was a weak ruler. She was helped by Sarvananda Goswami. When Harendranarayan, the son of Dhairyendranarayan was made the king at a tender age, she produced documents of being the guardian to the minor king. She faced many problems regarding administration as Dhairyendranarayan was regarded as the ‘mad king’ but she was able to bring composedness and stability. The pact signed between the young king Dharendra and the East India Company in April 5, 1773 (mentioned above) for their support to drive out the Bhutiya interference as well as the release of Dhairyendranarayan, was completed by Kamteshwari Devi’s suggestions. After Dharendra’s death, Dhairyendranarayan was placed on the throne for the second time, but he was least interested in administrative matters. So, Kamteshwari Devi had to look into state affairs. When Dhairyendranarayan died, and his son
Harendranarayan was made the king at about 3 years of age, she took the responsibility of the child king’s education and administration simultaneously. She opposed Nazir Khagendranarayan in different matters as a result she and the boy king Harendranarayan were made captive and were imprisoned. During the imprisonment Harendranarayan caught hold of Chicken pox and with the help of Britishers they were freed. Kamteshwari Devi continued the administrative activities till Harendranarayan attained adulthood.

**KAMESHWARI DEVI AND BRINDESHWARI DEVI:** Maharaja Harendranarayan was succeeded by Sivendranarayan. Among his queens, Kameshwari Devi and Brindeshwari Devi had remained worth mentioning. Brindeshwari Devi was moderately structured dark complexioned lady while Kameshwari Devi was more beautiful. Both of them got married to the king on the same date. Kameshwari Devi was known as ‘Dangar Aye’ and Brindeshwari Devi was called ‘Bara Aye’ in the palace. Both the queen enjoyed very good relation with each other. Both of them played significant role during the childhood period of Narendranarayan as custodians and also as administrators after the death of Maharaja Sivedranarayan.

Brindeshwari Devi was fond of reading of the two great Indian Epics – the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*; besides this, she used to read the *Puranas* and the ancient scriptures. The literary works at the then Koch Bihar was translational in character and this provided a congenial environment to Brindeshwari Devi to practice literary culture. She wrote ‘Beharodanta’ in poetic verses which may be treated as an autobiography and also a historical account as well. She gave a vivid description of the royal family, the rites and rituals, marriages, use of ornaments, health condition of the Maharaja, condition of the state, Maharaja’s death and funeral rites, the ascent of Narendranarayan to the throne, education and administration. She also referred to her immense grief after her husband’s death and also portrayed her loneliness as her adoptive son went to Krishnanagar for education.

Kameshwari Devi took interest in administration on the other hand. Since Narendranarayan was a minor king, she used to look after all the state affairs. She recommended Nistarini Devi as the bride and later on the queen consort to Narendranarayan. In those days, the elderly women in the royal family used to search brides at their own choice for the growing princes; they were brought to the palace at early age and were trained in the royal culture so that they attain eligibility of becoming the queen in the future. Among the girls, the Maharaja used to get married to the most
eligible one (by following the rituals in detail) who was regarded as the queen consort; the rest of the eligible girls would exchange the garlands (Gandharva form of Marriage) with the Maharaja and would remain as queen of a lower status than the queen consort.

3.2.9.2 SUNITY DEVI AND THE BEGINNING OF THE MODERN ERA: After Narendranarayan’s death, his son Nripendranarayan was placed on the throne as the king at a very tender age. After the attainment of adulthood he was formally installed to the throne in 1883. He got married to Sunity Devi, the daughter of Keshab Ch. Sen, the renowned social reformer and the founder of the Brahma Samaj. Sunity Devi was a learned person and well versed in English, Bengali and Sanskrit at the same time. She also learnt ethics, religious scriptures and developed the skill of judgment. She was married to Nripendranarayan when she was only 13 years of age, but soon after the marriage the king went abroad for higher education while she returned to her parents for the time being. Since 1880 the couple started to stay in the Koch Bihar Palace. Nripendranarayan’s reign can be earmarked to have entered into the modern period. Sunity Devi remained responsible for the developmental activities carried on in Koch Bihar. Some of them included: the establishment of the railways, improvement of the road links, spread of education in general and female education in particular, provision for drinking water, renovation works of old temples and buildings, development of the town area, facilities for higher education etc. Sunity Devi also remained connected with the eminent personalities of the then Bengal which contributed to the cultural environment of the Palace as well as that of the state. Among the luminaries, mention may be made of Rabindranath Tagore, Devendranath Tagore, Swarnakumari devi, Haraprasad Shashtri, Asit Halder, Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal, Gurusaday Dutta, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, Suadamini Dhar, Lilabati Mitra, Sarat Kumari Devi, Bipin Ch. Paul, Syed Amir Ali, Upendra Kishore Ray Chaudhuri and so on. ‘Bharat Mahila Samaj’ was established which took interest in the development of the women folk. Sunity Devi was very humble and a pious lady. At the same time, she held modern view to life. She had to accept many customs prevalent in the palace (like the purdah), but she was able to introduce modern way of life. She stopped the ‘Rudali’ custom in the palace. She also accompanied the king to the foreign tours. Sunity Devi was an eminent person of Literature also. She wrote many plays and acts based on the stories of the great epics. Rati Babu’s School was renamed as ‘Sunity College’ after she became the patron of the institution in 1890. This was again named as ‘Sunity Academy’ in August 22, 1916. She wrote 9 Bengali books some of them are: ‘Amrita Bindu’(two volumes), ‘Kathakatar Gaan’, ‘Jharer Dola’, ‘Sahana’, ‘Sishu Keshab’, ‘Shivanath’
etc. Among the English writings, the important works are- ‘The Rajput Princess’, ‘Nine Ideal Women’, ‘Bengal Dacoits and Tigers’, ‘Autobiography of an Indian Princess’, ‘Prayers’ etc. In her autobiography, she presented her life story to the readers. She also mentioned about her personal life, marriage, life in Koch Bihar Palace vividly.

**NIRUPAMA DEVI:** Nirupama Devi was a gem in the world of Literature and contributed with most prominence. She was married to the third son of Sunity Devi – Kumar Victor Nityendranarayan at 16 years of age. She wrote her first poetry at 11 years. Many of her verses were based on patriotic theme and her matured expressions reflected her competence. She also got engaged in the developmental activities for the people of Koch Bihar. The Koch Bihar Sahitya Sabha was established in 1895 to boost up literary activities in Bengali. Victor Nityendranarayan became the president of Sahitya Sabha and it was decided that the organization would start the re-publication of the magazine named ‘Paricharika’ which used to get published in Keshab Ch. Sen’s Nababidhan Sabha. Nirupama Devi was given the responsibility of the editorial work. It was all because of Nirupama Devi, the society at large got to know about ‘Koch Bihar’ which had remained as a pocket area so far. Through ‘Paricharika’ the literary activities pertaining to Koch Bihar got spread to the rest of Bengal as well as to the whole world. The contributors to ‘Paricharika’ included Tagore, Akshay Kumar Maitra, Kabi Sekhar Kalidas Ray, Sabitriprasanna Chattopadhyay, Sarat Ch. Chattopadhyay, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Kumud Ranjan Mallik, Krishna Bihari Gupta, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Roy, Banda Ali Miah, Banaphul, Krishna Dayal Basu, Mahim Ch. Thakur, Ramananda Chattopadhyay, Pramatha Chowdhury, Annadasankar Ray so on and so forth. Among the women authors Priyangbada Devi, Hemnalini Devi, Prasannamayee Devi, Shailabala Ghosh, Indira Devi Chaudhurani, Mrinalini Devi, Niharbala Devi, Mohini Sengupta, Prafullamayee Devi, Amiyabala Devi deserve special mention. This magazine became regularly published for the next eight years till Nirupama Devi got divorced in 1925 and she started living at Shantiniketan.

**INDIRA DEVI:** Indira Devi was the princess of Gaekwar. She fell in love with Maharaja Jitendranarayan and got married to him in 1913 in London. Her parents disliked her choice as she was chosen for the prince of Gwalior who held a much raised stature. But she was not happy of becoming the queen of Gwalior, as he was much older than her and also he had many queens. Later her parents accepted her marriage. Afterwards she came to India and learnt Bangali language and used to read books in Bengali, mostly those written by Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra. She also read many books and magazines in English. She used to ride horses and
enjoyed going hunting with her children. She also listened to the lectures and held discussions with the learned *Pundits*. She also looked into the matters of education of her children. Individual tutors and governesses were appointed for the daughters. She also started the system of pocket money to the daughters. Indira Devi had three daughters: Illa, Ayesha and Maneka and two sons.

**ILLA DEVI:** Illa Devi was the eldest daughter of Indira Devi and was born in 1914. She went abroad for education. In Paris she mastered Art and Home Management. She further studied in Shantiniketan. She was a versatile and could play Piano, Flute, Violin and Spanish. She loved riding horses and elephants. Even she learnt cycling and driving. She used to play table tennis and polo. Her hand works especially knitting, tailoring and embroidering deserve special mention. She was fluent in English as well as in the local dialect of Koch Bihar. She had a modern outlook to life.

**GAYATRI DEVI:** Gayatri Devi was born in 1919 in London. She was given the name ‘Ayesha’ by her mother Indira Devi. Later on she was renamed as Gayatri. Since childhood she got the essence of both the Indian and Western cultures and developed a strong affinity towards education for women. She learnt about the household activities and studied Home Science, got training in Music and Sports. She got admitted in Shantiniketan in 1934 and learned typing, shorthand and Home Science. She qualified matriculation and went for higher education. Gayatri Devi fell in love with Sawai Jay Singh, the Prince of Jaipur who was already married for twice. Indira Devi initially did not give her consent for their marriage but later she agreed. They got married in May 9, 1940.

After her marriage, she took interest in the developmental works at Jaipur. She planned for education, health services, trade – commerce, sculpture and overall cultural upliftment. She started a girls’ school in 1943 and also established Red Cross Society. Gayatri Devi also pursued politics in later part of her life. She was elected as the Member of Parliament. She took on to the renovation works of the heritage buildings in Rajasthan. In 1972, she was imprisoned by the Cofepose Law. By this time, she lost her husband. She was released from the imprisonment later. She did much for the development of Cooch Behar also. She donated large amounts of money for the renovation works of the temples in Cooch Behar. She wrote her autobiography titled ‘The Princess Remembers’ with proficiency.
**MENAKA DEVI:** Menaka Devi was youngest of all three sisters. She was very beautiful and quiet natured. She was a pious lady also.

After the death of Jagaddipendranarayan, Virajendranarayan (son of Jagaddipendranarayan’s brother Indrajitendranarayan) became the crownless and kingdom less king in 1970. He died in 1992. With his death the Narayani dynasty reached its termination.

Thus it may be concluded that the women folk at the ‘Koch Bihar Palace’ got metamorphosed with time. Westernization had touched their spirits and they had assimilated western culture having ethical roots planted in the Indian value system. From the period of Sunity Devi, more freedom crept into the interior of the Palace. The Maharajas came into contact with the princesses of different states and also married them. Marriages out of own selection replaced the former method of bride selection. The women folk contributed much to the field of Literature and showed competence as authoress of diversified fields. Therefore as women in the then society can be regarded as the symbol of progress not only for the period they belonged but also for the years to come.

**3.3 INDIAN WOMEN IN THE POST-MODERN ERA:** The low status of women in India upto late 1940s was the outcome of illiteracy, economic dependence, religious prohibitions, caste restrictions, lack of female leadership and above all the attitude of the males. Once Gandhiji questioned that ‘…if you make half the population of a country a mere play thing of the other half, an encumbrance on others, how will you ever make progress?’ (a speech at the foundation stone laying of the Mahila Vidyapitha, Allahabad, 31st March 1928; Menon, 2008:246). Thus social progress would never be achieved if both the constituent population of any country is equally equipped on equal standing. The relationship between the two should be complementary.

During the freedom struggle, the woman folk stepped out from their household confinement and participated in the same with prominence. As Nehru remarked ‘the call of freedom had always a double meaning for them, and the enthusiasm and energy with which they threw themselves into the struggle had no doubt their springs in the vague and hardly conscious, but nevertheless, intense desire to get rid themselves of domestic slavery also’ (from ‘An Autobiography’ by Jawaharlal Nehru in Menon, 2008: 245). The performance and participation of the womenfolk in the Nationalist Movement was an unexpected phenomenon to the men folk. Nehru again writes ‘Most of us men folk were in prison. And then a remarkable thing happened. Our women came
to the forefront and took charge of the struggle. Women had always been there of course, but there was an avalanche of them, which took not only the British Government but their own men folk by surprise’ (Nehru, ‘The Freedom Struggle’, The Discovery of India in Menon, 2008: 245).

3.3.1 WOMEN’S EDUCATION: After independence women’s education was given due attention. The planners looked upon education as a tool to achieve modernization and a source to achieve economic and political transformation. Literacy, the ability to read, write and comprehend was stressed upon. Elementary education helps women both in the rural and the urban set ups; it facilitates daily living by enabling the housewives to read newspapers, signboards, prices mentioned in packets of consumer goods such as soaps, salt, oil etc; also helps the day-to-day monetary exchange. The literacy scenario improved gradually. At the beginning in 1951, female literacy was 8.86% only which almost doubled (15.35%) during the next census year i.e. 1961. During 1991, the total literacy crossed 50% limit while by the turn of the century i.e. in 2001 the female literacy figure reached 53.67%. In 2011 Census, the figure rose to 65.46%.

Table 3.1: Literacy Scenario in India through Different Census Years (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Years</th>
<th>Persons (%)</th>
<th>Literacy Rate (%)</th>
<th>Male-Female Gap in Literacy Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>27.16</td>
<td>8.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>15.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>34.45</td>
<td>45.96</td>
<td>29.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981*</td>
<td>43.57</td>
<td>56.38</td>
<td>29.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991**</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>64.13</td>
<td>39.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>64.84</td>
<td>75.26</td>
<td>53.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>74.04</td>
<td>82.14</td>
<td>65.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

Note:
Literacy rate represents the number of literate persons as a percentage of the total population.
1951 – 1971: Age of population considered 5 years and more
1981 – 2011: Age of population considered 7 years and more
*Excludes Assam
**Excludes Jammu & Kashmir
Thus the table shows a gradual rise in the female literacy keeping pace with the national level throughout the Census years. However, the diminishing gap between male and female literacy is also perceptible especially during 2001 – 2011. Thus women are increasingly becoming literate since independence, which boosted their educational status to a great extent. Although when compared to their counterparts they lag behind, nevertheless, there has been a definite improvement among the women in the field of literacy and it depicts that they are on the path of progress and development.

Table 3.2 displays a similar kind of picture at the state level. In West Bengal as a whole, progress through years has been discernible from the figures. Just after the independence in 1951, the total literacy of the state recorded to 25% whereby the female literacy remained about 13.2%; turning to the urban areas, which were exposed to modernization and urbanization processes showed high literacy figures 45.7% for total and 37.1% for the urban females. At the district level Koch Bihar had recorded appreciably low literacy figures of 17.1% for the total population and only 6.1% for the females (in Table 3.3) in 1951; but the urban areas had higher literacy rates i.e. 61.2% for the total population and 57.6% for the urban females. The total literacy at the state level took as many as 40 long years to reach about a little more than 50% (i.e. 57.7%); while the female literacy for the state reached to 59.6% in 2001. Women literacy condition particularly for the urbanites reached 50% level within 1961. It escalated to 81% as of now (2011). The literacy

Table 3.2: Literacy Scenario of West Bengal Through different Census Years (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Years</th>
<th>Literates</th>
<th>Persons (%)</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Years</td>
<td>Literates</td>
<td>Persons (%)</td>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>Female (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

Table 3.3: Literacy Scenario of Koch Bihar Through different Census Years (1951-2011)
condition for Koch Bihar also showed progress through time. Between 1991 and 2001, the total literacy crossed the 50% mark and reached from 45.8% in 1991 to 66.3% in 2001. Finally it reached to 73.2% in 2001. Female literacy among the urbanites have remained consistently high than the total female literacy level throughout. At the initial stage i.e. in 1951, it was about 57.6%. The figure leaped from 68.5% in 2001 to 85.5% in 2011.

Thus, keeping pace with time literacy condition showed progress. The district level figure of 2011 does not remain far behind that of the 2011 figure at the state level. The total literacy figures at the National, State and the Regional level almost remain congruent to one another.

3.3.2 WOMEN’S MOVEMENT AND ORGANIZATION: The Constitution of India drafted in 1950 granted equal rights to men and women. A slew of rights such as the female franchise, right to education, right to entry into public service and political offices brought in satisfaction among women’s groups. Scores of women took part in Sharecroppers’ Movement in Telengana in Andhra Pradesh in 1948-50 and in anti-alcohol movements in Uttarakhand in the 1960s.

Post-independent India saw women’s movement in divided and sporadic forms – as the common enemy – the foreign rule was no longer there, many Muslim members went over to Pakistan. Some of the women leaders joined the Indian National Congress formally and held positions there in as Ministers, Governors and Ambassadors. By mid 1950s, India had fairly liberal laws concerning women. Most of the demands of the women’s movement had been met. Women dissatisfied with the status-quo joined struggles for the rural poor and industrial working class as the Tebhaga Movement in Bengal, the Telengana Movement in Andhra Pradesh or the Naxalite Movement. ‘Sahada’ was a tribal landless labourers’ movement against landlords (area in Dhulia of Maharashtra) saw active participation of women, who led demonstrations, shouted militant slogans and mobilized the masses. In Ahmadabad, the first attempt for a women’s trade union was made with the foundation of Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) at the initiative of Ela Bhat in 1972. It was aimed at improving the conditions of the poor women who worked in the unorganized sector by providing training, technical aids and collective bargaining. It saw remarkable success. The Anti Price Rise in 1973 – an agitation launched by Mrinal Gore and Ahalya Rangnekar in Bombay mobilized several women of the city against inflation. The Nav Nirmaan Movement originally a students’ movement in Gujarat against soaring prices, black marketing and corruption in 1974 involved thousands of middle class women. Their methods of
protest ranged from mass hunger strike, mock funerals and *prabhat pheris*. The *Chipko* Movement to save the trees by clinging on to it began in 1973 (in Gopeshwar in Chamoli district) and took a shape of a movement in 1974. The united strength prevented the contractor from cutting the trees. It was the women of the *Chipko* movement who brought public attention towards the importance of the trees and environmental protection. Meanwhile the UN declared 1975 as the international year of Women beginning with the First World Conference on Women in Mexico. It granted new interest in women issues and it was found that large masses of Indian women have remained unaffected by the rights granted to them more than 25 years ago.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the growth of numerous women’s groups that took up issues such as dowry deaths, bride burning, rape, *Sati* and violence against women. The stress was given on sexual oppression against women which was not yet been addressed. It further questioned on patriarchal control on the women, humiliation, torture and role of women (which always thought to be secondary in all family matters). The autonomous organizations like Progressive Organization of Women (POW, Hyderabad), the Forum Against Rape (now defined as Forum Against Oppression of Women), Stree Sangharsh Samata (Delhi) etc made their appearance. In 1987, Roop Kanwar (of Rajasthan), a young widow was forcibly put on the funeral pyre of her husband and was burnt to death. This act shocked the nation. Women’s organizations demanded a new Sati Prevention Bill. Another case is worth mentioning that of a divorce in favour of a Muslim woman named Shah Bano (in 1985) who petitioned in the Supreme Court; the Government introduced the Muslim Women’s Bill (Protection of Rights in Divorce).

The Indian Association of Women’s Studies established in 1981 is an institution of women academics and activists involved in research and teaching. The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up in 31st January 1992 to look into the women – related issues, to probe into the status of women, to study the different legislations and point out the loop holes and gaps, to look into the causes of discrimination and violence against women and analyze possible remedies. A number of Colleges and Universities now have Women’s Study Centres. A new women’s group declare themselves as the Feminists have formed informal network to raise voice against anomaly in the social arena. Women in India are one of the most backward even today in terms
of literacy, longevity, maternal mortality, female work participation and sex ratio. So, all these areas deserve due attention in order to maintain a balanced social ecology.

3.3.3 WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT: Both men and women have always worked. The differences lie in the areas of work, the location of work, execution and performance, tools and technical usage and motivating factors for work. It is no denying the fact that women always have contributed to the nation’s economy. After meeting their domestic responsibilities they were allowed to earn. Tara Singhal (2003: 21 - 22) identifies three kinds of productive works to which women are traditionally attached to. These are:
(a) Home based production activities which have exchange value in the market;
(b) Home based production for family consumption and
(c) Paid employment outside the home.
It has been observed that the impact of Globalization, Urbanization and Liberalization have ushered in a sharp rise in the field of paid employment outside the home. Women are seen to have engaged themselves in gainful employment involving diverse professions. In the rural sector, women help their husbands in the fields and get occupied in the household activities. They also get into household/ handicraft industry. In the urban areas on the contrary, their participation remains restricted (mainly to the tertiary activities) when compared to the women workers in the rural sectors. This may be accounted for the fact that women’s work has always thought to be ‘supplementary’ to their husband’s income. Even the educated women were prevented from taking up jobs outside the family setting. After industrialization and modernization have crept in, new invention in the household devices have reduced the work load and the educated housewives have found some scope to take up gainful employment. Moreover, they can now afford to employ domestic help to do the daily chores of cleaning, washing etc. Furthermore, parents have become more ambitious of giving better education to their children in order to raise the standard of living. Thus, in urban areas, now-a-days majority of women are seen trying to get gainful employment immediately after completion of their education. After independence with the aid of modern education, industrialization, science and technology revolutionized the occupational structure. ‘Equal work and equal pay’ have been stressed. A large number of educated women have been seen taking up white collar jobs. The earlier trend during 1960s showed popularity of administrative, executive and managerial jobs. By 1970s, women were found concentrating in the fields of medical, teaching and clerical services.
Table 3.4 Work Participation Rate by Sex in India Since 1951

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Persons (%)</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.09</td>
<td>53.93</td>
<td>23.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43.07</td>
<td>57.29</td>
<td>27.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>11.2</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>48.52</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>32.35</td>
<td>50.60</td>
<td>11.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.80</td>
<td>53.30</td>
<td>25.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>41.80</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>35.30</td>
<td>53.80</td>
<td>15.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

Note:
*Excludes Assam  
**Excludes Jammu & Kashmir  
***Excludes three districts of Manipur due to administrative and technical reasons

In a predominantly agricultural country like India, women play a distinctive role in economic activities especially in the rural sectors in earning a livelihood for the family. In 2011, though the Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR) i.e. 25.51% depicted an overall increase over time, yet it is far less than the Male WPR (53.3%). The total workers constituted 25.51% of the female population comprising of 30.01% in the rural areas and 15.44% in the urban areas. Tracing back, the 1951 census data shows that FWPR amounted to 23.43% which increased to 26.96% in 1961. But during 1971, a drop in the FWPR has been recorded and it was about 12.11%. According to a Report explaining the Trends and Determinants of Female Labour Participation (www.shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in Chapter IV, pp 110 -113, accessed on 07.10.15 at 7:50 a.m.); there has been some difficulty in the assessment of the number of female workers especially in the primary sector because the census concept of ‘workers’ changed from decade to decade.
‘Earners’ and ‘Earners dependants’ have been classified differently in census reports. The changing concepts and definitions of ‘workers’ in the rural areas for an instance of 1971 (referred to those who spent major part of their time in economic activities) may be cited. But there has been a genuine decline in the FWPR in 1971 from 1961 figures. Some opines that the drastic reduction in the FWP in the rural sectors was due to the exclusion of housewives who helped in the economic activity largely in the household industry or primary activities largely in household industry or agriculture. However, one reasonable explanation to this might be attributed to the technological changes, use of HYV technology, use of mechanical devices which might have released the marginal workers (i.e. women, children, elderly men) from agriculture and thus female workers might have devoted more time to their household activities, child rearing etc.

In the urban sector, the proportion of the female workers was generally low from the beginning (06.68% in 1971) when compared to the rural sector (13.42% in 1971) as well as that of the male WPRs (53.62% in the rural and 48.82% in the urban sectors) in the same time period. Nevertheless, a gradual increase is discernible till date. Discrepancy in the MWPR and the FWPR remains in the present scenario also.

Another trend is revealed following 2001 and 2011 data. The urban FWPR has shown an increase from 11.88% in 2001 to 15.44% in 2011, while the FWPR for the rural areas declined from 2001 (30.79%) to 2011 (30.02%). Thus, a shift in the occupational structure from the primary to tertiary activities is on the go. However, the proportion of the female workers has remained almost same overtime (i.e. 25.63% in 2001 to 25.51% in 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>34.68</td>
<td>54.77</td>
<td>11.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33.16</td>
<td>53.98</td>
<td>9.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27.91</td>
<td>48.83</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>27.19</td>
<td>48.48</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>30.12</td>
<td>49.80</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Census Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Years</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Persons (%)</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.17</td>
<td>50.30</td>
<td>8.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>30.30</td>
<td>50.56</td>
<td>8.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>29.80</td>
<td>49.62</td>
<td>5.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32.19</td>
<td>51.40</td>
<td>11.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>33.18</td>
<td>52.09</td>
<td>13.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>29.59</td>
<td>49.64</td>
<td>6.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36.78</td>
<td>54.23</td>
<td>18.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>37.93</td>
<td>54.30</td>
<td>20.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>33.82</td>
<td>54.07</td>
<td>11.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38.08</td>
<td>57.07</td>
<td>18.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>36.89</td>
<td>56.84</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

The table 3.5 and 3.6 displays the proportion of the Workers of West Bengal and that of Koch Bihar district respectively by their sex and their place of residences from 1951 to 2011 censuses. The workers at the state level have increased overtime but the change is not remarkable as it has increased from 34.68% in 1951 to 38.08% in 2011. An increase in the proportion of the male workers has also been viewed with the progress of time. A striking fluctuation for the proportion of the female workers has been observed during the whole period under consideration. With a figure of 11.29% of the female workers at the initial phase (1951) a gradual decline is observed through 1961 (9.43%) and 1971(4.43%) data. Then again it was seen to rise to 8.07% in 1981 and to 11.25% in 1991 finally reaching upto 18.08% in 2011. The urban female workers have depicted a very slow rate of progression. According to the expectation, they have remained far behind the workers of the rural areas considering both males and females. The proportion increased from 3.93% in 1971 to 15.4% in 2011. A notable change is worthy to mention while analyzing the above data especially concerning the rural and urban female workers for 2001 and 2011. This period has witnessed a rising trend for the urban female (11.33% in 2001 to 15.4% in 2011) workers with a simultaneous decline in the rural female working population (20.86% in 2001 to 19.4% in 2011). The shift of female working population from rural to urban is indicative of the increasing scope for service sector in the urban environment.
Table 3.6 Work Participation Rate By Sex of Koch Bihar from 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>29.6</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27.61</td>
<td>51.37</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>27.65</td>
<td>51.79</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>27.08</td>
<td>45.87</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29.80</td>
<td>53.63</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>30.04</td>
<td>54.29</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>26.62</td>
<td>44.73</td>
<td>7.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32.14</td>
<td>53.58</td>
<td>9.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>32.46</td>
<td>54.11</td>
<td>9.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>28.41</td>
<td>47.24</td>
<td>8.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td>54.91</td>
<td>22.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>39.64</td>
<td>55.14</td>
<td>23.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>32.53</td>
<td>52.67</td>
<td>11.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40.01</td>
<td>58.24</td>
<td>20.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>40.51</td>
<td>58.42</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>35.68</td>
<td>56.61</td>
<td>14.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

At the district level, an increasing trend of working population is discernible from the data in the adjacent table (Table: 3.6). The total workers during 1951 (29.6%) pertaining to the district of Koch Bihar steadily increased to 40.01% in 2011. With regard to female workers it has corroborated with that of the state level trend. A fluctuating trend is noticeable from 5.2% 1951 to 3.7% in 1961 and 1.69% in 1971. A rising trend followed next with 4.32% in 1981 upto 20.70% in 2011. Female urban workers of Koch Bihar district has also increased considerably from 4.62% in 1971 to 14.17% in 2011. But it remains low when compared to the rural female workers as well as the male working force at the rural and urban areas. Following the state level tendency, it is seen that the female workers at the rural areas have dropped from 23.28% in 2001
to 21.43% in 2011; this again portrays greater scope of female employment in the service sectors currently.

With the census data pertaining to the national, state and district levels regarding female literacy (%) and female workers (%) from 1951 to 2011, regression analyses have been prepared which are displayed in fig. no. 3a, 3b and 3c respectively. All the three graphs show a positive linear trend indicating proportional increase in the female literacy with a simultaneous increase in the proportion of the female workers. Fig. no. 3a represents the said relationship at the national level.
Which shows a low positive trend with $Y_c = 21.13 + 0.035x$ and $r = 0.13416$. The trend at the next level i.e. at the state level, the relationship between the same variables have resulted in a more positive note with $Y_c = 4.375 + 0.185x$ and $r = 0.76551$.

The positive trend becomes more conspicuous for the variables at the district level. The female literacy and the female workers of Koch Bihar display a strongly positive relation with the $Y_c = 0.746 + 0.343x$ and $r = 0.94287$.

Therefore, the main objective of the inquiry become fulfilled here as it is found from the analysis of the data that with the increased literacy among women through time, it has paved the way for increased employment among women. So, a positive change has been observed regarding the association of social status to working women.

### 3.3.4 WOMEN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PLAN PERIODS:

There has been a progressive increase in the plan outlays over the last nine decades of planned development to meet the needs of women and children. The outlay of Rs. 4 crores in the First Plan (1951-56) has increased to Rs. 13,780 crores in the Tenth Five Year Plan and about Rs.117,707 crores in the Twelfth Five Year Plan. There has been a shift from ‘welfare’ oriented approach in the First Five Year Plan to ‘development’ and ‘empowerment’ of women in the consecutive Five Year Plans.
The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) was mainly welfare oriented as far as women’s issues were concerned. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) undertook a number of welfare measures. The programmes for women were implemented through the National Extension Service Programmes through Community Development Blocks.

The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) was geared to organize ‘Mahila Mandals’ (women’s groups) at the grass-root levels to ensure better implementation of the welfare schemes.

Third, Fourth, Fifth and other Interim Plans (1961-74) accorded high priority to women’s education. Measures to improve maternal and child health services, and supplementary feeding for children, nursing and expectant mothers were also introduced. Thus three broad areas of development such as Education, Social Welfare and Health related to the women folk were stressed upon.

The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) is regarded as a landmark in women’s development. The Plan adopted a multidisciplinary approach with a triple thrust on health, education and employment of women.

In the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), development programmes for women were continued, with the objective of raising their economic and social status and bring them into the mainstream of national development. A very significant step therein was to identify and promote ‘beneficiary-oriented programmes’ which extended direct benefits to women.

The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) attempted to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors did not bypass women. Special programmes were implemented to complement the general development programmes. The flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education, health and employment were monitored attentively. Women were enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process with reservation in the membership of local bodies. This approach of the Eighth Plan marks a definite shift from ‘development’ to empowerment’ of women.

The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) envisaged: a) Empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and Minorities as agents of socio-economic change and development.
b) Promoting and developing people’s participatory institutions like Panchayati Raj institutions, cooperatives and self-help groups.

c) Strengthening efforts to build self-reliance.

d) The convergence of services from different sectors.

e) A women’s component plan at the Central and State levels.

The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) was formulated to ensure requisite access of women to information, resources and services, and advance gender equality goals.

The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) proposed to undertake special measures for gender empowerment and equity. The Ministry of Women and Child Development also targeted for synergistic use of gender budget and gender mainstreaming process. This plan made suggestions for giving women rights over land, credit, common property resources, equitable wages and also enhancing their access to technology, education and skill training.

The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) focuses on women’s access to and control over resources with the view to increase the WPRs especially in secondary and tertiary sectors so as to ensure their upward movement in the economic ladder. This plan would accord high priority to the issues like women’s property rights, equitable wages, education, use of technology and skill training. This plan also encourages self employment opportunities among women through skill, up gradation, improved access to credit and markets. Keeping micro-finance in mind, efforts for financial inclusion of women in the mainstream credit system would be thrusted upon. Exploitation of the collective power of women to achieve economies of scale leading to the growth of the Self Help Groups (SHGs) is also another goal (www.planningcommission.nic.in accessed on 10.11.2015).

3.4 CONCLUSION: Though women remain as the nuclei of a society, she has always been presented with a derogatory status. Following Hobhouse, an eminent sociologist, the position of women of any society determines the ‘sure index of the development’ of the country concerned (Singhal,T. 2003: 1). So, a lot of emphasis should be given on imparting proper education to the women folk so that they can identify their problems and existing deficiencies and discrepancies in varied aspects; they can develop self identity and a sound financial foundation that would help
them to lead a decent and dignified life. Thus, Pt. Nehru (1958) once aptly pointed out ‘In order to awaken people, it is the woman who has to be awakened. Once she is on the move, the household moves, the country moves and thus, we can build the India of tomorrow’.

Of recent a new trend has been noticed in the Indian scenario regarding education and employment related to women. Now-a-days girls are given higher education with a view that they would get better life partners. The social set up has been modified to nuclear families where girls/ women should get equipped financially in order to supplement the family income and to create buffer finance in the backdrop of inflation. Furthermore, girls are also encouraged for higher education and employment so as to ensure financial security even after her husband’s death or desertion. Thus some changes in the general psyche of a common man have already taken place. The view that only widow or a single woman without any support should seek a job has changed. The absorption of women in the labour force has silently revolutionized the socio-economic arena with reference to the status of women in India. As a consequence, the outlook of an Indian woman is slowly broadening, her opinion is finding perspective, her creativity is unfolding, her personality is developing and her position is getting redefined and re-oriented in the silhouette of patriarchy. The clutches of dowry is getting weakened and the decision making ability is getting increased. For instance, a woman can even go for a live-in relation (staying together with her partner without getting married), she can adopt a child singly, can become a surrogate mother and also go for Planned Parenthood.

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CHAPTER IV:

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY AREA AND THEIR STATUS & ROLE IN FAMILY, SOCIETY AND WORK PLACES
PART - A:

The Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents of the Study Area
CHAPTER IV:
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY AREA AND THEIR STATUS & ROLE IN FAMILY, SOCIETY AND WORK PLACES

PART- A:

The Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents of the Study Area

4.A.1 INTRODUCTION: Social complexion and economic stratum imparts proper perspective to any socio-geographical inquiry. The socio-economic framework instills a deep imprint upon the personality of a person. His thought process, livelihood pattern, behavioral pattern, work efficiency and above all the philosophy of life get shaped by his socio-economic experiences. In other words, this also acts as motivating and restraining factors especially at times of crisis.

The socio-economic background of the respondents therefore plays an important role in developing the sense of responsibility and perception to life and living so as to build up their social-self. Moreover, the social backgrounds of the respondents also help to know whether the sample drawn for the study is skewed or normally distributed.

4.A.2 AGE STRUCTURE: Age is one of the analytical criteria for any study as it is indicative of experiences of an individual. One’s preferences, tastes, pragmatism gets reflected through his chronology of experiences. Society recognizes human beings into children, adults and aged on the basis of their age. Age composition of the respondents reveal whether the sample pertains to the youth, matured or aged groups reflecting their experiences and perception to life. The present study has involved a sample of 1777 working women inhabiting the CBT area representing 32% of the universe. The sample is found to have five categories of age-groups, viz. 18-28, 29-39, 40-49, 50-59 and ≥60 years. The following table (Table: 4.1) shows their representation by percent values.
Table 4.1 Age Composition of the Respondents of CBT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Age-Groups (Years)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Assigned Group Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>18-28</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>29-39</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Matured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Aged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>≥60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014

A comparative young group of respondents i.e. of 18-28 years represents 25% of the sample, the experienced group referred to as the Matured category (29-39 & 40-49 years) represents the highest proportion of the sample i.e. 60%, the rest 15% of the respondents representing the Aged category belongs to 50-59 and ≥60 years. It therefore replicates a normal sample distribution.

Map No. 4.1

AGE STRUCTURE OF THE WORKING WOMEN IN COOCH BEHAR TOWN

Kilometers

Source: Field Survey, 2014
A ward wise representation in Map no.4.1 has been prepared which reveals that the Young Working Women is mostly found concentrated in wards of 17, 18 and 19; it is moderate in ward nos. 1, 6, 10-12, 14, 15, 16 and 20; it is low in ward nos. 2-5, 7-9 and 13. Respondents belonging to the Matured Age Group are found highly concentrated in ward nos. 10, 13-16, 18 & 19; it is moderately adhered in ward nos. 1, 9, 11, 12, 17 & 20; while it is least concentrated in the wards of 2-8. Aged category of respondents are classified in high concentration in the wards of 11, 13, 18 and 19; moderate concentration is noticed in the ward nos. 1, 9, 10, 12 & 14; while least adherence can be seen in the wards of 2-8, 16, 17 and 20 respectively.

**4.A.3 MARITAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS:** Marriage is an important event in life of an individual in general and more particularly to the Indian women. The institution of marriage gives shape to the basic social unit i.e. the family and re-defines a woman’s role in the family and at the same time in the society at large. Marriage in Indian social structure is still thought to be a permanent bonding and philosophized as a divine ordained relationship which goes beyond one’s life (the changes in such ideology is discussed in Chapter VI). Therefore, it reflects one’s desire for family and kin relation; it also imparts the sense of responsibility as well.

The data collected for the study showcases the presence of variegated marital groups. Marital status of the working women of the study area indicates both the ease and complication to their life experiences. This also becomes a help to the investigator to study the problems and prospects of the working women. Table 4.2 shows that majority of the respondents (72.93%) are married Women while 16.38% of the sample is constituted by unmarried women. An insignificant proportion of 2.70% are widows while a negligible proportion of 0.51% is represented by divorced women. However, there remains a presence of 7.48% of the sample who were single.

**Table: 4.2 Respondents by Marital Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1296</td>
<td>72.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>16.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>7.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
4.4 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION: Religious affiliation is an important aspect of Indian society. It reflects certain cultural traits and practices which remain conspicuous to any particular religious group. Variegated religious composition is indicative of cosmopolitan character in an urban unit. As far as the religious composition is concerned in the study area, the picture is less diverse than it was thought of. Most of the working women in the sample (90.66%) are Hindus; about 9.17% of the respondents are Muslims; an insignificant proportion is represented by the Christians (0.11%) and a meager representation is found by the Sikhs (0.06%). The predominance of the Hindu working women show that the Muslims, Christians and the Sikhs has little access to employment, whatever may be the actual reason.

The religious composition of the respondents has been cartographically represented in a map (Map no.4.2). The ward wise scenario almost has the same reflectance as that of the total representation. The Hindus remain prolific almost in every ward. Cent percent of the Hindus are found occupy the wards of 2, 11 and 12. Significant concentration of the Muslims can seen in ward no. 9 (32.93%), 3 (30.23%), 4 (26.42%) and 6 (25%). Other than this, the Muslim respondents are scant in ward nos. 1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13- 20.
While referring to the Christian respondents, they are negligibly found (< 1%) in ward no. 17 and 18 only. Only one Sikh respondent stays in ward no. 10.

4.A.5 CASTE DIVERSITY: Caste denotes an important ascribed status especially in a country like ours which holds historical antecedence in this regard. The modern version of ‘Varna’ system finds expression in the Caste system in the contemporary social framework. Previously, one’s occupation/work used to decide his caste and it was not a rigid and inflexible norm. Gradually, through time it has attained irreversibility and stiff connotation. Although some associate economic status to caste structure, but sometimes their connection is found coincidental in many cases.
Koch Bihar has 50% of Scheduled Caste (SC) population at the district level. However, this trend is not reflected in the present sample. Most of the respondents belong to the General category (40.29%), it is followed by the Scheduled Castes (18.35%), 9.17% of the respondents belong to the OBC-A category, while 3.10% is represented by the OBC-B category. The Scheduled Tribes (ST) are least represented by a share of only 0.51%. However, 28.58% of the respondents did not disclose their caste identity and thus have been categorized as the Not Mentioned group.

Commenting on the ward wise situation (Map no.4.3), 100% of the respondents belong to the General category in ward no. 2, >75% of the population in ward no 7 and 8 also belong to the General castes, few wards like 1, 3, 5, 12, 16 and 19 show >45% of General caste population. The rest of the wards have the concentration of the general category population ranging between 44 and 14 %. The least concentration is found in ward no. 6 (14%). The SC respondents are highest in ward no. 6 (60%), it is moderate i.e. 25-45% in ward nos.1, 14, 17 and 19. It is least in ward no. 3(4.35%) and absent in ward no.2. The STs are insignificant in their representation as a whole. Only 2.5% of ST respondents adhere to ward no. 19; ward no. 1, 17 and 18 has only about 1% of their concentration; while most of the wards are devoid of them. OBC-A is highest in ward no. 9 (32.93%); it is moderate in ward nos. 3, 4 and 6 ranging between 25-30%; it is low in ward nos. 5, 18 and 19 (10-18%); and least in ward no. 16 (1%). It is absent in ward nos. 2, 11 and 12. Ward no. 17 has the highest concentration of OBC-B (16.34%), it is least in ward no. 18 (0.48%); other wards have insignificant percent values denoting the OBC-B category of respondents.

4.A.6 NATURE OF RESIDENCE: Residential place is once again an important factor which binds together its inmates, their needs and aspirations are addressed and nurtured. Family life especially for the brides is all about adjustments and cooperation a most conspicuous characteristic feature of the Indian society. The bride performs mostly all the caring-nurturing activities (‘generative role’) and also steps out to extend her helping hand for her ‘productive role’ to enhance the financial condition of the family. So, the nature of residence and family composition becomes utmost important.

The survey in the present study area resulted in congruency with the expectation that majority of the respondents since married reside at their Spouse’s house (88.24 %). The rest 11.26 % of the respondents live in rented houses. An insignificant proportion of 0.51% are categorized as
Others’ since they have stated that they stay with the relatives, maternal place or in their own property. The ward wise situation has been presented in Map no. 4.4 which portrays exact finding as that of the total study area.

4.7 TRACING THE RURAL-URBAN BACKGROUNDS OF THE RESPONDENTS:
The rural-urban background plays a profound role in determining one’s life chances and life styles. When a person spends his childhood and teen age in an urban setting, he develops certain preconditions for a metro-life. He becomes habituated in cosmopolitan culture and has exposure to modern education, employment opportunities and social mobility. On the whole the entire state of being is been nurtured for a city life. On the way round, a rural setup give rise to limited access to opportunities and modern way of life.

About 80.36% of the respondents have in-migrated from outside the town area (either elsewhere from the district or outside the district). Of this proportion, 50.76% have come elsewhere from the district of Koch Bihar. A small proportion of 29.60% have come outside the district mostly
from the districts of Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri; few from Darjeeling, Assam even from Malda, Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur. Very few have come from Kolkata, Rajasthan, U.P., Bihar and Gujarat also. Some of the respondents (15.70%) who were born in the CBT area have experienced intra-urban marriage consequent shifting between the wards. Therefore, it can be summarized that majority of the working women have non-urban social background and they have been destined to live within the urban landscape of Cooch Behar Town.

A distribution of the respondents in this regard (shown in Map no.4.5) might help one to find out their ward wise adherence. Respondents experiencing intra-urban movement are mostly found in ward nos. 2, 3, 7 and 9. The respondents emigrated elsewhere from the district of Koch Bihar have settled themselves in the wards of 1, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12-19. The rest of the respondents coming from outside the district are found in the ward nos. 2, 4, 5, 11 and 20. The ward wise distribution of the emigrated population is coincidental.
4.A.7.1 REASONS FOR MIGRATION: In the present study, as the respondents are women, it goes without saying that, the Indian social set-up has compelled them to become migrants as the respondents have moved to their in-laws place after marriage. 72.93% of the respondents are married women so it is expected to have a higher degree of shuffle as a consequence. Most appropriately, it is found in fig. no. 4.a that 58.47% of the respondents have experienced a change in their residences owing to the institution of Marriage. 15.81% of the working women started to live in the CBT area so as to facilitate their journey to their work places. So here jobs have acted as the re-locating factor. A tiny proportion of the respondents (1.18%) have migrated because of both marriage and work place location.

4.9% of the respondents have shifted owing to some different reasons, which might either to take care of the property, to take care of the family members, for the nearness to child’s education etc. However, 15.70% of the respondents did not migrate from their places as they might have got married in the area or at the vicinity of their maternal place; or they are unmarried (16.38% of the respondents are unmarried) so there is no question of marriage induced migration in this regard. 3.94% of the respondents did not share their opinion. Map no. 4.6 displays the ward wise picture of the reasons for the migration among the working women and similar cause related to marriage has been found as the chief factor. So, marriage may be
regarded as the chief factor for the migration of the respondents which is a common social set up in patriarchy of which our country is no exception.

4.A.8 LITERACY AMONG THE WORKING WOMEN: The total literate persons in CBT are 66,404 persons and it portrays a Literacy Rate of 85.20% according to 2011 Census. Of these literate persons, 34,054 are male literates (51.28%) and 32,350 (48.72%) are female literates. While considering the number of Female Literates (32,350 women) and Total Population (77,935 persons) the proportion represented thus shows 41.51%. Out of the Total Female Population (38,921 women) of the CBT, the number of Female Literates are 32,350; representing 83.12%.
Literacy Scenario of the study area can be explained vividly with the secondary and primary data sources. A cartographic representation of the female literates and illiterates (Map no. 4.7) has been done following the Census data of 2011, which shows the relative proportion of both the categories just mentioned. The data reveals that Female Literacy is highest (92.64%) in ward no. 7, it is high in ward nos. 2, 12, 13 and 14 wherein all the values are >90%. The proportion of female literates is least in ward no. 10 (76.28%). Rest of the wards has values ranging between 77-89%. Likewise, the proportion of illiterate females are highest in ward no 10. (23.72%) and least in ward no. 7(7.36%). So, literacy considering the female population of the study area is impressive in the sense it is well above the state average (76.26%) as well as the national average (74.04%) as per the Census data of 2011.

A similar picture is also reflected by the respondents of the study area in Map no. 4.8, wherein Cent Percent of literacy among the working women is found in ward nos. 2, 5 and 13. A high percentage of female literates ranging between 90 - 97.32% are found in ward nos. 1, 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14-18 and 20 which obviously has low female illiteracy (2-10%). Least proportion of literates among the working women (71.88%) is found concentrated in ward no. 6 which simultaneously has the maximum concentration of illiterates (28.12%) among the stratified category. The rest of the wards has female literacy rate ranging between 80-90% and 14-18% of illiteracy among the female working women.
A statistical analysis of the Female Literacy based on the basis of 2011 census data has been represented by **Location Quotient (LQi)** in Map no. 4.9. ‘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. Symbolically, it may be defined as follows:

$$LQi = \frac{fli}{fpi} \div \frac{FL}{FP}$$

Where, $fli= \text{number of female literates in each ward}$, $fpi= \text{number of female population in each ward}$, $FL= \text{Total number of Female Literates in the CBT}$ and $FP= \text{Total number of Female Population in the CBT}$. 
While interpreting, it is found that the value of the LQ for ward nos. 2, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 17 is equal to unity. This may be understood that the share of female literacy in those wards is same as that of the CBT area. Ward no. 7 (highest LQ value of 1.11) and 14 has LQ value >1, which indicates that the concentration of the Female literates are more than that of the CBT area. Similarly, ward nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 20 represents a relatively low concentration (LQ value ranging between 0.92 – 0.98) when compared to the two earlier mentioned categories. Ward no. 10 has least LQ value (i.e.0.91).

Location Quotient for the literacy among the working women of the study area (surveyed population) has also been calculated and may be compared with the results of that of the census data (2011) based calculations in Map no. 4.10. Highest LQ value of >1 (i.e. 1.09) is found in ward nos. 2, 5 and 13. High LQ value equal to unity is seen in ward nos. 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 20. Ward no.10 has the least concentration (0.78) of literate respondents in the study area. While the rest (i.e. in ward nos. 4, 8, 9, 18 and 19) has LQ values ranging between 0.88 - 0.98 which may be categorized as low compared to the two formerly mentioned categories.
Therefore, careful observation of the Map nos. 4.9 & 4.10 reveal that the areas of concentration are common in certain wards in both the figures. For instance, the zones having equity value for both the figures are commonly found in ward nos. 11, 12 and 17. While that of <1 is found in ward nos. 4, 8, 18 and 19. In both the figures the least concentration of literate population is found in ward no 10. So, the census data and the sample corroborates with each other in the aforementioned spatial units pertaining to the study area.

4.A.8.1 LEVEL OF EDUCATION: Level of Education of the working women of the study area (surveyed group) has been represented by a simple pie diagram (Fig. No.4.b), wherein the proportion of each level of education are depicted by different colours. The figure displays that almost one-third of the surveyed working women (32%) are Graduates and 19% of the sample have Post-Graduate degrees. 18% of the respondents just crossed the threshold of schools (at Xth Standard) while 10% limited their studies upto the High School level (i.e. XII th Standard). Primary educated respondents cover up 7% of the sample. Only 3% of the respondents can sign their names only. On the other hand, a meager proportion is represented by those having Diploma, trainings or still higher educational degrees like M. Phil and Ph.D.
So far, this was the scenario as a whole; the ward wise situation has been depicted by a cartographic technique and represented spatially in Map no. 4.11. To start with: higher education at Post-Graduate level is mostly sought after by the respondents residing in ward nos. 18, 11, 14, 13, 16, 15, 10 and 1(in the order of importance). It is low in ward nos. 9, 4, 2, 3, 7, 19, 20, 17 and 8. Graduates adhere mostly in the wards of 18, 16, 11, 12, 13 and 14. The High School educated respondents occupy mostly the ward nos. 1, 9, 18, 20, 10, 11-17. School educated respondents are prolific in the ward nos. 6, 19, 9, 10, 15, 12, 18, 11, 14, 16, 17, 1, 3, 4 and 5. Primary level education is a common qualification of the respondents of ward no. 19, 10, 16, 9, 10, 17, 1, 3, 4, 15 and 18. While respondents can only sign their names are found largely in ward nos. 1, 4, 9, 10, 15-

While traversing throughout the entire field area during the field study, the researcher could recognize a strong relationship existing between education and economic profile of the respondents. The south western part of the CBT area, covered by the wards of 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 and 18 have been settled by relatively high income group of people (to be discussed later) thus can afford higher education. On the other hand, the portions of the CBT especially at the north and eastern parts (in ward nos. 10, 4, 3, 2, 1 and 19) are inhabited by the respondents belonging
to middle and lower middle economic classes. People living adjacent to the embankment all along the River Torsa (on the left side of the study area) and those placed juxtaposed at rural boundaries generally belong to this group. These portions show incidence of school level education mainly among the respondents.

4.A.9 ECONOMIC COMPOSITION OF THE RESPONDENTS: The study of the economic composition of the sample is inevitable in this inquiry. As the researcher is trying to study the different factors and conditions to which the working women of the study area are exposed to; the behavioral pattern they develop; the qualities they have and they nurture; the service they extend to their families and the society at large so on and so forth, the material state of affairs is of utmost importance to them. Occupation in terms of gainful employment is a fundamental factor in deciding their role and their status in the family and in the society as well.

4.A.9.1 OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE: Occupation of an individual is indicative of his trade, profession, type of work in which he is involved. While traversing throughout the entire field area a host of job types were found wherein the respondents were engaged to. The occupational types were so varied that it was very difficult to categorize them into broad groups. On the first hand as much as 227 kind of jobs were recorded and then they were sorted into 16 groups which are as follows in Table 4.3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Job Types</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Domestic Helpers</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>15.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Advocates &amp; Judges</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Service Holders</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Self Employed and Part-time workers</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>13.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Anganwari</em> workers</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Health workers (ICDS, Nurses in Hospital and Nursing Homes) &amp; Homeopath practitioners</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>10.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Professors, Assistant Professors &amp; Librarian in Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bank employees and Financial advisors</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Government Service Holders</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bidi Binders</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sex Workers</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Group D Staffs and Upper Division Clerks</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Police officers and Constables</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 4.3 Occupation Categories of the Respondents (elaborated)
The Job Types in Table no. 4.3 were further regrouped into 6 types for proper elucidation. They are shown in table no. 4.4. The table is self explanatory, as it shows the occupational structure as well as the occupational status assigned to the job categories of the study area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Job Types</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Occupational Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Domestic helpers &amp; Bidi binders</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>17.84</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Advocates, Judges, Professors, Doctors etc.</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>41.14</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Service Holders, Self Employed and Part-time workers</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Anganwari workers, Health workers &amp; Clerks</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>14.01</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sex Workers</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Workers engaged in miscellaneous activities</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

At a glance, it is noticed that the majority of the respondents (41.14 %) belong to the second type of occupational group i.e. they may be Advocates and Judges; they may be Professors, Assistant Professors & Librarian in Colleges and Universities; or Bank employees and Financial advisors; or Government Service Holders; or Police officers and Constables; Doctors, Engineers, Journalists and WBCS Officers or even Principals or Head Mistress and School Teachers. The next group of working women is Domestic helpers (who work as attendants to the aged persons, maids, cooks or baby sitters) & Bidi binders. They represent 17.84 % of the respondents of CBT. The Service holders, Self Employed (Boutique owner, Business person, Canteen owner, Tailor, Distributor, Dance Teacher, Music Teacher, Home delivery Service (of lunch/ food), Potter,
Ration dealer, Sericulture worker, Shop owner etc.) and Part-time workers (Beautician, Cosmetics seller, Book Binders, Seamstress, Tailor, Computer Trainer, Typist, Anchor in local Television shows and public functions, Art Teacher, Hotel owner, Nursery Teacher, Ration Shop worker, shop worker, supplier of various goods, tea supplier, thermocol artifact makers etc.) together contributes to 17% of the respondents. Anganwari workers, Health workers, Group D Staffs and Upper Division Clerks belong to the next category of workers and they represent 14.01% of the surveyed workers. Workers engaged in diversified occupations come next though very little in representation (2.81%), they are found working in Mobile phone shops, Jewellery shops, Medical Representatives, Medical firms, NGOs, Training Centres, Self Help Groups, Vocational Training centres etc; every society needs to vent out its tribulations, Cooch Behar is no exception to this. It is settled by Sex Workers in the Kalabagan area of Ward no.6 and they represent 2.53% of the sample.

The Occupational Diversity for each ward has been represented in proportional divided circles in Map no. 4.12. The figure clearly shows proliferation of certain categories of occupation. The
most prominent of all being represented by the School Teachers and Head Masters/Mistresses occupying 27.91% of the sample (seen in Table 4.3) are found maximum concentrated in ward nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 and 18; other than this it is also significant in ward no. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7-10, 19 and 20. The next major groups of working women are Domestic Helpers found to occupy ward no. 18 and 19 mostly; apart from this, they are also found in ward nos. 1, 9, 10, 15 and 16. Respondents engaged in Part-time services and self employment are the major occupational group found in ward nos. 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 18, 19 and 20. A considerable number of the respondents are found to be associated with health related occupation like Nurses in Hospitals and Nursing Homes and ICDS workers. They are mostly seen at ward nos. 11, 12, 13, 15 and 18. Police Line is situated in ward no. 17 and thus most of the working women who have taken up jobs related to it are found concentrated only in ward no. 17. Most strikingly a small concentration (2.53%) of Sex Workers is found localized in ward no 6.

4.A.9.2 JOB CATEGORIES: The distribution of job categories according to the type of organization is shown by a cartographic representation in fig. no.4.c. The diagram shows that most of the respondents (41.59%) of the surveyed area are engaged to jobs related to Private concerns. The next most popular category is represented by the Government Aided services in which about 31.63% of

Respondents in Different Job Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOB CATEGORIES</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pvt. Aided</td>
<td>31.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>21.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

the working women of the study area are affianced. On the contrary, about 21.33% of the working women do Government Services representing a reduced share in the total picture. A distribution of the respondents in different job categories has also been attempted for all the
wards of CBT in Map no.4.13. The representation displays a similar kind of picture as that of fig no. 4.c. Most of the respondents in wards no. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 20 adhere to the Private concerns; it is moderate in ward no. 8 and 12. Services to the Government Aided jobs are the next abundant group found in ward no. 2, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 and it is moderately found in ward no. 8, 9, 10, 15, 16 and 18. Respondents absorbed in Government Services are found in ward no. 11 and 17; while it is moderately found in ward no.11, 13, 14 and 19.

4.A.9.3 OCCUPATIONAL STATUS: Fig. no. 4.d displays the relative proportion of the Occupational Status of the respondents of the study area. All the job categories shown in the earlier mentioned table (table no. 4.5) have been assigned 3 broad status classes, namely; High Status Jobs, Moderate Status Jobs and Low Status Jobs. It is evident from the table 4.5 that High Status Jobs predominate the scenario although the percentage value is not so high (43%).
Respondents belonging to this category are either Advocates and Judges; or they may be Professors, Assistant Professors & Librarian in Colleges and Universities; or Bank employees and Financial advisors; or Government Service Holders; or Police officers and Constables; Doctors, Engineers, Journalists and WBCS Officers or even Principals or Head Mistress and School Teachers. The Moderate Status Jobs occupy about 35% of the total working force. They include jobs in different Services, Self Employment, Part-time jobs, Anganwari jobs, Health Care Services, Upper Division Clerks and other miscellaneous activities. Only 22% of the respondents did jobs of Low Status and they include mainly service to other domestic units (either maintenance of the house or cooking and babysitting) in lieu of money or wages, Biri rolling and even Sex working.

4.A.9.4 OCCUPATIONAL SECTORS: Generally, women remain largely engaged in household activities which are not considered as economically ‘productive’ and thus remain unlisted as workers under the conventional measures of employment. Her activities revolve round the pivot of her family as she provides goods and services for the use of her household. So, her work remains subsidiary, ‘non-productive’ and almost taken for granted. This was so far the accepted circumstances in the Indian society. Modern urban society however differs from this set-up. ‘..Majority of educated women try to get gainful employment immediately after completing their education. Nowadays, more and more women with higher education are trying to get paid employment’ (Singhal, 2003: 25).

Therefore, as of now two sectors of employment might go hand-in-hand complementing each other to augment female work participation. The sectors of employment may be parted into two, namely: the Organized and the Un-organized groups. By referring to the ‘Organized’ sector, it is
meant that those women who are engaged in salaried services. On the contrary, the ‘Unorganized’ sector refers to that section of the respondents who have engaged themselves in non-salaried economic activities.

The study area is characterized by the presence of both the groups. The Domestic helpers, Bidi binders, Self-employed & Part-time workers and the Sex workers may be designated as the Unorganized work force. While the rest of the jobs may be referred to as the Organized work force. The Organized working women has the dominant share (61.11%) in the sample. The Unorganized group represents 38.89% of the respondents. The distribution of Organized and Unorganized group of employed respondents have been represented by pie-graphs and spatially represented in Map no. 4.14. It shows the abundance of Organized Group found in the ward nos. 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 – 18 and 20. The rest four wards of 3, 4, 6 and 19 shows the profusion of Unorganized employment. So, Dr. Singhal’s observation of urban women getting into the organized sector of employment might be applicable to the present study area. Enhancement in the
organized sector of female employment in the urban area might be the current drift in the job market; whereby CBT being one of the urban pockets with small extent has reflected the country’s trend.

4.A.9.5 JOB PERMANENCY: Permanency in job indicates incumbents’ experience, promotion, salary and stability in services. It is very significant for the inquiry as it has a bearing to the psyche of the respondents. Permanent nature of jobs point to stability of the source of income and it imparts financial confidence to the employee. This in turn enhances the purchasing power and the decision making ability of the employee. These factors have a great bearing to the role and status of an individual in the social milieu so far as the working women of the study area are concerned.

The above figure (fig. no. 4.e) shows that a little more than one-half of the respondents (56.73%) are permanent in their service. An insignificant proportion of them are Self employed (3.15%) and Contractual workers (0.17%). 2.59 % of the respondents were unable to state their status of job and hence they are referred to as the ‘not mentioned’ group. The rest 37.31% of the working women pertaining to the study area are engaged to Temporary and Part-time jobs.
To comment on the wardwise situation, permanent job holders adhere in large numbers in ward no. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10-14 and 16-18. Temporary and Part-time workers are found considerably in ward no. 1, 4, 8, 9, 12, 15, 18, 19 and 20. Contractual workers are few in number and are solely seen in ward no. 3 while Self Employed group is noticeable in ward no. 6 (Map no. 4.15).

4.A.9.6 INCOME LEVELS: The money that a person earns is very intimately linked to his standard of living. Salary is the determinant of one's affordability and livability conditions. In the following table (Table no.4.5) the distribution of the respondents according to the different Income Groups has been presented. In the present study, 5 income levels among the respondents have been recognized. The high income group dominates the arena with 36.52% of respondents having monthly income of Rupees 20,001 – 50,000. The 'Very Low' income group has ≤5,000 Rupees as monthly income and has 35.68% share in the sample and occupies the second position in the order of importance. This is followed by the Moderate Income Group having Rupees
10,001 – 20,000 as monthly income and contributing 19.08% of the respondents. The next group is represented by the Low income group.

**Table: 4.5 Income Levels of the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Income Groups</th>
<th>Monthly Income (Rs.)</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>≤5,000</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>35.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5,001 – 10,000</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>7.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>10,001 – 20,000</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>19.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>20,001 – 50,000</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>36.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>≥50,001</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

whose monthly income ranges from Rupees 5,001 – 10,000 and contributes to 7.99% of the sample. The smallest proportion (0.73%) of the sample is represented by the Very High income group having highest affordability, whose monthly income is ≥50,001 Rupees.

Map No. 4.16
High Income level is noticeable in ward nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, and 18 as per Field Survey depicted in Map no. 4.16. Besides this, it can also be found in small concentration in ward nos 1, 7, 9, 10, 17 and 19. However, traces of Very High Income level is seen in ward nos. 13, 14 and 18. Moderate Income level is mostly seen in ward no. 6, 17 and 18; while low concentration of the same is observed in ward nos. 1, 10-14 and 20. Very Low Income level is detected maximum in ward nos. 10, 15, 18 and 19; while little occurrence is viewed in ward nos. 1, 4 and 9. However, Low Income level is significant among the working women pertaining to the study area.

This picture corroborates to that of the employment status also wherein, the largest proportion have been represented by the high order of service. According to Dr. Singhal, in urban society, the economically lower and middle income families do not remain satisfied to fulfill the needs of the family. The aspiration of achieving enhanced living standard that too in the present-day price rise situation forces the married women from these families to step out into the job market to supplement their family income (Ibid: 25). The situation in the present study also reveals similar findings to that of Dr. Singhal; the share of respondents in the Very Low, Low and Moderate Income Groups taken together is highest i.e. 62.75%. This reflects that the women from these families are most eager to alter their living standards. Thus, it has successfully increased the pool of women workers pertaining to the aforementioned economic groups in urban areas of CBT in gainful employment.

4.A.10 LITERACY AND WORK PARTICIPATION: Literacy rate and Level of Education influence the workers’ participation in any region. In the present study area the work participation among the Females is low than that of the Males. This is a common reflection of any Indian urban unit as females get into work more in the fields at the countryside. So, it was no surprise to have found out low female work participation in the study area. There are about 5,567 working women according to Census 2011 representing 7.14% of the total population of CBT. On the other hand, it is 27.75% for their counterparts. While relating the number of female workers and the number of total workers of the CBT for 2011 data, the females have 20.32% share in comparison to the males who represents 78.93%.
With regard to Literacy and Work participation, it shows that female literacy with regard to female population is as high as 83.12%; female literacy to total population amounts to 41.51% and female literacy to total literate population is 48.72%. On the whole, the average of these three figures amounts to 57.78% which might be considered as a progressive figure. The female work participation values for the two cases (no. of female workers to total population and no. of female workers to total workers) are essentially low. This may be well explained by Dr. Chandna’s opinion as he says “levels of literacy and education influence significantly the participation rates. There is a negative correlation between the two…..because acquisition of literacy and education delays the entry of people into working force” (2001: 244).

4.A.11 FAMILY SIZE: Family size is a very important factor while dealing with the working women’s activities in broader sense on one hand; the reason of getting employed, the extent of household responsibilities and the work load in particular on the other hand. As Dr. R.C. Chandna (2001: 243) remarks that ‘the average size of the family also produces its impact upon the incidence of participation in economic activities’, following Clarke, he also comments that the situation is congenial for the working women in the developed nations to get into jobs as there remains no inhibition for female employment. Likewise, it was observed that women from small-sized families go for employment in the developed countries. ‘On the contrary, in case of the less developed realm, the economic exigencies, which the large-sized families generate, make it necessary for every member of the family to participate in the economic struggle’ (Ibid: 243). Thus, it is the determinant of the economic and social status as well. Moreover, in urban studies, the number of single family dwellings under female occupancy has been regarded as one of the important indicator of social progress. So, households with female earners as the head of the family and households where the working women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>No. of Family Members</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single Family Dwelling</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>12.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>36.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>26.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>13.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>≥7</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey
reside singly at her own discretion is commendable in the patriarchal social setting as that of ours, where the mindset of commoners are attached with the legal guardianship of the males to their counterparts. Therefore, family size is of great significance to the present study.

Focusing on the study area (Table no. 4.6), it is seen that most of the respondents (36.07% + 26.90% = 62.97%) have 3-4 persons in their family, which might be nucleated family. About 13.06% of the working women reside in joint families having 5 persons as family members, while 4.16% of the respondents have 6 persons in their family and 2.42% of the families have 7 or more persons as family members. 4.56% of the working women stay singly in the study area. Thus, it may be said that the working women of the study area reside mostly in nucleated families which is a very common picture in any urban area. A small proportion of the sample is found to remain under single occupancy of the working women. This reflects that though a handful yet some of the working women in the study area do have the determination of taking
their own responsibility. The ward wise scenario has been represented in Map no. 4.17 where similar trend has been found.

4.A.11.1 FAMILY STRUCTURE IDENTIFIED: Family structure refers to a ‘formal pattern of rights, duties and living arrangements and its defined statuses of age, sex and Kinship’ (Green, 1952: 370). From the structuralist approach, family is seen in terms of pattern of interrelated statuses and roles at a particular time and as an organized pattern of interrelated rights and obligations of its members (Ahuja, 2013: 22). From the two definitions it can be inferred that structure of the family means the pattern yielded- role of each individual for different statuses in the family.

The study area is quite far flung from the hustle-bustle of metropolises; this seclusion might have led the researcher to presuppose the predominance of the Joint Families. A Joint Family is the one where a group of people (related by birth and / kin) generally live under the same roof, eat food from the same kitchen, hold property in common and participate in any family occasion. In fact, such large family was absent in the study area. On the other hand, Nuclear Families, which are ‘composed of two generations, usually one or both parents with children’ (Singhal, 2003: 48), were more prevalent. But during the survey it was noticed that apart from the well known typology of the Joint and the Nuclear Families, there exist another type named as Neo-Joint Family (Ibid: 47) which is gaining popularity than the former two types in the study area. A Neo-Joint Family is composed of husband, wife, their children along with their parents and some other relative(s). This is a family which is commonly found in urban areas and whose special function is to give relief to the woman from the household responsibilities. The parents or the relatives(s) come to stay leaving behind their own family elsewhere; or they do not have any places to live. The study area is no exception to this trend, as the proportion of the respondents staying in the neo-joint families are more (explained in detail in Chapter VI) than that of the other two varieties.

4.A.12 THE RESPONDENTS’ HUSBAND’S OCCUPATION: The survey of the working women of the study area included an enquiry about the occupation of their husbands also. The researcher was very eager to know the answer to the most thought of question that: at what occasion did the women in the study area has stepped out for earning? The answers to this question will definitely be illuminating the economic status of the working women of the study
area. In order to answer the question, one may look at Table no. 4.7 which states the occupational structure and the occupational statuses of the respondents’ husbands. It is revealed that the husbands of the respondents are mostly engaged to Self employment, Private services and Part-time jobs (44.07%) of moderate status. The next most popular occupation (34.55%) in which the husbands are engaged to are Advocates and Judges; they may be Professors, Assistant Professors & Librarian in Colleges and Universities; or Bank employees and Financial advisors considered as the occupation with high status; a proportion of 10.02% of the husbands remain engaged to miscellaneous activities of moderate status. Only 2.81% of them are found associated with health services and also as Group Ds or UDCs (moderate status). A negligible proportion of 0.84% either practice agriculture or work as Bidi Rollers of low status.

**Table: 4.7 Occupational Structure and Occupational Status of Respondents’ Husbands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Job Types</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Occupational Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bidi binders, Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Advocates, Judges, Professors, Doctors etc. Bank employees, Govt. Servicemen, Police officers, School Teachers etc.</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>34.55</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Service Holders, Self Employed and Part-time workers</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>44.07</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Health workers, Group D Staffs and Upper Division Clerks</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Workers engaged in miscellaneous activities</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

A comparison in the Occupational Structures between the respondents and their better halves would best explain the financial condition of the sample. Comparing the contents of table nos. 4.3 and 4.6 it can be easily summarized that:

- The proportion of workers in white collar jobs of high occupational status among the respondents outnumbers that of their counterparts in the same sector.
- The females are found to adhere to jobs which suits them well for instance; they are found in large proportion as School Teachers, Professors of Colleges and Universities, Doctors, Bank employees, Advocates and the like on one hand, while they are also
engaged as *Anganwari* workers, health workers and as Domestic help as well. So, ‘stereotyping’ of jobs according to gender do not remain uncommon to the study area.

- In order to get jobs of high occupational status, the working women are definitely to possess requisite educational qualification.
- As it is evident that the husbands remain associated with moderate income status jobs, so this might have compelled the women of the study area to go for employment in order to supplement the family income.


**4.A.13.1. THE ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE CBT:** While traversing through the study area the researcher has prepared an economic profile of the study area based on nature and general characteristics of the houses (such as building material, flooring material, presence of garage in the house premises, area occupied by the house, vertical extent, general appearance of the house etc.). It has been mapped on the basis of the Ward Map of the CBT area. The economic profile of the residences of CBT has been categorized into three groups which are displayed in Map no. 4.18. After careful observation of the map, it can be revealed that the Higher Income Group of residents adhered in ward no. 2, 7, 12-16 and 18 - 20. In ward nos. 1, 3, 4, 8-12, 15
Low Income Group residences could be found. The portion of ward nos. 1, 19, 18, 13 and 15 which have been occupied by the low class residential buildings essentially includes the embankment along the Torsa River, populated by the non-cream economic layer. The rest of the wards belong to the Middle Income Group of residences. After analyzing the overall economic profile of residents of CBT, it can be said the Middle Income Group of people have dominated over the entire town area. Apart from this, certain Non-residential areas are also noted in ward nos. 4 (Airport region), 8 (Bhawaniganj Bazar i.e. the Main Market area of the CBT), 17 (almost entirely covered by Schools, Colleges, Rashmela ground, Cinema Hall, Auditorium, Cooch Behar Police Line etc.), 19 (The CBD region of Koch Bihar, the Koch Bihar Palace, the Bus Stand area etc.) and 20 (the commercial establishments all along the Sunity Road which is the main arterial road of the town, the M.J.N Hospital, the Madan Mohan Temple, the Bairagi Dighi etc.) respectively.
A Land Value distribution map (Map no 4.19) has also been prepared on the basis of the data acquired from the Land Registration Office, Cooch Behar Bar Association and Primary Survey. This map shows the variation of the land pricing by the Government on the basis of the frontage of the plot of land concerned. It is found that Highest Land Value of Rs. 18-20 Lakh per Katha (Government pricing rate) is attributed to the areas of highest demand and better sites. These include ward no. 7, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20 and portions of ward nos. 1, 2, 11, 12, 14 and 15. Moderate Value of Rs. 11-15 Lakh per Katha (Government pricing rate) is attached to the plots of land situated in ward nos. 1, 2, 6, 9-13 and 19. Least amount of Land Value of Rs. 6-10 Lakh per Katha (Government pricing rate) is accredited to ward nos. 1, 5 and 8; while portions of ward nos. 1, 14, 15, 18 (along embankment), 3 (Burial Ground), 4 (Aerodrome area), 6 (Red Light area), 10 and 11 (cremation ground and peripheral portion of the CBT) respectively.
4.A.13.2. THE LEVEL OF FAMILY INCOME OF THE RESPONDENTS: The qualitative assertion on the basis of one’s earnings may be referred to as Income Level. The economic stratum thus evolved is the determinant of the living standards and the livability conditions of the members of one’s family. So, the income of the families of the respondents is classified into different economic slabs to understand the implication of earning on living. 5 economic strata have been identified and a qualitative description to each one has also been assigned. The Table no. 4.8 illustrates the aforementioned intension of the researcher. The high (40.24%) and very high (20.77%) income groups occupy the first and the second positions in terms of their proportional representation respectively. Juxtaposed to this, comes the very low income group with 15.36% share in the sample. The low and the moderate income groups are of equal value in representation (i.e 11.82% each).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Income Groups</th>
<th>Monthly Income (Rs.)</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>≤5,000</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>15.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5,001 – 10,000</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>11.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>10,001 – 20,000</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>11.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>20,001 – 50,000</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>40.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>≥50,001</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>20.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

Therefore, it may be inferred from the findings that the respondents have successfully augmented their family income as they have been largely found associated with the very high and high income groups. In connection to this, one must keep in mind that the family income the respondents have portrayed during the interview included their income also. Hence, the picture of being into a well to do material stratum covers their contribution also and thus there remains no confusion about the working women of the study area in getting employed.

4.A.14 DEPENDENCY ON WORKING WOMEN: Dependency in Demographic studies may be defined as ‘the ratio between the adults on one hand and young plus aged on the other hand. It is an index of age produced drain on a country’s man power potential’ (Chandna, 2001: 232). This percentage remains high for countries with less economic development as they have large
proportion of the youths. The respondents were asked to report about the number of dependents on them in their family. The results are quite impressive. About 64.50% of the respondents have 1-2 persons dependents and about 17.11% have 3-5 and >5 persons dependents. 11.99% are self dependents while 6.42% did not share their information. Thus, it is observed that majority of the working women has less number of dependents on them.

The incidence of dependency of upto 2 persons is particularly seen in high concentration in the wards numbers 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 19. Ward no. 10, 17, 18 and 19 shows the prevalence of dependents of 3-5 and >5 persons. Ward nos.13, 14, 18 and 19 displays the occurrence of no dependency (as evident in Map no. 4.20).

4A.15 HEALTH STATUS: The issues related to women’s health have been the most neglected and little talked about subject so far as our country is concerned especially during independence. During that time, the focus of concern was on maternal deaths and infant mortality rates which were on the rise. After independence, gradually maternal and child health were taken up as major
issues. It was thought that concepts regarding child care, hygiene system and information to birth control would ensure safe motherhood. The inclusion of vaccination during the child bearing period and after child birth was incorporated in the developmental programmes. But the seriousness of the women’s health issues were realized until the findings of the Committee on Status of Women in India (1974) revealed the declining sex ratio since 1901 (Desai & Thakkar, 2001: 175-176). Slowly, the aspects like life expectancy of the women, access to health services, nutritional status got attention of the planners.

This was not the fault for a developing nation like ours to have neglected the health issues of women after the post-Industrial Revolution days. No doubt it expedited production but at the same time it marginalized women labour (as technology was denied to them) in the job market. Consequently, misconceptions piled up against women work force and they stepped into the vicious cycle of underestimation, low wage rate and degraded working conditions. This legacy still continues in the developing and the less developed realms.

One of the most important areas of concern is health status of the women workers. It not only concerns the physical condition of the working women but also her mental state. Work efficiency is directly proportional to the health condition of the working women. As Menon (2008: 219) follows Dixon’s contemplation, ‘Today a common feature of many western definitions of the status of women is concerned with equality in the sphere of sexual relations and with women’s control over reproduction and their own bodies’; thus child bearing could no longer be an oppressive venture for those who think ‘reproduction’ to be the only essential function of womanhood. Therefore, understanding the inevitability of the situation some aspects of the health condition have been analyzed herewith which in turn has a bearing on to the work efficiency, mental make-up and above all quality of life of the respondents of the study area.

4.A.15.1 MAJOR DISEASES: Climatically, the area belongs to the monsoonal regime with far off distance from the sea (Bay of Bengal). Situated all along the foot hills and that too in the eastern portion of the country, this area receives ample rain fall almost recording next to Cherapunji. So, humidity in atmosphere almost throughout the year is a unique feature. Pleasant summers and cool winters complement the seasonal calendar. Exposure to such climate ushers in certain health problems in the study area. The people are mainly affected by seasonal cold and cough, allergy and fungal infections. Some areas are affected with fluoride contamination and
hence, tooth problems are not uncommon here. The region becomes humid and suffocating especially during the rains and dampness also prevails in the cold months, this may cause Arthritis and body ache.

The fig. no. 4.f shows that the majority of the respondents (73%) suffer from no specific diseases. About 12% suffers from Cold & Cough, Acidity, Gas, stomach related problems, tooth ache, Spondolysis etc. Arthritis, Thalasemia, Osteoporosis are found to affect only 7% of the respondents. Only 6% of the respondents have developed Blood Pressure, Blood Sugar, Kidney diseases and Obesity. This might be due to the urban mode of living and the stress and strain as the resultant effect. Allergy, Fungal infection on skins, Asthma, Eye problems, Migraine and Neurological problems are faced by 2 % of the respondents.

The following Table (Table no. 4.9) shows the different categories of diseases that affect the respondents under study. It shows a host of diseases from which the working women of the CBT suffers. Of all the types, the incidence of the second category of diseases occur the most and it is
displayed in Map no.4.21. These include all the illnesses that are resultant of the urban lifestyle oriented problems, such as Blood Sugar & Pressure, Thyroid, Osteoporosis, Skin disease, Joint Pain, Cholesterol, Eye Sight Problem, Fever, General illness, Headache, Tooth Problem, Colds cough, Allergy and Thyroid. Category 1 (including Kidney Stone, Kidney Problem, Lever Problem, Asthma)

is found in traces in ward nos. 1, 10 and 18. Moreover, categories 3 and 4 (including Skin disease, Arthritis, Respiratory, Paralysis, Bronchial, Spondolysis, Blood Sugar, Osteoporosis, Constipation, Thalassemia, Orthopedics and Cancer, Tumour, TB, Blood Cancer, Waterborne Disease, Mental Problem, Gynecological Problems) are found in very little proportion in ward nos. 1, 7, 8 and 10.
Table: 4.9 Category of Diseases bothering the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Category Types</th>
<th>Category of Diseases in Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Category 1</td>
<td>Kidney Stone, Kidney Problem, Lever Problem, Asthma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Category 2</td>
<td>Blood Sugar &amp; Pressure, Thyroid, Osteoporosis, Skin disease, Joint Pain, Cholesterol, Eye Sight Problem, Fever, General illness, Headache, Tooth Problem, Cold-cough, Allergy, Thyroid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Category 3</td>
<td>Skin disease, Arthritis, Respiratory, Paralysis, Bronchial, Spondolysis, Blood Sugar, Osteoporosis, Constipation, Thalassemia, Orthopedics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Category 4</td>
<td>Cancer, Tumour, TB, Blood Cancer, Waterborne Disease, Mental Problem, Gynecological Problem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

It was presupposed that the jobs to which the respondents are associated might have an imprint upon their health. But actually it was found that certain diseases like Blood pressure, Blood sugar, hypertension, Cholesterol etc. occur due to fast life at urban environment. The stress and strain through which the working women pass might have caused the incidence of such illnesses. So, on the whole occurrence of no major diseases may be noted as a positive indicator for the respondents.

4.A.15.2 POPULAR TREATMENT SOUGHT: As a resident of the vicinity of the study area, the researcher has observed that medical treatment is a complicated procedure in Koch Bihar. The district’s only one Government Hospital (M.J.N. Hospital) is located at the heart of the town. It receives a huge number of patients from all over the district. Assam being the next door neighbour sends people in large number, who tries to facilitate from the medical infrastructure of Koch Bihar. But people of Cooch Behar Town tries to avail the South Indian Hospitals mostly.

The respondents go for a host of treatment measures to remain healthy. Most of them (94.15%) go for Allopathy treatment; a small proportion of 3.83% have faith on Homeopath medicines; both Allopathy & Homeopathy treatments are jointly sought after by 1.86% while 0.056% of the respondents rely on Allopathy and Ayurvedic medicines.

A ward wise representation of this in Map no. 4.22 shows that almost every ward shows dependency on Allopathy treatment. Other types of treatment apart from Allopathy are absent in ward no.3, 6, 8, 11, 13 and 20. Homeopathy remains as the sole reliant treatment method for respondents residing in ward no. 9, 10, 12, 17 and 18. Small proportion of Homeopathy
treatment is followed by respondents of ward no. 1, 2, 5, 7, 14, 15, 16 and 19. The respondents of ward no. 2, 5, 10 and 17 depends both on Allopathy and Homeopathy treatments jointly.

4.A.15.3 VACCINATION OF THE RESPONDENTS DURING PREGNANCY:
Consciousness regarding immunization has delved deep into the respondents of the CBT. As a result of which, 85.03% of them have taken all the requisite vaccines during the child bearing period. The rest 14.97% did not undertake any vaccination for the said purpose. Ward nos. 2, 7 and 8 have 100% of vaccinated respondents (in Map no 4.23). The occurrence of the vaccinated respondents is maximum in ward nos. 3, 4, 13 and 20. Maximum concentration of respondents who did not take vaccines during pregnancy period adheres in ward nos. 1, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14 and 16-19. Least number of non-vaccinated respondents is seen in ward nos. 3, 4 and 20.
4.A.15.4 VACCINATION OF THE CHILDREN OF THE RESPONDENTS: It seems from the data collected through the survey that the respondents have well understood the necessity of immunization for their Children as almost 100% of all the wards of the CBT show their affirmative opinion regarding this.
PART- B:

Status & Role of Working Women in Family, Society and Work Places in the Study Area
PART- B:

Status & Role of Working Women in Family, Society and Work Places in the Study Area

4.B.1 INTRODUCTION: Family is the basic social unit for every society. The socialization process initiates only in a family. It is composed of persons united by either blood or by kin (marriage or adoption). The members of the family have common habitation or household and they interact or communicate with each other by performing their social roles like that of grandparents, parents, husbands, wives, sons, daughters etc. Families maintain common culture but every family nurtures its own distinctive culture within its domain. The structure of the family varies from society to society but whatever may be the form, the basic constituent members of parents with their children are seen everywhere.

The structure of the Traditional Joint Family in India felt the tremor of change when Industrialization and Westernization were introduced in the Colonial Era. Gradually, families migrated from rural to urban areas. The new industrial system started drawing women into its purview by modern education and employment. Though majority remained away from emancipation, economic independence to a handful changed the age-old doctrine – ‘man for the field and woman for the hearth’. The kinship relations started breaking up and the families started becoming smaller units than it used to be. This change was more clearly visible in the urban and sub-urban settings where the dearth of space was becoming a major issue. The advent of the Britishers led to the general realization and need for education for the males as well as for the females. More and more girls were given education and it remained unquestionable in the urban areas.

After the independence and partition of our country huge influx of people was witnessed across the newly formed borders. Poverty and turmoil in the then society deteriorated general living conditions. The traditional joint families disintegrated into smaller nuclear families. Women were forced to take up jobs and they stepped outside to complement their family income as the cost of living in the urban areas soar high. The educated handful entered into professions like law, medicine and teaching. In the initial years after independence, approaches to development
for the women and children were taken up in a welfare mode along with the other deprived
groups like destitutes, disabled, aged etc. until the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) when
importance was given to women’s education. The Sixth Plan (1980-85) for the first time
included a chapter on Women’s Development. From then onwards, the issues related to Women
were started given due attention (the detail of which is written in the following chapter i.e.
Chapter V). The scope for white collar jobs for women increased day by day and more women
got into earning though remaining at much lower proportion compared to their counterparts.

The society metamorphosed with time and the wave of social progress touched each and
everyone on its way. Women might have attained a changed status in due course of time but her
generative, productive and distributive roles remained intact however. No society can disapprove
women’s association with the very function of child bearing and rearing activities; no matter how
far the society progresses, Women remain as the core stone of the family and the society in a
broader sense. She inculcates the life and living among her off-springs and hence her role and
status in the family has a deep bearing with the progress and prosperity of the society at large.

4.B.2 THE MEANING OF STATUS: ‘Status’ may be 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”.

Menon 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.
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). She also 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.
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).

‘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 working women of the study area, social status would refer to their position in the social arena. The researcher is motivated to enquire how far they have accomplished to ascertain social rewards for themselves, so that they can lead a decent and enlightened living. The literature related to women largely presents the account of deprivation from different points of view, so this was an attempt to find out the actual position of the urban working women in their family, society as well as in their work places in the present day situation in the study area.

4. B. 3 THE STATUS & ROLE OF WORKING WOMEN IN THE FAMILY & SOCIETY:
The status of women in societies throughout the world has a diversified picture. As Natarajan reasoned quite correctly that women cannot be considered as a homogeneous social & intellectual class and neither all inequalities apply to every woman. Lack of employment opportunities can affect only the middle class women; while those in the primary occupation along with the men got involved in the field; the higher class women hardly wishes or has any urge to take up employment (2013:120-121).

Geographically, the continent of Asia can be divided into 3 regions on this basis. The South Asia and East Asia where women have been kept under control of men throughout her life cycle by the sequential custody of father, husband and son. In South East Asia, women have striking freedom especially the married ones. Conversely, Green Revolution in Indonesia has displaced poorer women from agriculture, as it demanded the use of technical knowledge involving the use of mechanized farming (where women lack). Thus, it has lowered the status of women as they were forced to seek other employment. The statuses of the female household heads have remained neglected as a matter of development planning. However, a number of western feminists and reformers have objected to this; as a result the term ‘household heads’ have been replaced by ‘reference member’ by the Economic Commission for Europe in 1978 (Menon,
2008: 13-14) since they are used in tabulation and analysis of the census. The culture of a society is reflected in the manner in which it treats the women, widows and aged persons. High proportion of the female headed single families in a society (developing) indicate that high proportion of women who were widowed because of the considerable age difference with the older husbands and also that high proportion of aged people who remain alone by themselves do not have anyone to take care of them.

A common feature in the contemporary Western thoughts with regard to the status of the women is concerned with women’s control over reproduction and their own bodies. As some writers feel that women of the developing nations feel oppressed by the burdens of child bearing and rearing; they also held the women herself responsible for this because of their lack of knowledge with regard to fertility regulation. Though providing contraceptives to the women would not improve their lives unless the societal concept changes. Women’s rights should not be compartmentalized and treated separately; instead they should be viewed as human rights issue and not means to an end. This is why it is so important to change the emphasis from women’s rights and status to women’s participation in creating development and in sharing its benefits (Menon, 2008: 220).

Astige (2006: 34) identifies the following in her work to explain social status of working women in family and within their work places:

- Right of empowerment, authority to decide for one’s life
- Opportunities to develop her social self
- Sharing of domestic responsibilities by other members, including husband
- Freedom accorded for participation in social and public activities
- The degree of differential treatment given
- Provision for protection of women from their exploitation, harassment and disabilities.

4. B. 4 THE STATUS & ROLE OF RESPONDENTS IN THE FAMILY & SOCIETY IN THE STUDY AREA: The connotation of the word ‘status’ and the legacy of social control have become clear from the aforementioned representation. Several aspects have been viewed to
analyze the status and role of the working women in their families pertaining to the study area. These are:

1. Freedom enjoyed by the working women in the family

2. Decision making in the family

3. Sharing of domestic responsibilities by other members of the family

4. Position of working women in their families

4.B.4.1 FREEDOM ENJOYED BY THE WORKING WOMEN IN THE FAMILY: Status and role of women depends on the degree of freedom accorded to her particularly in the family and in the society in the broader sense. On the other hand, restriction imposed on her increases deprivation of the right to equality. Thus, freedom and equality for the working women goes hand in hand. The target group was asked several questions during the survey to adjudge their freedom in their families.

4.B.4.1.1 Respondent’s Attire in Household: The respondents were asked about their usual household dresses they wear. Majority of the working women (86.55%) stated that they wear Sarees and Kurtis in the house. Only small proportion of the respondents (5.85%) told that they wear western outfits in their household. About 7.20% of the working women declared that they wear both traditional Indian dresses and western outfits in their house. An insignificant proportion of about 0.40% wear dresses other than these mentioned types. The dressing habit of the respondents is represented by simple cartographic technique in Map no. 4.24 which shows the above mentioned trend.
In order to find out the degree of freedom regarding selection of the household attire, the respondents were asked whether they experienced any confrontation from the family members about their dressing or not. 95.66% of the respondents confirmed that they did not face any objection for their household attire. Only 4.34% of the respondent stated that they faced disagreement regarding this from their family members.

**4.B.4.1.2 Freedom of Spending Own Income:** Most relevantly, they were asked ‘Do you spend your own income?’ 90.88% of the respondents opined in affirmation that they spend their own income (as in Table 4.10). Only 9.12% of the sample said that they kept their salary with their husbands and in-laws.
Table: 4.10 Freedom of Spending Own Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ Opinion</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1615</td>
<td>90.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>9.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

This group has to seek permission of their husbands and in-laws if they wanted to spend their money. Considering the ward wise picture (evident from Map no. 4.26), it can be said that ward nos. 1-9 and 13-20 has respondents where almost 90% are capable of spending their own income. Only in ward nos.10, 11 and 12 about 70-80% of the working women faces difficulty and requires permission of the family members for expenses. So, employment has given freedom and independence to greater proportion of the sample in the study area.

4.B.4.1.3 Interference in Spending Own Income: Though verbally almost everyone said that they have perfect understanding with their husbands and in-laws regarding the money matters, they admitted that to some extent they face interference of them in spending their own earned
money. When it was asked that ‘Do you face any interference regarding spending your income?’ About 18% of the respondents confessed that they faced interference (Table 4.11). The respondents of ward no. 5 and 10 mostly (about 60-70%) complained about the infringement of their housemates in their expenditure. A much smaller proportion (i.e 12-28%) of the respondents pertaining to the ward nos. 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 complained about the same. The majority of the working women (82%) still said that they did not face any interference regarding money matters and enjoy total freedom while spending their own income (found in ward nos.2, 3, 12, 13 and 20). Map no. 4.26 displays the interference with regard to the management of money faced by the respondents.

Table: 4.11 Interference of the Family Members on Respondents’ Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ Opinion</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

Map No. 4.26
4.B.4.1.4 Who Interferes? : Of this 18%, the husbands intrude in the money matters of 223 respondents (i.e. 70% of 320 respondents); in-laws of 59 respondents amounting to 18% (of 320 working women) interferes and 38 respondents forming 12% (of 320 working women) tolerates

Table: 4.12 Who Interferes the Respondents’ Expenses?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interfering Persons</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
<th>% (out of 320)</th>
<th>% (Based on Total no. of Respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-laws</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Interference</td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

intervention of other relatives and family members regarding their expenses (Table no. 4.12). The ward wise interference regarding the money management of the respondents has been recorded and mapped in Map no. 4.27. It reveals that the husbands are the interfering persons in most that is found in ward nos. 1, 4-11, 14-19. In-laws of the respondents matters the most in ward nos. 5, 8, 10, 14, 15 and 19. Other relatives’ interference can be noticed in ward no. 5, 10, 14 and 15 respectively.
4.B.4.1.5 The Nature of Respondents’ Expenses: With regard to the nature of expenses, about 97.41% of the respondents reported that the lion share of their expenses moved round the household articles or those related to family (very well represented in Map no. 4.28). These included clothes, food stuffs, domestic appliances, healthcare for the household members, gift items for relatives and friends etc. On the other hand, 2.59% of the working women spends on her personal clothing, jewellery, saving schemes, home loans, children’s education, savings for the children, medicines for own self and the like (Table 4.13). Having a view of the pattern of the expenses by the working women of the CBT, it may be inferred that the working women takes the load of the family to a
The figures in parenthesis indicate the percentage

greater extent as majority of them spends mostly in buying household items or items for common needs of the family. Only an inconsequential proportion of the respondents spend on personal items and children. Although they opine that they feel free to spend on whatever they wanted, but they actually expend on the household requirements. The way round, it seems to be a kind of ceiling on to their desires.

4.B.4.1.6 Freedom for Savings by the Respondents: Majority of the working women (82.95%) have the freedom to save their money either for their children or for themselves in various deposit schemes. The saving habits of the respondents have been shown in Map no. 4.29 which contains clear depiction of the wards where the respondents save or do not save their earnings. Some of working women under study belonging to ward nos. 1 – 10, 12 and 19 do not save their money at all; those make a proportion of 17.05% of the respondents. They were cross questioned about their reluctance for savings. These working women (residing in ward nos. 1, 4, 9, 12 and 19) answered that they usually spend all the earned money and there remains no money for savings.
The most popular saving schemes among the respondents are found to be LIC, MIS, Recurring Deposits and Fixed Deposits. The popular saving schemes among the respondents have been shown in a ward wise map of CBT (Map no.4.30), it is observed from the map that LIC is the most popular among all such schemes and is unanimously accepted in almost every ward. Some of the respondents also reported that they were not encouraged to save their income by their in-laws and husbands. Therefore, a small proportion of the respondents remain underprivileged of saving their own income posing hindrance to their freedom to manage material resources.

4.B.4.1.7 Freedom of Addressing to Own Needs: Now the most pertinent question arises that whether the respondents are able to satisfy their own needs and requirements or simply they compromise with that of the family expenses. The respondents were asked to convey the proportion of their income expended upon themselves. The findings are thus listed below in Table no. 4.14. The Table shows that majority of the respondents (about 30%) spend less than 10% of their income to satisfy their own requirements as evident in Map no. 4.29, which displays that the respondents hardly spends for their own selves. The researcher feels that this is a very low proportion that the respondents are spending on their own selves especially at the backdrop of rise in the market prices. Such respondents are found to be present in the ward nos. of 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 13. Keeping in mind the Land-Value Map (Map no. 4.19) and that of the Economic Profile (Map no. 4.18) of the CBT, these above mentioned wards mostly belong to the lower income and middle income group of urbanites and hence they might face problem of spending more money on themselves rather to meet their family requirements. About 25% of the sample spends upto 20% of their income on themselves and are found to be present in ward nos. 2, 4, 17 and 18. 21 – 40% of the income is expended by 12 % of the respondents adhered in ward nos. 14 and 18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion of Income (%)</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>Ward wise Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤10</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2, 4, 17, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥51</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3, 8, 12, 14, 15, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
the respondents in ward no. 10 opined that they spent about 41-50% of their salary on personal requirements. 19% of the working women of the study area were found to spend about \( \geq 51\% \) of their monthly income on their own needs. These respondents reside in ward nos. 3, 8, 12, 14, 15 and 20. It may be summed up that almost one-half of the working women (30+25=55%) afford to spend upto 20% of their salary for their own needs and necessities and they are generous enough to spare themselves. The rest 45% of the respondents might be regarded to have a congenial position in the family where they can freely cater to their wants. So, employment to these 45% of respondents has enhanced their status in terms of freedom as an important component of equality.

4.B.4.1.8 Spending on Shopping During Festivals: The working woman by virtue of her employment faces certain stress on her salary especially during the festive shopping. Traditionally, people of Bengal spend a lot during the ‘Pujas’ by buying clothes and valuables and also by exchanging gifts among friends and relatives. The study area is no exception to this. Moreover, the respondents are expected to buy things to her family, friends and relatives. The respondents were asked the question: ‘Who does the festive shopping?’ in order to reach the desired goal of finding out that if the respondents were pressurized to spend their money since they are employed.

Map No. 4.31
About 48.51% of the respondents said that they spend their money in such shopping. Almost equal proportion (48.62%) said that their husbands along with them remain involved in the said purpose. A small proportion of them (2.87%) stated that other persons (like the in-laws, mother, father, sisters, brothers etc) had contributed for shopping. Thus, it is found that about one-half of the respondents did spend during the festivals satisfying the expectation of their friends and families. The contribution of the respondents to Shopping has been shown in Map no. 4.31 which is self explanatory.

4.B.4.2 DECISION MAKING IN THE FAMILY: Decision making in the family is an important facet in determining the status of its family members since it involves the allotment of material resources in a family; it also embraces the distributive and functional roles of the family members especially that of the women. Some writers like Dixit, Ross, Heer and others are of opinion that a shift in the authority from patriarchal to egalitarian (including both the parents) is taking place with the increasing economic autonomy of the working women. The wife being educated and employed one has been found to play the role of a co-decision maker in the family especially in the urban setups (Singhal, 2003: 100-101). The husbands of the emergent neo-joint and nuclear families cannot undermine the wives’ financial contribution to the family income and hence consult them in every important decision.

The respondents were asked this question that acts as an indicator facilitating the researcher to infer about the status of the working women in the study area. According to the respondents, about 79.90% confirmed that they take decisions of their families; 12.89% said that they remain detached from taking any decision in the family; while 7.21% of the respondents take the decisions but jointly after discussion with their husbands. So, if the former and the latter groups are added, it would indicate that independently and jointly the respondents take part in the decision making process in the family with prominence (79.90% + 7.21% = 87.11%).

The decision-making may be parted into three categories as per the study conducted by Singhal (2003). These may revolve round: Money, Children and others related to visiting relatives (as in case of neo-joint families). In the present study the working women of the CBT area were found to involve themselves mostly in the former two areas i.e. decision making related to Money-centric matters and Children-centric matters.
4.B.4.2.1 MONEY-CENTRIC DECISION MAKING can be reflected by recognizing the contribution of the working women in shopping during festivals, purchase of consumer articles and purchase of real estate for the family.

4.B.4.2.1.a Contribution of the Working Women in Shopping: In the previous unit of analysis (Freedom enjoyed by the working women in the family), this has already been dealt with but with a different view. The findings of the study show that about 48.51% of the respondents do contribute in the Festive Shopping alone and their contribution might be earmarked with significance as almost a similar share (48.62%) of the respondents contribute to it jointly with their spouses. The rest 2.87% were put in by the in-laws, parents and other relatives. Therefore, with regard to the question of decision-making, an impressive proportion of the respondents enjoy the autonomy of buying and exchanging gifts during the festivals. (reference to Map no. 4.30).

4.B.4.2.1.b Purchase of Consumer Articles: The working women of the study area are found to be extremely generous of throwing in their income for procuring the consumer articles for the family. Almost 96.90% i.e. 1722 respondents out of 1777 expend their income for buying consumer articles including Clothes, food stuffs, domestic appliances etc. needed by their families (as evident from Table no. 4.13). So, another area of contentment regarding the decision-making ability of the respondents of the study area finds its expression.

4.B.4.2.1.c Purchase of Real Estate: The respondents were enquired about their consultancy during buying and selling of property. The result found shows an interesting trend. About 30.48% of the sample said in affirmation that they were being consulted in case of buying and selling of properties. On the other hand, 47.86% of the respondents did not contribute in the decision related to the purchase of real estate. A proportion of 21.66% of the respondents have reported that they jointly with their husbands and in-laws take the decision. So, directly or indirectly about 78.34% (adding 30.48% and 21.66%) of the working women remain involved with the decision-making in property matters. This is a positive trend for the working women of the study area to have a firm footing in the decision-making.

4.B.4.2.1.d Saving Investment and Loan Repayment: It has already been seen that saving investment is popular among the working women of the study area. Almost 82.95% of the respondents save a portion of their income in diverse deposit schemes. The popular deposit
schemes as per the preferences of the working women are listed below in the following Table (Table no. 4.15). It is

**Table: 4.15 Saving Investment by the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred Deposit Schemes</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIC</td>
<td>1301</td>
<td>73.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIS</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FD</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings a/c &amp; Recurring Deposits</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>11.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014

evident from the table that the LIC is mostly accepted (73.21%) as the saving schemes by the working women of the study area. The next most reliable way of saving investment of the target group is through the banks (i.e. 11.09%). Contrary to this a proportion of 17.05% of the respondents did not save owing to either incurrence of huge expenses or little / no encouragement from the rest of the family members in investment savings. With regard to repayment of loans, some of the respondents are found indebted to banks for house building loans. The percentage might be insignificant (0.79% as mentioned in Table no. 4.13) but such an observation in the study area gives a boosting to the confidence level of the working women for taking such a decisive role in handling material resources of the family.

**4.B.4.2.2 CHILDREN-CENTRIC DECISION MAKING** is evident in the matters related to child bearing, family planning and children’s admission to schools.

**4.B.4.2.2.a Child Bearing and Family Planning:** Women remains deeply associated with child bearing and rearing activities in all societies. This procreative role has brought in both glorification and derogation to women. In the former case, this may be held high in the sense that women (without caring for their bodily distortions and physical handicap) brings new life to the world and enjoys the experience called ‘motherhood’. The derogatory value is sometimes associated as she is viewed as a medium of sexual pleasure and a machinery of procreation. Women in the present-day world have now mastered the usage of technical knowledge which is concerned with the ‘equality in the sphere of sexual relations and with women’s control over reproduction and their own bodies’ (Menon, 2008:219).
Working women with the dual strength of education and employment can become more decisive in child bearing and family planning. In the study area, the working women have been found to have 2-3 children on an average. They were asked about their intention of having more children. Only 4.39% of the respondents opined in affirmation; about 36.07% of them confirmed in negation; whereas 59.54% of the respondents said that they take the decision jointly with their husbands regarding this. This reflects that though a small proportion yet a handful of the women have taken a firm decision like that of child bearing. It is upon their discretion whether they wanted more children or not.

Another important area of exerting an articulation for the working women of the study area is with regard to Family Planning. 98.14% of the respondents were found to be aware of family planning. 96.96% of the working wife and their husbands have adopted various birth control measures like that of operation, use of contraceptives, birth controlling pills etc. 1.18% of the couples were found to be motivated with the ideology and would shortly adopt such measures; while 1.86% of the respondents discarded the idea.

4.B.4.2.2.b Decision-making related to Children’s Admission to Schools: There are some matters which may appear trivial, but may be considered as important indicator to find the extent to which the working women exercise their authority. One such issue may be treated significant to the present study that concerns with the children’s admission to schools. The working women were asked about the medium of instruction in schools to which their children were admitted.

The following table (Table no. 4.16) displays the detail. It is found that most of the respondents (63.25%) admitted their children to the Bengali Medium Schools; it is followed by the English Medium Schools (33.60%) and by the Hindi Medium Schools (1.24%) respectively. A smaller percentage (1.91%) of the working women did not have any preference and they belong to not mentioned group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengali Medium Schools</td>
<td>1124</td>
<td>63.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Medium Schools</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>33.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi Medium Schools</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
Whatever be the choice, the focus of study was to know about whether the working women face any confrontation with the family members (husbands and in-laws) regarding the admission of the children to schools. A percentage among the respondents, though small (7.26%) is found who have faced disagreement from their family members regarding this issue. The rest 92.74% of the respondents could admit their kids to the schools freely according to their choice. Map no. 4.32 reflects the confrontation faced by the respondents in admitting their children to schools. Therefore it is seen that, most of the working women of the study area are capable to take decisions regarding their admission to schools.

4.B.4.3 SHARING OF DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES BY OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY: Traditionally, the division of labour between both the sexes has remained pronounced in patriarchal social structure. Men were associated with strenuous work both in the domestic arena and outside. Women were assigned to duties like cooking, serving of food,
washing and cleaning of clothes and utensils etc. With the advent of industrialization and urbanization the traditional family structure started to wither away. New arenas of occupation and career opened up. Women gradually stepped into the so-called ‘masculine’ professions. Subsequently, it was followed by a steady increase in the white collar jobs for women.

While analyzing the data collected after the survey, Cooch Behar Town has been found with no exception to this trend. Already it was mentioned earlier that it shows an increasing drift of white collar jobs among the respondents wherein 41.14% are found to be Advocates, Judges, Professors, Doctors, Bank employees, Government Service person, Police officers, School Teachers etc. by profession (Table 4.3); it becomes now essential to know about the kind of work load the working women bears and the extent to which they get support from their family members in their household performances.

4.B.4.3.1 Working Women Bearing School Expenses: Almost 99.10% of the respondents send their children to schools. The necessity of education is undeniable and the respondents have been able to generate willingness for education among the kids. The respondents were also asked the question that ‘Who bears the school expenses for the kids?’ to know the contribution of them as well as their family members towards the education of the children. About 40.57% of the working women of the study area bear the education related expenses of the children. 54.76% of the respondents told that their husbands took this responsibility. A small proportion (4.67%) of the respondent stated that their in-laws and other family members like father, mother, own brother and elder sisters provided the school expenses for the children. Therefore, it is seen that a significant proportion of the working women of the study area bears the school expenses of their kids and the rest 59.43% of the respondents receive their family backing regarding this.

4.B.4.3.2 Expenses during Child Birth & Illness of the Family Members: The responsibility towards the family members can be considered by analyzing the dependability of the same during illness and at times of sheer necessity. The respondents were being questioned to know about the person(s) who bore the medical expenses during the birth of the children in the family. About 90.71% spoke of their husbands who paid all the medical bills during their child birth. 8.67% respondents were found steady enough to take their own responsibility. The rest 0.62% of the respondents got the support from the other family mates (in-laws, mother, father etc.) in this regard.
When any of the family members fall ill, most of the husbands (i.e. according to 96.57% of the respondents) take the responsibility of medical treatment given to them. Only 2.59% of the working women expended for this purpose, while 0.84% of other family members (in-laws, mother, father, own brother & sister etc.).

Therefore, analyzing the findings of both the cases it may be inferred that on medical expenses the working women of the study area gets a firm support from their husbands. The husbands of more than 90% of the respondents bear the medical expenses of the sick family members as well as the expecting respondents during their child birth.

4.B.4.3.3 Looking After Children in Working Women’s Absence: The working women of the study area are found to be mostly (61.11%) associated with the organized services or salaried employment as already envisaged in the preceding portion of this chapter; on the other hand, the remaining 34.22% of the surveyed group belonged to the un-organized or non-salaried group. The salaried group requires leaving their houses at fixed time of the day and remaining in their respective work places for 6-7 hours daily. The un-organized group however stays outside for a lesser period of time than the former one. Whatever be the nature of the job, the working women have to go outside leaving their children as well.

She now requires the assistance of the family members for taking good care of the children. If she lives in a nuclear family, she opts for maid servants or baby sitters for this purpose. The Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons Taking Care of Children</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>1083</td>
<td>60.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother-in-laws</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>12.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maids</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>19.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>6.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 4.17 Caring Children in Working Women’s Absence

were asked the question ‘who takes care of your children when you go out?’ and majority (60.97%) of them stated that their Husbands take care of their children in their absence (Table no. 4.17). The respondents are found to rely on the Maids (19.98%) after their husbands. The Mothers-in-law secures the next position according to 12.77% respondents. The other family
members including the Fathers-in-law, brothers, sisters, own parents etc. also take care of the little ones as per 6.30% of the working women. So, it is clear that the working women organize the support systems at her home for going out to suffice her employment. If she does not get one, then she goes for maids or baby sitters.

4.B.4.3.4 Household Performances by the Respondents and the Family Members: The following table (Table no. 4.18) reveals the relative proportion of the working women who opined about their performances in domestic chores and about sharing of the tasks by the family members. Seven areas of household activities have been recognized as indicators, these are: Cooking, Marketing (grocery and green grocery), Cleaning & Washing of utensils and clothes, taking care of the aged persons of the family, taking care of the Children, Dropping the children to schools and Paying of different Bills (such as electric, telephone, cooking gas etc.). Here, the work performances of the respondents, their husbands and other persons (including in-laws, own parents, brothers or sisters, sons and maids) in these mentioned areas have been compared to decide upon the degree of responsibilities taken up by any of the family members. This would throw light upon the respondents’ domestic work load also.

To begin with, Cooking for the family might be considered wherein it is found that majority (83.23%) of the working women engage themselves to it; other persons (here, Mothers-in-law and Maids) are found as supporters (16.32%) to the respondents. Marketing included grocery and green grocery

Table: 4.18 Comparison of Household Tasks between the Respondents & the Family Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Work Performances By</th>
<th>Cooking</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Cleaning &amp; Washing</th>
<th>Caring Aged</th>
<th>Caring Children</th>
<th>Dropping Children to School</th>
<th>Paying of Bills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>1479</td>
<td>83.23</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>35.79</td>
<td>1096</td>
<td>61.68</td>
<td>1391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>55.82</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>16.32</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>8.39</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>34.38</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
items for the family and as expected, the husbands were found to be the highest contenders (55.82%); nevertheless, the respondents have also become remarkably significant (35.79%).

With regard to Cleaning & Washing of utensils and clothes, the highest labour is contributed by the respondents (61.68%) and it is followed by others (including Mothers-in-laws, Daughters, Maids) contributing to it according to 34.38% of the respondents. Caring of the aged persons of the family is the next area of study. The respondents excel in this work tremendously with contribution from 78.28 % working women. The husbands also come forward having an involvement of 16.32% as per the respondents. While taking Care of the Children, the respondents contribute 69.11% and are followed by their better halves by 25.83%. 57.46% of the respondents also drop their children to schools and a proportion of 35.96% according to the respondents has been maintained by the husbands. The Paying of Bills to avail different amenities to civic life is the next area to be taken into consideration, where the Husbands contributed the most (67.98%), 26.84% of the working women was also found to engage themselves in this.

4.B.4.4 POSITION OF WORKING WOMEN IN THEIR FAMILIES: The working women in their families pertaining to the study area till now have shown their responsibility and performances. It is found that the working women have relentlessly performed the household duties; even they have stepped outside for giving a firm financial support to their families. At this juncture, time has come to find out the position of the working women in their families. Certain points of view elaborate their status in their families.

4.B.4.4.1 Materialistic Position of the Respondents: The material benefit from the working women is very clearly seen in a family. They not only provide regular flow of funds but also engage themselves in the daily household chores. The respondents were enquired about their possession of property. Inspite of their vibrancy in all spheres of activities, the respondents possess only 2.14% of property singly; 1.46% of them possess property jointly either with their husbands or with their in-laws; on the contrary, 96.40% of the respondents have stated that the property belonged to their husbands and in-laws. Thus, material position is not so prominent for the respondents.

4.B.4.4.2 Attitude of the Family Members Towards the Respondents: The respondents were inquired about the attitude that the family members possesses towards themselves. Almost
97.69% of the respondents admitted that their household members had a helping attitude towards them. They tried to assist the working women whenever and wherever it is required. Easy and mutual co-operative relationship works as boosters to the respondents so that they also look after the family’s benefit. Only 2.31% of the respondents reported that their family members had non-co-operative attitude.

4.B.4.4.3 Co-operation Received from the Family Members: Family life is a team work. The home maker’s success in organizing and orienting the family members lies in the mutual understanding and co-operation among them. Though majority of the respondents said that their family members had a helping attitude, but actually 54.59% of them receive co-operation from them. About 40.68% admitted that their family members did not co-operated with them. The rest 4.73% did not mentioned their choice.

4.B.4.4.4 Harassment in the Family: The experience of the brides in our country has not been smooth and peaceful at their in-laws’ place for everyone. Their adjustments often get soured and sometimes confrontation leads to harassments. This becomes painful for those women who do not have economic autonomy. The target group in this inquiry is employed and thus it might bring a relief to the researcher in the question of being harassed at their households. With this expectation they were asked about domestic harassment and 84.02% of the respondents stated that there was no such irritation for them in their households. Contrary to this, 6.42% of the respondents were not satisfied with the conduct of their family members and reported to have experienced verbal abuse.

4.B.5 THE ROLE OF THE RESPONDENTS IN THEIR WORK PLACES: The ‘work places’ are those places where ‘groups of people work together to achieve a common goal, it denotes a structure of duties and activities necessary for the conduct of business’ (Astige, 2006: 159). The working women till now were subjected to the challenge of going out of the four walls of the houses to add to the financial support of their families. They succeeded in doing so. Now the new goal for the working women has come up i.e. to face the outer world and to establish a firm footing in their work places also. Following Astige, the working women have to face several problems in their workplaces:

- Since they have to play the dual role of mother/wife and that of an employee simultaneously, the ‘private’ and the ‘public’ lives are likely to be in conflict.
Secondly, the ‘Work Place’ continues to be a domain of men, so they might face problems working in the men’s world.

The work places have their own structures, duties and functions; they have a definite culture of their own besides the employment related activities. The working women need to adjust themselves with the ‘office-culture’ and socialize with their colleagues by attending office-functions, get-togethers etc.

The present study has delved into these thoughts and some questions were asked to know about the official personality of the working women as well.

4.B.5.1 Respondents in Services: It is already seen (Table no. 4.3) in the initial part of this chapter that most of the respondents (41.14%) are engaged into services of high status i.e. they are either Advocates and Judges; or they may be Professors, Assistant Professors & Librarian in Colleges and Universities; or Bank employees and Financial advisors; or Government Service Holders; or Police officers and Constables; Doctors, Engineers, Journalists and WBCS Officers or even Principals or Head Mistress and School Teachers. The rest of the proportion of the sample is found distributed among moderate and low status services.

Comparing the occupational structures of the respondents and that of their husbands (Table 4.3 & 4.6) it may be said that the proportion of workers in white collar jobs of high occupational status among the respondents proliferate than that of their spouses. The adjacent table (Table: 4.19) reveals that even if majority of the respondents are found engaged to white collar jobs, professionally their scope of making decisions remain restricted. Considering the occupancy of the respondents in professions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocates &amp; Judges</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial advisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.B.C.S. Officers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Head Mistresses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councilors in Municipality</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014

related to decision making it is found in almost a negligible proportion. In other words, 1.46% of the sample is either Advocates & Judges, Financial advisors, W.B.C.S. Officers, Principals and
Head Mistresses or Councilors in Municipality etc. The husbands remain associated with moderate job status belonging to middle income group, so this might be the driving force behind the respondents to go for employment in order to support the family income.

With regard to permanency of the jobs of the respondents, it may be said (fig. no 4.e) that little more than one-half of the respondents (56.73%) are permanent in their services. About 37.31% of the working women are engaged to Temporary and Part-time jobs. An insignificant proportion of them are Self employed (3.15%) and Contractual workers (0.17%). 2.59% of the respondents did not commented on their status of job and hence they are referred to as the ‘not mentioned’ group.

4.B.5.2 Decision & Reasons to Get Employed: The respondents were asked a couple of questions in this connection; firstly, they were enquired about their decision for jobs and overwhelmingly 96.96% of the sample said that it was their own decision to get employed. The remaining 3.04% stated that they came into service getting encouragement either from their father, husband or mother as the cases were.

The next question asked was to identify the reasons that drove the respondents to get employed. Most of the respondents (86.89%) answered that it was the financial inadequacy which acted as the stimulant. About 9.90% of the respondents reported that they got into services to attain a social position. While 3.21% of the working women admitted that it was because of their family tradition and also to occupy time they had taken up jobs. So, financial crisis is attributed as the chief cause behind female employment in the study area.

4.B.5.3 Job Satisfaction: It is clear that employment of the respondents have enabled them to shoulder monetary responsibilities of the families. Furthermore, it has also been observed that most of the respondents professionally belong to the High income group associated mostly with the white collar jobs. Therefore, it was thought that the working women under study would also remain satisfied with their work and work related matters. The study conducted in this concern shows congruency with the presupposition. 89.53% of the respondents reported that they were satisfied with their jobs. Only 10.47% of the respondents told that they were not satisfied with their jobs.

4.B.5.4 Office Attire: Women’s entry into services is of more recent phenomena than that of the men’s especially in the third world countries like India. The respondents are gradually adjusting
themselves with the office-culture, work load, decorum and discipline of the work places. Office attire might work as an indicator to know about the degree of freeness enjoyed by the employer. For an instance, Advocates and Police personnel must wear their uniforms as per their designation. While employees of private farms may select the office-wardrobe according to their taste, comfort level and affordability. So, the respondents were asked to convey their office attire so that the researcher could justify the freedom experienced by them. Almost 97.69% of the working women wear Indian Dresses in their work places (found in Map no. 4.33). Only a skimpy section (0.73%) of them dresses in western wears. 1.58% of the respondents wear both Indian and western dresses in the office. So, most of the respondents show traditional mind set and tries to remain formal in their offices with regard to dressing.

Map No. 4.33
4.B.5.5 Confrontation Regarding Dressing in the Office: It is not a good practice to experience criticism regarding attire in the work places especially in a civilized society. A worker is an adult and he/she must have the modesty in selection of the dresses. Inspite of all, sometimes the employer or colleagues do become inquisitive and a critique for their wardrobe especially in case of a female colleague.

![Disagreement Regarding Office Attire Faced by the Working Women in Cooch Behar Town](image)

About 3.94% of the respondents (who stays in ward nos. 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 17, 19 and 20) faced altercation regarding their dresses in their work places (shown in Map no.4.34). A Saree is regarded as the most modest dress for the females as formal wear. Some respondents prefer Kurtis as well. These respondents also faced criticism for wearing Salwar-Kurtis especially in schools where the distance travelled by the employee and the ease or comfort are not considered.

4.B.5.6 Harassment in Office & Steps for Eradication: Not all the time things remain congenial for the working women at their work places. The working women sometimes develop enemity as colleagues especially reaching certain targets benefitting their services. They face
mental torture, verbal abuses, physical and sexual harassments, political pressure and the like. These evils are a part of the outside-world vices which are like unwanted guests and are resultant professional hazards.

The respondents of the study area do face harassments but in a smaller proportion as a whole (shown in Map no. 4.35). About 6.81% of the respondents (121 in number) complained about the harassments in their work places endangering their mental peace and ease of service. Of all the categories mentioned in Table no. 4.20, work related problems bother most (38.01%) to the working women of the study area. In this issue the respondents have reported that they face infrastructural problems like non-availability of ladies’ toilets in their work places; some health workers have reported that that they have to tolerate the hostile behaviour of the patient-party; some of them have complained that the

Map No. 4.35
co-workers do not co-operate with them and they find difficulty in completing their work. Next come the issue of Political Pressure (35.06%) which hampers the normal activities in the workplaces. Verbal abuse resulting to mental torture is experienced by 23.97% of the respondents; while 4.96% are the victims of sexual and physical harassments as well.

When the respondents were asked ‘If they had taken any steps for eradication of harassment in your office; 18.23% of the sample responded in affirmation while the rest 81.20% did not raised their voices. Some respondents have told that they have lodged complaints to the higher authority against sexual harassment. Some of them have given in writing to improve the infrastructural facilities in their offices.

**4.B.5.7 Modification Intended in the Office:** Since the dissatisfaction level for both job (10.47% of the respondents) and workplace (6.81% of the respondents) related issues are small in proportion, it is expected that the target group would be having least concern about modification in their workplaces. It was only about 7.03% of the respondents who wanted a change in their offices. The rest 90.77% did not wanted alteration and 2.10% of them remained silent about their choice.

- Respondents serving in Schools primarily wanted infrastructural improvement for their workplaces such as increased number of rooms, proper playgrounds for the students, increased number of teaching staffs, library facility, proper boundary wall, drinking water facility and ladies’ toilets. Few of them even reported that they were not satisfied with the work environment. A respondent serving at a school complained about the distance she has to cover every day to reach her destination and she wanted a mutual transfer with any colleague working at any school convenient for her.
• Respondents serving at Colleges did report for ladies’ toilets and general infrastructure of their workplace.

• Some of the respondents owning garment shops and beauty parlours have expressed their desire to increase their shop size.

• A respondent working at a government co-operative store (Samavaika) stated that she did not have a fixed working time. She is either called for duty in the morning (10 am to 4 pm) or in the afternoon (2 pm to 7 pm).

• Health workers especially the nursing staffs at the M.J.N. Hospital have grievances towards the security of the female staffs during night. They have experienced molestation and find extreme difficulty in delivering their duties at night. This undesired problem worries the researcher the most, since the one who takes care of the sick and unable person is thought of as a medium of sexual pleasure! This kind of behaviour is detrimental for the society. This mindset should be changed for the sake of healthy living in a healthy social structure.

4.B.5.8 Participation in Office Functions: The office-culture also involves certain non-official formally informal celebrations involving cultural functions, treats, parties, reception etc. Like the male-colleagues, the working women have to get acquainted with all these and take part in the same so as to maintain good relationship with the colleagues. These functions also help to make the official relations more at ease so that the employee gets a free environment. The respondents of the study area were enquired about their participation in the office functions and 86.44% of them confirmed their participation. 13.56% of the respondents however remained aloof from the socialization owing to their own reservations. Map no. 4.36 displays the participation of the respondents in office functions in ward wise representation.
4.B.5.9 Employment and the Family Life of the Respondents: Employment brings emancipation to women but it fetches certain undesirable problems along with it as well. They might develop a guilt feeling as they spent maximum hours doing employment related works outside. Compensating that, the working women might find a problem in adjusting with the family life and the working life and they try to take up maximum workload of the household also. Keeping this presupposition in mind, the respondents were asked several questions and the following points were studied:

- **Employment Posing Hindrance to Family Life:** Almost 93% of the respondents felt that their employment is a boon to them rather than a curse. They seemed happy with their family life and it never bothered them to have posed hindrance to the normal familial life and living. The rest 7% remained dissatisfied with their employment as they thought it to lie between them and their families.
- **Husband-Wife Relation:** The respondents were further asked that whether they felt distanced with their husbands or not while pursuing their employment. About 93.30% answered in negation. They opined that their relation with their husbands remained usual. Only 6.70% of the respondents reported that they have felt that employment have made them occupied so much that they lack quality time towards their conjugal life. This might result in the differences of opinion on various issues related to family.

- **Inattention to Children:** About 11.09% of the respondents told that they felt to have neglected their children as they are employed and remain outside for a considerable period of time each day. But majority of them (88.91% of the respondents) said that they remain careful in the upbringing of their children.

- **Feeling of Fatigue:** 79.46% of the respondents stated that they did not feel fatigued in doing the household works as they believe that they are doing them for their own family, so they can extend their co-operation to any limit. On the other hand, 20.54% of the working women felt fatigued in doing all the chores so, they have resorted to take the assistance of domestic help.

Astige (2006) studied the working women of the Gulbarga City (Karnataka) and found that the husbands of the respondents had grievances against their wives on the issues of not contributing sufficient amount of their salary to the families, not paying attention to the needs of their husbands, neglecting family interests and children. On the contrary, the present study conducted in the CBM area show a different and a more open-mindedness towards the respondents.

**4.B.6 SOCIAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY AREA:** When some single parameters become insufficient to portray complex characteristics of any analysis, then all the related parameters may be taken up together to get the composite picture. A **Composite Index** is therefore chosen to represent the properly selected variables. The computation of Composite Index involves the recognition of a host of variables which may be designated as $X_1$, $X_2$, $X_3$........$X_n$. These variables on the first hand are made value free to remove the biasness of scale.
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. Here the observations have been divided by their respective Mean values, so that their scale effect gets neutralized; 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 degree of Social Status. Then these are spatially represented by employing chloropleth method for visual representation (Map No. 4.37).

The adjacent map (Map No. 4.37) displays the quantified version of the qualitative data which is the chief finding of the study. The working women under study have diversified representation
of their social and economic backgrounds; yet the basic framework of the social structure being patriarchy gives limited authorization to their livability. Considering all the above mentioned parameters and the calculation procedure it is found that the working women residing in ward nos. 5, 10, 14, 18 and 19 enjoy High Social Status compared to the rest of the sample having the Composite Index Score 11.01 – 15.49. Moderate Social Status working women resides in ward nos. 1, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17. The Composite Index Score for these wards vary within 7.01-11.00. The last category has been accorded with Low Social Status with Composite Index Score value of 3.35 – 7.00. The ward nos. of 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 20 falls in this category.

As the researcher explored throughout the study area during the field survey, it has been revealed that the socio-economic condition exactly matches with the social status groups thus formed by computing the Composite Index Scores. For instance, the Bandher Paar region bordering ward no. 1; the areas adjacent to the Burning Ghat in ward no. 9 and 10; portions of ward no 3 along the Binpatty Road and the Burial ground; portions of ward no. 4 especially juxtaposed to the airport region; the area settled by the Prostitutes at Kalabagan in ward no.6; Harijan Mohalla of ward no. 8 and 20 are some of the examples where working women with low social status resides. Contrary to these, the relatively high-class residential have been accorded with greater status and financial affordability. This picture corroborates with the economic mapping and the land value map of the CBT area.

Therefore, the areas accorded with moderate and low social statuses are the areas of concern. From the developmental point of view, problems pertaining to these areas should be properly identified and social, economic, sectoral planning would be ensured to address those problems adequately.

4.B.7 THE POSITION OF THE NON-WORKING WOMEN IN THEIR FAMILIES IN CBT: The study on the working women remains incomplete without analyzing the opinion of the non-working women of the study area. In order to understand and comprehend the status and to appreciate the achievement of the working women pertaining to the study area, it becomes necessary to know about that of the non-working group also. Therefore, a handful of non-working women from the study area were also surveyed and their opinion and experiences were recorded as a control group.
Following that of the working women, the non-working women were asked similar questions that would lead to infer about their position in their families. The aspects of study included:

1. Freedom enjoyed by the non-working women in the family

2. Decision making ability of the non-working women in the family

3. Sharing of domestic responsibilities by other members of the family

4. Position of non-working women in their families

4.B.7.1 FREEDOM ENJOYED BY THE NON-WORKING WOMEN IN THEIR FAMILY: While opining about their household attire, 70% of the group said that they wear Indian dresses including Sarees and Kurtis, only 6.67% stated that they wore Western garments; 23.33% of them wore both Indian and Western outfits. It was found that only 3.33% of this group of respondents faced confrontation with their families regarding dressing. Since the maximum proportion of the control group wear Indian outfits, hence there remains very little or no scope of differences in opinion with the inmates of the family in defying tradition.

With a view to the freedom in spending money on household items and requirements, 100% of the non-working women reported that they had no freedom in this regard.

4. B.7.2 DECISION MAKING ABILITY OF THE NON-WORKING WOMEN IN THEIR FAMILY: The housewives were asked whether they take their own decisions or not. 41.67% of them said in affirmation, while the rest 58.33% reported that their family members always has a say on matters related to them. In the matters concerning their families only 36.67% of the respondent-housewives were consulted while taking household decisions; the rest 63.33% of the control group were not consulted in this regard.

While interrogating the control group about the festive shopping, 75% of them told that neither they were consulted nor they contributed in this matter. 25% of the respondent-housewives said that they are consulted and taken to the shops for assisting the festive shopping.

4. B.7.3 SHARING OF DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES BY OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY: There are a host of issues which could be dealt in order to justify the domestic responsibility of the non-working housewives: On the first hand, it was found that 100% of the...
respondent-housewives have stated that their **husbands bore all the school related expenses** of their children. **75% of the husbands expended during the child birth**, while 25% expenses in this regard have been expended by other relatives who included own father and father-in-laws of the housewives. **90% of the respondent-housewives said that their husbands take up all the responsibility of sick people** in their families and the rest 10% got assistance from the other family members. Table no. 4.21 shows a comparison of Household Tasks between the respondent-house wives & their family members. It is revealed that the non-working women mostly labour the

Table: 4.21 Comparison of Household Tasks between the Respondent-Housewives & the Family Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Work Performances By</th>
<th>Cooking (%)</th>
<th>Marketing (%)</th>
<th>Cleaning &amp; Washing (%)</th>
<th>Caring Aged (%)</th>
<th>Caring Children (%)</th>
<th>Dropping Children to School (%)</th>
<th>Paying of Bills (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents (Non-working women)</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>51.67</td>
<td>78.33</td>
<td>81.67</td>
<td>71.67</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>91.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.67</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23.33</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>76.67 #</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Here 23.33% of the respondents did not have children  
Source: Field Survey, 2014

household chores except two areas i.e. dropping the children to schools and paying of bills to avail different amenities. The housewife does most of the tasks like: cooking, marketing (grocery and green grocery), cleaning utensils and washing clothes, caring aged in the family, caring children.

4. B.7.4 POSITION OF NON-WORKING WOMEN IN THEIR FAMILIES: The non-working respondents were also asked about their ownership in the property. It was found that only 3.33% of the housewives owned property. The rest 96.67% of the control group were refrained from holding any property. Probably because they did not have the firm footing of having employment they were not included in these matters.

Inspite of all these, 93.33% of the respondents of this group confirmed that their families have helping attitude towards them. Only 10% of the housewives told that they faced domestic harassment which was mostly verbal.
So, finally they were asked that whether they were satisfied with themselves of being the housewives. 83.33% of them answered in negation. They wanted to get some jobs and earn certain amount of money which could not only facilitate the family expenses but also would empower them to have confidence and economic autonomy. 86.67% of them admitted that the working women have better status in the family; as they earn they can spend money at their will; they have more liberty in taking important decisions related to their families and thus can lead a better life.

4. B. 8 CONCLUSION: This Chapter unfolds two essential aspects of the inquiry: the socio-economic background of the respondents and the status & role of the respondents in the family, society and work places. The socio-economic background has helped to understand the mindset of the target group, their desires and priorities of life. In short, it determines the type of the behaviour the respondents put forward in a given situation. The analysis of the socio-economic conditions of the respondents would assist the study of their status and role in their families and workplaces in particular and in the society in the broader sense.

Several indicators like the age profile, marital status, religious affiliation, caste diversity, social mobility, educational qualification, occupational diversity, job category, income levels (of respondents as well as that of their families), occupational status, family structure, dependency and health conditions of the target group were analyzed. This study confers a positive hint in some areas especially to education and to the consequential employment status. The trend of attainment of higher education amongst the general mass of population irrespective of sex is discernible. This probably has led to the incidence of higher education (51% of the sample are Graduates and Post-graduates) amongst the respondents. Likewise, their employment status also portrays incidence of prestigious jobs (41.14% of respondents) and high income levels (36.52% of the respondents earning 20,001 – 50,000 INR on a monthly basis). But the participation rate for the women workers in the study area like any other Indian city is appreciably low (i.e. 20.32% of female workers out of total workers as per Census 2011).

With regard to the role of the working women in the family, society and work places, some interesting results have arrived:
• The respondents under study play a significant role in their households by spending lion share of their salary (97.41% of the respondents) towards the procurement of the goods and services for their families.

• 40.57% of the respondents spend on school expenses for their children.

• 82.95% of the respondents keep some amount of their salary as their savings and a meager proportion (0.79%) of them repays loan.

• An appreciable proportion of the target group (79.90%) reported that they take their family decisions.

• 98.14% of the respondents have told that they were aware of family planning and they remained involved in taking child bearing decisions independently and jointly with their husbands (59.54 + 4.39 = 63.93%).

• A checklist of household activities in Table no. 4.17 shows that apart from doing the office work outside the premises of the household, the working women takes up a heavy work load on their shoulders. They cook (83.23% of the respondents) for their family; does marketing (55.82% of the respondents); they clean the utensils and wash clothes (61.68% of the respondents); they do care for the aged persons in the family (78.28% of the respondents); take care of the children (69.11% of the respondents); drop children to schools (57.46% of the respondents) and pay the electric, telephone etc. bills (67.98% of the respondents).

The thorough interview of the respondents revealed the status of the respondents under study. The working women think that their emancipation has brought about economic autonomy to them and by virtue of which they could control their livability conditions. About 90.88% of the respondents declared that they are free to spend their income according to their wish; but actually it was found that majority of their expenses (97.41% of the respondents) revolved round the household items to suffice the family needs and necessities. In the course of the fulfillment of the family requirements, their own needs and necessities remain unaddressed. Shrinkage in the fund allocation for this is noticed also (55% of the respondents spent less than 20% of their income on
their personal needs). So, the freedom of the working women in expending at their whims in this case remains as an eye-wash.

They remain involved mostly in shopping related decisions only (48.52% of the respondents contribute in festive shopping; 96.90% of them spend wholly on consumer goods). While a smaller proportion (30.48%) of the working women have been found to get themselves involved in the purchase of real estate. Thus, it may be said that the working women gets little involvement in important decisions. But there is no denying the fact that the respondents have showed more decisive role in the question of family planning and child bearing, which is a very important indicator in determining their status.

Although majority of the working women toil heavily for their families, yet their husbands are found in a helping attitude towards them. They take care of sick persons and pay the medical bills (according to 96.57% of the respondents); look after their children in the absence of the working women (according to 60.97% of the working women), spend largely during child births (90.71% of the respondents reported) and also spend for the children’s education (54.76% of the respondents). So, the complementary role of the husbands towards their better halves work as a mental boosting for the respondents and they enjoy doing the domestic drudgery for their family without the feel of getting fatigued (79.46% of the respondents stated that they did not feel fatigued in doing the household works). Thus, the status of the respondents have not improved much, rather they still experience the malice of patriarchy in a new format; even some respondents have a guilt feeling of neglecting the household activities as it remain instilled in the thought that home is the primary responsibility of a woman.

Commenting on the position of the respondents in their families, it may be concluded that the working women of the CBT has a scant materialistic position when their property possession is considered (as only 2.14% of the sample holds property). Although the attitude of the family members towards them remains helping (as per 97.69% of the sample), yet actual receipt of cooperation is far from expectation (54.69% of the respondents). A positive aspect in this connection may be upheld here, that though there remains dissatisfaction and differences of opinion between the respondents and their family members, 84.02% of the respondents do not experience domestic violence and harassment. Only 6.42% of the respondents have a tough luck in this respect.
The working women’s role in their work places are also of significance for the study so as to find out whether they are able to strike a balance between the house and the office. Majority of the respondents (86.89%) came to hunt jobs out of financial necessity. The proportion of permanent workers is found highest (56.73%) in the CBT. Socialization is an important aspect if office-culture. The respondents show excellent participation (86.44%) in the non-formal activities as well indicating that they have good relations with their colleagues. 89.53% of the respondents remain satisfied with their job. However, a small proportion (7.03%) of the working women has upheld dissatisfaction related to their workplaces and has demanded modification there upon. These mainly dealt with infrastructural inadequacies. Displeasure in office related issues have also been voiced by 6.81% of the working women of the study area wherein verbal abuse and consequent mental harassment top listed the discontent (explained in Table no. 4.19) among the sample. To sum up, it may be said that employment did not posed hindrance towards the family life and living of the respondents largely (93% of the sample). 93.30% of them felt to maintain usual conjugal relationship with their spouses. Majority of them (88.91% of the sample) never felt to have neglected their children while doing jobs. Thus, the working women seemed to have strike a balance between their house and their office.

From the analysis of the field data it may be concluded that the role and status of the working women in India has altered much from the traditional social framework. Although the working women of the study area have a much improved position (with high education and prestigious employment) but they have not yet achieved equal standing with their spouses. They are happy to strike a balance between their family and office but certain areas need to be addressed properly. The working women of the CBT should be more involved in decision making process in their families. The co-operation of the family members is inadequate to the respondents, so they should become more helping in their attitude. The working women of the CBT are overburdened with work; therefore they should reduce their household work load. The husbands were found co-operative and helpful to the respondents; they should maintain this in order to reach a more egalitarian status with their wives.
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CHAPTER V:

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN INDIA & RELATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES
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CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FOR WOMEN
IN INDIA & RELATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

5.1 INTRODUCTION: The Preamble to the Constitution of India promises “to secure all its citizens: justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation”. To attain these national objectives, the Constitution guarantees certain Fundamental Rights and freedoms such as freedom of speech, protection of life, personal liberty and prohibition of discrimination or denial of equal protection to all. Thus, Indian women theoretically are the beneficiaries of these rights and freedoms in the same manner as that of the men.

According to the Indian Census of 2011, out of the total population of 1210,193,422 persons, 623,724,248 were male while 586,469,174 were females (the males representing 51.54% and the females 48.46%). Statistics clearly indicates a deficit of 37,255,074 women in India. Moreover, a simple comparison regarding literacy (above 7 years of age) between male and female i.e. 82.14% and 65.46% respectively in the same Census year show that both the sexes does not possess equal standing. It was at the dawn of our independence the policy makers realized the unequal social position of women and hence made provisions in favour of them.

5.2 CONSTITUTION’S PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN IN INDIA: The Constitution of India thus promises to all Indian women the following:

5.2.1 PART III: FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

5.2.1.a ARTICLE 14: The State shall not deny to any person equality before law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. In other words, equality before law and equal protection of the laws has been emphasized.

5.2.1.b ARTICLE 15: Envisages prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth –
15(1): The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

15(2): No citizen shall on above mentioned grounds be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to –

a) Access to shops, public restaurants and places of public entertainment, or

b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of state funds or dedicated to the use of general public.

15(3): The provision of this article shall not prevent the State to make special provision for women and children.

Bakshi (2002: 26-28) explains that reservation of certain posts exclusively for women is valid under Article 15(3). Clause 3 of Art.15 permits special provision for women and children has been widely resorted to and the courts have upheld the validity of special measures in legislation or executive orders favouring women. Particularly, provisions in the criminal law or in the procedural law discriminating in favour of women have been upheld. Similarly, provisions providing for reservation of seats for women in local bodies or in an educational institution is valid.

5.2.1.c ARTICLE 16: Advocates Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment –

16(1): There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

16(2): No citizens shall, on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, decent, place of birth, residence or any of them be ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of any employment/office under the state.

5.2.1.d ARTICLE 21: Envisages about protection of life and personal liberty. It says that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

Bakshi (2002: 48-49) explains Art.21 citing two important cases which have bearing to the womenfolk with special reference to the Beauty Contests and sexual harassment. With regard to beauty contests, it may be said that, in their true form, are not objectionable, but if there is
indecent representation of the figure of a woman or if there is any matter derogatory of women, then it would offend the Indecent Representation of Women Act (1986) and also Art. 21 [Chandra Rajkumar Vs. Police Commissioner, Hyderabad, AIR 1998 AP302].

While explaining sexual harassment, Bakshi (2002:49) opines that sexual harassment in workplace is a violation of Art. 15 and Art. 21 of the Constitution, citing the instance of Vishakha Vs. State of Rajasthan, AIR 1997, SC 3011.

Denial of Right of Succession to women (ibid, 58) of Scheduled Tribes amounts to deprivation of their right to livelihood under Art. 21 [Madhu Kishwar Vs. State of Bihar (1996)5SCC125].

The Supreme Court laid emphasis (while dealing with a case related to the prostitutes) on the need to provide to prostitutes opportunities for education and training so as to facilitate their rehabilitation may also be related to Art.21[ Gaurav Jain Vs. Union of India, AIR 1997 SC 3021-(3035, 3036)].

5.2.1.e ARTICLE 23: Deals about Prohibition of Trafficking in human beings and Forced Labour (Right against Exploitation) –

23(1): Traffic in human beings and beggars and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

23(2): Nothing in this Article shall prevent the state from imposing compulsory service for public purposes, and in imposing such service the state shall not make any discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste or class or any of them.

Clause 1 of Art. 23 envisages legislation for the enforcement of the Constitutional prohibition. Section 374 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) is one such enactment, though a pre-constitution one, specific legislation also exists regarding immoral traffic in women, girls and bonded labours. Directions were issued by the Supreme Court in public interest litigation as to the children of prostitutes (www.jstor.org/stable/4408327 accessed on 31.10.15 at 11: 37 am).

5.2.2 PART IV: DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY

The Constitution of India aims to establish not only political democracy but also socio-economic justice to the people to establish a welfare state. With this purpose in mind, our constitution lays down desirable principles and guidelines in Part – IV. These provisions are known as Directive
Principle of State Policy (p.69, www.download.ad.nos.org accessed on 31.10.15 at 7:58p.m). These are essentially the guidelines or instructions to the governments at the centre as well as at the states which help in the decision and policy-making processes. Article 36 to51 comes under the Directive Principles.

5.2.2.a Article 39: States that certain principles of policy to be followed by the state –

The state shall in particular, direct its policy towards securing –

Art.39 (a): That the citizens, men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

Art.39 (b): That the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to sub serve the common good;

Art.39 (c): That the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.

Art.39 (d): That there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;

Art.39 (e): That the health and strength of workers, men and women and the tender aged children are not abused and the citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength.

Thus the different clauses to Art.39 addresses to equal means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work for women. It also supports the health and strength of workers (men and women) for suitable jobs and safeguards abuse of women and children from becoming labour out of economic.

5.2.2.b Article 42: Provides for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief – the state shall make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity leave (for women).

5.2.3 PART IVA: FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES

The Fundamental Duties are moral obligations of all citizens to help promote a spirit of patriotism and to uphold the unity of India. These duties set out in Part IV-A of the Constitution, concern individuals and the nation. Like Directive Principles, they are not legally enforceable.
Fundamental Duties are envisaged in Art. 51A, in which clause (e) is important to the concerns of the womenfolk in India.

Art. 51 A(e) says that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India – to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religions, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

5.2.4 PART IX: THE PANCHAYATS

With regard to the reservation of seats in Panchayats in Art. 243D, it states that –

Seats shall be reserved for –

i. the Scheduled Castes and

ii. the Scheduled Tribes

in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in the Panchayat as the population of Scheduled Castes in the Panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

Art. 243 D (2): Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the SCs, or as the case may be the STs.

Art. 243 D (3): Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the SCs and the STs) of the total number of seats to be filled in by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

Art. 243 D (4): the offices of the chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the SCs, the STs and the women in such a manner as the legislature of a state may, by law provide.

In other words, the number of offices of the chairpersons reserved for the SCs and the STs in the Panchayats at each level in any state shall bear, as nearly may be, the same proportion to the total number of such offices in the Panchayats at each level as the population of the SCs in the state or of the STs in the state bears to the total population of the state.
Provided further that, not less than one-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women; allotted by rotation to different Panchayat at each level (Bakshi, 2002:109-110).

5.2.5 PART IX A: THE MUNICIPALITIES

Clause (3) of Art. 243 T regarding reservation of seats in the Municipalities follow the same provisions as that of Art. 243 D.

5.2.6 PART XV: ELECTIONS

According to Art. 325, no person to be ineligible for inclusion in, or to claim to be included in a special, electoral roll on grounds of religion, race, caste or sex. In other words, there shall be one general electoral roll for every territorial constituency for election to either House of Parliament or to the House of Legislature of a state and no person shall be ineligible for inclusion in any such roll or claim to be included in any special electoral roll for any such constituency on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or any of them.

5.3 THE LAWS FAVOURING WOMEN AND WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA: Male-female disparities in Indian society are endemic and they become more complicated as the hierarchy of gender intersects with the hierarchies of class, caste, economy and ethnicity along with regional variations. The traditional Indian social order is rarely put to question and thereby women’s voice becomes inaudible. Her role becomes least significant in the formulation, implementation and interpretation of laws. The Fundamental Rights as guaranteed by the Constitution and the Directive Principles of the State Policy have become mere pious words. The Personal Laws have full command on women’s lives controlling the issues of marriage, divorce, guardianship, adoption, maintenance and property. Desai and Thakkar (2005: 122) have rightly said: “ It seems rather paradoxical in this context to state that inspite of the shortcomings of the legal system in India, it is the Law which has been and is still expected to be effective as an instrument of social change, a strategy to free women from the shackles of inequality and subjugation.” The problem arises from the patriarchal framework of the society and since the law makers themselves belong to that very social framework, the problem persists.

Nevertheless, legislations were passed through years vouchsafe the interests of women both in the pre-independent and post independent periods.
5.3.1 LEGISLATIVE MEASURES IN FAVOUR OF WOMEN IN PRE-INDEPENDENT INDIA:

Since the Post-Vedic Period, Women’s status had deteriorated and the diminution continued throughout the later periods. So, women’s question was high on the agenda of the social reformers in the 19th Century. The Britishers were keen to establish a modern legal system as well as a positive image so, they supported the then emerging Indian intelligentsia to bring about social reforms with particular emphasis on women’s status. The colonial rulers were unfamiliar with the social practices, cultural traditions, local customs and usages. They fixed their attention to civil and criminal liabilities and property contract. They sought the help of the Pundits and the Maulvis and relied upon the written religious texts rather than the practical usages. Thus “the Hindu Law became Brahminized and the Muslim Law similarly became Islamized. Slowly but firmly, the belief that women have very limited rights took roots in the system” (Desai and Thakkar, 2005: 123).

In this backdrop, the Britishers modified certain practices on the grounds of public demands and the humanitarian consideration to alleviate the social ills bestowed upon women. For instance, Regulation no. XXI of 1795 and Regulation no. III of 1804, declaring the practice of infanticide as illegal. The Bengal Sati Regulation Act of 1829 annulled the practice of Sati or self immolation of widows as illegal and punishable offence. Other noteworthy enactments were-the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850 and the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act of 1856. The formulation of Indian Penal Code (1860) and the Indian Contract Act might be cited as manifestation of the objective to codify the law in the matters of civil and criminal procedures and property issues. The IPC (1860) provides for punishment for various offences against women like abduction, rape, adultery, bigamy, remarriage during the lifetime of a wife, cruelty and cheating against women etc.

The Converts Marriage Dissolution Act (1866) provides for dismissal of a marriage where one of the parties has deserted or been disowned by other on the ground of the former’s conversion to the religion of Christianity.

The India Divorce Act (1869) empowers a wife to give petition for dissolution on the grounds of:

a. remarriage of the husband
b. change in husband’s religion

c. where the husband is guilty of adultery, bigamy, rape, bestiality etc.

**The Special Marriage Act of 1872** provided an opportunity for the Indians to contract a civil marriage. But the parties marrying under this Act had to declare that they had ceased to practice their religion. An amendment later on in 1923, however, removed this clause.

**The Married Women’s Property Act (1874)** declares that the wages, earnings of any married woman; any property acquired by her own self through her skills and employment; all her savings and investments shall be of her separate property. The Act further guarantees that a married woman may maintain a suit in her own name in respect of her own property.

**The Power of Attorney Act (1882)** empowers a woman to appoint an attorney on her behalf.

**The Age of Consent Act passed in 1891** deserves special mention as an important piece of legislation in the Pre-independent India. Sexual intercourse with a girl below 10 years according to the IPC was considered as rape. Later on, the case of Phulmani Dasi (a child bride of 11 years who did not attained puberty and bled to death as her much older husband forced upon her) raised a storm in the various sections of the society and ultimately the age of consent was fixed at 12 years in 1891.

**The Civil Procedure Code of 1908** prohibits arrest or detention of women in civil prison in execution of a decree for the payment of money.

**The Legal Practitioner (Women) Amendment Act of 1923** says that no women can be disqualified from being admitted as a legal practitioner by reason of her sex.

**The Indian Succession Act of 1925** grants woman to have same right to the property as the husband has on the death of his wife.

**The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929** fixed the minimum age at marriage for the boys at 18 years and for the girls at 15 years respectively.

Though **The Right to Property Act of 1937, Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937, and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act of 1939** granted limited rights to women but they did not question the fundamental gender inequality experienced by women of both the religions.
The Bombay Prevention of Hindu Bigamous Marriage Act of 1946 imposes penalty for the offence of bigamy up to 7 years of imprisonment.

5.3.2 POST-INDEPENDENT LEGISLATIONS FAVOURING WOMEN:

By the late 1940s, the necessity for a comprehensive code regulating marriage, divorce and inheritance was felt by the then women leaders of our country. But the political atmosphere was changing rapidly owing to the momentum of the freedom struggle. The struggle for women’s liberation merged with the nation’s liberation movement. Women seemed to get the avenue of relief from the prevalent confinement and actively participated in the nationalist movement. Post-independent period saw a series of enactments favouring women, governing issues like marriage, divorce, inheritance, succession, adoption (came to be known as Personal Laws) etc.

The Employees’ State Insurance Act, 1948 provided benefits like sickness, maternity, disabled, dependent medical and funeral benefits.


The Special Marriage act of 1954 permits marriage of people from different religious faith without changing their religion and stipulated the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys.

The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 advocated universalization of monogamy and also fixed the minimum age of marriage at 18 and 21 years for girls and boys respectively. Both the Special Marriage Act and the Hindu Marriage Act were amended in 1976 and it made provisions for a girl to disown the marriage if she has not attained puberty or whether the marriage has been consummated. Cruelty and desertion was also added as the grounds of divorce and mutual consent were given importance.

The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 confers women to have absolute ownership of property. By virtue of this Act, a woman can make ‘Will’ leaving her share of property to the heirs. It also envisages that intestate widow(s) if there is more than one shall take one share. The surviving son, daughter and mother of the intestate shall take one share each.

The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956 confers that any Hindu man of sound mind to adopt a child provided he has a living wife and he gets consent of his wife to do so,
unless the wife has completely renounced the world, is of unsound mind and has ceased to be a Hindu.

A Hindu woman can adopt a child if she is unmarried or is a widow, divorced, her husband has renounced the world, has changed his religion and is declared to be having unsound mind.

The consent of father or mother is necessary for giving the child in adoption unless otherwise.

The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act of 1956 states that the consent of wife is required for adopting a child.

The Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act of 1956 prohibits trafficking in women and girls for the purpose of prostitution as an organized means of living. This Act was amended in 1978 and 1986 in order to make it more stringent and effective. In 1986, this Act was renamed as the “Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986”, wherein it has some salient features: all persons whether male or female who are sexually exploited for commercial purposes would come under its purview; period of imprisonment would be enhanced where offences against children and minors are committed. The appointment of Trafficking Police Officers, who will have the powers to investigate inter-state offences; prescribe punishment as laid down for rape under IPC or the seduction of victims of trafficking while in custody; interrogations of women and girls removed from the brothels to be held by women Police Officers or in their absence, in the presence of women social workers and setting up of special courts.

The Dowry Prohibition Act was first legislated in 1961. This was amended in 1984 to make the offence cognizable (perceivable) to enhance the penalty of both fine and imprisonment and to widen the scope of the Act to make it more effective. The Act was further amended in 1986 to make the penal provisions stricter. The minimum punishment for taking or abetting of dowry has been raised to 5 years and a fine of Rs.15,000/-. The advertisement in newspapers, periodicals etc offering a share of property as consideration for marriage is punishable. The amendment proposes appointment of Dowry Prohibition Officers by the State Governments. Offences under the Act have been made non-bail able. A new offence of ‘Dowry Death’ has been included in the IPC consequential to the amendment in the Act.

The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 is applicable to every establishment, plantation, mine or factory and provides for payment of maternity benefits at the rate of average daily wage for the
period of women’s actual absence. The Act was amended in April, 1976 to cover women, who do not fall within the purview of the Employees State Insurance Act, 1948. A proposal to further amend the Act is under consideration of the Labour Ministry.

**The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971** makes it possible to have legal inducted abortion by qualified doctor on humanitarian and medical grounds. This is primarily a welfare measure to protect the health of women, though it has a family planning aspect also.

**The Factories act of 1976** (Amended) provides establishment of crèches where 30 women are employed (including casual labourers or contract labourers) as against one of every 50 hitherto.

**The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976** provides for:

a) Equal remuneration to men and women workers and

b) Prevention of discrimination on the grounds of sex against women in the matter of employment and for the matter connected there with or identical hitherto. The Act is under further review for the benefit of women.

**The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act of 1976** provides minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years and for boys to 21 years. The offences under this Act have been made cognizable.

**The Contract Labour (Regulation) Act of 1978** regulates the working conditions of contract labour (including women), payment of wages and provides welfare facilities and crèches for the children of working women engaged in construction work.

**The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 1983:** The Indian Evidence Act, The Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code were amended in 1983 to make the offence of rape and such crimes against women much more stringent and effective and also to make a new provision to the IPC to make cruelty against women by the husband and other relations punishable. The onus of proof of innocence would rest on the accused of such offences.

**The Family Courts Act** was passed in 1984 with a view of setting up of Family Courts in the country with an objective to promote reconciliation in and securing speedy settlement of disputes relating to marriages and family affairs and for matters connected therewith.
**Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986:** prohibits representation of women in an indecent or derogatory manner in all ads and publications. Offences under this Act is punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term extending to 2 years and fine extending to Rs. 2,000/- on first conviction.

**The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act of 1987** punishes all the matters attached with the glorification of Sati and is punishable by the maximum penalty i.e. death or imprisonment of life. This Act provides more effective prevention for a woman (widow) being sacrificed as a *Sati*.

### 5.4 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR INDIAN WOMEN THROUGH FIVE YEARS PLANS:

Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Nehru had dreamt of a society in which women would participate equally as men in every aspect to usher in the national progress. Therefore, the main task was to inculcate the spirit of confidence among the womenfolk of our country so that they can identify their innate potentialities and endowments which would not only illuminate themselves in particular but also would lead to the social progress at large. Thus, once the Constitution was adopted, the next step was to initiate the policies and programmes for realization of the ideology of welfare state.

“Having regard to the Fundamental Rights and in furtherance of the Directive Principles as well as of the declared objective of the Government to promote a rapid rise in the standard of living of the people by efficient exploitation of the resources of the country, increasing production, and offering opportunities to all for employment in the service of the community.

The Planning Commission will—

1. make an assessment of the material, capital and human resources of the country, including technical personnel, and investigate the possibilities of augmenting such of these resources as are found to be deficient in relation to the nation's requirements;

2. formulate a Plan for the most effective and balanced utilisation of the country's resources;

3. on a determination of priorities, define the stages in which the Plan should be carried out and propose the allocation of resources for the due completion of each stage;
4. indicate the factors which are tending to retard economic development, and determine the conditions which, in view of the current social and political situation, should be established for the successful execution of the Plan;

5. determine the nature of the machinery which will be necessary for securing the successful implementation of each stage of the Plan in all its aspects;

6. appraise from time to time the progress achieved in the execution of each stage of the Plan and recommend the adjustments of policy and measures that such appraisal may show to be necessary; and

7. make such interim or ancillary recommendations as appear to it to be appropriate either for facilitating the discharge of the duties assigned to it; or, on a consideration of the prevailing economic conditions, current policies, measures and development programmes; or on an examination of such specific problems as may be referred to it for advice by Central or State Governments.”

(http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/1st/1pintro.htm accessed on 21.04.16 at 1p.m)

5.4.1 FIRST PLAN (1951-56): During the initiation of the First Plan, India was facing some problems related to acute food shortage, partition of the country, influx of refugees and high inflation. Thus, the thrust areas were laid upon rehabilitation of refugees; rapid agricultural improvement to attain food security and sufficiency; control of inflation and initiation of a process of all round balanced development which would ensure a rising national income and a steady improvement in the living standards over a period of time (cited in Ray Chaudhuri, 2001: 272-273).

Development of Women has been treated as a subject of ‘welfare’ and clubbed together with the welfare of the disadvantaged groups like destitute, disabled, aged etc. In 1953, the Government of India set up Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) outside the framework of the Government with a view of combining governmental and non-governmental resources and creating a network of services catering to maternity, child care, health, education and training to women. In 1954, the CSWB introduced the formation of ‘Mahila Mandals’ for execution of welfare projects
extended to rural areas by promoting local women’s organizations through project implementation committees (Narasaiah, 2007:24).

**5.4.2 SECOND PLAN (1956-61):** The welfare approach continued in the Second Five Year Plan and it showed concern for employed women and sought improvement in employment opportunities for them. Priority to women’s education and improvement of maternal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children and expectant mothers were given.

This Plan recognized the need for organization of women as workers, for protecting them against injurious work and paying them maternity benefits. It also talked of crèches for children in work places. It also recommended speedy implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work and provisions of training to enable women compete for higher jobs (Mishra, 1994: 87).

In 1958, the CSWB introduced a socio-economic programme to promote women’s economic activities. The programme was extended to the *Mahila Mandals* which acted as production units of handicrafts, dairy, poultry, piggery, sheep breeding and allied activities to expand women’s employment. The *Mahila Mandals* also acted as the platform for promoting community participation and for providing social education to women (Narasaiah, 2007:25).

This should have augmented women’s work participation rate but by 1961, it was seen that in the organized sector female work participation rate declined that of the males (27.96% for the females against 57.19% for the males). This was chiefly of two reasons: Firstly, employees were reluctant to provide welfare measures to the female employees; and Secondly, as women were not encouraged to take technical training, modernization of some industries such as textiles led to the displacement of women.

**5.4.3 THIRD PLAN (1961-68):** The emphasis was again shifted to agriculture to meet the food shortages and achieve self sufficiency in food grains. The focal point of women’s development mainly revolved round education nevertheless, improvement of maternal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children and expectant mothers continued to get special attention. According to Mishra (1994), about 625 condensed courses in education and 75 production units were installed in urban areas for the benefit of women. The CSWB also set up 66 urban extension projects. The Applied Nutrition Programme (ANP) was introduced in this Plan with the objectives of imparting nutrition education to mothers through demonstration feeding, production programme and training of women functionaries. The Programme was
implemented through the *Mahila Mandals* and covered 34% of all community development blocks.

**5.4.4 FOURTH PLAN (1969-74):** The Fourth Plan laid stress on women’s education. A special central sector scheme for rural women called ‘Composite Programme for Women and Pre-school Children’ was introduced with the components of nutrition, economic activity and training of associated women workers. The basic objective was to promote welfare within the family as a unit.

The *Mahila Mandals* showing good performance during a year were given cash awards for undertaking certain economic projects. About 450 *Mahila Mandals* were given financial assistance and 653 condensed courses were organized during this period. Another scheme was designed in this period which involved training of associate women workers having leadership qualities for providing assistance to implement various welfare programmes. Thus, the approach of the Fourth Plan was ameliorative in nature with regard to women.

**5.4.5 FIFTH PLAN (1974-79):** The Fifth Plan prioritized the training of women particularly who belonged to low income family with dependent children. Special steps were taken for the placement of the successful candidates under the existing scheme of condensed courses of education and socio-economic programmes. Besides this, managerial and sales training was also provided to market goods produced by them.

To promote local leadership among rural women a new scheme for promotion and strengthening of *Mahila Mandals* was introduced. Another scheme named Promotion of Voluntary Action was started with the view to utilize the potential of the organizations for development of women and children. The concept of ‘Minimum Needs’ was introduced to cater to the various needs like elementary education, primary healthcare, nutrition, drinking water, house sites and other basic amenities of the rural poor. Eight Home Science Colleges were established within Agricultural Universities to provide education, research facilities and extension services to the rural farm families. In addition to this, the CSWB introduced the Dairy Scheme to assist rural women to get benefit from the Dairy Development Programme. Vocational training of women in 1975 was also initiated by the CSWB in order to increase their employability. The ICAR in 1975-76 started a scheme to train women in simple technology.
Meanwhile, the UN General Assembly during 1975-76 declared the adoption of world plan of action for the International Women’s Decade to acknowledge equality, development and peace in favour of the womenfolk. This resulted in a number of developments. A new department named Bureau for Women’s Welfare and Development was established within the Ministry for Social Welfare which was entrusted with the task of coordinating, receiving and initiating policies for women’s development and service. A special cell was established within the Ministry of Labour and Employment to give due attention to the women’s employment needs and problems. Equal Remuneration Act (1976) was passed with a view to remove disparities in wage between men and women in organized sector. A similar unit was also founded within the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction to review and supervise development programmes for rural women. In 1977, the Planning Commission appointed a working group on Employment of Women. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development also appointed a working group on the development of village level organization of rural women to review the existing programmes.

5.4.6 SIXTH PLAN (1980-85): The development Programmes under the Sixth Plan for the first time included a chapter on Women Development. The documented chapter highlighted 4 strategies:

i. Economic independence

ii. Educational advance

iii. Access to healthcare and family planning and

iv. Income supplementing of tribal women

Several steps were taken up to boost women’s development in the country accordingly. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) prioritized women. It was decided that, one-third of the beneficiaries under TRYSEM (Training for Rural Youth for Self Employment) would be represented by the womenfolk. A new scheme named Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was started in 1982-83 to increase rural women’s access to employment, skill, training, credit and other support services. Along with this, 144 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) of seat capacity of 11,200 exclusively for women became functional by the termination of the 6th Plan. Encouragement for education among women at the primary and the higher levels were given wherein a centrally sponsored scheme was taken up for providing
financial assistance to educationally backward states for establishing non-formal education centres exclusively for girls. SC and ST girls continued to receive higher rates of post-matric scholarships; other incentives included free clothing and free tuition. Separate Universities were established in the states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh for girls.

Special programmes related to adult education, awareness regarding health, nutrition, childcare and family planning also involved women. Priority was given to pregnant women and lactating mothers of weaker sections. Special nutrition was also provided to the pregnant women and lactating mothers under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). To arrest anemia among these women, preventive and protective programmes were being taken up which involved distribution of Iron and Folic Acid tablets for free.

As far as science and technology is concerned, the scheme was widened to include wide range of activities. Earlier, during the 2nd Plan, it was seen that women got displaced from organized sector when technique and skill became the chief criterion as a consequence of modernization in industrial scenario; now impetus was laid on the training of women in the instrumentation technology. The National Research Development Corporation set up training cum demonstration centres spread all over the country to provide knowledge and resources to the women entrepreneurs. Nearly 3000 women were trained in skills to get absorbed in modern industries under ‘Employment and Income Generating Training’ scheme.

For creating increasing awareness about the role of women in development and the need for improvement of their status, various units of mass media were used under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which presented appealing programmes addressing social problems and issues related to them so that these could motivate people to fight against dowry, child marriage, alcohol addiction etc (Narasaiah, 2007:31).

5.4.7 SEVENTH PLAN (1985-1990) AND THE ANNUAL PLANS (1990-92): The 7th Plan was sought to generate confidence among women and to make themselves aware of their potentialities, their rights and privileges. The long term objectives of the Plan was to raise women’s economic and social status with an integrated multidisciplinary approach to bring them into the mainstream of national development; addressing to issues like employment (income generation), education, health, nutrition, application of science and technology in various activities and so on. The Beneficiary Oriented Schemes (BOS) in various developmental sectors
were identified and promoted with extended direct benefits to women. Thrust was given on generation of both skilled and unskilled employment through proper education and vocational training continued. A National Commission on Self Employed Women and Women in Informal Sector submitted a report titled “Shramshakti” which discussed different problems, living conditions of the poor women in the unorganized sector. Their recommendations were also paid attention.

**Employment and income generation:** The number of women beneficiaries under IRDP was 34.83 lakhs during this Plan and special emphasis was laid upon women headed beneficiaries. 4.5 lakhs of women beneficiaries were trained under TRYSEM. DWCRA, which was launched during the 6th Plan covered 187 districts by 1990-91. Women’s share in the Dairy Cooperative Societies increased to 14 % out of 68.85 lakh members in 1989. Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh formed the Milk dairy Cooperatives for women. Women also got involved in the fisheries sector. They were trained in fish processing and preservation. They were even encouraged for Livestock Breeding Programmes. A National Training Institute for women was established at Noida. The Ministry of Labour took interest in opening women branches ITTs.

**Education:** Education was made free for the girls in all the states and union territories. The Directorate of Adult Education and Resource Centres planned and administered women’s education programmes and encouraged participation of womenfolk. About 65,000 centres were set up covering 16 lakh girls’ special cells by 1989. Talented girls were encouraged to attain higher education. To continue with the encouragement of education among the SC and ST girls, provisions for additional facilities were made under the ‘Development of Backward Classes’. The Sports Authority of India conducted National Sports Festival for women. Scholarships to talented women were also being distributed. Women Development Centres (WDCs) were established in 22 Universities and Colleges to bring into light the issues entailing women in the social milieu.

**Health:** Since the Plan targeted to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rates, emphasis was given upon the expansion of Maternity and Child Health Centres (MCH). Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) aimed to cover universally the pregnant women and infants was extended to all states. The Multipurpose Workers imparted knowledge regarding nutrition to expectant and lactating mothers through regular home visits along with the distribution of Iron
and Folic Acid tablets to bridge the calorie-vitamin and mineral deficiency gap as well as to combat anemia.

**Women issues:** With regard to violence against women including domestic violence, amendments of the existing laws were carried out. Grants were given to voluntary organizations to support and promote Women’s development. 597 working women’s hostels were constructed to provide safe accommodation at reasonable rents.

**Programmes under the 7th Plan:** Included the continuation of some schemes like IRDP and DWCRA; under CSWB, Socio-economic Programmes for needy women and Women Development Corporations (WDCs) prioritizing employment generation was also viewed; increased employment opportunities under Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP) and Industrial Estates were targeted; more employment of women along with their increased share (46% to 48%) was expected under the coverage of *Khadi* and Village Industries; the Council for Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) was initiated in 1986 which aimed to reduce drudgery of women in household economic activities. The Rural Sanitation Programme was launched in 1986 to ensure privacy for women through the construction of sanitary latrines for individual household. The merger of National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) was recommended in this Plan under the single head of *Jawahar Rozgar Yojana* (JRY), wherein 30% of beneficiaries were envisaged to be women. The *Nehru Rozgar Yojana* (NRY) was launched in October 1989 which was targeted to the BPL families and also envisioned to cover 30% women beneficiaries. Other measures included strengthening of Equal Remuneration Act and implementation of Factories Act (1948), the Plantation Labour Act (1951) and Mines Act (1952). Studies would be conducted to find out the factors that hinders women’s employment. Provisions to extend credit facilities to women to encourage self employment and home based works by some special agencies were also thought of. Existence of special cells for proper monitoring was also considered as an effective medium to look after the performance and co-ordination of different schemes.

Inspite of all these, the contribution of women to the economy continues to remain grossly under-reported due to some conceptual, methodological and perception problems, reflecting gender bias and also of the fact that economic value is not assigned to unpaid household work
and various kinds of subsistence activities performed by them. Home based production activities and unpaid family work also tend to be grossly under-reported. Women were even not recognized as producers in their own right. They do not get their stipulated wages and stipulated minimum hours of work adhered to. The traditional economic activities suffered competition with the advent of technology. Moreover, at the social arena, the menace of dowry, domestic violence against women, infanticide, killing of unborn female foetus etc. continued unabated.

5.4.8 EIGHTH PLAN (1992-97): The Eighth Plan showed a shift from the developmental aspect to empowerment of women. The strategy was to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors did not bypass women and special programmes were implemented to complement the general programmes (https://16_chapter6.pdf.sodhganga.inflibnet accessed on 26.10.15 at 4p.m.:295). Since ‘Women’ were at the focal point of development, the main aim was to extend the services to women both in terms of quantity and quality. The three tier system of Panchayat was also made involved in the implementation of the developmental programmes. The three key areas of Education, Health and Employment were addressed carefully throughout the Plan.

Programmes related to Health: The improvement in the health status of women was given high priority. The previous programme of maternal and child health services were re-casted as the Child Survival and Safe Motherhood (CSSM) Programme and were launched in 72 districts in 1992-93. This was further extended to 466 districts towards the end of the Plan. Under UIP, TT Vaccination among the pregnant women reached the coverage of 76.4% in 1996-97 (from 40% in 1985-86). About 1022 First Referral Units (RFUs) for emergency obstetric care were identified in 5 states (Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan). The National Nutrition Policy (NNP) adopted in 1993 aimed at reducing anemia amongst pregnant women. Through the ongoing ICDS programme, special knowledge regarding nutrition was disseminated among mothers/ women.

The National Social Assistance Programme gave thrust to woman specific needs. The National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) was launched in August 1995 whereby pregnant women were extended help of Rs. 300/- each for giving first two consecutive live births.

Programmes related to Education: 422 districts were covered under Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) by the end of March 1998, benefiting 68.57 lakh people of whom 41.4 lakh were women.
The Non Formal Education (NFE) Programme provided education to those who remained outside the formal schooling. This has benefitted 24.81 lakh girls by the end of 1995-96 and 29.80 lakh girls by March 1998. The Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education was launched in 1995 in 40 low female literacy blocks. It provided a special boost to enrolment, retention and attendance of girls besides upgrading their nutritional status.

Programmes related to Employment: Mahila Samakhya, a programme for women’s equality and employment addressed issues like drinking water, health services, managing non-formal education, provision for pre-school centres/ crèche facilities etc. This was made available to 35 districts pertaining to 7 states (UP, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Assam).

To extend the support for the SC and ST girls and to continue with their education beyond the middle school level, the number and the seat capacity was increased during 1997-98. The main objective of the Eighth Plan was to achieve near full employment, thus accordingly, efforts were made to augment gainful employment for women in various sectors, like, agriculture, dairying, animal husbandry, Khadi and Village Industries, small scale industries, handlooms, handicrafts etc. (http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/8th/1pintro.htm accessed on 21.04.16 at 12:47 p.m).

Agricultural sector received maximum attention since 89.5% of rural women were engaged in the agricultural sector. So, special programmes like “Women in Agriculture” was launched in 1993 to train the women agricultural practitioners and this programme was further linked to programmes associated with animal husbandry, dairying (Operation Flood), horticulture, fisheries, aperies (bee keeping) etc. Women milk cooperative became leading in the states like Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Karnataka.

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) took several measures to generate more employment opportunities for the womenfolk. A National Level Training Institute was established in Pune during the 8th Plan. Prime Minister’s Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) and Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) in small scale industrial sector were started to augment entrepreneurial skills and self employment among women. With regard to training and upgradation of skills for women, an expansion of 66 Women’s ITIs and 102 Women’s wings in
General ITIs sprung up in addition to 223 Women’s ITIs and 235 Women wings in General/private ITIs by February 1998.

Urban areas also implemented certain programmes to alleviate poverty and improve the socio-economic condition of the poor women living there. The Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP) and Prime Minister’s Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme (PMIUPGP) are worthy to mention. Empowerment through skill upgradation, provisions for assistance for setting up of micro-enterprises, wage employment through construction of public assets and shelter upgradation were focused. The PMIUPGP was replaced by Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana (SJSRY) in December 1997.

Other programmes included Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) initiated in August 1995 [to enhance education, awareness, income generation capacities and employment]; DWCRA, STEP, Training cum Employment cum Production Centres (TEPC) popularly known as NORAD, IRDP, TRYSEM, JRY, NRY etc. Support systems for women like the provision of Working Women’s Hostels and Creche/Day care units were also encouraged.

“Rashtiya Mahila Kosh (RMK), an innovative venture to facilitate credit support/micro-financing to poor and asset less women struggling in the informal sector, works through the medium of NGOs as its channelizing agencies for identification of borrowers, delivery of credit support and also recovery. While the lending rate of RMK both for short and medium-term loans is 8% per annum to NGOs, the ultimate borrowers or their Self Help Groups pay 12% per annum. Till the end of Eighth Plan in 1997 RMK has extended credit worth Rs.35.14 crores through 170 NGOs benefiting about 1.91 lakh women all over the country. In addition to this, RMK also supports its NGO partners, to form Women’s Thrift and Credit Societies, which are popularly known as Self Help Groups (SHGs)”.

(http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/8th/1pintro.htm accessed on 21.04.16 at 12:47 p.m).

During this Plan 1.36 lakh Women’s Self Help Groups were formed benefiting 21.82 lakh women. The National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) was designed to help elderly women of 65 years or more of age with no regular means of subsistence whereby they would get Rs.75/- per month as pension amount. The National Family Benefit Scheme would give a financial assistance of Rs. 5000/- to Rs. 10,000/- to the women on the death of the prime bread earner of
the family. The launching of the *Mahila Samriddhi Yojana* (MSY) in 1993 was envisioned to empower women by institutionalizing their savings so as to enable them to have better control of household resources.

One of the achievements during the 8th Plan was the setting up of a statutory body named as the National Commission for Women (NCW) in 1992, to safeguard the rights and interests of women which reviewed both women-specific and women-related legislations, investigated into thousands of individual complaints and atrocities and initiated remedial action wherever possible. It also set up *Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats* and extended speedy justice to approximately 7000 women. The other issues taken up by the Commission during the Plan period included welfare of women prisoners and under-trials in correction homes; women and children involved in the sex trade and trafficking; reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures etc.

Last but not the least, efforts were also put to generate awareness among the mass through mass Medias. With the view of projecting positive image of both women and girl child through an integrated media campaign, electronic media was used extensively involving telecast of a large number of Television shows, quickies, documentary films etc. Radio programmes with positive messages were also broadcasted regularly.

“The CSWB organized more than 6000 Awareness Generation Camps during 1992-96 to make 2.10 lakh rural women conscious of their rights and privileges, besides imparting knowledge about community health and hygiene, technology application, environment, etc” (http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/8th/1pintro.htm).

**5.4.9 NINTH PLAN (1997-2002):** The 9th Plan made two significant changes in the conceptual strategy of planning for women. On the first hand, ‘Empowerment of women’ was treated as one of the important objectives of the 9th Plan, so that an environment would be created wherein she would remain free to exercise her rights both inside and outside of the premises of her household as equal partners along with their counterparts. Secondly, the 9th Plan attempted to merge the existing services catering to women related and women specific sectors. For this, it directed both the centre and the state to adopt a special strategy of ‘Women Component Plan’ (WCP) so that ≥30% of fund-benefits would flow towards women. A monitoring section will also be there for vigilance so that a holistic approach is brought in with regard to women empowerment.
Apart from these, the 9th Plan took initiatives for empowerment of women. These are –

i. Launching of ‘Swa-Shakti’ (1998) to create an enabling environment for women’s empowerment through setting up of self-reliant SHGs and developing linkages with lending institutions to ensure women’s access to credit facilities for income generation activities.

ii. ‘Stree Shakti Puraskaras’ (1999) started honouring 5 distinguished women each year annually for their outstanding contribution to the upliftment and empowerment of women.

iii. A task force was set up in 2000 to review the existing women specific and women related legislations and suggested enactment of new legislations or amendments wherever necessary.

iv. Gender Budgeting was introduced (2000-2001) to attain more effective targeting of public expenditure and to counter balance undesirable gender specific consequences of previous budgetary measures.

v. A National Policy for Employment of Women was adopted in 2001 to remove the discrimination against women and to ensure gender justice.

vi. Recasting of IMY as ‘Swayamsidha’ in 2001 took place as an integrated programme for women’s empowerment organized with the help of SHGs for pursuance of various entrepreneurial ventures.

vii. ‘Swadhar’ (2001) was launched as rehabilitation services for women in difficult circumstances.

viii. A Bill on domestic violence against women (prevention) was introduced in 2002 to eliminate all forms of domestic violence against women and girl child.

ix. The year 2001 was declared and celebrated as ‘Women’s Empowerment Year’ for awareness generation and sensitization among women through Integrated Media Campaign covering electronic, print and film Medias.

Although efforts were made to upgrade the condition of women but the general picture still show some critical areas of concern demanding attention. These areas are increasing burden of poverty; unequal access to primary healthcare; under/ malnutrition; high rates of illiteracy and lack of training; lack of access and control on assets and resources; inequalities in sharing of
power and decision making; lack of access to media and information; increasing violence against women, adolescent girls and girl child; discrimination against girl child etc. so the next Plan was suggested to strengthen the issues related to women.

5.4.10 TENTH PLAN (2002-2007): The approach to women development trickled down in the 10th Plan as it was a continuation of the preceeding plan. So, the vision of ‘Women Empowerment’ continued as the major strategy. Three arenas were identified which stemmed out from the goals of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001). These are – Social Empowerment, Economic Empowerment and Gender Justice.

5.4.10.1 Social Empowerment will be ensured by creating an environment through various affirmative development policies and programmes for development of women besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic services, so that they can realize their full potentials.

In order to ascertain social empowerment several steps were taken up:

To meet the health needs of the target group (i.e. women, mothers, adolescent girls, girl child) and to provide the under-privileged segment with minimum basic healthcare facilities, the universalization of the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) services was thrust upon. The aim of reducing the Infant Mortality Rate to 30/1000 live births and Maternal Mortality Rate to 100/100,000 live births was set forth. Healthcare and nutrition services were supplemented through the Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY) to fill the critical gaps in the existing healthcare infrastructure and nutrition services. In order to tackle the micro and macro nutrient deficiencies, several nutrition supplementary feeding programmes with necessary support services like health check-ups, immunization, health and nutrition education and nutrition awareness were being held. The 10th Plan also aimed at equal and easy access to free education for girls and women at all levels and in the field of technical and vocational education, training in job oriented trades. In order to arrest the drop-out rates and to increase the retention rates, the Plan had sought for support services like provision for Mid-day Meals, hostels and incentives like books, uniforms, transport charges, so on and so forth. A major step for social empowerment was taken up in the form of extension of Women ITIs and Women’s Branch in Regional Vocational Training Centres and General ITIs with residential facilities at all district and sub-district levels. Mass Medias were encouraged to promote the positive image of women and girl-child and thereby change the mind-set of the people at large. Gender sensitization in every sphere
would be encouraged so that the rights and interests of women are taken better care of besides getting involved in planning, implementation and monitoring processes.

5.4.10.2 **Economic Empowerment** will ensure the provisions of training, employment and generate income with the development of forward and backward linkages so that women could become economically independent and develop a self-reliant entity. Several poverty alleviation programmes were taken up through some women SHGs like - *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana* (SGSY), *Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana* (SJSRY), *Rashtriya Mahila Kosh* (RMK), STEP, Training cum Production Centres for Women (NORAD) etc. These not only generated income amongst womenfolk, but also enhanced their economic capabilities and strengthen them economically.

Since women adhere in large number (89.5% of female work force) in agricultural sector, they are doubly marginalized, first being a woman and second as landless labourers with no inheritance (for land and productive assets). The 10th Plan will ensure better working conditions with regard to equal wages, training, technical knowledge etc supporting the phenomena of ‘Feminization of Agriculture’.

Women who have been displaced from the traditional sectors owing to the advancement of technology can take up jobs and become relocated and re-trained. The expansion of Khadi and Village Industries, Handicrafts, Handlooms, Sericulture, Small Scale Cottage Industries in favour of women received priority attention. Micro-financing institutions were encouraged to provide micro-crediting facilities for women.

Reservation of 30% of seats for women in public sector was proposed for proper representation along with required provisions and upward mobility.

5.4.10.3 **Gender Justice** becomes inevitable to restore the balance in the declining sex ratio. Most stringent measures of punishment under IPC (1860) and the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 have been set to arrest female foeticide and female infanticide (for the illegal practitioners). The existing legislations were amended to improve women’s access to productive assets and resources. To ensure gender justice and eliminate all gender discriminatory references, legislation was effectively enforced by amendment and enactment of new laws favouring women. For justified representation, one-third
seats of the Parliament and that of the State Legislative Assembly would be reserved for women to enable them to reach the decision making body.

In close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, strategies have been worked out to provide equal opportunity with regard to the women. Initiative was taken to make women visible in the context of their contribution in the National Economy i.e. recognition of the value addition by women in the informal sector.

The Women Component Plan (WCP) was defined clearly and schemes and programmes under each department/ ministry would ensure the adoption of women related mechanisms through which funds or benefits would reach the women.

With consultation of the enforcement authorities, well planned programme of action had been prepared to arrest the increasing violence against women, adolescent girls and girl children. This would get the legislative support from the judiciary at the central and the state levels.

Provision for gender awareness and sensitization was there and generation of gender related data (such as GDI) would take place which would be monitored effectively to assess the progress made in improving the status of women. Initiative was taken for a societal re-orientation towards a Gender Just Society.

5.4.11 ELEVENTH PLAN (2007-2012): On the onset of the 11th Plan, it has remained in the notice that women and children continued to be the victims of violence, neglect and injustice. The 11th Plan committed that it would address these issues at the same time it would recognize women’s agency and need for women’s empowerment. It also promised to end multifaceted exclusion of women and discrimination against them so that they can develop their full potential and share the benefits of economic growth and prosperity.

The 11th Plan recognizes heterogeneity among women and children of our country, i.e. they belong to different caste, class, community and above all different economic groups; located within a separate geographical setting and development zones. Therefore, besides the general programmes, the 11th Plan would cater to the needs of the diverse categories of women and children. For the first time, in the 11th Plan women are recognized as equal citizens and also as the agents of economic and social growth (www.planningcommission.gov.in, 11th Plan, vol.2, chapter 6: 1; accessed on 21.04.16 at 1:00 p.m.). The 11th Plan envisioned that Women would no
longer be seen as victims but as agents of socio-economic growth and development for the country.

5.4.11.1 The approach of the 11th Plan towards women includes:

i. Provide women with basic entitlements

ii. Address the reality of globalization and its impact on women prioritizing economic empowerment.

iii. Ensure an environment free from all forms of Violence Against Women (VAW) – physical, economic, social, psychological etc.

iv. Ensure participation and adequate representation of women at the highest policy levels, particularly in Parliament and State Assemblies.

v. Strengthen existing institutional mechanisms and create new ones for gender mainstreaming and effective policy implementation.

5.4.11.2 The five-fold agenda of the 11th Plan for Gender Equity are:

a. Ensuring economic empowerment.

b. Engineering social empowerment.

c. Enabling political empowerment.

d. Effective implementation of women-related legislature

e. Creating institutional mechanisms for gender main-streaming and strengthening delivery mechanisms.

5.4.11.3 The Women Related Schemes of 11th Plan:

Schemes related to Economic Empowerment: Swayamsidha II is an integrated scheme for women’s empowerment through SHGs promoting thrift and credit activities and participatory approach towards alleviation of poverty. Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) is a scheme aimed for skilled training for women which will be revamped and will get merged with the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and Swayamsidha for credit linkages. A separate Women Empowerment and Livelihood Project assisted by the United Nation’s International
Fund for Agricultural Development will be implemented in 4 districts of Uttar Pradesh and 2 districts of Bihar.

**Schemes related to Social Empowerment:** Various schemes will be implemented which focuses on to the social empowerment of women. The CSWB continued financing the NGOs for implementation of various women and child related schemes. Condensed courses were arranged for those who could not join the mainstream education system or had been compelled to become drop outs. The usage of Mass Medias favouring women also received encouragement.

With regard to the support services extended towards women, the Ministry of Women and Child Development provided a revised Working Women’s Hostel Scheme to provide safe and affordable accommodation to the working women. Along with this, the functionaries of homes designed for destitute women and women in difficult situation will continue with modification. The Short Stay Home (SSH) Scheme addressed to the basic necessities to women and girls in need (like victims of marital conflict, crime, homeless etc.) counseling, legal aid, medical facilities, vocational training and rehabilitation. The Supreme Court had directed the National Commission of Women (NCW) to ensure rehabilitation to rape victims. Accordingly, a scheme named ‘Scheme for Relief and Rehabilitation of Victims of Sexual Assault’ was formulated.

**Schemes related to Health:** The Ministry of Women and Child Development put forward a programme having the provision of maternity benefits known as Conditional Maternity benefit Scheme (CMBS) or Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY). The idea was to provide cash benefits to a pregnant woman before and after delivery to ensure avoidance from physically stressful activities, meet medical and nutrition supplementation expenses during the last trimester and spend time with the child after birth. The benefits under the scheme will be conditional to the mother being registered to the Anganwadi services (ICDS infrastructure was used to achieve success for this programme).

**Schemes Providing Legal Support:** The 11th Plan also allocated funds to sensitize law enforcement agencies, medical establishments etc. It will ensure immediate online filing of FIR and recording of victim’s statement by female police officers. The Plan supports setting up of more forensic laboratories and DNA testing centres, ensuring safety to rape victims to testify in courts and appoint a specially designated judge in the District Court to deal with rape cases.
5.4.12 TWELFTH PLAN (2012-2017): The 12th Plan recognizes the primacy of India’s Women and Children since they represent about 70% of the country’s population. The plan also commits that high priority would be given to them especially to those belonging to the weaker socio-economic strata and deprived socio-religious communities like SCs, STs, OBCs, religious minorities, migrants, vulnerable tribal communities, those living in inaccessible areas, insecure environments, those are single and the urban poors.

The 12th Plan also addresses to multifaceted deprivation related to women and children having their manifestation in the declining sex ratio among children below 6 years of age and gender based violence. So, the plan will endeavour to provide nurturing, protective and safe environment for women to facilitate their entry into public spaces.

5.4.12.1 The Strategies: Provisions for economic empowerment, social and physical infrastructure, enabling legislations, women’s participation in governance, inclusiveness of all categories of vulnerable women and engendering national policies/programmes.

5.4.12.1.a Economic Empowerment: Proper implementation of the Equal Remuneration Act and the Maternity Benefits Act would be taken care of. In order to have increased proportion of female employment, imperative that Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment at Work Place Bill into law.

This Plan also realizes that one of the lacuna regarding female work participation, particularly in secondary and tertiary sectors, lies in the lack of skill and usage of technology. Therefore, the promotion of skill development of women from the traditional to the emerging skills will break the ice of gender stereotypes and women would enter better employment and space in the market economy with jobs like BPO employees, electronic technicians, electricians, plumbers, sales persons, auto drivers, taxi drivers, masons and so on.

The 12th Plan also provides an essential component supporting women home-based workers, self employed workers and small producers so that they could get support for their enterprises covering technology and skill training, entrepreneurship training, market information, access to institutionalized credit, power and other infrastructure related facilities. This Plan also prioritizes the role of SHGs so that they can serve the poor women’s interest in a proper manner. It also brings provision of reduced interest rate of 7% in case of repayment of loans for the beneficiaries under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). Apart from this, the plan also favours
special dispensation for single women particularly related to the modification of the Medical Insurance Policies recognizing their needs. Issuance of Kisan Credit Cards to women farmers with joint pattas as collateral would be encouraged. This Plan has identified the necessity of awareness building regarding the emergence of the new trend of ‘Feminization of Agriculture’ (initiated during the 10th Plan). It has prescribed for sensitization of policy makers, so that gender stereotype of farming being a sole male activity is adequately challenged. Furthermore, it emphasizes that, women must be included in land and water management, Pani Panchayats, preservation of soil fertility and nutrition management, sustainable use of soil, water, livestock and fishery resources and creating village level community seed banks etc. In order to increase women’s access, a quota will be incorporated by modifying the guidelines of agriculture related schemes. Agricultural technology will also include women friendly methods to reduce the drudgery and lead to better health and productivity. Special Resource Centres would be provided to women for development of new skills, techniques, access to information related to schemes, subsidies, training in crop planning, use and repair of low cost irrigation methods and so on. The Plan will also cater to the women’s access to ‘land’ which is an essential component of empowerment. In this connection, mention may be made of the Hindu Succession Amendment Act (HSAA), 2005 that attempts to bring all agricultural land on par with other property. This makes Hindu women’s land inheritance rights legally equal to men’s across states, overriding any inconsistent State laws.

Other than agriculture, women involved in manufacturing sector also received promotion in this plan. Important traditional industries like leather, handlooms, handicrafts and sericulture would be activated to identify the market potential and existing skills. Technological support and analysis of industrial climate would be extended to them for the prosperity of the ventures.

Women in unorganized sector can get assistance in the form of labour protection so that issues of leave, wages, work conditions, pension, housing, child care, health benefits, maternity benefits, safety and occupational health, sexual harassment etc. could be addressed.

5.4.12.1.b Social and Physical Infrastructure: Four indicators like health, education, sanitation and transportation are earmarked for strengthening social and physical infrastructure of the country. The persistence of gender difference with these regards calls for the women’s need to be taken into account.
On the first hand, some serious problems that should be properly dealt with regarding Health, such as, the sex ratio and the decline in the child sex ratio; occurrence of anemia, morbidity, access to care and treatment etc. The Plan recognizes categorization of vulnerable women on socio-religious basis and seeks to address issues of women’s survival and health through a life-cycle approach. The NRHM targets to lower down high female IMR and declining child sex ratio. NRHM would also go for an impact assessment of Janani Suraksha Yojana, Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh etc. The NRHM would also be integrated with IGMSY, National Food Security Bill (NFSB) and other programmes related to expectant and lactating mothers and those which are formulated to reduce MMR.

The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) aims at increasing the number of women teachers especially in rural schools and inaccessible areas. Provisions for improved work conditions including transport facilities and housing would be there. Special system of child tracking would be adopted to reduce drop-outs at school. Provision of hostels and inclusion of vocational training with in the curriculum would help to attain more coverage and success.

Lack of sanitation, toilets especially in the rural areas is a major weakness of our country and women are once again affected adversely. The ‘Total Sanitation Campaign’ has been designed to address issues like reduction in women’s work load, security provisions, improvement of hygiene and reproductive health of women, decrease of school dropout rates among girls etc. The Plan will also ensure the provision of toilets in all schools and Anganwadi centres and will involve women’s participation regarding the location of sanitation facilities.

Women specific transport needs like transportation of primary products, inter and intra village roads, non-motorized paths, bicycle lanes, pedestrian side walk, passenger safety etc. deserve special mention. While implementing new plans and programmes, women’s needs should be taken care of properly. Improvisation of designs suitable for women’s needs especially related to lowering of height of entry steps, length of steps in buses and trains, installation of hand railings and ramps, safety measures etc. wherever required should be done. Provision of night shelters and toilets for women at bus terminus would also be there.

Women are the primary stakeholders in energy and natural resource management, especially for domestic use. Women’s groups would be encouraged to undertake the smaller power production units and energy-based enterprises. They would also be provided with trainings to develop their
expertise in renewable energy sector, repairing of solar lanterns, improved cooking stoves, pump sets etc. so as to develop a large pool of trained female technocrats/energy entrepreneurs.

Urban planning and livelihood goes often unnoticed especially by the planners and get eroded by the urban renewal schemes. Urban women also face threats to their livelihood on a regular basis. So, allocation of urban land/space and other resources will be made for livelihoods of the poor. Special mention in this regard involves- safe shelter homes, women friendly public toilets, public crèche facilities and so on.

Climate change has gender-wise differential repercussions as well. as it affects the energy, water, food security, agriculture and fisheries, biodiversity and ecosystem services, health, industry, human settlements, disaster management and security. The 12th Plan will ensure a gender assessment of the plans including gender specific objectives, indicators, monitoring and evaluating dimensions, capacity building etc. keeping pace with the changing and adapting strategies: eg. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) planning and implementation at local, regional, national level; Nation Adaptation Program of Actions (NAPAs).

The 12th Plan is committed for engendering the different channels of the media including local media like street plays, community radio etc. The Information and Broadcasting Ministry will encourage gender messaging which would cover substantial engagement to the programme executives, writers, editors with critical gender issues.

5.4.12.1.c Enabling Legislations: The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act (PC-PNDT) must be reviewed and make the sex selection practices punishable. State interventions are required for this. The Maternity Benefit Act (1961) would be reviewed to increase the length of leave period which women of varied occupations (even in factories, mines, shops etc.) can utilize with paid absence at their convenience.

The implementation and monitoring of Equal Remuneration Act (1976) will be strictly enforced. The 12th Plan also recommends the proper implementation of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PVDWA) and Dowry Prohibition Act (DPA) with State’s involvement with the creation of posts like Protection Officers, Prohibition Officers, Family Counseling Centres etc. Besides these, new initiatives like ‘One Stop Crisis Centres’ for providing shelter, police desk, legal, medical and counseling services and Women’s Helpline will be initiated.
The responsibility of the corporate sectors cannot be denied in this regard. They will be encouraged to take up projects providing assistance to women in situations like domestic violence and for rehabilitation of victims of trafficking.

5.4.12.1.d Women’s Participation In Governance: Women’s empowerment could be ensured in a most effective manner if they could be absorbed in governance. In the Panchayats, the Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) must be able enough to initiate better governance and social change. They should be able to deliver the programmes and schemes like ICDS, NRHM, SSA, MNREGS etc. and monitor the functioning of grass root workers like Anganwadi Workers (AWW), Accredited Social Health Activities (ASHA), Primary School Teachers and so on. Integration of their activities is essentially required so as to formulate plans, address issues, lead campaigns etc.

The Panchayats must keep an eye on death, birth, marriage registrations and migration so that trafficking and illegal child marriages are restricted and EWRs could guide the victim girls to lead violence free life and achieve universal education.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in collaboration with other ministries must promote and groom women in pre-election trainings, building up of capacity and gender budgeting and gender audit in rural and urban local bodies.

The Gender Resource Centres (GRC) of MoWCD has been envisaged to bring social, economic and legal empowerment particularly to the under-privileged women by their courses of action.

Urban local bodies also need to give importance to a gender focal point in each body; citizen report cards focusing on the needs and necessities of urban women dwellers so that this helps in capacity building, planning, budgeting and mobilization of resources.

5.4.12.1.e Inclusiveness of All Categories of Vulnerable Women: The 12th Plan pays attention to the needs of vulnerable women including the SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities. The Plan seeks for better implementation of Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 in the form of special programmes and interventions that should be drawn up for them particularly in the fields of education and health. The Plan also strives for the betterment of the STs by promotion of the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006; so that they could go for adequate land development facilities and credit
facilities. A special category known as the PVTGs (Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups) has been identified.

Muslim girls would be given additional support for education and transportation facilities which can improve their enrolment and attendance. This would complement the SSA. Along with the SCs and STs, the Muslim girls would also get included as vulnerable groups. NRHM should be improved so that health and sanitation facilities could be extended to them. Women artisans who desire occupational diversification would be provided alternative training.

Differently abled women must be taken care of in this Plan. Schools, especially girls’ schools would be having infrastructure so that sensitization and training of school teachers and AWWs in vocational training and assured employment could be ensured.

Special attention is required for single women, particularly widows. Provisions for rehabilitation, compensation, legal aids, economic packages like pension schemes etc. would be there. Separate quota under Indira Awas Yojana and Rajiv Awas Yojana for single woman would be extended under MGREGA. Elderly women would be addressed with regard to issues of health, nutrition and pension concerns.

Women affected with HIV/ AIDS specially who have been deserted by husbands and families have no access to resources or economic support. Caregivers of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and AIDS will be trained in all respects of the disease.

To protect women migrant workers (domestic) from exploitation by placement agencies, a system of registration, monitoring, placement accountability may be introduced. Migrant Resource Centres/ Assistance Centres will be set up in major destination areas to provide counseling and training to ensure better integration in urban labour markets.

Women have a different experience in the disturbed areas as they remain exposed to continuous army presence, suspended civil rights and lack of normal access to facilities/ services due to continuous violence. So this Plan prioritizes those women and girl child so that they can attend schools, have free legal aids, health care measures etc. by proper implementation of Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA). Gender sensitization, counseling for women, access to justice etc. would be provided by Gender Resource Centres by the State venture (a greater coverage by NRLM & MGNREGA).
The 12th Plan also commits that efforts will be there to prevent trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation and rehabilitation of the trafficked victims including the prostitutes (those wanting to leave the exploitative situation). Steps would be taken to break the second generation prostitution and brothel related livelihood so that they could be mainstreamed with proper education (through SSA) and proper living.

To reduce and eliminate the inside-prison problems bothering women and children (like overcrowding, prolonged detention of under-trial individuals, poor living conditions, physical, mental and sexual abuse etc.). the All India Committee on Jail Reforms (1980-83), the Supreme Court of India and the Committee of Empowerment of Women (2001-2002) have all highlighted the need for a comprehensive revision of prison law.

The Plan also proposes empowerment of transgender community by advocating for their education, housing, healthcare, skill development, employment opportunity and fiscal assistance. The ministry of Social Justice Empowerment with the Ministry of State and Programme Implementation will determine the number of transgender persons in India, their interests would be protected thereupon.

5.4.12.1.f Engendering National Policies/ Programmes: The Govt. of India is implementing a number of Programmes for improving access to employment, education, health, infrastructure development, urban development etc. These Programmes often highlight women, often become gender neutral or often pose constraints to the livelihood of women. These constraints must be identified and addressed. Some programmes benefitting women and children under the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation are:

- **Bharat Nirman Programme** which aims at training of women and their participation. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and MGNREGA with NRLM aim at women empowerment. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme – will include PC-PNDT Act & PWDVA, promote women SHGs and will collaborate with ICDS. National Rural Health Mission looks into the interest of women belonging to vulnerable communities, affected by HIV/AIDS; this would integrate with IGMSY and NFSB. Integrated Childhood Development Scheme (ICDS) will collaborate with AWWs and ASHAs relating to nutrition, counseling, child rights, gender discrimination etc. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Kasturba
Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act- are aimed to secondary level girls’ school with proper infrastructure, teachers, standardization of learning levels, proper address of sexual stereotyping, changing attitudes and perceptions, providing secured environment for girls of minority communities etc. *Indira Awas Yojana / Rajiv Awas Yojana* aims to provide housing for vulnerable women, single women and female headed households. National Rural Drinking Water Programme and Total Sanitation Campaign relates to the women taking active participation in determining location and usage of sanitation facilities. *Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana* (RGGVY) looks into women’s access to drinking water, electrification of households facilitating studies of children. Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is a component of city planning aiming at creation of infrastructure (like market places for women hawkers etc.) where women councilors are involved in decision making.

The process of Gender Budgeting will be strengthened further in this Plan and its reach would be extended to all Ministries, Departments and State Governments.

**5.4.12.2 The Schemes of the 12th Plan:** To promote socio-economic development, a continuation of the programmes like STEP, *Priyadarshini* (helping livelihood and working women hostels), *Ujjwala* (prevention of trafficking, rescue and rehabilitation of victims), *Swadhar* (short stay homes and stay homes for women) have been recommended.

Besides this, with the specific objective of ensuring convergence and better co-ordination among the schemes/programmes under different Ministries/Departments, the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) has been initiated. The NMEW aims at generation of awareness building strategies to question the prevalent patriarchal beliefs; establishment of a convergence mechanism at multiple levels, creation of Gender Resource Centres; formation of women SHGs and improvement of their capacity to access the benefits of Government schemes, programmes, laws, policies developing empowerment indicators relating to the survival, visibility, freedom and equality of women. It would also make vulnerability mapping of women having difference in caste, age, abilities, ethnicity, marital status, education, income, minority status, religion, region etc.

Autonomous bodies like CSWB, RMK, NCW etc would function with their respective priorities.
5.5 CONCLUSION: An overview of the provisions favouring women in the Constitution, Legal frame work along with the Government initiatives taken up so far shows that indeed there remain discrepancies among men and women on various grounds especially having a patriarchal social set up. Realizing this, the policy makers from the very first occasion have tried to make special provision for women and children as well.

The first two plans had welfare approach towards women but had considered them as disadvantaged group and accordingly, developmental programmes were taken up. Third Plan onwards, this approach shifted to ‘development’ of women and children. The Sixth Plan may be earmarked for the fact that for the first time, it had included a chapter on ‘Women’s Development’. The Seventh Plan came up with a multidisciplinary approach revolving round enhancement of women’s status covering various aspects. From the Eighth Plan to Eleventh Plan, again a shift of approach have been noticed; from Development of Women to Empowerment of Women. The State was noticed to have accepted women as active agents, participating in and guiding their own development. But sometimes the efforts have remained piecemeal compartmentalizing and marginalizing the issues.

In order to have a more comprehensive approach, the 12th Plan aimed at the “fulfillment of Women’s Rights as inalienable condition to achieve a rapid, sustainable economic growth, reducing gender based inequities, discrimination and violence against them” (www.planningcommission.nic.in, 12th Plan, Vol.3, Chapter 23, p.214).

Thus, it goes without saying, that economic prosperity devoid of social development perspective is meaningless and unfeasible.

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CHAPTER VI:

PERCEPTION OF THE WORKING WOMEN OF THE STUDY AREA TOWARDS EDUCATION, MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND EMPLOYMENT
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PERCEPTION OF THE WORKING WOMEN OF THE STUDY AREA TOWARDS EDUCATION, MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND EMPLOYMENT

6.1 INTRODUCTION: Formal education and life experience teaches one to have a different perspective to life and living. Astige (2006: 74) has rightly pointed out that ‘the role and status of the employed women depends on the extent to which she has become modern in her attitudes, values and out looks…’ The working women with education and employment develop diverse orientation towards the basic social issues viz. education, marriage, family and employment. Economic autonomy gradually imparts confidence among the working women and augments the living standards of the family also. The focus of this chapter is to illuminate the perception of the working women of the study area concerning education, marriage, family and employment since these can be regarded as the fundamental matters shaping one’s social and personal reality.

6.2 PERCEPTION OF THE WORKING WOMEN TOWARDS EDUCATION: The word ‘education’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘educere’ which means ‘to draw out’ i.e. to bring out the innate potentials or endowments which remains within an individual. To get education means to acquire knowledge and experiences as well as to develop skills, habits and attitudes those help a person to lead a full and worth-while living. Kundu and Bose (1995: 155) remarked that ‘Education is an endless process of becoming’ in other words, education is a lifelong process from birth to death. So, it 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 regarded as an important indicator of development (as seen in the computation of HDI, GDI etc.) particularly related to women’s position in the society. Societies providing congenial and free environment for social progress also portrays high incidence of female education. Women along with men adhere for higher education and become contenders of white collar jobs. Higher education also enables women to analyze life experiences with a different perspective and develop her own identity. Astige (2006: 75) has summarized the consequential outcome of women’s education in the form of:

a) Greater female work participation;

b) Reduction in family size;

c) Greater attention by mothers in child rearing in terms of health, character building, educational accomplishments and the like; and

d) Enhancement in per-capita income and capital; ensuing better quality human capital. Astige further cites Joshi (Ibid: 76) and tried to account for the increasing trend of female students for higher education. She justifies the following reasons for such phenomena:

a) Since the average marriage age in India has been increased, the girls like to continue their education in this situation;

b) The educated boys prefer educated brides so, the girls intend for higher education as qualification of marriage;

c) Higher education paves the way for better jobs, so in order to become self supporting in life they go for higher education and

d) For attaining a better status in the society and for economic autonomy women prefer getting higher education.
The respondents were asked a number of education related questions whereby their attitude and perception towards education could be reflected. These might be represented as important indicators for the study concerned.

6.2.1 ADHERENCE OF THE RESPONDENTS TO HIGHER EDUCATION: The educational qualification of the respondents of the study area has been dealt in detail in Chapter IV. The primary data and the census data pertaining to 2011 have been tallied and similar kind of representation have been found. A general finding regarding the education and literacy level of the respondents of the study area is that it has an impressive percentage of female literacy having an average of >75% in most of the wards. The Map no. 4.11 of the chapter IV shows the level of education among the working women in the CBT and the diagram has been prepared on the basis of the primary data. The incidence of higher education (including Graduates, Post-graduates, Ph.D and M.Phil, Diploma holders) among the respondents is found the most (54%), 35% of the respondents have School Level Education (including primary, secondary, higher secondary levels); 3% could only sign their names; 4% were Illiterates and 4% did not mention about their educational qualification. Having a situation like this, the working women have been appropriately found to engage themselves mostly (41.14%) with white collar jobs. This might be treated as a positive attitude and an achievement for the respondents.

6.2.2 RESPONDENTS’ PREFERENCE FOR THE SCHOOLS:

The Popularity for the Medium of Instructions in Schools: This has already been dealt with in Chapter IV, wherein it has been found that most of the working women (63.25%) send their children to the Bengali Medium Schools; 33.60% send their wards to English Medium Schools; 1.24% to Hindi Medium Schools and the rest 1.91 % belonged to the not mentioned category evident in Table 4.14 of Chapter IV. This is represented spatially in Map no 6.1 to detect the popularity of medium of instructions in schools among the respondents. The map reflects similar findings as that of CBT as a whole.
The Preference for the Medium of Instructions in Schools: The respondents were further asked to indicate their preference for the medium of instructions in schools for their children. Surprisingly it has been found that about 81.04% of the respondents (i.e. 1440 in number) have preference for English Medium Schools while the rest 18.46% of them preferred Bengali Medium Schools. The reasons for such preference were also enquired and are displayed in the following table (Table no. 6.1).

Table: 6.1 Preferences for English as the Medium of Instruction in Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate Higher Education</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>18.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Job opportunity</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>50.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universality of English language</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>12.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful for Competitive Exams</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>18.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1440</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey
It is evident from the above table that the respondents prefer English medium schools mostly (50.34%) because they think that it will fetch good jobs for their children; the next 18.98% of the respondents believe that it will remain helpful for appearing in Competitive Exams, almost equal proportion (18.13%) of the respondents stated that it would facilitate higher education since most of the good reference books are written in English. Only 12.55% showed their interest in learning English as a universal language leading to better comprehension.

Now the most pertinent question arises, that if 81.04% of the respondents prefer English to be the most useful language having a practical benefit, then why most of the respondents (63.25%) send their children in Bengali Medium Schools. The probable answers to this question are many: to some respondents, it has been their inability to cope up with the subject since they have been to Bengali Medium Schools; affordability to English Medium Schools cannot be an un-denying fact; insufficient number of English Medium Schools in the study area is yet another issue.

**Popularity of the types of Schools in the study area:** Preference of the respondents regarding the type of schools has been represented by simple cartographic technique in Map no. 6.2, where ward wise representation in this regard have been displayed.
About 63.31% of the working women send their children to co-education schools of the study area (ward nos. 1, 3-13, 15 - 20). 18.40% of the respondents admitted their daughters to the Girls’ (ward nos. 4, 9, 10, 14, 18 & 19) and 16.26% of them admitted their sons to the Boys’ school (ward nos. 2, 9, 12, 13, 14, 18 & 19) respectively. However, 2.03% of the respondents did not have any preference as their children are yet to be born to them.

**6.2.3 NECESSITY OF EDUCATION & VIEWS OF THE RESPONDENTS REGARDING ITS IMPORTANCE:** When the respondents were asked about the necessity of education in their life and living almost everyone (99.66%) gave their consent in affirmation; however, 0.44% of the respondents did not mentioned anything.

The respondents were further inquired to elucidate their views regarding the importance of education and they were asked that ‘why do you think that education is important?’ The answer to this question shows some interesting findings:

- About 45% of the respondents told that education has given new impetus to their lives and living, they have been empowered to secure jobs and to lead a decent life.
- 25.47% of the respondents opined that education has given them social position and they have imbibed traditional values by virtue of it.
- The rest 29.53% of the respondents admitted that education has given them freedom and strengthened the decision making ability.

**6.2.4 SHOULD WOMEN GO FOR HIGHER EDUCATION?** There is no denying the fact that education in the contemporary world has become crucial for everyone irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex, class, so on and so forth. Still it should be kept in mind that education itself gets affected by the social forces as well. The working women of the study area have already shown positive sign towards education. Literacy level among women is quite impressive. Out of the Total Female Population (38,921 women) of the CBT, the number of Female Literates are 32,350; representing 83.12% as per 2011 Census. About 92% of the working women under study in the CBM are literates. More than one-half section of the respondents (54%) has attained higher education (i.e. Graduates, Post-graduates, Ph. D, M. Phil, Diplomas etc.).

**Differences of opinion:** The respondents were asked that whether Women should go for Higher Education or not; the answer was quite predictable. Almost 90.21% of the working women under
study said in confirmation. On the contrary, 9.79% replied in negation. The reasons were further enquired and it led to the insight of the differences of opinion:

- Some of the respondents opined that though education has practical implication upon everyone’s life yet, higher education imposes threat to simple living. In other words, a highly educated girl does not show willingness to marry a person having low educational qualification. It is sometimes seen that a Post-graduate woman stays single throughout her life.

The following table (Table 6.2) displays an interesting outcome of the survey. Out of the total number of the respondents the unmarried sample represents 16.38% (table no. 4.2 of Chapter IV). These unmarried respondents under study were classified according to their age groups and educational qualifications. It was revealed that the assumption just made above stands almost correct, as the proportion of the highly qualified respondents (42.61% of Graduates & Post-graduates and 32.99% of respondents having technical qualifications such as Advocacy, Medical, Engineering, Polytechnic etc.) outnumber all the other groups irrespective of age. Even if the Young Age Group is not considered (since they still have the chance of getting married), the proportion for the unmarried Graduates, Post-Graduates and Technically educated respondents are more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Qualifications</th>
<th>Young (18-28 years)</th>
<th>Matured (29-49 years)</th>
<th>Aged (50-65 years)</th>
<th>Unmarried Respondents of all Age Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can Sign</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-VIII Std.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-XII Std.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.56</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates &amp; P.G</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>42.78</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>37.97</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total no. of unmarried respondents = 291 working women

Source: Field Survey, 2014
Some other respondents stated that highly educated women refrain themselves from household chores of cleaning, washing, cooking, even child bearing and parenting.

A respondent also added that education empowers women to get job but sometimes the job demands the employed women to remain outside the house for long hours, this may sour the family relations.

6.2.5 PERCEPTION OF THE NON-WORKING WOMEN TOWARDS EDUCATION:
The perception of the non-working women in this regard complements the research inquiry. The different aspects of study can be summarized as follows:

- With regard to the Educational qualification of the non-working women, it may be said that the sample shows incidence of highly educated women like that of the working women of the study area. Among the non-working women, 58% of the sample has been represented by the Graduates and Post-graduates. 30% of this group has completed schooling of Classes X and XII levels. The rest 11.67% did not crossed the threshold of schools.

- The non-working women send their children to Bengali Medium Schools mostly (77.33%); on the other hand, the rest 26.67% of the group send their children to the English Medium Schools. So, there remains popularity of the Bengali Medium Schools for both the cases of the working and non-working women of the study area.

- While looking for the preference of the working women for the medium of instructions in schools, almost 90% of the non-working category voted for the English Medium Schools. While the rest of the lot prefers Bengali Medium Schools.

- The reasons for such preference was also asked to the house wives whereby they opined that they prefer English as the medium of instruction in schools because it facilitates higher studies (31.67%); it enables one to communicate properly (8.33%); it adds smartness to the personality (8.33%). About 51.67% of the housewives nominated for all the three options while 5% of them did not mention their choice.

- Most of the non-working women (83.33%) send their children to co-education schools of the study area. The 10% and 6.67% of the housewives send their children to the Boys’ Schools and Girls’ School respectively. The reflection on this issue also has similarity with that of the working women’s family.
• Cent percent of the housewives felt the necessity of education in their life and living. About 53.33% of them summarized that it is necessary for getting a job; 45% felt that education helps in gaining knowledge, only 1.67% felt for both. In this respect, the working women portrays a more mature and pragmatic connotation of education than the non-working women.

• It is obvious that the non-working respondents would go for the necessity of higher education since they themselves are mostly educated with superior degrees. As per expectation, 98.33% of this group opined for the motion. A meager proportion (1.67%) of the sample did not support the idea.

6.3 PERCEPTION OF THE WORKING WOMEN TOWARDS MARRIAGE: The institution of Marriage is of utmost significance in a country like ours. The concept of ‘Marriage’ in the Indian society acts as a cementing factor complementing the basic social unit i.e. the Family. Of the various roles that are played by man, the economic roles and the marital roles are most significant to him. His entire life finds connotation by these two roles. The popular concept of marriage holds that it is a union between a man and a woman. It may be explained differently by different group of people: the anthropologists view it as the social sanction of the union; the sociologists think it to be a system of roles and primary relationships while some think it to be the Dharma (righteousness or the performance of duty). While explaining the concept of Marriage, Ahuja (2013: 118) opines that ‘Primary relation in marriage performs two important functions: one of need gratification and other of social control. It gratifies biological (sexual satisfaction), psychological (affection and sympathy) and economic (food, clothing and shelter) needs of the individuals and also acts as a primary source of morality and ethics’.

6.3.1 WHY MARRIAGES ARE CONSIDERED AS SACRAMENT? Since 90.66% of the respondents are Hindus by religious affiliation, the philosophy of the Hindu marriage was delved into. The Hindu marriages are popularly considered as sacrament because of few reasons:

a) Because it aimed at Dharma towards the fulfillment of the religious duties of an individual.

b) Because it involved certain rituals and rites and considered to be religious in nature.

c) Because the rites were being performed in front of the Agni, the sacred God of Fire of the Hindus symbolizing purity.
d) Because the union between the man and the woman was considered as permanent and irrevocable throughout life and even beyond that.

e) Because it was the only ritual that could be performed by women in her entire life unlike their spouses, is considered to be of utmost importance.

f) Because marriage has been considered to be a ‘social duty’ rather than individual aspiration and interest.

6.3.2 THE CHANGE IN THE CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE: The traditional society has seen marriages undertaken to solve certain practical problems also apart from there being love and companionship between spouses: people wanted children for economic reasons; they wanted more women to work on fields so they undertook marriage (polygamy in some cases). As of now, the traditional society having been transformed into modern, those practical reasons for marriage have been reduced in importance. Marriages are conceived as an escape from loneliness, rather going for ‘companionship’ or ‘comradeship’. That does not exclude the object of sex- gratification from its scope (Ibid: 120). The need gratification in today’s concept of marriage comes secondary to companionship.

Thus, the basic premises of marriage are found to have changed: 1) Marriages are no longer thought to be a sacrament rather a companionship; the hierarchical relationship between the husband and wife are transforming into egalitarian ones and 2) Marital relations no longer remain irrevocable, divorce is sought as the last resort when marital obligations are not fulfilled. 3) Widow re-marriage has become sanctioned but it still remains as uncommon practice. 4) Freedom of mate selection has trickled in the contemporary society, but it does not destroy the stability of marriage.

A new trend in the process of mate selection especially in the urban society among educated youths belonging to middle and upper economic classes has set in. 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.
Thus the concept of marriage has been found to get transformed through time. A woman’s role and status are integrally connected with marriage and family. Changes in the structure and organization of marriage and family will have a deep and lasting influence on the changing role and status of woman (Astige, 2006: 94). With the commencement of urbanization and modernity the livelihood of the women, their exposure and interaction to the outer world, their gainful employments have contributed to develop an entity of their own. So, the researcher wanted to examine the perception of the working women of the study area regarding the institution of marriage through their experiences.

6.3.3 MARITAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS: The sample under consideration when classified as per the marital statuses show the preponderance of the Married respondents (72.93%) as evident in Table no. 4.2 in Chapter IV. 19.59% of the respondents are singly living working women in the study area. This group is composed of the unmarried, widowed and divorced working women representing 16.38%, 2.70% and 0.51% of the sample respectively. However, a proportion of 7.48% of the respondents have been designated as the Not Mentioned group which includes Sex Workers representing 2.53% of the sample.

Since the married respondents represent the lion share of the sample under study, it may be inferred that the working women of the CBT prefers a stable married life and kin relations. The presence of singly residing working women, though found to occur in small proportion (19.59%), point towards the independent living of the working women in the study area.

6.3.4 AGE AT MARRIAGE: The age at which women gets married may be designated as one of the major indicator for the present study. Early marriages in the Third World socio-cultural setup lead to maximum number of child births; subsequently it escorts the family to critical living standards and finally upto the ‘Vicious Cycle of Poverty’. In India, though the government has endorsed the marriage age for the females at 18 years and 21 years for the males, there are defiance found at places. This ratification of the age of marriages is important to have a hold on to the fertility and population growth. Generally in towns, it is seen that women after the completion of their education enters into employment. After financial establishment they go into marriages and family. In pursuance of education and employment, the women reach almost in late twenties in age. Moreover, the working women owing to her occupation prefer less number
of children. Therefore, on the whole, population growth becomes reduced as a contribution from the urban educated working women.

Since the whole of the universe represents the working women only, the proportion of the sample entering early family life constituted by 24.31% of working women of ≤18 years reveals the aspiration of the women to supplement their family income and augment their living standards. It also reflects their mind-set of sharing the financial responsibility of the family complementing with that of their spouses. Table 6.3 shows that majority of the sample (65.96%) of the working women entered into married life between 19-30 years of age which may be referred to as the optimum age of marriage for the women. This age group also denotes that the respondents are economically active. Since the majority of the respondents initiate their conjugal life at the optimum age, it may be deduced that the respondents under study are able to take right decision at right time which help them to strike balance between career and personal life. Dr. Singhal (2003: 25) remarked in her study that ‘in urban society, majority of educated women try to get gainful employment immediately after completing their education. Nowadays, more and more women with higher education are trying to get paid employment’, it corroborates with the present study as well. The present study however, does not confirm with the statement of Dr. Singhal that many of the working women discontinue their jobs after getting married; which might be true for metropolises. Late marriages however are infrequently represented by 4.95% of the sample in the study area.

**Table: 6.3 Marriage Age of the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Age at Marriage (in Years)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>≤18</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>24.31</td>
<td>Early Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>32.19</td>
<td>Optimum Age of Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>33.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>Late Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>≥37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Could not tell</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014

6.3.5 TYPE OF MARRIAGE UNDERGONE: Out of the total sample, 76.13% of the respondents got married. Of this proportion, 1296 working women were found currently married; 09 were found divorced and 48 of them were widows.
Before going into the analysis, the terms ‘Arranged Marriage’ and ‘Marriage by Own Selection’ or ‘Love Marriage’ needs to be clarified. Here, mention may be made by the connotation given by Dr. Astige in her work (2006). She explains that Arranged Marriages are negotiated and approved by the parents and guardians or kin members of the bride and the groom without their consultation. On the other hand ‘Love Marriage is a form of marriage in which the boy and the girl interact with each other and develop a relationship on the basis of personal likes, common interests and finally decide to marry without considering the desires and wishes of the parents or guardians, sometimes much against the will of the parents’ (Astige, 2006: 99). The researcher during the field survey revealed that both the types of marriages have undergone metamorphosis in their character. The ‘Arranged Marriage’ has now become more malleable as the parents/guardians or kin members finds a match and they are allowed to interact before marriage. Through several meetings and interactions both the bride-groom get to know each other and they get married subsequently. Here, one thing must be kept in mind that the parents finalize the marriage on the first hand and then only the interaction between the would-be couple could be allowed. On the other hand, ‘Marriage by Own Selection’ has also undergone certain modifications; a boy and a girl develop a relationship by interacting with each other, when they decide to get married, they inform their parents about their choices. The parents of both the bride and the groom come together for the social marriage.

The respondents were asked to point out the marriage type they had undergone. The result of the question has been shown in Table 6.4 which is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Type of Marriage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% (Out of Total Married)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1296</td>
<td>1353</td>
<td>Arranged</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>72.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td>Own Selection</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>27.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>424</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutually Seperated</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Married</td>
<td>1353</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
Coming on to the results of the field study, it was found that 72.36% of the married category of respondents stated that they had undergone Arranged Marriage, whereby their parents negotiated their marriage. The rest 27.64% of the married group reported that they had undergone marriage by their own selection. This shows that despite the respondents are highly educated and employed; they have greater reliance on their families on account of mate selection. Only 27.64% of the respondents have selected their life partners of their own.

6.3.6 PREFERENCE FOR MARRIAGE TYPE: Dr. Astige is of opinion that modern youth tend to prefer love marriage as against arranged marriage (2006: 98). She had cited the works of Giriraj Khanna (1978), Kapur (1970) and Giriraj Gupta (1976) who had similar findings. However, the present study differs in the opinion. In this study area concerned, when the respondents were asked about their preference regarding the marriage type, a little more than half of the respondents (53.91%) voted for Arranged Marriage (Table 6.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arranged Marriage</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>53.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage by Own Selection</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>32.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>11.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Preference</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

The next group representing 32.92% of the sample preferred ‘Marriages by Own Selection’. 11.09% of the respondents preferred both the marriage types while 2.08% of the sample did not mention their choice. The fact must not be forgotten that 60% of the respondents belong to the Matured Age group of 29-49 years of age. So, the choice is attributed to the experiences of the respondents and was not stated casually.

6.3.6.1 Reasons for Such Preference: While the respondents were requested to clarify the reasons for such choices, they had their own points of view for their answers. The respondents who preferred marriages by own selection summarized that they had realized that in this case, the couple gets scope to know each other properly while interacting. Moreover, as they interact, they
come to know about the likings, disliking, personality, choice, tolerance, and attitude towards different situations etc. of each other which paves way for better understanding for the future.

The respondents in support of arranged marriages accounted that both the individuals having lack of experience remain unable to make proper mate selection. They strongly believe that these marriages by own selection does not last long. Moreover, they added that when the parents select the match, they support them throughout their life in all situations. So, in order to insure parental support they were in favour of arranged marriages. Some of the respondents were also of opinion that for the sake of social status and family status they prefer arranged marriages.

6.3.7 THE ISSUE OF DOWRY AT MARRIAGES: The practice of dowry is very own to the Indian society and culture. In an ordinary sense, dowry refers to money, gifts, goods or estate that wife brings to her husband in marriage (Ahuja, 2013: 200). It is different from Kanyadan (whereby the bride is given as a gift to the groom) and Stridhan (the gifts that the bride gets from her natal kin or by her husband at or after the wedding). The amount of dowry depends on a number of factors such as: the social and economic status of the groom and his family, social and economic status of the bride’s family, educational qualification of the bridegroom etc. The aspiration to marry in high status and rich family, the non-avoidance of dowry as a social custom, hypergamous marriage (marriage of the bride belonging to a low caste family into a higher caste family) sometimes act as motivations behind dowry. Apart from the dowry, lavish hospitality must be offered to the bride’s in-laws from time to time; decoration at the wedding and dinner expenses are all borne by the bride’s parents.

Generally, it is believed that educated and employed women are against the practice of dowry (Astige, 2006:101). But there are differences in opinion also. Some researchers have found that in reality when the bride is highly qualified, in order to find a suitable match to ensure a higher standard of living, dowry is encouraged. Therefore, the researcher wanted to know that since the respondents in the study area are highly educated and employed, whether the search for their grooms might promote the practice of dowry.

6.3.7.1 VIEWS REGARDING DOWRY:

6.3.7.1.1 Whether the Family of the Respondents had Taken Dowry: From the above discussion, it may be said that dowry is a social ill but it has become an unavoidable menace which is advertently or inadvertently observed in the society. Though not always it leads to
brutal act of bride-burning, but it instigates lust and greed for money or assets and failing to supply that showers ill-treatment and harassment to the bride. The respondents were asked about whether their in-laws had demanded for dowry during their marriage. About 54.36% of the respondents said that their family did not take dowry at their marriage. 10.58% of the working women admitted that their in-laws had accepted dowry in the form of gadgets and cash during their marriage. 35.06% of the respondent however did not mention their choice. This might be because of some reasons: a) 16.38% of the respondents are unmarried. b) 2.53% of the respondents are sex workers and hence the possibility of dowry does not arise here. c) The rest might not want to divulge about their families taking dowry as it indicates a derogatory practice.

6.3.7.1.2 Should Dowry be Discouraged? The next most pertinent question arises. The answer to this question corroborates with the hypothesis that educated and employed working women rejects the practice of dowry. Almost 85.42% of the respondents unanimously discarded the practice of dowry, while 14.58% still favoured it. The group favouring the practice of dowry opined that in order to maintain the family status of the bride-groom dowry should be offered and accepted.

6.3.7.1.3 Families of the Respondents Supporting Dowry: The respondents were further enquired about their family’s choice in support of dowry. 85.03% of the working women stated that their families did not support the practice of dowry. On the contrary, 14.97% admitted in affirmation as they did not find anything wrong about it.

Therefore, this leads the researcher to opine that educated and employed working women in the area under study do not prefer the social evil of dowry. Though the proportion of the respondent’s family disregarding it is not an impressive figure (i.e. 54.36%), it may be inferred that in due course of time, when these working women (i.e. 85.42% of the respondents who rejected dowry system) would become the family heads, they would summarily reject this social ill.

6.3.8 PERCEPTION OF THE NON-WORKING WOMEN TOWARDS MARRIAGE: The non-working women were also interviewed to exchange their views regarding marriage. They are as follows:
• The marital status of the non-working women shows that they are largely married (98.33%) and their predominance indicate similar kind of findings as that of the working women i.e. they are stable in their marital and kin relations.

• Negligible proportion (1.67%) of this group stays single. These women are unmarried who live with their parents and depend entirely on them for various requirements.

• A small proportion (15%) of the non-working women experienced early marriage (≤ 18 years); maximum proportion of women (81.67%) under this category gets married at their optimum age of marriage ranging between 19 to 30 years; while late marriage (31-36 years) is very rare i.e 1.67% of the sample and the same proportion of the sample were found unmarried. Thus, in short, majority of the non-working women gets married at their optimum age. The urban environment (higher education) might have instigated for getting married at proper age.

• Although the findings show that majority (55%) of the group underwent ‘Arranged Marriage’ and the rest got married by selecting their life partners by themselves. The difference between the two categories is not so prominent and this may indicate the prevalence and popularity of ‘Marriage by Own Selection’ as well.

• While comparing the preferences of the non-working women, the proportion favouring ‘Marriage by Own Selection’ (33%) exceeds that of ‘Marriage by Negotiation’ (18%). However, 49% of the non-working women did not possess any preference. The sample of the working women and that of the non-working women differs quietly on the ground of marriage preference. The economically autonomous groups showed their reliance upon their parents solely while the dependent group prefers deciding for their own. When they were asked to justify, they unanimously replied that better understanding results from ‘Marriage by Own Selection’.

• Coming on to the issue of Dowry, the non-working group overwhelmingly (92%) confirmed the non-receipt of dowry by their in-laws during their marriage. They (97%) further explained their view that it should be discouraged whole heartedly. The rest 3% were supportive of Dowry. 95% of their families also voted for its abolition.
6.4 PERCEPTION OF THE WORKING WOMEN TOWARDS FAMILY:

6.4.1 CONCEPT OF FAMILY: The concept of Family in our country holds the idea of great cohesion and permanence. Even if the members have to leave the family for job or education, they remain in touch with their parents. Ahuja (2013: 24) has defined 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. Ross (1961) sees family as a group of people usually related as some particular type of kindred, who may live in one household, and whose unity resides in a patterning of rights and duties, sentiments and authority. She further makes distinction between four sub-structures of family: a) ecological sub-structures (indicating towards the size of the household and the type of the family), i.e. spatial arrangement of family members and their households, or how relatives or how relatives live geographically close to each other. b) Sub-structure of rights and duties, i.e. division of labour within the household. c) Sub-structure of power and authority, i.e. control over the actions of others. d) Sub-structure of sentiment, i.e. relationship between different sets of members, for e.g. parents and children, husband and wife, siblings and siblings. So, this definition includes the physical, social, economic and psychological attributes of family life and living. Singhal (2003: 3) opines that the structural and functional approaches to family complement each other. The structural approach looks into the family statuses while the functional approach deals with the roles performed by its members.

6.4.2 THE CHANGES IN THE FAMILY STRUCTURE: The Joint family system has always existed in India. Karve has recognized five characteristics of traditional joint families like common residence, common kitchen, common property, common family worship and some common kinship relations. 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 interpersonal 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. In the study area the presence of Neo-Joint Families has also been found the most (see Table no. 6.8). 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. This search would lead to build up the perception of the working women towards the institution of family (the seat for socialization and transference of culture to the generations to come) in the study area. Three functional aspects of family have been earmarked in order to understand the respondents’ perception regarding their life experiences.

6.4.3 IN REFERENCE TO FAMILY BUILDING:

6.4.3.1 Age at 1st Pregnancy: Age at first Pregnancy is significant in all the studies related to demography and development especially related to the women. This is very important since one may get an idea about the socio-economic stratum (where the food, nutrition etc. of the expecting mother matters), the physiological conditions, the level of education attained and outlook to life reflecting the society and culture to which she belongs.

From the findings of Table no. 6.3 it has been found that the working women mostly (65.96% of the respondents) marry at their optimum age i.e. between 19-30 years. This may lead one to infer that the respondents under study first ensure their career and employment and then go for marriage and family. In due course of the completion of their education and their entry into gainful employment they reach the optimum age of marriage.

The respondents were asked to recall their age at first pregnancy which revealed almost expected results. The following Table (Table 6.3) displays the findings in this regard. As most of the respondents are highly educated and are engaged in white collar jobs mostly, they (61% of the respondents) have entered into pregnancy at the right age between 19-30 years. Late (10.01%) and Over Delayed (6.30%) Pregnancies are found in the study area which may be the
Table: 6.6 Age of the Respondents at their First Pregnancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at 1st Pregnancy (in Years)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤18</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>16.09</td>
<td>Early Pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-30</td>
<td>1084</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Optimum time of Pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>10.01</td>
<td>Late Pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>Over Delayed Pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014

consequence of the careerist attitude of the respondents to whom getting married and settling for the family is not the only goal of life. On the contrary, 16.09% of the working women were found plunged into early pregnancy at less than 18 years of age. This group has been represented by the socio-economically subjugated group. Thus, in this respect, the working women has portrayed matured decision making.

Delay in marriage would lead to lowering of per capita child bearing and fewer children. In this present study, it is found (Table: 6.7) that 39.28% of the respondents have single child; 21.50% have 2 children, 4.73% of them have 3 children; 1.01% of the working women have 4 children and 0.28% of them have ≥5 children. Some respondents (19.70%) did not have any children and about 9.74% of the respondents did not plan for children during enumeration. Prevalence of single child to the respondents indicates low birth rate of the study area. The per capita child bearing comes to 1 for the study area on the basis of the surveyed data. This confirms the popular notion of ‘delayed marriage and fewer children’.

Table: 6.7 Numbers of Children to the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>39.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>21.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>19.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet planned</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>9.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
6.4.3.2 Intension for more Children and Planned Parenthood: Another area deserving mention is the intension of the working women for more Children. The respondents of substantial proportion (36.07%) responded in negation. A feeble affirmation was put forward by 4.39% of the working women under consideration. This might be represented partly by those having no children as yet. The rest 59.54% admitted to take the decision jointly.

With regard to family planning awareness, 98.14% of the respondents admitted that they have developed awareness. 96.96% of the respondents have already taken up for birth control measures like that of pills, contraceptives, NSV and even have undergone operation.

This shows that the respondents have significant contribution to planned pregnancy and birth control. Already cited earlier, the words of Menon that can be relevantly applicable as ‘equality in the sphere of sexual relations and with women’s control over reproduction and their own bodies’ goes without saying for the study area (2008:219).

6.4.3.3 Preference for the Male Child: Indian society is characterized by patriarchal structure wherein property rights and inheritance are guided by it. Male heir of the family is held high from time immemorial. Mothers giving birth to male child were conferred with added stature while those giving birth to girl child were treated with negligence. The preference for the male child is the root cause behind female infanticide, pre-natal sex determination and forced abortion of the female foetus, bride burning, divorce and so on leading to a lopsided sex ratio. Keeping all these in mind, the respondents were enquired about their preference for the sex of the child (if any). The answers to this question was quantified and found that majority of the respondents (62.46%) has no gender preference for their off-springs (Table 6.8). They said that ‘it was no difference to them in bearing and rearing a girl or a boy since upbringing both is their natural parental duty.’ They remain unbiased in doing so by providing good education, ethical values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference for</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>6.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>30.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Preference</td>
<td>1110</td>
<td>62.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
and culture to them irrespective of their sex. An opposite picture has been revealed rather as almost 30.66% of the working women prefer girl child rather than the boys. These respondents held the view that it is the girls rather than the boys who takes care of the parents at their old age. So, disbelieving in the girls was not right. Only a smaller proportion of 6.81% of the respondents relied upon the traditional belief of inheritance and maintenance of the family lineage by preferring the boys.

Opinion of the husbands and the in-laws in this respect were also noted down. The husbands were found overwhelmingly supporting (91.05%) the respondents in their view regarding this. Contrary to this, their in-laws were found to be less congruent (45.86%) with their daughter-in-laws’ ideology. There were some cases of confrontation though meager (1.41% of the respondents), regarding this ‘boy-girl’ issue between the respondents and their in-laws, which resulted in divorce also. The differences of opinion are probably due to generation gap and outlook of the respondents with that of their in-laws.

6.4.3.4 Preference for the Type of Family: The joint family as a predominant form of family existed in India since the ancient times. The closeness of the family members, mutuality in the interests and common familial goal are the salient features of the Joint Families in our country. The status of women in this type of families has remained low. Nuclear Families are of recent in origin and chiefly characterize urban landscapes. Women in the Nuclear Families are seen to enjoy more power and autonomy. According to Dr. Astige, sociologists have been found to differ greatly on the issue of Joint vs. Nucleated families as the present trend in India. Some (Desai and Kapadia) are of opinion that ‘the Joint Families has not undergone any basic changes under the impact of modernization’ (Astige, 2006: 118). While sociologists like Ross and Goode opined that the joint families are giving way to nuclear families in the urban areas. The dichotomy between these two views remains unresolved since ‘it is not clear as to what constitutes a joint or a nuclear family’ (Ibid: 118). The concept of Joint family inferred in Astige’s work holds significance to the present study. She writes that ‘a joint family is a joint family in so far as married brothers live together in the same household. The moment they establish their separate households, the joint family ceases to be a joint family’ (Astige, 2006: 119). Nuclear Families strictly composed of husband-wife along with their unmarried children only remain rare in India. Conversely, a nuclear family in Indian context may be composed of husband, wife, and their unmarried children; sometimes it may also include a parent or unmarried brother or sister. The
power and authority are usually vested on the husband (son). Even if the son with his wife and children live separately in a distant place, they remain united in kinship obligations especially seen during marriages in family or during medical treatment. So, this new type semi-nucleated yet joint to some extent families can referred to as Neo-Joint Families which now dominates the social structure of the urban areas in India.

Table: 6.9 Types of Family of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Family</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>17.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nucleated</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>12.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-Joint</td>
<td>1119</td>
<td>62.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Dwelling</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Family (Sex workers)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014

As evident from the Table 6.9, most of the respondents (62.97%) were found residing in the Neo-Joint Families (just mentioned above), while about 17.22% of the respondents were found staying in the Joint Families and Nucleated families were represented by 12.83% of the working women under study. These nucleated families are composed of only husbands and wives; who have started living separately to avail residence within vicinity to their workplaces. 4.56% of the respondents lived singly in rented house for the same reason. However, 2.42% of the respondents did not have family as they are sex workers.

Preference of the working women regarding the family type has come up while interviewing them. As displayed in the Fig. no.6.a, it is clearly seen that about 59% of the respondents preferred staying in Joint Families. 24% of the representation voted for Neo-Joint Families and
the remaining 17% preferred Nuclear Families. The most significant finding in this respect is the preference of the working women (59%) for the Joint Family system. The respondents largely stay in the Neo-Joint Families where they can get more status and can exercise their autonomy regarding household decision making; despite this they wish for a Joint Family as they felt that the members of the joint family have a better eye on the children when the parents remain outside owing to their jobs. Moreover, the respondents could get assistance in the daily household chores. In short, they believed in the utility and benefits of the Joint Families.

6.4.4 PERFORMANCE OF HOUSEHOLD CHORES: Since time immemorial, gender-stereotyping for all the activities in every society was a common feature. The strenuous works were taken up by the males while cooking and serving of food, child bearing and rearing, caring for the sick and aged were the main concerns of the females. Slowly with the passage of time, the technological know-how increased and it led the civilizations to enter into a newer complicated world. Urbanization process modified the prevalent landscape. Population increased and migrated to better locations. The females started getting modern education and the new horizon of the job market opened before them. They started getting employment which facilitated the financial aspect of their families. Thus the women have been found to enter into the labour market which was monopolized by men. Inspite of being employed, the women were never found dissociated from the household activities. Apart from the daily household chores now the women got themselves engaged in outside activities also mounting extra work load upon them. Now the working women started confronting dilemma for the public and the private lives; especially, when the child rearing issue comes to the fore front. They strive for assistance from their family members. Sometimes, they get co-operation of the family in performance of the domestic activities and sometimes they experience a harder luck. As Astige quotes Indiradevi (1987) in her work, ‘the employment of women creates a situation for the emergence of joint roles compared to the segregated roles’ (Astige, 2006: 143). Her assertiveness gets established in home management with her employment. But to what extent she gets an egalitarian sharing of household duties is a question to think upon.

The working women of the study area were interviewed in detail about their daily domestic activities. They were enquired about the assistance from other family members regarding their household works and the findings have been put up in a tabular form in Table 6.10.
Table: 6.10 Regular Domestic Chores showing relative comparison with the Respondents & Other Family Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domestic Chores</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>1479 (83.23)</td>
<td>8 (0.45)</td>
<td>290 (16.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>636 (35.79)</td>
<td>992 (55.82)</td>
<td>149 (8.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning &amp; Washing</td>
<td>1096 (61.68)</td>
<td>69 (3.88)</td>
<td>611 (34.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring Aged</td>
<td>1391 (78.28)</td>
<td>290 (16.32)</td>
<td>96 (5.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring Children</td>
<td>1228 (69.11)</td>
<td>459 (25.83)</td>
<td>90 (5.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropping Children to School</td>
<td>1021 (57.46)</td>
<td>639 (35.96)</td>
<td>117 (6.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying of Bills</td>
<td>477 (26.84)</td>
<td>1208 (67.98)</td>
<td>92 (5.18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The figures in parenthesis indicate the percentage

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Several categories of domestic works have been chosen for the study which included Cooking, Marketing (grocery and green grocery), Cleaning & Washing of utensils and clothes, taking care of the aged persons of the family, taking care of the Children, Dropping the children to schools and Paying of different Bills (such as electric, telephone, cooking gas etc.). The table also helps in the comparison of the work performances of the respondents with that of their husbands and other family members (including in-laws, own parents, brothers or sisters, sons, daughters and maids). This would help one to know about the work load of the respondents apart from their services outside and the proportion of the work shared by the rest of the family members.
Map No. 6.6

Map No. 6.7
Performance of domestic chores by the respondents and their family members have been shown diagrammatically in Map nos. 6.3 to 6.9 which reveals the following finding. The working women of the study area dominate in the household activities like Cooking (83.23%), Cleaning of utensils and washing of clothes (61.68%), Caring of aged (78.28%), Care of children (69.11%) and even Dropping children to schools (57.46%). In these activities they receive assistance and support from their husbands, in-laws, own parents, son or daughters, brother or sisters, maids etc. The two areas where the husbands dominate the scene are daily marketing (55.82%) and Paying of different bills to avail civic amenities (67.98%). In case of cleaning and washing activities next to the respondents it is the support group (34.38%) whose assistance is worth mentioning.

Therefore, a probe into the daily activities apart from the outside works may lead the researcher to conclude that the employment might have emancipated the working women of the study area, but they intensively work in the household as well. This might be a reason that made the respondents to picture about the joint family situation and develop a preference for that expecting more help and shouldering of familial responsibilities.

6.4.4.1 Do the Respondents Feel Fatigued in doing the Household Chores? The above finding portrays the tough daily work-out for the respondents; it might make the researcher to think employment (for these women) as a path leading to the inconsiderate division of labour, characterizing ‘Patriarchy’ squeezing all that could be taken out from them. At this juncture, the respondents were further asked whether they felt fatigued doing all the household activities and outside activities satisfying the dual role of the home maker and the service person. 79.46% of the respondents stated that they did not feel fatigued in doing these aforementioned works as they believe that they are doing for their own family, so they can extend their co-operation to any limit. 20.54% of the working women felt fatigued in doing all the chores so, they have resorted to take the assistance of domestic help.

6.4.5 IN REFERENCE TO FAMILY RELATIONS: The family experiences of the working women is intended in the present study to know about the state of mind, stresses or strains, weaknesses and strengths of them since those have implications on the behavioral pattern of the respondents under study. For this, the working women were asked several questions during the survey. The findings have been analyzed which are as follows:
6.4.5.1 Family Attitude towards Working Women: It was important to know about the attitude of the family members of the respondents towards the working women. In other words, since ‘working women’ in India is of recent in emergence, whether the family members have favourable attitude towards them reflects their acceptance also. So, the respondents were enquired about the attitude of their family members towards the phenomena of working women. Overwhelmingly, the respondents (96.45%) reported that their families possess helpful attitude towards the working women.

6.4.5.2 Family Attitude towards the Respondents: When they were asked about the attitude of their family members towards them as working women, almost equal response was recorded, as 97.69% of the respondents said that their families have accommodating attitude towards them which is evident from the spatial representation in Map no. 6.10. Almost every wards show co-operative attitude towards the respondents.

Map No. 6.10
6.4.5.3 Expectations from the Respondents: Although the family members have shown co-operative attitude towards the respondents, yet they have a wide range of expectations from them as well especially in doing the household activities. The following table (Table 6.11) depicts the anticipation of the family members towards the respondents. The findings clearly shows that the

Table: 6.11 Expectations of the Family Members from the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents should do all household chores</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>96.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents should do all outside works</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>11.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents should spend all the earnings for the family</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents should bring up their children properly</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the 4 views</td>
<td>1308</td>
<td>73.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should not interfere with family matters</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No expectations</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Respondents’ family members (96.06%) really want to see them as a super-human being expecting that they should do all household chores, all outside works, spend all the earnings for the family and bring up their children properly. 2.93% of the respondents told that their families did not have any expectation from them as they usually do whatever is required for their families. The category indicated that the respondents should not interfere with the family matters (!), some family members of the widowed respondents opined that they should remarry at the earliest.

The family members of the respondents are found to expect so much from them and this might be due to their radiant performance at the domestic duties as viewed in Table no. 6.10. The respondents’ relentless efforts have raised the expectation level of their household members.

6.4.5.4 Family Co-operation received by the Respondents: As far as family co-operation is concerned (mentioned in Chapter IV), the respondents were enquired about it and 54.59% of them stated that they received co-operation from their families. Contrary to this the rest 40.68% said that their family members somehow did not co-operated with them. Here, the researcher
feels that since the respondents have shown their all round performance in the domestic field, the family members did not get the scope of extending their helping hand. However, 4.73% of the respondents did not mention their choice.

6.4.5.5 Harassment of the Respondents in their Family: Family life involves duties, expectations, responsibilities, obligations, indebtedness, emotional stress and strain, affection, involvement and bonding apart from the tangible resources. Family members interact continuously and in due course, they sometimes go through confrontation, differences of opinion and even sometimes harassments. The respondents were asked to talk freely about any kind of harassments they face in their households. 84.02% of the respondents said that there were no such cases for them. On the other hand, 6.42% were not satisfied with the behaviour of their family members and they felt they were being harassed experiencing verbal conflicts (mentioned earlier in Chapter IV).

They were further enquired about the steps they had taken for its eradication. Out of 114 respondents (facing harassment), 21% took steps for its eradication. Some of them went for negotiation with the family members, some of them changed their residence, some have stopped all kinds of transactions, some have gone elsewhere for few days etc. Two cases have been found who have filed divorce cases against their husbands.

6.4.5.6 Family Preferring Working Women as Brides: So far as the efficiency and responsibility are concerned, the respondents have scored their best. The most evitable question comes into the mind concerning about the working women’s acceptability in the present day world and precisely to the study area. So, the respondents were asked about the preference of working women as brides in their families. 95.55% of them answered in affirmation. The reason behind their choice can be summarized as “since the working women remain entrusted to earn money for the family, they are preferred for their income as brides” (a family member of the respondent answered). The rest 4.45% said that their families were reluctant to accept working women as brides because they felt that “working women would only remain concerned with earning money and would be avoiding household activities; furthermore, they would remain outside the house for long hours that would hamper the family” (another working woman submitted).
HYPOTHESIS 2: The ‘private’ and ‘public’ lives of the working women are likely to be in conflict

Majority (83.23%) of the working women engage themselves to cooking for their families; Marketing including grocery and green grocery (35.79%); cleaning & washing of clothes and utensils (61.68%); the respondents also take care of the aged persons in the family (78.28 %); they 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 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.

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.

All the above findings clearly show that the working women under study take up huge workload in addition to their profession. 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. Their relentless efforts and continuous labour to keep both the household and workplace ever functioning are really praise worthy.

Although 97.69% of the working women reported that their families have helping attitude towards them but 54.59% of the sample reported that they have received 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. 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. 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. They seem to remain unaware of the herculean task they endure. So, it revealed that the ‘private’ and ‘public’ lives of the working women are likely to be in conflict.

**6.4.6 PERCEPTION OF THE NON-WORKING WOMEN TOWARDS FAMILY:** Family is the basic social unit in every society. It has a deep connotation to each and every social being as the socialization process is initiated in itself. The working women remains detached from their families for quite some time in a day owing to their jobs while the non-working women stays at home and spends more time with her family. So, the perception of the non-working group becomes equally important for the present study.

- It is already noted that the non-working women also possess higher education and this might have helped them to understand the relevance of getting married at the right age; so they are mostly (81.67%) found to enter the married life between 19-30 years. This has a sequential impact upon the child bearing also. 62% of the non-working group has been found to get pregnant for the first time at this age (between 19-30 years). Although early marriages leading to early pregnancies are found, but the proportion is very low i.e. only 7%. Late pregnancy of ≥31 years are also found among a handful (8%). About 25% of these women are yet to enter pregnancy and are found child less during the survey.

- Contrary to the working women, 65% of the non-working women showed enough boldness to submit that they did not want further children. 30% of them answered in affirmation. While only 5% admitted that they prefer taking decision jointly on this issue. The non-workers in this respect have been found to be more decisive than that of the working women under study.

- 82% of the category of non-working women reported that they do not possess any preference for the male-child. While 10% still believed on the family lineage and preferred boys. The rest 5% did not mention their choice. The large proportion of the non-working women therefore has been found to be progressive in their thinking.
• Neo-Joint families remain popular (80%) for the non-working women of the CBM also. While 15% of the sample reside in nucleated families. Joint families seem to be disappearing with only 3% of the present category of women staying in it. 2% of the sample stays singly.

The type of the family preferred mostly (90%) by the non-working women is Nuclear family. The women have least preference (8%) for Joint Families. 2% prefers both the types. This is again an opposite reflection possessed by the non-working women with that of the working group. The employed women stayed in Neo-Joint families but longed for Joint families. While the non-working group voted for nuclear families. As such Joint Families are diminishing day by day especially at the urban sites, but the inclination towards nuclear families by the non-working group indicates that they might have been facing interference from any persons within the family and thus could not exercise their own will.

• Table 4.17 in Chapter IV displays the domestic duty performances by the family members of the non-working women. It was revealed that in cooking, marketing, cleaning and washing, caring for children they extend maximum effort. They share equal standing with that of their husbands with regard to dropping the children to schools. While the husbands mostly pays off the bills to avail different civic amenities.

The working women in all respects (except marketing) showed maximum contribution. Therefore, although employment has imparted economic autonomy to the working women but it has added extra work-load upon their shoulders. Assistance from other members of the family is seen but it is not enough to relieve the working women.

• On the issue of their household performance, the non-working women were asked that whether they felt fatigued on performing the household tasks. 25% confirmed it, 40% said in negation while the rest 35% did not mention.

• The non-working women mostly (93%) found their family members to possess helping attitude towards them even they had a non-working status. 7% of them only received non-cooperation from their family members.

• The families of the non-working women mostly (60%) expects that the housewives should do all household chores, should do all outside works, should spend all the earnings for the
family and should take care of the young, aged and sick persons. 37% of the families of this category prefers the second option i.e. the housewives should do all outside works also; the next two options have been the choice for 2% of the families for each. Thus, it may be inferred that either the women is a working or a non-working one, the family expects to do her all the works that could be done by her. So, employment is not making any difference here.

- Overwhelming co-operation (87%) as per the non-working women are received from their families. Only 13% of them opined a reversed story.

- There occurs almost no harassment (82%) in the households of the non-working women; 10% admitted that they are being harassed verbally by their family members. While 8% did not mention their choice.

- On the issue of preference for the working women as brides to the families, the non-working women said that 55% of the sample has the preference. 38% did not support the women to get employed and 7% did not mention their choice.

6.5 PERCEPTION OF THE WORKING WOMEN TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT: Men and women both have always worked through the history of human civilizations but it differed in the area, nature, location, execution, performance, tools and techniques and so on. Women’s work has always contributed to the national economy, but gender stereotyping of work might be attributed for all the confusion what so ever regarding its recognition. Singhal (2003:21) aptly stated that “Women workers play a necessary and important role in the economic structure of our country and have done so throughout its history but their efforts and accomplishments have not been recognized. They have been invisible workers.” She further recognized three types of traditionally performed economically productive work done by women after Mathur (1992). These are: (1) home based production activities having exchange value in the market; (2) home based production for family consumption and (3) paid employment outside the home. As a consequence to the Industrial Revolution, proliferation of the third category has been noticed the most especially in the Occident. The structural changes in the family and in the social frame at large liberated women (though the patriarchal pattern prevailed) to adapt the modern lifestyle, to occupy jobs and to become economically independent to some extent. The colonial rule in India
ushered in modern education and general social awakening. Women were no exception to have experienced the changes taking place in the then society predominantly in the urban areas. Gradually, people became convinced about the necessity of education and employment for the women outside the residential premises.

6.5.1 WORK DEFINED ACCORDING TO CENSUS 2011: ‘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 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 ‘A person who did not work at all in any economically productive activity during the last one year preceding the date of enumeration was treated as non worker. 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).

6.5.2 WHY DOES WOMEN SEEK WORK? The respondents were asked to state the decision for jobs and overwhelmingly 96.96% of the sample said that it was their own decision to get employed. The remaining 3.04% stated that they came into service getting encouragement either from their father, husband or mother as the cases were.

Natarajan (2013) recognizes two chief reasons for employment in her study with 400 samples of working women. She found that the Financial reasons for the job seekers revolved round some factors like Economic pressures, Other economic needs to help relatives and Attainment of a high standard of living. The Non-financial reasons behind female employment according to her findings were Personality Traits (equating themselves with the men to secure job), to occupy time and to get into the tradition of the family in a specific occupation. The Financial reasons came up with prominence in her study with 77.5% of respondents belonging to this category.

**HYPOTHESIS 1: Financial necessity is not the sole driving force behind female employment for all cases.**

The survey in the study area also included similar type of inquiry and the respondents were enquired about the reasons which forced them to go for employment. The answers have been tabulated in Table 6.12 which reveals that majority of the respondents (86.89%) went for jobs because of the financial inadequacy in their families. About 9.90% of the respondents accounted that they got into services to attain a social position, as women with financial authority is held high in the society. While 3.21% of the working women disclosed that in order to get absorbed into professions related to their family tradition and also to occupy time they had taken up jobs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Inadequacy</td>
<td>1544</td>
<td>86.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attain Social Position</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>9.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To follow Family Tradition</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Occupy Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
The ward wise representation of this in Map no. 6.11 also reveals similar findings. So, financial necessity is attributed as the chief cause behind female employment in the study area. The respondents have stepped outside for supplementing the financial needs of their families. Natrajan (2013) conducted her study in Delhi and Mumbai and findings in this respect corroborates with that of the present study area of Koch Bihar, which was thought to remain secluded being a small urban unit far off from the influence of any big city but it has portrayed all India trend in this aspect.

Therefore, from the above lain table (Table: 6.12) as well as from Map no. 6.11, it is found that though financial necessity largely contributed for the female employment; but it is not the sole reason which acted as the push factor for the same in the study area. Thus the first hypothesis of the study gets proved that **Financial necessity is not the sole driving force behind female employment for all cases.**
6.5.3 THE SCENARIO OF FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IN CBT: With the census data of 2011, the Female Workers’ Intensity Index has been prepared and represented spatially in the map of Cooch Behar Town area (Map no. 6.12). 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 ranges may be tabulated as follows (Table 6.13):

**Table: 6.13 Female Workers’ Intensity Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale of Female Workers’ Intensity</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
<th>Ward wise Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤1.5</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.51 – 2.00</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4, 6, 9, 14, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.01 – 2.50</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥2.51</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>11, 16, 18, 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Computed by the investigator on the basis of Census data of 2011
The Female Workers’ Intensity scores 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. Very low level of Female Workers’ Intensity (FWI) is found in ward no. 2. Low FWI can be seen in ward nos. 4, 6, 9, 14 and 17. While Moderate FWI is viewed in ward nos. 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 19; High FWI is noticed in ward nos. 11, 16, 18 and 20. Therefore, moderate to high FWI is observed mostly in the study area.

To quote a report on female employment some insights might be found towards the inquiry: “The phenomenon of female economic activity and women's employment in each of the segments are main issues in the economy of all developing nations. The economic activity may be classified as organized and unorganized, each of which may be in the formal or informal sector. Participation of women in economic activities in formal sectors of industries, services and agricultural sector is measurable, but activities of women in informal sectors such as house
works, training and education of children, activities in agricultural sectors and household services are still not measurable”.

(http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/statistical_publication/social_statistics/Chapter_4.pdf accessed on 29.06.2018 at 1:34 am.)

Two sectors of employment could be recognized in the study area the detail of which are discussed in Chapter IV whereby the names of organized and unorganized economic activities were used to designate the salaried and non-salaried employment respectively. The Domestic helpers, Bidi rollers, Self-employed & Part-time workers and the Sex workers are referred to as the Un-organized work force in the present study; while those who work in the Government Offices, Private Companies, Government-Aided sectors Government-undertaking organizations have been referred to as the Organized workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors of Employment in CBT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>organised 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unorganised 36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

Fig. no. 6.b

The Organized Working Women (61.11% of the respondents) outnumber the Un-organized Working Women including the not mentioned group represents 38.89% of the respondents in the study area as evident in Fig. no. 6.b. The ward wise distribution of the employment sectors in which the target group has been engaged to are discussed and displayed in Map no. 4.14 in Chapter IV. It also reveals similar findings as that of the total picture in the above figure.
6.5.4 RESPONDENTS’ EDUCATIONAL LEVEL & INCOME: Keeping pace with the emerging trend, the respondents were found to have inclination for higher education as evident in Fig no. 4.b (Chapter IV) portraying the educational level of the entire CBT area as well as in the ward wise scenario in Map no. 4.11 in Chapter IV. In both the representations, the respondents were found mostly to acquire Graduation and Post-graduation.

Turning the attention on to the monthly income of the respondents, they were sub-grouped under several categories according to their salary per month which can be seen in Table no. 4.5 of Chapter IV. The High (36.52% of the respondents having Rs. 20,001 – 50,000 INR as their monthly income) and Very High (0.73% of the respondents having ≥50,001 INR as their monthly income) Income Groups predominates the findings with 37.25% of the respondents jointly belonging to this category.

![Educational Levelwise Avg. Monthly Income of Respondents](Fig no 6.c)

Co-relating the Level of Education and the Average Monthly Income of the respondents of the study area (shown in Fig no. 6.c) it may be inferred that high income (Rupees 35,000 – 40,000 INR) is discernible among the respondents having M.Phil and Ph.D as their educational qualification. On the other hand respondents having school level education i.e. upto XIIth Standard gets average monthly income upto a little higher than Rupees 10,000 INR. Moderate average monthly income of Rupees 15,000 - 25,000 is found to be received by Graduate & Post-graduate respondents and also included those having Diploma and other educational
quaifications. Therefore, it may be summed up that higher the level of education, the higher is the income level.

6.5.5 WORK PARTICIPATION: As per the mindset in patriarchy, the primary role of women is to look after the home and family, they try to remain associated with the household chores which are ‘uneconomic’ in their character and thus yield least significance in the labour market. As a consequence, the work participation of the women in India is very low. According to Census 2011, the work participation rate at the national level for the females is 25.51% against 53.26% for the males (Shown in Table 6.14). 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. The Census figures for the state level data (i.e. for West Bengal) show a total work participation of 38.08% in 2011; whereby 18.08% has been represented by the Females and 57.07% by the Males (higher % for Males than the national level). In the rural scenario, it is 19.4% for the Females and 57.2% for the Males. Keeping parity with the trend in the urban areas at the all India level, West Bengal portrays 15.4% (exactly matching with the national figure) for the Females and 56.84% for the Males. The WPR values for the district level are also not so impressive. The total WPR for the Koch Bihar district is 40.01%, constituted by 58.24% of Male WPR and 20.70% of Female WPR. The rural areas show higher WPR among the Males (58.42%) than those in the Urban set up (56.61%); while the same for the Rural Females remains high (21.43%) as expected than that of the Urban Females (14.17%).

Table: 6.14 Comparison of Work Participation at the National, Regional and Local Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koch Bihar</td>
<td>21.43</td>
<td>58.42</td>
<td>40.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2011
Turning the attention to the CBT (the study area), relating to the number of female workers and the number of total workers of the CBT for 2011 data, the females have 20.32% share in comparison to the males who represents 78.93% (much higher than the national and the State level figures for Males). The urban females have better representation than the national, the state as well as the district level figures. The total WPR for the urban India, the urban West Bengal and that of Koch Bihar district remains appreciably low than the study area. This gives an optimistic view regarding the share of the FWPR at the study area compared to the district, the state and the national levels.

6.5.6 JOB SATISFACTION: The Table 4.4 of Chapter IV displays the employment structure along with employment status of the respondents. It is seen that mostly (41.14%) the respondents were engaged in high level of occupation with white collar jobs. So, the satisfaction level could be presumed for the respondents. Moreover, it has become clear that the respondents has taken up jobs out of financial necessity. So, job satisfaction would be an obvious outcome. The study conducted in this concern remains harmonious with the presupposition as 89.53% of the respondents submitted that they were satisfied with their jobs. Only 10.47% of the respondents told that they were dissatisfied with their jobs (the dissatisfaction revolved round the infrastructural issues mainly discussed in Chapter IV).

6.5.7 EMPLOYED WOMEN - WORK Vs FAMILY LIFE: Employment has imparted a positive implication upon the family life of the respondents in CBT area. Besides augmenting the family income, it has been able to convey a firm footing for the respondents towards decision making (79.90% of the respondents) in the family although they have to get more avenues in property and child centric matters. Thus employment has not posed hindrance to family life according to 92.91% of the respondents. 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 respondents) inspite of the pre-occupation by their jobs.
The working women of the study area reported that their families have helping attitude of according to 97.69% of them. But they are fortunate enough to have co-operation from 54.59% of the families. The most commendable endeavor which came up from the findings concern the husbands of the respondents. The husbands of the working women have shown their co-operation and a helping attitude wherever possible. They care for the respondents the most when they get ill (Map no. 6.13) and pay for the medical bills for the sick person in the family (according to 96.57% of the respondents); many of them take care of the children in the absence of the respondents (according to 60.97% of the working women) evident in Map no 6.14; some of them spend for the children’s education (54.76% of the respondents). So, the support from the husbands helps in the psychological enhancement of the working women and as a result they are found to get onto excessive work load in the family.

6.5.8 NECESSITY OF EMPLOYMENT FOR WOMEN & JOB PREFERENCE: An answer to the evitable question: Should women go for jobs? Has a positive indication towards its affirmation. 90% of the respondents overwhelmingly opined that women should go for jobs. They were further asked to state the jobs they aspire for women in general (Table 6.15). The respondents were found to prefer teaching profession the most (45.98 %), this was followed by business (22.57%), Administrative jobs (11.93%) and Miscellaneous (3.15%) activities. About 16.38% of the working women did not have any specifications regarding jobs. The scenario is quite satisfying as most of the respondents prefer Teaching, which is considered to be the most suitable and acceptable profession individually as well as socially. To women teaching in schools, colleges and universities are remunerative and also it add to their status. The respondents chose for business next to the academics which is beyond expectation for having an enterprising attitude. Business requires skill of management and propagation. Women as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred Job Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>45.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>22.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>11.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous jobs (Doctors, Banks, Office, Health workers)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Specific Preferences</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>16.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
entrepreneurs in Cooch Behar Town are limited to shops of miscellaneous items, tailoring, garment boutiques, food stalls, beauty parlours etc. Though in limited proportion, yet some of the respondents showed their willingness towards administrative jobs. Other preferred jobs included Medical profession, Banking, Official services and Health services. These demand technical knowledge as well.

6.5.9 PREFERENCE OF WORKING WOMEN AS BRIDES: The working women of the study area have been found as extremely efficient in managing the household needs and necessities as well as their professional life. They are contributing to the family income, they are taking up enormous work load and spend almost whole of their salaries for procuring resources for the family and children. It was thus expected that the respondents would have been successful in creating a positive impression for themselves in the family. Likewise, they are found to have a wide acceptance (95.55% of the sample) in the family as brides. According to them, the working women are preferred because of their financial contribution to the family. However a handful of respondents (4.45%) perceived that their families have no preference for the working women as brides even considering their financial support. Conversely, they opined that working women spends a lot of time outside the domestic premises thereby giving lesser time to the family.

6.5.10 PERCEPTION OF THE NON-WORKING WOMEN TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT: Although the non-working women do not earn, they still have some perception regarding jobs or employment. Their views were recorded during the interview which reveals some important insights.

- As per their opinion, the surveyed non-working women of the study area are found to be dissatisfied largely (83%) from being just housewives. The non-working respondents are keen to get employed in order to augment the financial condition of their family as well as to gain economic autonomy and social position.
- Almost 87% believed that the employed women have better status in the family. They also feel that the working women contribute to the family financially as well as take important decisions therein.
- 98.33% of the non-working women felt the necessity of employment while only 1.67% believed that engagement in work takes away the freedom of living and doing things independently.
- 70% of the housewives stated that women should engage themselves in jobs related to academics. In addition to this, 25% of them desired for Miscellaneous jobs (such as Medical practice, Banking, Clerical services, Health workers etc.) 5% of the non-working respondents had no specific choice of services. This reveals the affinity of the women towards teaching profession.

- Since the non-working women spend all the time within the four walls of their houses, there remains no scope to ask whether they remained distanced with their husbands and family. But some of the women admitted that they neglected their children to some extent (25% of the non-working group) owing to cope up with the domestic drudgery. The 70% of the housewives stated that they never neglected their children. 5% of them did not mention their choice.

- Though the non-working sample felt the necessity of employment very strongly as mentioned above, yet some of them (38.33% of the sample) seemed reluctant to accept the working women as brides in their family. A little more than half of the non-working women aspire for the working women in their households. 6.67% did not speak about their opinion.

**HYPOTHESIS 3: Employed women are able to attain a better standard of living and financial autonomy.**

Perception to life and living of the working and the non-working women has also been marked during the interview. The sample of the non-working 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).

The working women on the contrary, are mostly (61.11%) engaged to the 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 jobs of other 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) apart from the income of their spouses. 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.

87% of the non-working women believed that employed women enjoy better status in their family by taking financial decisions independently. 98.33% of them have opined that women should go for employment in order to attain a better living standard. So the second hypothesis of the study gets proved that **Employed women are able to attain a better standard of living and financial autonomy.**

**6.6 CONCLUSION:** The perception of the working women of the study area has been revealed in terms of Education, Marriage, Family and Employment. These four aspects outline the foundation of the life and living of the respondents.

With regard to **Education**, a proliferation of literacy (92% of the respondents) among the working women in the study area with a general trend towards attainment of higher education is found. About 99.66% of the sample conferred about the significance of education. 45% of the respondents admitted that it gave a new impetus to their lives. 30% of the working women under study admitted that education has given freedom and enhanced their ability for decision making. 25% of the respondents said that education has enabled them to get social position and helped them to imbibe traditional values as well. 90.21% of the respondents opined that women should go for higher education.

Only 9.79% of them held a difference in opinion about this in that they said that higher education sometimes pose hindrance to marriage; as highly educated women have been found reluctant to marry persons with low educational qualification. This remains true to some extent for the present study since the incidence of unmarried matured and aged working women (12.28% of the sample) representing 42.61% and 32.99% respectively of the total unmarried sample under consideration (i.e. out of 291 respondents) are found with higher education and technical knowledge. A few respondents remarked that highly educated women do not adhere to household works which is absolutely incorrect as per the findings of the present study.

**Marriage** is a significant indicator for the present study as well as for all studies related to women because life experiences changes with time and life-cycle events. Marriage for women is one of the most important life-cycle events especially in the context of Indian society as: it is indicative of women’s mobility from parental abode to spouse’s house; it relates to the change in
the control of women’s life from parents to spouses and in-laws; it confers social and material status to women.

Most of the respondents in the sample (75.63%) are married (which includes married and widowed categories) representing stability in their lives and kin relations (refer to table no. 4.2 of Chapter IV). 65.96% of the respondents got married between 19-30 years (Table 6.3), which may be regarded as the optimum age of marriage. Maturity in age enables one to take up right decisions in their lives and by virtue of which the respondents are expected to strike a balance between home and office. The incidence of maximum number of respondents in the referred age group also indicate occurrence of economically active population at the same time. The present study also attempted to work out a relationship (Fig. 6.1) between the literacy and average age of marriage; which resulted into a positive finding with regard to both the indicators. This again confirms the earlier studies in urban areas that the woman finishes off with their education and then only enters into family life. Education of the respondents has helped them to imbibe ethical values and to break away the futile social practices also. About 85.03% of the respondents voiced against dowry.

Most of the respondents (72.36%) have undergone arranged marriage while 27.64% of the sample experienced marriage by own selection. As it has been found that the respondents enters family life at matured age after getting educated, it was expected that the working women would have experienced marriages by own selection or they would have a strong preference for it. On the contrary, marriages by negotiation are preferred the most by majority (53.91%) of the working women of CBM; but with changed characteristics from that of the traditional arranged marriages. The working women preferred to meet the ‘would- be groom’ in order to build an idea of the likings, disliking and compatibility before marriage. The study thus unveiled the changing pattern of marriages.

In connection with the present study, **Family** of the working women is of tremendous significance as the women sets out for work outside to support the family’s financial necessities. Moreover, all the members have their specific roles in the family and they also enjoy a position within it. Generally speaking, it is seen that working women have better status in their families in comparison to the non-working women and that the former ones enjoy financial autonomy and command over resources. The type of the family matters the most, especially when the status and
freedom of the daughter-in-laws are concerned. The prevalence of nucleated families is more than the traditional joint families in urban areas of our country. The working women enjoy more freedom and autonomy regarding financial matters in these families. The nuclear families have also experienced change in their composition presently. The study area is no exception to the popularity and proliferation of the neo-joint families. The composition of which includes husband, wife, their unmarried children and any one relative who has his/her family elsewhere but stays with this family for providing assistance to the working women. 62.97% of the sample resides in the Neo-joint families in the CBM, but the respondents (59%) prefer joint families to stay within.

Looking on to the procreating role of the families of the study area, it has been found that 98.14% of the respondents are aware of family planning. It might be because of education, the respondents have developed matured decision making ability so that 61% of them entered into first pregnancy between 19 – 30 years. Incidence of late pregnancy and delayed pregnancy are also seen here. It is the effect of the delayed marriages that have occurred in the study area. 62.46% of the respondents do not possess any preference for a boy child as the heir of the family.

The respondents have opined that their families have a helpful attitude towards working women in general (96.45%) and the respondents in particular (97.69%). But the household works listed in Table 6.9 show that the respondents have a tough life in doing the household chores. Most of the working women does all the domestic works and might have raised the expectation of the families from they expect the working women to do all the chores, to spent all the income for family needs, to look after the children properly. Employment might have emancipated the working women of CBM, but the respondents work exhaustively at their households. This might led to develop a preference for Joint families in the view of getting assistance in household activities. The respondents also reported that 95.55% of their families prefer working women as brides for their earning. Most importantly, the respondents are fortunate to have co-operative husbands whose role and activities complements that of their betterhalves.

Perception of the working women towards Employment is very important for the present study. The reason for getting into employment for the respondents like every other study on women’s work might be attributed largely (86.89%) to financial necessity. The working women are mostly (61.11%) found engaged to salaried jobs. The level of education has a positive influence on the
average monthly income of the respondents. Respondents with high educational qualification have high average monthly income. 89. 53% of the respondents are satisfied with their jobs while the rest complained about the infrastructural issues mainly.

To 92.91% of the working women, employment has not posed hindrance to their family life. 93.30% of the working women did not felt that they are distanced from their husbands. 88.31% of the respondents remain concerned with child rearing and related matters. Moreover, 90% of them are of opinion that women should go for jobs. The preference list of jobs begins with that of teaching (45.98% of respondents), it is followed by business (22.57%), then administrative jobs (11.93%) and miscellaneous jobs (3.15%).

Therefore, it may be concluded that the working women of the study area has a pragmatic vision to life and living.

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CHAPTER VII:

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
7.1 SUMMARY: Women constitutes almost one-half portion of the total population of our country but their presence, relevance, well being, needs and necessities have been somewhat undermined so far. Apart from the Vedic Era, no historical references could be found where women were held high in the society in our country. The position of the women became derogatory in the medieval period. The Custom of ‘Sati’, forced celibacy of the widows, slavery and slave trade among women, seclusion of women, child marriage, dowry, female infanticide etc. were some of the social practices which affected the women most during the 18th Century. Girls were given scant attention regarding education during this period. Only the wealthier section rarely allowed their daughters to attain the reading and writing skills. Matrilineality in traces was found in certain areas of Kerala and Malabar region in the south and also among the Garos and Khasis of Meghalaya in the North East.

The colonial rulers initially focused their attention to trade. Then they introduced modern education aided by the Christian Missionaries and a large number of enlightened Indians. Modern schools, colleges and hospitals were established in the country thereafter. There was a total neglect of women’s education in early education policy of the British India. The reason behind this might be that the Government probably did not want to hurt the orthodoxy of the Indians regarding female education and also because of the fact that they could not be employed as clerks in the Government jobs. Nevertheless, the relentless efforts of the social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, William Bentinck, David Hare, Alexander Duff, Dwarkanath Tagore, Henry Vivian Derozio, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Akshay Kumar Dutta and many more voiced for women’s rights and their freedom in the society in Bengal. Bal Shastri Jambekar, Jotiba Phule, Vishnu Shastri Pundit, Jagannath Sarkar Seth, Bhau Daji, Karsondas Mulji, Dadabhai Naoraji and others deserve special mention for favouring women’s status and uniform laws of inheritance and marriage in the society. The significance of the 19th Century reformers lay not in their numbers but in the fact that they were the trend setters with a vision of making a new India.
By the turn of the century, the Nationalist Movement was kindled and a number of middle class women became educated (though their position did not improve). Education was unable to show its emancipatory role as women still remained confined to the four walls proving themselves as appropriate housewives and better mothers. Women were marginalized and gradually they lost their autonomy. In the early 20th Century, migration from rural to urban areas prevailed all over the country. Males migrated to the cities in search of industrial employment. Their families remained at home. When the resources failed to support them, the females either migrated in utmost poverty or they took up jobs in the cotton and jute mills, in tea plantations and even in coal mines. In the service sector also their domestic role had been figured as most vital – their work was considered as ‘supplementary’ to the family income and less important. This had a reflection in the wage rate and they were paid less than their counterparts. Meanwhile, the National Movement geared its momentum and it embraced women also. The women too actively participated in the freedom struggle. Slowly, it gave rise to organizations looking after the various needs and necessities of women especially in the urban areas. But during the Partition, worst moment for the sub-continental womanhood was brought in. Women both Hindus and Muslims entered into the ‘continuum of violence’, where they were ruthlessly raped, mutilated and humiliated by men of ‘Other’ community. The stigmatized women either committed suicide or lived with a permanent scar in their mind. So, the Colonial Rule also failed to bring honour and justice to the women in the Indian society in general. Although some of them got into professions like Medicine, Law, Education etc. yet the rest of the womanhood still remain in the ‘vicious cycle’.

After independence, women’s education was given due attention. Literacy was stressed upon. The necessity of elementary education was felt. Elementary education helps women both in the rural and the urban set ups as it facilitates daily living by enabling the housewives to read newspapers, signboards, prices mentioned in packets of consumer goods such as soaps, salt, oil etc; also helps the day-to-day monetary exchange. The literacy scenario improved gradually. At the beginning in 1951, female literacy was 8.86% only which almost doubled (15.35%) during the next census year i.e. 1961. During 1991, the total literacy crossed 50% limit while by the turn of the century i.e. in 2001 the female literacy figure reached 53.67%. In 2011 Census, the figure rose to 65.46% at the national level.
In West Bengal as a whole, progress through years has been discernible from the figures. Just after the independence in 1951, the total literacy of the state recorded to 25% whereby the female literacy remained about 13.2%; turning to the urban areas, which were exposed to modernization and urbanization processes showed high literacy figures 45.7% for total and 37.1% for the urban females. At the district level Koch Bihar had recorded appreciably low literacy figures of 17.1% for the total population and only 6.1% for the females (in Table 3.3 of Chapter III) in 1951; but the urban areas had higher literacy rates i.e. 61.2% for the total population and 57.6% for the urban females. The total literacy at the state level took as long as 40 long years to reach about a little more than 50% (i.e. 57.7%); while the female literacy for the state reached to 59.6% in 2001. Women literacy condition particularly for the urbanites reached 50% level within 1961. It escalated to 81% as of now (2011). The literacy condition for Koch Bihar also showed progress through time. Between 1991 and 2001, the total literacy crossed the 50% mark and reached from 45.8% in 1991 to 66.3% in 2001. Finally it reached to 73.2% in 2001. Female literacy among the urbanites have remained consistently high than the total female literacy level throughout. At the initial stage i.e. in 1951, it was about 57.6%. The figure leaped from 68.5% in 2001 to 85.5% in 2011. Thus, keeping pace with time literacy condition showed progress. The district level figure of 2011 does not remain far behind that of the 2011 figure at the state level. The total literacy figures at the National, State and the Regional level almost remain incongruent to one another.

Women’s movement in Post-independence period has remained random in character. They were seen in the participation of the movements such as the Tebhaga Movement in Bengal, the Telengana Movement in Andhra Pradesh or the Naxalite Movement. ‘Sahada’ was a tribal landless labourers’ movement against landlords (area in Dhulia of Maharashtra) which also saw active participation of women. Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) at the initiative of Ela Bhat in 1972 in Ahmadabad was the first attempt for a women’s trade union, saw a remarkable success. The Anti Price Rise in 1973 – an agitation launched by Mrinal Gore and Ahalya Rangnekar in Bombay mobilized several women of the city against inflation. The Nav Nirmaan Movement in Gujarat against soaring prices, black marketing and corruption in 1974 involved thousands of middle class women. Their methods of protest ranged from mass hunger strike, mock funerals and prabhat pheris. The Chipko Movement to save the trees by clinging on to it began in 1973 (in Gopeshwar in Chamoli district) and took a shape of a movement in 1974. The united strength prevented the contractor from cutting the trees. It was the women of the
Chipko movement who brought public attention towards the importance of the trees and environmental protection. Meanwhile the UN declared 1975 as the International Year of Women beginning with the First World Conference on Women in Mexico. It granted new interest in women issues.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the growth of numerous women’s groups that took up social issues such as dowry deaths, bride burning, rape, Sati and violence against women. The stress was given on sexual oppression against women which was not yet been addressed so far. It further questioned on patriarchal control over women, humiliation and torture to them and the role of women in family and society at large. The autonomous organizations like Progressive Organization of Women (POW, Hyderabad), the Forum Against Rape (now defined as Forum Against Oppression of Women), Stree Sangharsh Samata (Delhi) etc. came up. In 1987, the ‘Roop Kanwar Case’ shocked the nation. Wherein Roop Kanwar, a young widow of Rajasthan, was forcibly put on the funeral pyre of her husband and was burnt to death. Women’s organizations demanded a new Sati Prevention Bill after this incident. Another case is worth mentioning that of a divorce in favour of a Muslim woman named Shah Bano (in 1985) who petitioned in the Supreme Court; the Government introduced the Muslim Women’s Bill (Protection of Rights in Divorce) in response to this.

The Indian Association of Women’s Studies established in 1981 is an institution of women academics and activists involved in research and teaching. The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up in 31st January 1992 to look into the women related issues, to investigate the status of women, to learn about the different legislations and point out the lacunae, to look into the causes of discrimination and violence against women and analyze the possible remedies. A number of Colleges and Universities now have Women’s Study Centres. A new women’s group declared themselves as the Feminists have formed informal network to raise voice against the anomalies in the social arena. Women in India are still backward even today in terms of literacy, longevity, maternal mortality, female work participation and sex ratio.

It has been observed that the trio of Globalization, Urbanization and Liberalization has a remarkable influence in the field of paid employment of women outside the household premises. Women are seen to have engaged themselves in gainful employment involving variegated professions. In the rural sector, women help their husbands in the fields and get occupied in the
household activities. They also get into household/handicraft industry. While, in the urban areas their participation remains limited mainly to the tertiary activities. This may be accounted for the fact that women’s work has always thought to be ‘supplementary’ to their husband’s income. Even the educated women were disallowed from taking up jobs outside the family setting. After industrialization and modernization have crept in, new invention in the household devices have reduced the work load and the educated housewives have found some scope to take up gainful employment. Moreover, they can now afford to employ domestic help to do the daily chores of cleaning, washing etc. Furthermore, parents have become more ambitious of giving better education to their children in order to raise the standard of living. Thus, in urban areas, now-a-days majority of women are seen trying to get gainful employment immediately after completion of their education. After independence with the aid of modern education, industrialization, science and technology revolutionized the occupational structure. ‘Equal work and equal pay’ have been stressed. A large number of educated women have been seen taking up white collar jobs. The earlier trend during 1960s showed popularity of administrative, executive and managerial jobs. By 1970s, women were found concentrating in the fields of medical, teaching and clerical services.

In a predominantly agricultural country like India, women play a distinctive role in economic activities especially in the rural sectors in earning a livelihood for the family. Although the concept of working women is a recent phenomenon in the country, yet a rise in the proportion of working force among the women is the current trend. In 2011, though the Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR) i.e. 25.51% depicted a more or less overall increase over time, yet it is far less than the Male WPR (53.3%). The total workers constituted 25.51% of the female population comprising of 30.01% in the rural areas and 15.44% in the urban areas. In the first census recorded data of 1951, the FWPR showed a figure of 23.43%. A decline in the FWPR in 1971 (12.11%) from 1961 (27.96%) figures has been observed. To some it was due to the exclusion of the housewives from the house hold industries or primary activities. However, one reasonable explanation to this might be attributed to the technological changes, the use of HYV technology, the use of mechanical devices which might have released the marginal workers (i.e. women, children, elderly men) from agriculture and thus female workers might have devoted more time to their household activities, child rearing etc.
In the urban sector, the proportion of the female workers was generally low from the beginning (06.68% in 1971) when compared to the rural sector (13.42% in 1971) as well as that of the male WPRs (53.62% in the rural and 48.82% in the urban sectors) in the same time period. Nevertheless, a gradual increase is discernible till date. Discrepancy in the MWPR and the FWPR remains in the present scenario also.

Another trend is revealed following 2001 and 2011 data. The urban FWPR has shown an increase from 11.88% in 2001 to 15.44% in 2011, while the FWPR for the rural areas declined from 2001 (30.79%) to 2011 (30.02%). Thus, a shift in the occupational structure from the primary to tertiary activities is discernible. However, the total number of female workers has remained almost same overtime (i.e. 25.63% in 2001 to 25.51% in 2011).

The table 3.5 and 3.6 of Chapter III displays the proportion of the Workers of West Bengal and that of Koch Bihar district respectively by their sex and their place of residences from 1951 to 2011 censuses. The workers at the state level have increased overtime but the change is not remarkable as it has increased from 34.68% in 1951 to 38.08% in 2011. An increase in the proportion of the male workers has also been viewed with the progress of time. A striking fluctuation for the proportion of the female workers has been observed during the whole period under consideration. With a figure of 11.29% of the female workers at the initial phase (1951) a gradual decline is observed through 1961 (9.43%) and 1971(4.43%) data. Then again it was seen to rise to 8.07% in 1981 and to 11.25% in 1991 finally reaching upto 18.08% in 2011. The urban female workers have depicted a very slow rate of progression. According to the expectation, they have remained far behind the workers of the rural areas considering both males and females. The proportion increased from 3.93% in 1971 to 15.4% in 2011. A notable change is worthy to mention while analyzing the above data especially concerning the rural and urban female workers for 2001 and 2011. This period has witnessed a rising trend for the urban female (11.33% in 2001 to 15.4% in 2011) workers with a simultaneous decline in the rural female working population (20.86% in 2001 to 19.4% in 2011). The shift of female working population from rural to urban is indicative of the increasing scope for service sector in the urban environment.

At the district level, an increasing trend of working population is discernible from the data in the adjacent table (Table: 3.6). The total workers during 1951 (29.6%) pertaining to the district of
Koch Bihar steadily increased to 40.01% in 2011. With regard to female workers it has corroborated with that of the state level trend. A fluctuating trend is noticeable from 5.2% 1951 to 3.7% in 1961 and 1.69% in 1971. A rising trend followed next with 4.32% in 1981 upto 20.70% in 2011. Female urban workers of Koch Bihar district has also increased considerably from 4.62% in 1971 to 14.17% in 2011. But it remains low when compared to the rural female workers as well as the male working force at the rural and urban areas. Following the state level tendency, it is seen that the female workers at the rural areas have dropped from 23.28% in 2001 to 21.43% in 2011; this again portrays greater scope of female employment in the service sectors currently.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS OF THE STUDY: In finding out the status of the working women residing within the study area four broad aspects (such as education, marriage, family and employment) were taken up surrounding which the life and living of the respondents revolve. The analysis of the field data on the various aspects may lead to the structuring of the present study into several findings. These findings act as factors that have great bearing towards the focal point of this study.

- Maximum of the female work force in CBT is generated from Very low (35.68%), Low (7.99%) and Moderate (19.08%) income groups contributing to 62.75% of the sample. This proves that the respondents belonging to Very low, Low and Moderate income groups have more aspiration to get employed to alter their socio-economic status.

- Educational qualification of the respondents has a general trend towards attainment of higher level. In other words, about 51% of the respondents are found to be Graduates and Post-Graduates.

- The proportion of the working women in the organized or salaried section is high in the study area. It represents 61.11% of the total sample. Moreover, they have been observed mostly (41.14%) to get employed into high-status jobs compared to that of their husbands (34.55%). While the respondents are mostly found engaged to white collar jobs, the proportion of the working women in jobs related to decision making remains low. The study shows that the working women are least (1.46%) engaged to jobs related to
decision making. This certifies the patriarchal control over decision making and policy making in the social structure of the study area.

- **Gender stereo-typing** in occupation is found present in the current study. The respondents adhere in large numbers for occupations like school teaching (primary, secondary and high schools), health services (nurses in hospitals and nursing homes), anganwari workers and domestic help. In contrast to this, the husbands of the respondents are largely self-employed, Clerks and workers to miscellaneous jobs.

- Most of the working women (65.96% of the sample) of the study area enter into married-life at their optimum age i.e. between 19 to 30 years. Occurrence of early marriages is low (24.31%) though not uncommon. The regression analysis between literacy level and marriage age done in Chapter VI (Fig. 6.1) shows a positive co-relation and indicates that more the literates the higher will be the age of marriage. This may also indicate that after attainment of certain level of education (High school level at least) and employment, the respondents go for marriage. Late marriages are also seen in the study area (among 4.95% of respondents).

- Delay in marriage would lead to lowering of per capita child bearing and fewer children. In this present study, it is found that 39.28% of the respondents have single child; 21.50% have 2 children, 4.73% of them have 3 children; 1.01% of the working women have 4 children and 0.28% of them have ≥5 children. Some respondents (19.70%) did not have any children and about 9.74% of the respondents did not responded to the query. Prevalence of single child to the respondents indicates low birth rate of the study area. The per capita child bearing comes to 1 for the study area on the basis of the surveyed data. This confirms the earlier mentioned remark of ‘delayed marriage and fewer children’.

- Some of the working women (220 in number representing 12.38% of the respondents under study) with high educational qualifications remain unmarried. This might also reflect that probably they have not found a proper match for them and prefers staying single.
• It was expected following the popular belief that the study area would show the dominance of Nuclear Families like other urban areas of our country. But actually the respondents of the CBT have been largely found to reside in Neo-joint families (62.97%) rather than Joint families (17.22%) and Nuclear families (12.83%) displayed in Table 6.8 of Chapter VI.

Since it is a fact that women have more liberty and autonomy in nucleated families, the working women of the study area would go for it when asked about the preference; but it came up from the survey that they long for Joint families as they prefer them the most (59% of the respondents). The working women believed in the utility and benefits of the Joint Families especially for keeping an eye on the children and the assistance from the family members in daily household works.

• In the patriarchal social structure of our country, the husband-wife relationship has been viewed as that of superiority and inferiority. Employment to women has added new dimension to their marital life since both work outside to fetch economic fluency for the family. It was assumed before the study being conducted in CBT that the working women would be unable to maintain family life with proper care towards their children and catering to the needs and necessities of their husbands; but it resulted in negation of the presumption. The working women remarked that their employment did not pose hindrance to their family life (according to 93% of the respondents). About 93.30% of the respondents said that they have good and usual relation with their husbands.

The present findings greatly differ from a similar type of study performed by Dr. Astige (2006: 220) in the city of Gulbarga in Maharashtra, where she had found that employment has posed hindrance to family life of most of the working women there. The husbands had a complaining attitude towards their wives with regard to the needs and necessities of the family.

7.3 THE LEVEL OF EMPOWERMENT OF THE RESPONDENTS: Empowerment according to the Merriam-Webster’s dictionary is ‘the act or action of empowering someone or something: the granting of the power, right, or authority to perform various acts or duties’ (www.merriam-webster.com). The Oxford Dictionary meaning for empowerment is
the ‘authority or power given to someone to do something’. It is further explained as ‘the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights’ (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com). The historical antecedence of our country has depicted a patriarchal control over the society by which women have been accorded with a derogatory status (as already discussed in Chapter III). Therefore, women’s empowerment in general and particularly for our country has become relevant in the recent years.

Women’s empowerment may be viewed from three aspects, such as: Economic, Political and Social. Women's economic empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their rights; to control and benefit from the resources, assets, income as well as the ability to manage risks and improve their economic status and well being (https://en.wikipedia.org). Political empowerment relates to the policies that supports gender equality and activities of women both in the public and private arenas. Social empowerment to women means the process of generating a sense of autonomy and confidence among them so that they can individually as well as collectively redefine the social relationships which out casted them on the issue of being deficient in some sense.

7.3.1 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: The employment scenario of the respondents is quite satisfactory as far as the survey results are concerned. Chapter IV has already put forward the occupational structure of the respondents of the study area in detail, wherein most of the working women are found associated with salaried (organized) occupation (61.11%); majority of them are engaged to white collar services (41.14%); more than half of the working women are permanent job holders (56.73%); about 36.52% of the working women belong to the high income family group having monthly income of Rupees 20,001 – 50,000.

Though the initial contemplation reflects positive vibes with regard to employment of the respondents, the spending habits when scanned reflects the economic status of the same (explained in Chapter IV). Majority of the respondents (90.88%) have said that they are free to spend their own income at their will. So, one may infer that employment has given freedom to a greater extent to the respondents in the study area. But actually, 97.41% of the respondents reported that the lion share of their expenses is centres round the procurement of their household articles or those related to their family (also represented in Map no. 4.29). These included clothes, food stuffs, domestic appliances, healthcare for the household members, gift items for
relatives and friends etc. an inconsequential proportion i.e. 2.59% of the working women spends on her personal clothing, jewellery, saving schemes, home loans, children’s education, savings for the children, medicines for own self and the like. It is clear from the above findings that the working women shoulder a heavy share to the family requirements. Thus, although they opine that they feel free to spend on whatever they wanted, but in reality they expend on the household requirements. This might be referred to as a form of disguised patriarchy and far from emancipation. They take part in the family decision making to a great extent (79.90%) in general, in matters related to buying of real estate (30.48%) and admitting children to schools (92.74%); they also contribute to the festive shopping almost equally (48.51%) with their counterparts. Although it was found in Table: 4.18 of Chapter IV, that majority of the respondents are engaged to white collar jobs, professionally their scope of making decisions remain restricted. Considering the occupancy of the respondents in professions related to decision making, it is found in almost a negligible proportion. In other words, only 1.46% of the sample is either Advocates & Judges, Financial advisors, W.B.C.S. Officers, Principals and Head Mistresses or Councilors in Municipality etc.

An important observation in this regard deserve special mention is the use of mobile phones by the respondents. About 98% of the working women under study possess cellular phones. This must be kept in mind that buying a cellular phone is not so important; rather maintenance of it matters a lot. Working women of almost of all economic strata has mobile phones of their own and they spend some amount of money for running them. This is definitely a step which has taken them to the path of emancipation. Moreover, the self help groups like the Bandhan (now has been transformed a Bank), DRVSK, BITAN and some NGOs like LANDESA, CINI etc. look after the interests of the urban poor women. The government has initiated micro-crediting to the urban poor women under Swarna Jayanti Sahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) which ended in March 31st, 2014 and National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) which was launched in April 1, 2014 and is still continuing. Microcredit has enabled the poor and asset less women to use modern gadgets and it has also trained them to handle finance with proficiency. The concept of SHGs has also successfully aroused the feeling of group solidarity and unity amongst the poor women which gives strength to combat the problems associated with their living.

7.3.2 SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT: Social empowerment of the residents of the Cooch Behar Town area especially with regard to women may be traced back to the times of the Princely
State. The ladies of the royal family were upright in their times, with great literary skills and knowledge. They intermingled with the outer world and developed the art of living with dignity. The arrival of Sunity Devi as the queen of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan brought a change not only to the royal household but also to the society at large. Education of the girls was encouraged and many developmental activities took place in the social scenario. These initial steps set forth the target of social progress in the urban environs of Koch Bihar.

The Social Empowerment of the working women may be adjudged currently by some statistics resulting from the primary survey and may be highlighted through some case studies. It has already been stated that though the working women under study said that they spend money at their will but actually it has been found that they expended over procurement of household articles mostly. Their own needs and necessities remain unaddressed. Reduction in the fund allocation for meeting their own necessity is noticed (as 55% of the respondents spent less than 20% of their income on their personal needs). So, the freedom of the working women in expending at their whims is far from reality.

They remain involved mostly in shopping related decisions only (48.52% of the respondents contribute in festive shopping; 96.90% of them spend wholly on consumer goods). While a smaller proportion (30.48%) of the working women have been found to get themselves involved in the purchase of real estate. Thus, the working women get modest involvement in important decision making in the family. But the respondents have showed more decisive role in the question of family planning and child bearing, which is a very important indicator in determining their status.

Apart from doing the office work outside the premises of the household, the working women takes up a heavy work load on their shoulders. They cook (83.23% of the respondents) for their family; does marketing (55.82% of the respondents); they clean the utensils and wash clothes (61.68% of the respondents); they do care for the aged persons in the family (78.28% of the respondents); take care of the children (69.11% of the respondents); drop children to schools (57.46% of the respondents) and pay the electric, telephone etc. bills (67.98% of the respondents). Although majority of the working women toil heavily for their families, yet their husbands are found in a helping attitude towards them. Although the attitude of the family members towards them remains helping (as per 97.69% of the sample), yet actual receipt of co-
operation is far from expectation (54.69% of the respondents). So, the social status of the working women has not improved much especially with the evident patriarchal control.

Considering some parameters such as 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 level of Social Status of the working women under study have been found out; it is found that the working women residing in ward nos. 5, 10, 14, 18 and 19 enjoy High Social Status having the Composite Index Score 11.01 – 15.49. Moderate Social Status working women resides in ward nos. 1, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17. The Composite Index Score for these wards vary within 7.01-11.00. The last category has been accorded with Low Social Status with Composite Index Score value of 3.35 – 7.00. The ward nos. of 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 20 falls in this category. This is spatially exhibited in Map no. 4.38 in Chapter IV.

7.3.3 POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT: All of the respondents enjoy their voting rights. They cast their vote regularly. An impressive picture may be revealed while viewing the representation of the women councilors in the CBM. There are 10 women councilors (in ward nos 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 17 and 20) out of 20 wards. So, 50% of the wards having women councilors chosen by the electoral process who are looking after the needs and necessities of the residents are quite remarkable. Moreover, some women are also found to take active participation in community clubs which have been associated with generating social awareness programmes and campaigning activities like organizing blood donation camps, collection of relief (in case of any natural catastrophe), campaigning for plastic free environment, free vaccination for Japanese Encephalitis and Malaria in association with the M.J.N. Hospital (District Government Hospital), waste disposal within the CBM area, combating open defecation in the town area and so on.

7.3.4 FEW CASE STUDIES EXPLAINING THE PREVALENT SITUATION: The socio-economic status of the respondents varies throughout the study area. While going through the entire field area, interacting with so many working women of diverse occupation and differing age groups some experiences needs to be put up for the proper understanding of the inquiry and also to find out the actual standing of the working women of CBT. These experiences are narrated in the form of the following Case Studies:
Case Study#1: The respondents along the embankment popularly known as the ‘Bandher Paar’ occupy portions of ward nos 1, 19, 18, 15, 16 reside in deplorable conditions especially during the rains. A respondent named Tumpa Paul (34 years) admitted that during the rainy season, the embankment area becomes very unfit for living. The water level of the Torsa River increases and since they do not have proper sewerage system, it becomes difficult for them to stay in their households even. The Mantu Dasgupta Pally Bandher Paar Area does not belong to the Municipality area strictly, but hundreds of people reside this narrow strip. Of late, a metalled road has been made on this embankment itself connecting the NH 31 to Harinchohra near Ghughumari towards Dinhata which facilitates the transport of commodities without their entrance to the CBM area aggravating the traffic congestion. The building of this road thus helped the people’s access on one hand and an improved livability condition on the other.

Case Study#2: Mamoni Barman a 24 year woman working as a domestic help resides along side of the embankment of ward no 19 said that she wanted to continue her education and get herself employed in service but poverty has compelled her to get married at an early age to relieve her parents. After marriage also situation has hardly changed for her, as her husband is a rickshawPuller and most of the day remains intoxicated contributing almost nothing to feed two children and his widowed mother along with himself and Mamoni. So, she has to go for domestic services and work as a maid.

Case Study# 3: Prathama Roy, a veteran government college teacher residing in ward no.14, said that she took the profession as it was a bare financial necessity initially. Later on, with time she has gained financial stability. She recollected her childhood memories as her mother was a housewife and her father was the sole earner in the family. Her mother could not afford to spend at her wishes. Comparing herself with her mother, Smt. Roy told that her employment has facilitated her to build a financial support for herself. She can take important decisions in her family and has complete financial autonomy. She further opined that women not engaged in jobs develop a tendency to get involved in familial politics and tussles which is not at all desirable as it affects the environment of the family. ‘Employment has a broader perspective especially to the women and every woman should get employed’ she says strongly.

Case Study# 4: The ‘Harijan Mohalla’ is located along a path delineating ward nos 8 and 20. About 100 women workers have been found who work as sweepers mostly in the hospitals, nursing homes, private chambers of the doctors, pathological clinics, Municipalities and offices.
Some of them are permanent workers while most of them are temporary and contractual. Permanent job holders have salary ranging from 10,000/- to 15,000/- rupees on monthly basis. The temporary workers work at much lower wage rate (800/- to 2000/- rupees per month). About 25% of the working women are literate. A primary school is located nearby but students hardly go there. The reason behind their reluctance for this may be attributed by the fact that the women section of this area is largely illiterate, so the youngsters do not get motivation for learning and securing better jobs. The social environment is not at all satisfactory according to some of the respondents. There are several clubs and organizations which in the name of looking after the social health actually create terror, squeezes out money but remain silent in the hours of necessity. When a person dies, they become active to take over the deceased service but does nothing for the family.

Their occupation is hereditary and they recollected that they have settled in this area quite a long time back. All of the residents of the Harijan Mohalla are not the autochthons. They have come from Bihar, Assam, Darjeeling and the rest are from Koch Bihar. The Maharajas of Koch Bihar gave them land and they settled here since then. Presently, they do not hold separate patta for their plots under the CBM. The Municipality has announced for apartment system for them so as to improve the environmental quality; moreover, the banks have also shown their willingness to provide loans to them, but they are reluctant to submit their lands to promoters since they fear of losing it.

Dowry is in full swing during marriages in this area. The families lack interest for education and it has a detrimental effect on the social environment. The youngsters largely do not go to schools, they take up drinking, gambling and other mal practices from a very early age; they get into marriages at tender age and girls become mother of children consequently. Shortly after marriage and child birth, they get separated from their husbands and return back to their parent’s house. On the other way round, the daughters-in-law also have tough experiences. They become the victims of domestic violence. They endure physical and mental torture by the husbands and the in-laws. If working, the women are not allowed to spend their money to meet their own necessity. The husbands forcefully take up the money and spend on liquor and gambling.

At work places even they face problems related to unequal wages (compared to the men of their community), physical harassment and forceful sexual relationship. So, the women at the Harijan
Mohalla are not at all living in a healthy environment. It hardly matters a woman to be working or not, the experience of women of this area is distressing and painful.

Case Study# 5: A beautician named Tanushree Das Saha aged 31 years residing in ward no 15 narrated about her struggle and achievement. She got married at about 18 years of age and her’s was marriage by own selection. At first both the guardians of the bride and groom did not accepted their marriage and they had to live separately. As of then she was only of 18 years and had no experience as a home maker. She struggled a lot since her husband was also inexperienced and could hardly earn. Her husband put an end to his own formal education and encouraged Tanushree’s education. Gradually she passed the thresholds of College and University. She did diploma in beautician course from ‘Cooch Behar Polytechnic’. Now, she has established her own beauty salon at her residence. They had built their own house. Their only daughter is being sent to a reputed school. She delivers lecture on ‘Beautician Course’ at ‘Cooch Behar Polytechnic’. But this was not an end to her struggles. Her husband recently developed mental problem and owing to which his memory has become blurred. Initially she had a heart break. But now with strong determination she has started medical treatment for her husband.

Tanushree’s story is of very significant one as her strong determination is being reflected throughout her endeavour. Education has helped her to develop a strong foundation to her career. Her success in the outer world has been the constant source of strength to fight every inconvenience. The picture of emancipation is evident from the life experience of Tanushree.

Case Study# 6: At the western part of the junction of Kameshwari Road and Pran Narayan Road separating Ward Nos. 5 and 6 of CBM, lies the Kalabagan Area settled by the sex-workers. More than 450 women stay here who have taken up the profession of sex-working. Many of them have migrated to this area from places like Bihar, Assam, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar and Darjeeling. Keeping parity with the Royal heritage of Koch Bihar, this place has historical antecedence too. This area was delineated and given to the sex-workers during the rule of the Maharajas of Koch Bihar. At that time very few women got into this business. A couple of big ‘Kothas’ was there which used to hold the ‘Mujras’. The palace horses and elephants used to take rest along a big tank situated in this area. Gradually things got changed; people became dissociated with the cultural aspect (music and dance etc.) involved in this profession. More women got into this occupation as it became highly remunerative. There was a time when the civil customers were
restricted from entering this area by the military men. Later, this area was freed from their control.

The concept of sex-working has also undergone metamorphosis through time. About 90% of the women got involved into this profession out of poverty. Many of them have their families outside this place. They have come here only to earn financial support to their families. Normally they begin their profession at about 20 years of age and continue upto 36 years. An aspiring woman usually seeks for a room to start the business in this area. After a preliminary enquiry when the brothel owner gets convinced about the financial necessity of the aspirant, she is allowed to start the business in a rented room. Rents for room vary from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 2000/- on per month basis. Availability of the amenities is justified by the cost. The peak season for business according to them starts from end of September and continues till May, during which their income shoots upto Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 1500/- per day. Otherwise, their income remains limited to Rs. 500/- and Rs. 600/- per day during the rest of the year. They do not even get a single customer in a day during the lean period. There persists an economic classification among the sex workers too. The well to do women having higher rate of income, reside in better houses and enjoy higher standard of living than those having low income who cannot afford a comfortable living. These women receive a variety of customers also. Most of them are flying clients belonging to professions like truck driving, masonry, military forces etc. The ‘Babu-System’ or fixed customer system is also seen here. Some of the clients (referred to as the ‘Babus’) regularly visit their fixed women. By the late 40s, these women may choose for a family. The women are free to take decision of becoming a mother as well. In this regard, a mutual understanding between a woman and her Babu is of utmost importance. Both of them undergo HIV tests and other medical investigations required for safe motherhood. Since the sex-workers are aware of their professional hazards, they remain extremely conscious about getting expectant. They never become pregnant by accident. They use different types of contraceptives and other methods to resist unwanted pregnancy.

About 140 children and 250 adult males reside in this area. Literacy level is appreciably low over here. 65% of the children go to schools. They get admitted to Netaji Prathamik Vidyalaya for Primary Education which is situated at a stone’s throw distance from this area along the Kalabagan High School Road (Ward No.3). For secondary schooling, children go to the Kalabagan High School. It was found that education for the girls remain restricted till class VII – VIII, but the boys are encouraged to continue their studies further. Only a handful of them have
passed the threshold of school. Only one of them has passed graduation in 2001 from A.B. N. Seal College, the most reputed institution of Koch Bihar. The ambience of this place is absolutely different. There is a number of grocer’s shop where liquor is sold openly along with the articles of daily requirement. The children from their tender age become habituated to see smoking, drinking and remain aware of the profession of their mothers or other women of this area. The brighter side of this is that they themselves rarely get into the habit of buying and drinking alcohol. This is because all people residing in this place are so familiar to each other that they live like a single family; elders keep an eye on the youngsters so that they do not fell into bad habits. The adult males are store keepers and stationers in majority. They prefer getting out of this area and even go for arranged marriages. As father they want their children to get rehabilitated to the mainstream society.

This socially deprived area did not receive any help for a considerable period of time. The Durbar Mahila Samannoy Committee (DMSC) an NGO remained active till 2008 after which on exhaustion of their funds it ceased to function. Immunization of expectant mothers and children were carried on by the health workers of other wards during that period. The DMSC resumed their functions currently (i.e. 2016). The residents of this area keenly wanted an organization like the DMSC which would look into their interests and benefits since they are socially deprived to the most. The DMSC has taken up the issues especially related to health and has set up an office in this area. They arrange for the medical facilities and facilitate the supply of the contraceptives, pills etc. to the sex workers. Though this area has undergone limited up gradation, yet the residents reported that administrative help is availed whenever it is required. Police patrolling is a regular activity from 9:00 p.m. each night to 6.a.m. the following day, sought to maintain security in this place.

Therefore, the women engaged in sex-working call for some basic requirements. The most important of all is the spread of education especially for the youngsters. This is because once they would get education; they would get a better exposure and would gradually find the means of living in the mainstream society and this would end the ‘vicious cycle’. The medical support is also an important necessity to this area. Proper vaccination to women and children should be provided and the basic knowledge for health and hygiene should be imparted to them so that they could lead a healthy living. Training for handicraft making and other articles may be provided to them so as to dissociate them from this profession.
Case Study# 7: The working women sometimes confront with some crucial moments which affect their professional life too. Attention may be drawn to the experiences of some of the health staffs who work in the M. J. N Hospital as nurses. Some of them have reported about their traumatic experiences during the night duties in the hospital premises itself. They face taunting and molestation by the patient parties especially during the night time and which pose hindrance in delivering their duties to the patients. Several complaints were being lodged but it has been of no use. This is very shameful from the ethical point of view. The authority should look into this matter with grave concern and should address this problem properly ensuring security to the women staffs of the hospital especially at the odd hours.

This again reflects the patriarchal superiority complex of the men who are not at all aware of the weightage of the duty and responsibility of their profession and therefore pays no respect to them. Rather they view women as mere medium of sexual pleasure.

7.4 CO-RELATION BETWEEN VARIABLES: The Principal Component Analysis has been employed in the present inquiry so as to find out the factors which have a great bearing to the development of the social status of the working women of the CBT area.

To explore the influence of some socio-economic variables upon the respondents of the study area a Co-relation Matrix has been initially drawn. The variables taken up for the study may be designated as follows: Number of working women as $X_1$, Number of Literates as $X_2$, Average Monthly Income (Rs.) as $X_3$, Number of Dependents on working women as $X_4$, Number of women workers engaged in Organized Sector $X_5$, Number of Respondents who have been translocated from outside Koch Bihar District as $X_6$, Number of Respondents who have been translocated from Koch Bihar District to CBT as $X_7$, Number of Respondents who have been translocated within the CBT area $X_8$, Number of Respondents spending own income as $X_9$, Number of Respondents spending on Household items as $X_{10}$, Number of Respondents who are able to save money as $X_{11}$, Number of Respondents facing Interference in Money Management as $X_{12}$, Number of Permanent Job Holders as $X_{13}$, Number of Respondents having Co-operative attitude from family as $X_{14}$, Number of Respondents participating in Office Functions as $X_{15}$ and Average Work Performance of the working women in % as $X_{16}$.

The Co-relation Matrix (Table no 7.2) identified a set of 3 variables that account for the variance
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<th>No. of ww translocated within CBT</th>
<th>No. of resp. spending own income</th>
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<th>Co-operative attitude towards resp (no.)</th>
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<th>No. of Dependent s on ww X4</th>
<th>Salaried employment (No.) X5</th>
<th>No. of respondents came outside of CoB X6</th>
<th>No. of respondents translocated within CoB dist. X7</th>
<th>No. of resp. translocated within CBT X8</th>
<th>No. of spending own income X9</th>
<th>No. of spending on household items X10</th>
<th>Savings by resp. (no.) X11</th>
<th>Interference in Money management (no.) X12</th>
<th>No. of permanent job holder X13</th>
<th>Co-operative attitude towards resp. (no.) X14</th>
<th>Participation in office functions (No.) X15</th>
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<td>.849</td>
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for the socio-economic factors affecting the working women of the CBM area. These are: Number of working women ($X_1$), Number of Literates ($X_2$) and Average Monthly Income (Rs.) ($X_3$). A scatter plot can be visualized, the shape of which will identify the Principal Components of best fit orientations. To reduce dimensionality, a factor analysis with Principal Component Method has been applied assuming the initial communality as 1.000. The extraction of communality (Table 7.3) shows the variables in descending order starting from the extraction value of 0.994 for variable $X_2$, gradually reducing to 0.988 for $X_1$, 0.983 for $X_{10}$, 0.962 for $X_{14}$, 0.952 for $X_4$, 0.946 for $X_9$, 0.925 for $X_5$, 0.884 for $X_7$, 0.879 for $X_{11}$, 0.825 for $X_{16}$, 0.790 for $X_{13}$, 0.718 for $X_6$, 0.419 for $X_3$ and finally 0.365 for $X_{12}$.

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<th>Table: 7.3 Extraction of Communalities</th>
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<td>Avg. monthly Income in Rs</td>
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<td>salaried employment (No.)</td>
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<td>no. of respondents translocated within CoB dist.</td>
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<td>No. of ww translocated within CBT</td>
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<td>No. of resp. spending own income</td>
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<td>Savings by resp (no.)</td>
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<td>interference in Money management (no.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of permanent job holders</td>
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<td>co-operative attitude towards resp (no.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>participation in office functions (No.)</td>
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<td>Avg work performance of ww in %</td>
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis by SPSS 23.
The variance has been explained by 3 major components that together explain 83.588% to the total variance (Table 7.4). Initially Component 1 explains 66.011%, Component 2 explains 10.498% and Component 3 explains 7.078%. These 3 components have Eigen Values more than 1.000.

After Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization (Figure 7.a), the proportion of explanation by different components almost has shown an imperceptible change (Table 7.4). After rotation, Component 1 explains 66.844% followed by Component 2 explaining 9.910% and Component 3 explaining 7.833% respectively. The Eigen Value has been plotted to produce a Scree Plot (Figure 7.b) and it shows the Principal Components as 1, 2 and 3.
Fig. no. 7.a

Fig. no. 7.b
**Initial Solution:** The variance for Component 1 initially has been mostly due to variables \{X_2, X_1, X_{10}\}; for Component 2 by variables \{X_{16}, X_8, X_3\} and for Component 3 by variables \{X_6, X_{16}\}(Table 7.5).

<p>| Table: 7.5 Component Matrix(^a) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|</p>
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<th>3</th>
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

\(^a\) 3 components extracted by SPSS 23.

**Final Solution:** After rotation, the component score changed marginally (Table 7.6), so that the goodness of the fit becomes optimized. Component 1 is now explained by variables \{X_2, X_1, X_{10}\}; Component 2 by variables \{X_{16}, X_3\} and Component 3 by variables \{X_8, X_{13}\}. Thus variable X_6 became superfluous and redundant in explaining the degree of influence as a socio-economic factor upon the working women of the CBT area.
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

<sup>a</sup> Rotation converged in 5 iterations By SPSS 23.

7.5 FULFILLMENT OF OBJECTIVES: The major findings of the study helped to reach the seven objectives.

7.5.1 The Main Objective:

- The main objective is to study whether employment has brought a significant change in the social status of the working women

An Overview: A probe into the history does show a shift of status of the women in the society. Women during the Vedic Period had been accorded with a high status. They enjoyed freedom in the house hold and outside as well. Prior to marriage, they used to get education and learned scriptures. Learned women even contributed in the composition of the *slokas* and participated in the philosophical discussions with the learned men also. They enjoyed freedom in movement and
never used *purdah*. They were also free to choose their mates. They could also remarry. This status got a radical change in the Post-Vedic times. During this period, the socio-economic scenario and the politico-legal changes started bothering women’s status in the society. Men solely began to hold power and authority. Marriages became irreversible and indissoluble institution. Women were thought to be inferior and subordinate to men. They lost property rights. They even lost eligibility for participation in political and religious matters. Child marriage, polygamy and dowry came into practice. Education was not completely denied but women were discouraged to study Vedic literature. This trend of women’s subordinated status continued throughout the history until the arrival of the Britishers to our country. The Colonial rule did not change the status of the women but it initiated modern education in the country and in response to which the wave of social revivalism shook the entire society. Social reformers relentlessly tried for social justice to women by making scope for women’s education, stoppage to *sati*, early marriages, polygamous marriages and many more. The Nationalist Movement was another milestone for the women for their changed status. It had kindled the light of emancipation as their active participation in the freedom struggle had given them the opportunity to step outside their home premises. The men could also realize their ability and tenacity for the social whole. An educated handful during this time became absorbed in paid employment also. T. Krishnamurty is of opinion that “…many services associated with modernization under colonial rule expanded in particular, public, educational, medical and legal services” *(www.economicdiscussion.net/india/occupational-structure-in-india-an-overview/19135accessed on 27.06.2018 at12.55am)*.

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. Coming back to the working women, their generative and the distributive roles continued both in the household and workplaces. The status of women in our
country seemed to have changed a lot with the dual strength of modern education and employment. With passage of time the working women finds a new air of living, voices to speak about their needs and necessities, creative endeavour to get expression but the real problem does not lay with the number of privileged handful who are able to get empowered, but with the fact of having being considered as ‘extra’ or ‘supportive’ earners rather than bread winners. This had a psychological impact on the patriarchal setting. Quoting Beneria and Sen (1981), Jayati Ghosh in her paper titled “Women’s work in the India in the early 21st century” observes that the issues related to women’s employment and work have the qualitative aspect differing very much from the men. She continues “Just increasing paid employment does not always mean an improvement in the conditions of women workers, since it can lead to a double burden upon women whose household obligations still have to be fulfilled. So there has to be a focus on the quality, the recognition and the remuneration of women's work in developing countries, as well as the conditions facilitating it…”. All these factors get affected by the social relationships, the economic policies and processes and these in turn determine the economic condition of the working women.

In West Bengal as a whole, progress through years has been discernible from the figures of Tables 3.2 and 3.3 of Chapter III. Just after the independence in 1951, the total literacy of the state recorded to 25% whereby the female literacy remained about 13.2%; turning to the urban areas, which were exposed to modernization and urbanization processes showed high literacy figures 45.7% for total and 37.1% for the urban females. At the district level Koch Bihar had recorded appreciably low literacy figures of 17.1% for the total population and only 6.1% for the females (in Table 3.3) in 1951; but the urban areas had higher literacy rates i.e. 61.2% for the total population and 57.6% for the urban females. The total literacy at the state level took as many as 40 long years to reach about a little more than 50% (i.e. 57.7%); while the female literacy for the state reached to 59.6% in 2001. Women literacy condition particularly for the urbanites reached 50% level within 1961. It escalated to 81% as of now (2011). The literacy condition for Koch Bihar also showed progress through time. Between 1991 and 2001, the total literacy crossed the 50% mark and reached from 45.8% in 1991 to 66.3% in 2001. Finally it reached to 73.2% in 2001. Female literacy among the urbanites have remained consistently high than the total female literacy level throughout. At the initial stage i.e. in 1951, it was about 57.6%. The figure leaped from 68.5% in 2001 to 85.5% in 2011.
Thus, keeping pace with time literacy condition showed progress. The district level figure of 2011 does not remain far behind that of the 2011 figure at the state level. The total literacy figures at the National, State and the Regional level almost remain congruent to one another.

**Recent Trends in Employment in India - Sectoral Occupational Shift:** Colin Clark says that “A high average level of real income per head is always associated with a high proportion of working population engaged in tertiary industries; low real income per head is always associated with a low proportion of the working population engaged in tertiary production and a high percentage in primary occupation” (www.economicdiscussion.net/india/occupational-structure-in-india-an-overview/19135 accessed on 27.06.2018 at12.55am). Therefore to attain a high level of economic development, inter-sectoral transference of work force is desirably necessary.

In case of our country, a shift in the work force is seen from the primary to tertiary sector in past few decades at the national level thereby increasing about one-third in the work force. This is not appreciable in the sense, it relates to the augmentation of service workers especially in the self employed category i.e. in informal sector (in informal shops & workshops; domestic workers or workers in open public spaces as rickshaw pullers, street vendors, rag pickers and so on) rather than increase in modern formal wage employment headed by industrial development. This observation was also earmarked by M.A. Chen and G. Raveendran (2011) in their study (www.inclusivecities.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/chen_WIEGO-wp7.pdf accessed on 26.07.2018 at 1:50 am).

With respect to women’s work, four apparently contradictory trends have been observed in India with simultaneous increases in the incidence of paid labour, underpaid labour, unpaid labour, and open unemployment of women. This may be attributed to the fact that agriculture still continues to account for more than half of the work force. In the past decade, agrarian crises across many parts of the country have impacted adversely on the livelihood of both cultivators and rural workers, yet the generation of more productive employment outside this sector remains inadequate. The factors responsible for low development for the women include: the persistence of widespread poverty; the absence of basic food security; the inability to secure the basic needs such as housing, sanitation, adequate health care services; the inability to achieve universal education; the slow progress in access to education and material resources across different social groups and for women in particular. According to Ghosh’s observation, “formal employment has
stagnated, and even paid employment in general (in the form of regular of casual work) has fallen as a share of total employment. Most of the recent increases in employment have been in the form of self employment. This growing army of ‘self-employed’ workers, who now account for more than half of the work force, mostly have been excluded from paid employment because of the sheer difficulty of finding jobs, but are nevertheless heavily involved in commercial activity and exposed to market uncertainties in the search for livelihood. Therefore the Indian economy shows a paradoxical trajectory of high aggregate growth with inadequate or poor employment generation. And this has directly impacted on the lives of women in India” (www.4dj7dt2yichlw3310xlow2op2.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com accessed on 26.06.18 at 2:04 am).

The incidence of the unpaid and underpaid women work force may be accounted for the fact women remain associated with the generative and procreative roles i.e. of the maintenance of the household and reproduction which are not subject to explicit market relations. There remains a tendency of ignoring these roles as women are taken for granted for their contribution to these activities. Their work thus remains invisible in most of the cases. So a recent attempt has been made to measure the invisibility of their activities through ‘time-use surveys’ to find out for how long women engage themselves for the household drudgery such as procurement of water for drinking and sanitation, fuel wood, cooking, looking after the sick and dependent members of the family etc. It was found that the women often do these at the cost of their resting time or leisure. Furthermore, the substantial form of female self-employment is found in cultivation. Huge number of women remains associated with it as agricultural labourers and remains unrecognized, their rights and benefits such as access to credit, extension services, subsidized inputs, etc. are highly denied.

For urban women, the increase in regular work has dominantly been in services, including relatively low-paid domestic services, along with some manufacturing. Self-employment has come to dominate women’s activities even in non-agricultural occupations largely because of the difficulty of finding paid work. The non-agricultural activities are largely characterized by both low expectations regarding incomes and remuneration and substantial non-fulfillment of even of these low expectations. Despite some increase in high-remuneration, self-employment among professionals and micro-entrepreneurs, in general seems to be a distress-driven process, determined by the lack of availability of sufficient paid work on acceptable terms
Therefore, generation of gainful employment for the general population and women in particular is the need of the hour at the national arena. Although increased proportion of workforce in the self-employed category is the emerging trend, yet in few years it would lead to a large pool of casual or unprotected workers. As Deepak Kumar Behera observes rightly in this regard that in the nearing future, “the challenge of poverty and unemployment would only worsen. Provision of a minimum social protection to this large mass of workers is, therefore, likely to emerge as a much greater challenge. It would only sharpen the class struggle with the market driven high-growth-informal-employment”.

The Tables 3.5 and 3.6 of Chapter III displays the proportion of the Workers of West Bengal and that of Koch Bihar district respectively by their sex and their place of residences from 1951 to 2011 censuses. The workers at the state level have increased overtime but the change is not remarkable as it has increased from 34.68% in 1951 to 38.08% in 2011. An increase in the proportion of the male workers has also been viewed with the progress of time. A striking fluctuation for the proportion of the female workers has been observed during the whole period under consideration. With a figure of 11.29% of the female workers at the initial phase (1951) a gradual decline is observed through 1961 (9.43%) and 1971(4.43%) data. Then again it was seen to rise to 8.07% in 1981 and to 11.25% in 1991 finally reaching upto 18.08% in 2011. The urban female workers have depicted a very slow rate of progression. According to the expectation, they have remained far behind the workers of the rural areas considering both males and females. The proportion increased from 3.93% in 1971 to 15.4% in 2011. A notable change is worthy to mention while analyzing the above data especially concerning the rural and urban female workers for 2001 and 2011. This period has witnessed a rising trend for the urban female (11.33% in 2001 to 15.4% in 2011) workers with a simultaneous decline in the rural female working population (20.86% in 2001 to 19.4% in 2011). The shift of female working population from rural to urban is indicative of the increasing scope for service sector in the urban environment. At the district level, an increasing trend of working population is discernible from the data in the adjacent table (Table: 3.6). The total workers during 1951 (29.6%) pertaining to the district of Koch Bihar steadily increased to 40.01% in 2011. With regard to female workers it has corroborated with that of the state level trend. A fluctuating trend is noticeable from 5.2%
1951 to 3.7% in 1961 and 1.69% in 1971. A rising trend followed next with 4.32% in 1981 up to 20.70% in 2011. Female urban workers of Koch Bihar district has also increased considerably from 4.62% in 1971 to 14.17% in 2011. But it remains low when compared to the rural female workers as well as the male working force at the rural and urban areas. Following the state level tendency, it is seen that the female workers at the rural areas have dropped from 23.28% in 2001 to 21.43% in 2011; this again portrays greater scope of female employment in the service sectors currently.

So, status for employed women in India has changed a lot through history. Education and employment for Women have enabled them to supplement their family income and to create buffer finance in the backdrop of inflation. The inclusion of women as economically active work force has revolutionized the socio-economic arena with reference to their status in India. As a consequence, the outlook of an Indian woman is slowly broadening, her opinion is becoming audible, her creativity is unfolding, her personality is developing and her position is getting redefined and re-oriented in the patriarchal social structure. Therefore, the main objective of the inquiry become fulfilled here as it is found from the analysis of the data that with the increased literacy among women through time, it has paved the way for increased employment among women. So, a positive change has been observed regarding the association of social status to working women.

7.5.2 Other objectives are as follows:

- The second objective is to know about the present socio-economic status of the working women

The present study explicitly reveals the social and economic conditions of the working women of the study area. The age profile, marital status, religious affiliation, caste diversity, social mobility, educational qualification, occupational diversity, job category, income levels (of respondents as well as that of their families), occupational status, family structure, dependency and health conditions of the sample were analyzed to have a clear and insightful picture revealing their socio-economic status as well as their behavioral characteristics. A sample of 1777 working women inhabiting the CBM area representing 32% of the universe was interviewed for the completion of the study.
Age composition:

The Age of the respondents reveals the maturity level which facilitates in the study of their perception in different occasions of the inquiry. The sample is found to have five categories of age-groups, viz. 18-28, 29-39, 40-49, 50-59 and ≥60 years; wherein the matured category (belonging to 29-39 & 40-49 years) has been represented by 60% of the respondents. The Young and the Aged categories have been represented by 25% and 15% of the sample. This implies that the selection of the sample has remained correct representing normal distribution.

Marital status:

Regarding the Marital Status, two broad group categories can be identified from the sample such as, the Never Married Group (composed by Unmarried working women) and the Ever Married Group (comprised of Married, Widows and Divorced working women) representing 16.38% and 76.14% respectively. However, a small proportion (7.48%) did not reveal their marital status. The preponderance of the Ever Married Group justifies the study as they can be reliable source of data since the investigation involves complicated sociological inquiry. It was found that the Ever Married working women have been able explain their life events and kin relations with proficiency.

Religious Affiliation:

Keeping parity with the country’s share, the respondents were largely (90.66%) found to be the Hindus. About 9.17% of the respondents are Muslims; an insignificant proportion has been represented by the Christians (0.11%) and a low representation is found by the Sikhs (0.06%). The predominance of the Hindu working women shows that the Muslims, Christians and the Sikhs have little access to employment.

Caste composition:

Cooch Behar remains as the only district in West Bengal having one-half of Scheduled Caste population but this aspect has not been reflected in the caste structure of the sample under study. Most of the respondents belong to the General category (40.29%), it is followed by the Scheduled Castes (18.35%), 9.17% of the respondents belong to the OBC-A category, while 3.10% is represented by the OBC-B category. The Scheduled Tribes (ST) are least represented by a share of only 0.51%. Predominance of the General category of population among the
respondents may indicate that probably the study area (CBT) is mostly settled by people belonging to General category.

**Mobility of the respondents:**

Majority of the working women have non-urban social background as 80.36% of the respondents have in-migrated from outside the CBT area (elsewhere from the district or even from outside the district). Of this proportion, 50.76% have come elsewhere from the district of Koch Bihar. Among the out comers, 29.60% have migrated from the districts of Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri; few have come from Darjeeling, Assam even from Malda, Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur. Very few have come from Kolkata, Rajasthan, U.P., Bihar and Gujarat also. Some of the respondents (15.70%) who were born in the CBT area have experienced intra-urban marriage consequent shifting between the wards. Majority of the respondents (88.24 %) are found to stay in their spouse’s house. The rest 11.26 % of the respondents live in rented houses. An insignificant proportion of 0.51% has stated that they stay with the relatives, maternal place or in their own property. Complying with the expectation, 58.47% of the working women recalled that they shifted to the CBT as a consequence of their marriage. 15.81% of the respondents migrated to Cooch Behar Town to stay nearer to their workplaces. 1.18% of the respondents have both the reasons of marriage and nearness to work place for their re-location. About 4.9 % of the respondents have shifted owing to some different reasons, which might either to take care of the property, to take care of the family members, for the nearness to child’s education etc. The rest 15.70 % of the respondents did not migrate from their places as they might have got married in the same area or at the vicinity of their maternal places or they are currently unmarried.

**Educational Level:**

According to the Census data of 2011, the CBT area has recorded a Literacy Rate of 85.20% which is high than the national (74.04%) and the state (76.26%) level figures of the same census year. The Male Literacy and the Female Literacy are 51.28% and 48.72% respectively. Out of the Total Female Population (38,921 women) of the CBT, the number of Female Literates are 32,350; representing 83.12%. The ward wise census data for Female Literates is highest (92.64%) in ward no. 7, it is high (>90%) in ward nos. 2, 12, 13 and 14. The proportion of female literates is least (76.28%) in ward no. 10 which is almost equal to the state level value. Rest of the wards has values ranging between 77-89%. Therefore, Literacy rate among the
female population of the study area is quiet impressive as per census records. After conducting
the survey among the working women of the CBT a similar picture has been revealed wherein
Cent Percent of literacy among the respondents is found in ward nos. 2, 5 and 13. A high
percentage of female literates ranging between 90 - 97.32% are found in ward nos. 1, 3, 7, 10,
11, 12, 14-18 and 20. Lowest proportion of literates among the working women amounting to
71.88% is found concentrated in ward no. 6. The rest of the wards have female literacy rate
ranging between 80-90%.

Almost one-third of the working women under study (32%) are Graduates and 19% of the
sample have Post-Graduate degrees. 18% of the respondents just crossed the threshold of schools
of Xth Standard while 10% limited their studies upto the High School level (i.e. XII th Standard). Primary educated respondents cover up 7% of the sample. Only 3% of the respondents can sign their names only. On the other hand, a meager proportion (3%) is represented by those having Diploma, trainings or still higher educational degrees like M. Phil and Ph.D. Higher education at Post-Graduate level is mostly encouraged by the respondents residing in ward nos. 18, 11, 14, 13, 16, 15, 10 and 1(in the order of importance). While it is found low in ward nos. 9, 4, 2, 3, 7, 19, 20, 17 and 8. Graduates adhere mostly in the wards of 18, 16, 11, 12, 13 and 14. The High School educated respondents occupy mostly the ward nos. 1, 9, 18, 20, 10, 11-17. School educated respondents are found scattered in the ward nos. 6, 19, 9,
10, 15, 12, 18, 11, 14, 16, 17, 1, 3, 4 and 5. Primary level education is a common qualification of the respondents of ward no. 19, 10, 16, 9, 10, 17, 1, 3, 4, 15 and 18. While respondents can only sign their names are found largely in ward nos. 1, 4, 9, 10, 15- 19.

**Employment of the Respondents:**

The working women of the study area are mostly (41.59%) absorbed in private concerned jobs,
31.63% of them area are affianced to the Government aided organizations. About 21.33% of the
working women do Government Services representing a reduced share in the total picture.

The study area is characterized by the presence of both the Organized (salaried) and the Un-
organized (non-salaried) groups. The Domestic helpers, Bidi binders, Self-employed & Part-time
workers and the Sex workers may be designated as the Un-organized work force representing
34.22%. While the rest of the jobs may be referred to as the organized work force. The
Organized working women has the dominant share (61.11%) in the sample.
A little more than one-half of the respondents (56.73%) are permanent in their services. An insignificant proportion of them are Self employed (3.15%) and Contractual workers (0.17%). 2.59% of the respondents were unable to state their status of job and hence they are referred to as the ‘not mentioned’ group. The rest 37.31% of the working women pertaining to the study area are engaged to Temporary and Part-time jobs. Therefore, the picture does not match with the all-India trend of having preponderance of self employed workers. Rather, it shows high concentration of white collar salaried service women. It may therefore imply that there remains a scope for gainful employment for the women in the study area.

Five income levels among the respondents can be recognized. The high income group dominates the arena although entails a limited proportion of respondents (36.52%) having monthly income of Rupees 20,001 – 50,000. The ‘Very Low’ income group has ≤5,000 Rupees as monthly income and has 35.68% share in the sample and occupies the second position in the order of importance. This is followed by the Moderate Income Group having Rupees 10,001 – 20,000 as monthly income and covering 19.08% of the respondents. The next group is represented by the Low income group whose monthly income ranges from Rupees 5,001 – 10,000 and contributes to 7.99% of the sample. The smallest proportion (0.73%) of the sample is represented by the Very High income group having highest affordability, whose monthly income is ≥50,001 Rupees. High Income level is noticeable in ward nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, and 18 as per Field Survey. Besides this, it can also be found in small concentration in ward nos1, 7, 9, 10, 17 and 19. However, traces of Very High Income level is seen in ward nos. 13, 14 and 18. Moderate Income level is mostly seen in ward no. 6, 17 and 18; while low concentration of the same is observed in ward nos. 1, 10-14 and 20. Very Low Income level is detected maximum in ward nos. 10, 15, 18 and 19; while little occurrence is viewed in ward nos. 1, 4 and 9. However, Low Income level is significant among the working women pertaining to the study area.

Husband’s occupation and family income:

It is revealed that the husbands of the respondents are mostly engaged to Self employment, Private services and Part-time jobs (44.07%) of Moderate Status. This goes with the current trend of the Indian Economy where people are found associating with the Tertiary Services of self-employment, non-permanent, contractual services which does not guarantee service security to the employee. The next most popular occupation (34.55%) in which the husbands are engaged
to are Advocates and Judges, Professors, Assistant Professors & Librarian in Colleges and Universities, Bank employees and Financial advisors considered as the occupations with High Status; a proportion of 10.02% of the husbands remain engaged to Miscellaneous Activities of Moderate Status. Only 2.81% of them are found associated with health services and also as Group Ds or UDCs (Moderate Status). A negligible proportion of 0.84% either practice agriculture or work as Bidi Rollers and are accorded with Low Status.

Five economic strata have been identified and a qualitative description to each one has also been assigned. The High (40.24%) and Very High (20.77%) income groups occupy the first and the second positions in terms of their proportional representation respectively. Next to this, comes the Very Low income group with 15.36% share in the sample. The Low and the Moderate income groups are of equal value in representation (i.e 11.82% each). In connection to this, one must keep in mind that the family income the respondents have portrayed during the interview included their income also. Hence, the picture of being into a well to do material stratum covers their contribution also and thus there remains no confusion about the working women of the study area in augmenting the living standards of their families.

Family Size and Structure:

It is seen that most of the respondents (62.97%) have 3-4 persons in their family, which might be considered as the nuclear families. About 13.06% of the working women reside in joint families having 5 persons as family members, while 4.16% of the respondents have ≥6 persons in their family. 4.56% of the working women stay singly in the study area. Thus, it may be presumed that the working women of the study area reside mostly in nuclear families which is a very common picture in any urban area. A small proportion of the sample is found to remain under single occupancy of the working women. This reflects that though a handful yet some of the working women in the study area do have the determination of taking their own responsibility.

During the survey it was found that, apart from the well known typology of the Joint and the Nuclear Families, there exist another type named as Neo-Joint Family, which is gaining popularity than the former two types of Joint and Nuclear families in the study area. A Neo-Joint Family is composed of husband, wife, their children along with their parents and some other relative(s). This is a family which is commonly found in urban areas and whose special function is to give relief to the woman from the household responsibilities. The parents or the relatives(s)
come to stay leaving behind their own family elsewhere; or they do not have any places to live. The study area is no exception to this trend, as the proportion of the respondents staying in the Neo-joint families is found rather more than that of the other two varieties.

**Dependency on the Working Women:**

The respondents were asked to state the number of dependents on them in their family. About 64.50% of the respondents have 1-2 persons dependents and about 17.11% have 3-5 and >5 persons dependents. 11.99% are self dependents while 6.42% did not share their information. Thus, it is observed that majority of the working women has less number of dependents on them. The incidence of dependency of upto 2 persons is particularly seen in high concentration in the wards numbers of 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 19. Ward no. 10, 17, 18 and 19 shows the prevalence of dependents of 3-5 and >5 persons. Ward nos.13, 14, 18 and 19 displays the occurrence of no dependency.

**Health condition:**

Majority (73%) of the respondents suffer from no specific diseases. About 12% suffers from Cold & Cough, Acidity, Gas, stomach related problems, tooth ache, Spondolysis etc. Arthritis, Thalassemia, Osteoporosis are found to affect only 7% of the respondents. Only 6% of the respondents have developed high Blood Pressure, Blood Sugar, Kidney diseases and Obesity. This might be due to the urban mode of living and the stress and strain as the resultant effect. Allergy, Fungal infection on skins, Asthma, Eye problems, Migraine and Neurological problems are faced by 2% of the respondents. Most of them (94.15%) go for Allopathy treatment; a small proportion of 3.83% have faith on Homeopath medicines; both Allopathy & Homeopathy treatments are jointly sought after by 1.86% while 0.056% of the respondents rely on Allopathy and Ayurvedic medicines.

Generally speaking, ‘Education’ and ‘Employment’ are two most significant factors for development and may be seen as important indicator in this inquiry also. They influence each other and have complementary role towards each other. Education among girls is encouraged very much and it has always remained popular among the working women also. Two important aspects have come up through the course of investigation.
On the first hand a relationship has been recognized between Level of Education and that of Average Monthly Income that has been displayed in Fig no. 7.a. The Educational Level already attained by the respondents have been Converted on a Likert’s Scale which ranges from values 1-7. The lesser value remain associated with lesser level of educational qualification. The qualitative connotations of those values are as follows: Illiterates= 1; Can Sign Only = 2; Upto Class V = 3; Class VI- X = 4; Class X-XII = 5; Graduates, Diploma Holders and Others (Jr. B. T. & Nursing) = 6 and Post-graduates, M.Phil & Ph.D holders = 7. The Average Monthly Income (in Rupees) of the respondents according to their educational qualification have been tabulated for finding out the relationship. The scatter plot shows that a positive co-relation exists between the two variables. In short, higher the Level of Education higher is the Average Monthly Income of the respondents of the study area. This finding corroborates with the incidence of maximum proportion of white collar workers (41.41%) in the sample under study.

Secondly, the Level of education can be related spatially with the economic profile of the study area. It is seen that highest level of monthly income (≥50,001 Rupees) is earned by working women residing in ward nos. 13, 14 and 18. High level of monthly income (20,001-50,000 Rupees) is earned by respondents living in ward nos. 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16 and sporadically found in ward nos. 1, 7, 9, 10 and 17. Moderate level of monthly income (10,001 – 20,000 Rupees) is generated by the respondents of ward no. 6 mainly and in ward nos. 17 and 18 in patches. Low monthly income (5,001 – 10,000 Rupees) is found to occur among the working
women of ward nos. 1 & 20 and intermittently in ward nos. 10-14. Very Low level of monthly income ($\leq 5000$ Rupees) is generated by respondents residing in ward nos. 10, 15 and 19. Female literacy when spatially seen yields almost similar picture. High Literacy Rate ($\geq 91\%$) among female population is found in ward nos. 2, 7, 12, 13, and 14. Moderate Literacy Rate (80-89\%) is seen in ward nos. 1, 3, 9, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20. Low level of Literacy Rate among the females is visible in ward nos. 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 15. So, proportionality between Income level and Education can be perceived from this. In other words, income level of the respondents is positively related with the affordability towards attainment of education in the study area.

- The third objective is to find out the reasons that has led the women to go for employment

Natarajan (2013) in her study identifies two main reasons which pushes and pulls women for gainful employment. They are (1) Financial and (2) Non-financial reasons. Financial reasons have been parted into three sub-reasons namely; ‘(a) Economic pressures which pertain to the fulfillment of the basic minimum needs of life, (b) Other economic needs – money required to help relatives, (c) Higher standard of living’ (Natarajan, 2013: 3). Among the Non-financial reasons, she mentions about (a) Personality Traits (b) Occupancy of time and (c) Maintenance of traditional occupation which works as motivation for employment. Singhal (2003) however, stresses on to the economic reasons for women’s employment. She says that ‘women’s entry in services is not only a social need but it is mainly due to economic factors. It is required to supplement family’s income to cope with the present day economic crisis in almost all the lower and middle class families in urban areas’ (Singhal, 2003: 25). Furthermore, she adds that the scientific inquiry leads to the invention of certain devices which may be employed by the modern housewives to reduce their work loads. The use of such gadgets not only reduces their work load but at the same time yields free time that may be utilized by the house wives by getting employed. In addition to this situation, they can escape their household chores by deploying maids and getting into jobs so as to enhance their living standards. In her writing she emphasizes the role of modern education in improving the sectoral absorption of the women working force who gets into tertiary services mostly. Thus the myth of work on popular belief held either for widow or single woman in our society stands nullified.
In the present study, the respondents were asked to mention the reasons behind their employment. Majority of them (86.89%) said that it has been the ‘financial inadequacy’ which has pushed them to seek jobs. About 9.90% of the sample reported that because the women wanted to gain a social position, they got employed into services. A handful of the working women (3.21%) stated that they have entered into jobs either to maintain their traditional occupation of the family or to occupy leisure time.

Therefore, it becomes clear that the working women of the CBM area under study have seek employment purely out of economic reasons in order to supplement the insufficiency of their family income.

➢ The fourth objective is to find out the job varieties to which the working women are engaged and the job preferences of the respondents

Job Variety of the Respondents:

Several occupational categories are found among the working women under study. These may be categorized under six groups such as:

a) Domestic helpers & Bidi binders (17.84% of the sample);

b) Advocates, Judges, Professors, Doctors, Bank employees, Govt. Servicemen, Police officers, School Teachers etc. (41.14% of the sample);

c) Service Holders, Self Employed and Part-time workers (17% of the sample);

d) Anganwari workers, Health workers, Group D Staffs and Upper Division Clerks (14.01% of the sample);

e) Sex Workers (2.53% of the sample);

f) Workers engaged in miscellaneous activities (2.81% of the sample).

Majority of the respondents (41.14 %) belong to the second type of occupational group i.e. they may be Advocates and Judges; they may be Professors, Assistant Professors & Librarian in Colleges and Universities; or Bank employees and Financial advisors; or Government Service Holders; or Police officers and Constables; Doctors, Engineers, Journalists and WBCS Officers or even Principals or Head Mistress and School Teachers. This group may be designated as the High Status Job category.
The next group of working women is Domestic helpers (who work as attendants to the aged persons, maids, cooks or baby sitters) & Bidi binders. They represent 17.84% of the respondents of CBM. Sex Workers in the Kalabagan area of Ward no.6 represent 2.53% of the sample. These two heads represent Low Status Job type.

The Service holders, Self Employed (Boutique owner, Business person, Canteen owner, Tailor, Distributor, Dance Teacher, Music Teacher, Home delivery Service [of lunch/food], Potter, Ration dealer, Sericulture worker, Shop owner etc.) and Part-time workers (Beautician, Cosmetics seller, Book Binders, Seamstress, Computer Trainer, Typist, Anchor in local Television channels and public functions, Art Teacher, Hotel owner, Nursery Teacher, Ration Shop worker, shop worker, supplier of various goods, tea supplier, thermocol artifact makers etc.) together contributes to 17% of the respondents. Anganwari workers, Health workers, Group D Staffs and Upper Division Clerks belong to the next category of workers and they represent 14.01% of the surveyed workers. Workers engaged in Miscellaneous occupations come next though very little in representation (2.81%), they are found working in Mobile phone shops, Jewellery shops, Medical Representatives, Medical firms, NGOs, Training Centres, Self Help Groups, Vocational Training Centres etc. All these have been classified as Moderate Status Job category.

About 4.3% of the sample did not mention about their job details.

Job preferences:

90% of the respondents overwhelmingly stated that women should go for jobs. They were further asked to state the jobs they aspire for women in general. The respondents were found to prefer teaching profession the most (45.98%), this was followed by business (22.57%), Administrative jobs (11.93%) and Miscellaneous (3.15%) activities. About 16.38% of the working women did not have any specifications regarding jobs. The scenario is quite satisfying as most of the respondents prefer Teaching, which is considered to be the most suitable and acceptable profession individually as well as socially for women. To women teaching in schools, colleges and universities are remunerative and also it adds to their status. The respondents chose for business next to the academics which is beyond expectation for having an enterprising attitude. Business requires skill of management and propagation. Women as entrepreneurs in Cooch Behar Town are limited to shops of miscellaneous items, tailoring, garment boutiques, food
stalls, beauty parlours etc. Though in limited proportion, yet some of the respondents showed their willingness towards administrative jobs. Other preferred jobs included Medical profession, Banking, Official services and Health services. These demand technical knowledge as well.

The trend in occupational pattern at the all-India level for women workers in the urban sphere is essentially getting replaced to ‘self-employed’. This may have a dual connotation: (a) the scope for salaried employment might be getting reduced and (b) the provisions for the facilities attached to the gainful employment are also getting difficult day by day. The working women are losing their job security on one hand and on the other hand, the inconveniences to basic food security; to procure basic needs such as housing, sanitation, adequate health care services; difficulty to achieve universal education etc. are taking place. The slow progress in access to education and control over material resources across different social groups for the women in particular is also aggravating the situation. In this circumstance, the working women in the study area are found to attach themselves with salaried and substantive employment which is the silver lining of the dark cloud. Self employment for the women in the study area is not so prolific as of now and this may be treated as a satisfying status for employment to them.

- The fifth objective is to study the attitude of the working women towards the family and vice versa

Attitude may be defined as the position or the way of carrying oneself; disposition or state of mind. The attitude of the working women towards the family and vice versa could be best understood and adjudged through their experiences.

Freedom of managing money:

Monetary experience is the most important and reliable data source of any analysis. How one reacts to a given situation with regard to money brings forth the inherent characteristics of the personality. Therefore, money management by the working women is firstly dealt with. About 90.88% of the respondents stated that they spend their own income at their disposal. Only 9.12% of the sample said that they kept their salary with their husbands and in-laws. So, one may infer that employment has conferred the respondents with emancipation. But contradictorily, 97.41% of the respondents reported that the lion share of their expenses moved round the household articles or those related to meet the needs and necessities of the family. These included clothes, food stuffs, domestic appliances, healthcare for the household members, gift items for relatives
and friends etc. So, actually the working women are found to carry the load of the family to a greater extent. Only an inconsequential proportion (2.59 %) of the respondents spends on personal items and children. However, majority of the working women (82.95%) have the freedom to save their money (in low proportion) either for their children or for themselves in various deposit schemes. Although they opine that they feel free to spend on whatever they wanted, but they actually expend on the household requirements. The way round, it seems to be a kind of ceiling on to their desires and the shocking part of the story is that they do not realize it.

Decision making:

Decision making in the family is an important facet in determining the status of its family members since it involves the allotment of material resources in a family; it also embraces the distributive and functional roles of the family members especially that of the women. According to the respondents, about 79.90% said that they take decisions of their families; 12.89% said that they remain detached from taking any decision in the family; while 7.21% of the respondents take the decisions jointly after discussion with their husbands. So, if the former and the latter groups are added, it would indicate that independently and jointly the respondents take part in the decision making process in the family with prominence (79.90% + 7.21% = 87.11%).

About 48.51% of the respondents reported that they spend their income in shopping during the ‘Durga Pujas’. Almost equal proportion (48.62%) said that their husbands along with them remain involved in the said purpose. A small proportion of them (2.87%) stated that other persons (like the in-laws, mother, father, sisters, brothers etc) had contributed for shopping. Thus, it is found that about one-half of the samples do spend during the festivals satisfying the expectation of their friends and families.

About 30.48% of the sample said in affirmation that they were being consulted in case of buying and selling of properties. On the other hand, 47.86% of the respondents did not contribute in the decision related to the purchase of real estate. A proportion of 21.66% of the respondents have reported that they jointly with their husbands and in-laws take the decision in this regard. So, directly or indirectly the respondents have developed a firm footing in decision making in their families.

With regard to the savings made by the respondents, LIC is mostly accepted (73.21%) as one of the saving schemes. The next most reliable way of saving investment of the target group is
through the banks (i.e. 11.09%). Contrary to this, a proportion of 17.05% of the respondents did not save owing to either incurrence of huge expenses or little / no encouragement from the rest of the family members in investment savings. With regard to repayment of loans, some of the respondents are found indebted to banks for house building loans. The percentage might be insignificant (0.79%) but such an observation in the study area gives a positive indication on the part of the working women for taking such a decisive role in handling material resources of the family.

Education and employment has made today’s Working women more decisive in child bearing and family planning. In the study area, the working women have been found to have 2-3 children on an average. When they were asked about their intension of having more children, only 4.39% of the respondents opined in affirmation; about 36.07% of them counteracted; whereas 59.54% of the respondents submitted that they take the decision regarding this after discussion with their husbands. This reflects that though a small proportion yet a handful of the women have taken a firm decision like that of child bearing.

Family Planning is another important area of exerting an expression for the working women of the study area. 98.14% of the respondents were found to be aware of family planning. 96.96% of the working wife and their husbands have adopted various birth control measures like that of operation, use of contraceptives, birth controlling pills etc. 1.18% of the couples were found to be motivated with the ideology and would shortly adopt such measures; while 1.86% of the respondents discarded the idea.

With regard to children’s admission to schools, it has been noticed that the working women under study is free enough to exercise their choice. About 92.74% of the respondents could admit their kids to the schools according to their preferences. The rest faced resentment from the family members in this regard.

**Household responsibilities and workload:**

About 40.57% of the respondents bear all the education related expenses of the kids. The rest get support from their husbands and in-laws regarding this. 8.67% respondents were found steady enough to take the financial responsibility during their child birth by paying the medical bills. Their husbands are mostly (96.57%) found to bear the medical bills for the family members.
The working women of the study area require an arrangement to look after their children while they go out to their workplaces. It is found that 60.97% of the respondent’s husbands take care of their children in their absence. 19.98% of the respondents are found to appoint maids/ baby sitters. The Mothers-in-law secures the next position according to 12.77% respondents. The other family members including the Fathers-in-law, brothers, sisters, own parents etc. also take care of the little ones as per 6.30% of the working women. So, it is clear that the working women can successfully organize the support systems at her home for going out to suffice her employment.

Considering the household chores it is found that, majority (83.23%) of the working women engage themselves in cooking; caring of the aged persons (78.28 %); caring of the children (69.11%); cleaning & washing of utensils and clothes (61.68%); marketing including grocery and green grocery items for the family (55.82%); dropping children to schools (35.96%) and paying of bills to avail the amenities of civic life (26.84%). 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. 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. Thus they have a co-operative and helping attitude towards the other family members.

Attitude of the family members towards Working Women: It was important to know about the attitude of the family members of the respondents towards working women so as to find out their acceptance. Overwhelmingly, the respondents (96.45%) reported that their families possess helpful attitude towards the working women in general.

While they were asked about the attitude of their family members towards them as working women, almost equal response was recorded, as 97.69% of the respondents said that their families have accommodating attitude towards them.

But they have a wide range of expectations from them as well especially in doing the household activities. The findings clearly shows that the respondents’ family members (96.06%) really want to see them as a multi-tasker expecting them to do all household chores, all outside works, spend all the earnings for the family and bring up their children properly. The family members of the respondents are found to expect so much from them and this might be due to their radiant
performance at the domestic level as discussed above. The respondents’ relentless efforts have raised the expectation level of their household members.

**Family Co-operation received by the Respondents:**

As far as family co-operation is concerned, the respondents were enquired about the actual co-operation received whereby 54.59% of them stated that they received co-operation from their families. Contrary to this the rest 40.68% said that their family members somehow did not co-operated with them.

Therefore by examining all the aspects from the above findings it may be inferred that the contribution of the respondents of the study area in the family matters cannot be denied. They spend almost the entire salary on procuring things for their family and children in particular. Their education and employment have enabled them to take important decisions particularly concerning their children. Since they are well equipped with higher education and white collar jobs, they were expected to be found involved more with the decision making in the family; but actually it is found that they have been consulted largely in matters of less significance. The respondents however, are seen to have a say in family planning and child bearing. This may be taken as a positive indication towards egalitarianism. With regard to home management, the respondents have shown their brilliance. They are successfully managing their household and workplaces. Their contribution regarding domestic works is highly commendable and it nullifies the idea that modern education and employment abstains the working women to do the household tasks. But there remains a lacuna in matters concerning co-operation from the family members in general. With a positive note it may be said that, the husbands of the respondents are found to have a helping attitude towards the working women especially with regard to caring of the children in their absence and caring of the respondents especially when they are sick.

- **The sixth objective is to find out the Constitutional and Legislative support for Women in India and also to discuss the Developmental Programmes related to them**

The Indian social frame work being patriarchal has always shown favour for the men. The need for the alleviation of injustice to and oppression of the women was felt and accordingly, provisions were made in the Constitution (Fundamental Rights and Duties, Directive Principles etc.) and Legislation ( regarding succession, adoption, marriages and their dissolution, property rights, equality in remuneration, maternity leave, prohibition of dowry and Sati etc.). The
provisions favouring women in the Constitution, Legal frame work along with the Government initiatives taken up so far did not remain unbiased on the gender issue. Realizing this, the policy makers have tried to incorporate special provisions and integrated approaches for the benefit of the women and children evident in the Development Plans and their outlays.

**Constitutional Support to the women in India:**

With regard to Constitutional support extended towards women in India Articles 14, 15 (1), 15(2), 15(3), 16(1), 16(2), 21, 23(1), 23(2) deserve special mention. Article 14 emphasizes about equality before law and equal protection of the laws to all the people of India. Article 15 envisages prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth while accessing any public places, shops, restaurants, ghats, roads, resorts etc. Article 16 advocates equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. Article 21 envisages about protection of life and personal liberty to all. It is important to note here that: any indecent representation in the name of beauty contests would fall under Indecent Representation of Women Act (1986); Sexual harassment in work place is a violation of Art. 15 and Art. 21 of the Constitution; Denial of Right of Succession to women of Scheduled Tribes amounts to deprivation of their right to livelihood under Art. 21; The Supreme Court laid emphasis on the need to provide to prostitutes opportunities for education and training so as to facilitate their rehabilitation may also be related to Art.21. Article 23 explains about Prohibition of Trafficking in human beings and Forced Labour (Right against Exploitation).

Article 36 to51 comes under the **Directive Principles** which may be consulted by the states as well as by the Central Governments for instructions or guidelines helping in the policy making. This also entails the interests and concerns of the women. Article 39(a-e) talks about the equality towards adequate means of livelihood, ownership and control of resources, equal pay for equal work, it also supports the health and strength of workers (men and women) for suitable jobs and safeguards abuse of women and children from becoming labour out of economic.

Like Directive Principles, the **Fundamental Duties** are not legally enforceable but are moral obligations of all citizens to help promote a spirit of patriotism and to uphold the unity of India. Fundamental Duties are envisaged in Art. 51A, in which clause (e) is important to the concerns of the women in India. Art. 51 A(e) says that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India – to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India.
transcending religions, linguistics and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

With regard to the reservation of seats in Panchayats in Art. 243D, not less than one-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women; allotted by rotation to different Panchayat at each level. the number of offices of the chairpersons reserved for the SCs and the STs in the Panchayats at each level in any state shall bear, as nearly may be, the same proportion to the total number of such offices in the Panchayats at each level as the population of the SCs in the state or of the STs in the state bears to the total population of the state.

Clause (3) of Art. 243 T regarding reservation of seats in the Municipalities follow the same provisions as that of Art. 243 D.

According to Art. 325, there shall be one general electoral roll for every territorial constituency for election to either House of Parliament or to the House of Legislature of a state and no person shall be ineligible for inclusion in any such roll or claim to be included in any special electoral roll for any such constituency on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or any of them.

**Legislative Measures favouring women in India:**

The legislative measures addressing to the needs and necessities of women and advocating justice to them were introduced during the Colonial Rule. The British somehow wanted to put a check on to the atrocities bestowed upon the women and several enactments were made thereupon. Some of these deserve special mention and has applicability in the present day also.

The following are some of the enactments during the pre-independent India: Regulation no. XXI of 1795 and Regulation no. III of 1804, declared the practice of infanticide as illegal. The Bengal Sati Regulation Act of 1829 annulled the practice of Sati or self immolation of widows as illegal and punishable offence. Other noteworthy enactments were- the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850 and the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act of 1856. The formulation of Indian Penal Code (1860) and the Indian Contract Act might be cited as manifestation of the objective to codify the law in the matters of civil and criminal procedures and property issues. The IPC (1860) provides for punishment for various offences against women like abduction, rape, adultery, bigamy, remarriage during the lifetime of a wife, cruelty and cheating against women etc. The Converts


**Developmental Programmes related to the women in India:**

Development of Women has been treated as a subject of ‘welfare’ and clubbed together with the welfare of the disadvantaged groups like destitute, disabled, aged etc in the **First Five Year Plan** (1951-56). The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was established in 1953 with a view to cater services to women facilitating maternity, child care, health, education and training to women. The welfare approach continued in the **Second Five Year Plan** (1956-61) and it showed concern for employed women and sought improvement in employment opportunities accordingly. Women’s education and improvement of maternal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children and expectant mothers were given importance. Development
The approach was introduced from the **Third Five Year Plan** onwards (1961-68). Though education was prioritized but other facets like knowledge regarding women’s health and nutrition was also given attention. The **Fourth Five Year Plan** (1969-74) laid stress on women’s education. The **Fifth Five Year Plan** (1974-79) prioritized the training of women particularly those belonged to low income families with dependent children. Special steps were taken for the placement of the successful candidates under the existing scheme of condensed courses of education and socio-economic programmes. Besides this, managerial and sales training was also provided to market goods produced by them. The UN General Assembly during 1975-76 declared the International Women’s Decade to acknowledge equality, development and peace in favour of women. Consequently, a new department named Bureau for Women’s Welfare and Development was established within the Ministry for Social Welfare which was entrusted with the task of coordinating, receiving and initiating policies for women’s development and services. A special cell was established within the Ministry of Labour and Employment to give due attention to the women’s employment needs and problems.

The development Programmes under the **Sixth Five Year Plan** (1980-85) for the first time included a chapter on Women Development. It emphasized on women’s Economic independence, Educational advance, Access to healthcare and family planning and Income supplement (for tribal women). Accordingly, IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA etc prioritized women. Women ITIs were set up all over the country and separate Universities were established in the states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh for girls. Emphasis was given to pregnant women and lactating mothers of weaker sections through ICDS.

The **Seventh Plan** (1985-1990) was sought to generate confidence among women and to make themselves aware of their potentialities, their rights and privileges. The long term objectives of the Plan was to raise women’s economic and social status with an integrated multidisciplinary approach to bring them into the mainstream of national development; addressing to issues like employment (income generation), education, health, nutrition, application of science and technology in various activities and so on. Besides the earlier mentioned schemes, several others like CAPART, JRY, NRY etc. were initiated during the 7th Plan period.

The **Eighth Five Year Plan** (1992-97) showed a shift from the developmental aspect to empowerment of women. The strategy was to ensure that the benefits of development from
different sectors did not bypass women. The three key areas of Education, Health and Employment were addressed carefully throughout the Plan. The highlights of the developmental programmes include Child Survival and Safe Motherhood (CSSM), National Nutrition Policy (NNP), National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) in the health sector; Non-formal Education (NFE) Programme provided education to those who remained outside the formal schooling, The Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education provided a special boost to enrolment, retention and attendance of girls besides upgrading their nutritional status. In the employment sector, special programmes like “Women in Agriculture” was launched in 1993 to train the women agricultural practitioners and this programme was further linked to programmes associated with animal husbandry, dairying (Operation Flood), horticulture, fisheries, apiaries (bee keeping) etc. Women milk cooperative became leading in the states like Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Karnataka. Prime Minister’s Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) and Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) were started. The Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP) and Prime Minister’s Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme (PMIUPGP) which was replaced by Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana (SJSRY) in December 1997 are worth mentioning. Other programmes included Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY), Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP), Training cum Employment cum Production Centres (TEPC) popularly known as NORAD were there besides earlier initiated programmes like IRDP, TRYSEM etc. The Rashtiya Mahila Kosh (RMK) facilitating credit support / micro-financing to poor and asset less women struggling in the informal sector started working through the medium of NGOs. In addition to this, RMK also supported its NGO partners, to form Women’s Thrift and Credit Societies, which are popularly known as Self Help Groups (SHGs). One of the achievements during the 8th Plan was the setting up of a statutory body named as the National Commission for Women (NCW) in 1992, to safeguard the rights and interests of women which reviewed both women-specific and women-related legislations, investigated into thousands of individual complaints and atrocities and initiated remedial action wherever possible. Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats were also set up for speedy justice to women.

The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) envisaged a) Empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and Minorities as agents of socio-economic change and development. b) Promoting and developing people’s participatory institutions like Panchayati Raj institutions, cooperatives and
self-help groups. c) Strengthening efforts to build self-reliance. d) The convergence of services from different sectors and e) A women’s component plan at the Central and State levels. Gender Budgeting was introduced (2000-2001) to attain more effective targeting of public expenditure and to counter balance undesirable gender specific consequences of previous budgetary measures. The year 2001 was declared and celebrated as ‘Women’s Empowerment Year’ for awareness generation and sensitization among women through Integrated Media Campaign covering electronic, print and film Medias.

The vision of ‘Women Empowerment’ continued as the major strategy in the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007). Social Empowerment, Economic Empowerment and Gender Justice were the thrust areas. Universalization of the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) services along with Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY) to fill the critical gaps in the existing healthcare infrastructure and nutrition services were encouraged. The 10th Plan also aimed at equal and easy access to free education for girls and women at all levels and in the field of technical and vocational education, training in job oriented trades. In order to arrest the drop-out rates and to increase the retention rates, the Plan had sought for support services like provision for Mid-day Meals, hostels and incentives like books, uniforms, transport charges, so on and so forth. A major step for social empowerment was taken up in the form of extension of Women ITIs and Women’s Branch in Regional Vocational Training Centres and General ITIs with residential facilities at all district and sub-district levels. Several poverty alleviation programmes were taken up through some women SHGs like - Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY), Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), STEP, Training cum Production Centres for Women (NORAD) etc. These not only generated income amongst womenfolk, but also enhanced their economic capabilities and strengthen them economically. The expansion of Khadi and Village Industries, Handicrafts, Handlooms, Sericulture, Small Scale Cottage Industries in favour of women received priority attention. Micro-financing institutions were encouraged to provide micro-crediting facilities for women. The Women Component Plan (WCP) was defined clearly and schemes and programmes under each department/ ministry would ensure the adoption of women related mechanisms through which funds or benefits would reach the women. With consultation of the enforcement authorities, well planned programme of action had been prepared to arrest the increasing violence against women,
adolescent girls and girl children. Initiative was taken for a societal re-orientation towards a Gender Just Society.

The beginning of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) saw women and children who continued to be the victims of violence, neglect and injustice. So, it committed to address these issues and see to the all round development of them. The 11th Plan recognizes heterogeneity among women and children of our country, i.e. they belong to different caste, class, community and above all different economic groups; located within a separate geographical setting and development zones. Therefore, besides the general programmes, the 11th Plan was expected to cater to the needs of the diverse categories of women and children. For the first time, in the 11th Plan women are recognized as equal citizens and also as the agents of economic and social growth (www.planningcommission.gov.in, 11th Plan, vol.2, chapter 6: 1; accessed on 21.04.16 at 1:00 p.m.). The development programmes included: Swayamsidha II, which is an integrated scheme for women’s empowerment through SHGs promoting thrift and credit activities and participatory approach towards alleviation of poverty; Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) - a scheme aimed for skilled training for women which was aimed to get revamped and merged with the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and Swayamsidha for credit linkages. For social empowerment of women, the CSWB continued financing the NGOs for implementation of various women and child related schemes. Condensed courses were arranged for those who could not join the mainstream education system or had been compelled to become drop outs. The usage of Mass Medias favouring women also received encouragement. The Short Stay Home (SSH) Scheme addressed to the basic necessities to women and girls in need (like victims of marital conflict, crime, homeless etc.) counseling, legal aid, medical facilities, vocational training and rehabilitation. The Supreme Court had directed the National Commission of Women (NCW) to ensure rehabilitation to rape victims. Accordingly, a scheme named ‘Scheme for Relief and Rehabilitation of Victims of Sexual Assault’ was formulated. The Ministry of Women and Child Development put forward a maternity benefit scheme known as Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme (CMBS) or Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY).

The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) recognizes the primacy of India’s Women and Children since they represent about 70% of the country’s population. The plan also commits that high priority would be given to them especially to those belonging to the weaker socio-economic strata and deprived socio-religious communities like SCs, STs, OBCs, religious minorities,
migrants, vulnerable tribal communities, those living in inaccessible areas, insecure environments, those are single and the urban poor. The 12th Plan also provides an essential component supporting women home-based workers, self-employed workers and small producers so that they could get support for their enterprises covering technology and skill training, entrepreneurship training, market information, access to institutionalized credit, power and other infrastructure related facilities. This Plan also prioritizes the role of SHGs so that they can serve the poor women’s interest in a proper manner. Apart from National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), the 12th plan also favours special dispensation for single women particularly related to the modification of the Medical Insurance Policies recognizing their needs. Issuance of Kisan Credit Cards to women farmers with joint pattas as collateral would be encouraged. This Plan has identified the necessity of awareness building regarding the emergence of the new trend of ‘Feminization of Agriculture’ (initiated during the 10th Plan). The Plan recognizes categorization of vulnerable women on socio-religious basis and seeks to address issues of women’s survival and health through a life-cycle approach. The NRHM targets to lower down high female IMR and declining child sex ratio. NRHM would also go for an impact assessment of Janani Suraksha Yojana, Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh etc. The NRHM would also be integrated with IGMSY, National Food Secruity Bill (NFSB) and other programmes related to expectant and lactating mothers and those which are formulated to reduce MMR. The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) aims at increasing the number of women teachers especially in rural schools and inaccessible areas. In the Panchayats, the Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) must be able enough to initiate better governance and social change. They should be able to deliver the programmes and schemes like ICDS, NRHM, SSA, MNREGS etc. and monitor the functioning of grass root workers like Anganwadi Workers (AWW), Accredited Social Health Activities (ASHA), Primary School Teachers and so on. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in collaboration with other ministries must promote and groom women in pre-election trainings, building up of capacity and gender budgeting and gender audit in rural and urban local bodies. The Gender Resource Centres (GRC) of MoWCD has been envisaged to bring social, economic and legal empowerment particularly to the under-privileged women by their courses of action. Urban local bodies also need to give importance to a gender focal point in each body; citizen report cards focusing on the needs and necessities of urban women dwellers so that this helps in capacity building, planning, budgeting and mobilization of
resources. The 12th Plan pays attention to the needs of vulnerable women including the SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities. The Plan seeks for better implementation of Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 in the form of special programmes and interventions that should be drawn up for them particularly in the fields of education and health. The Plan also strives for the betterment of the STs by promotion of the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006; so that they could go for adequate land development facilities and credit facilities. A special category known as the PVTGs (Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups) has been identified. To promote socio-economic development, a continuation of the programmes like STEP, Priyadarshini (helping livelihood and working women hostels), Ujjwala (prevention of trafficking, rescue and rehabilitation of victims), Swadhar (short stay homes and stay homes for women) have been recommended. Besides this, with the specific objective of ensuring convergence and better co-ordination among the schemes/programmes under different Ministries/Departments, the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) has been initiated. The 12th Plan also proposes empowerment of transgender community by advocating for their education, housing, healthcare, skill development, employment opportunity and fiscal assistance.

- The seventh objective is to study the perception of the working women towards education, marriage, family structure and employment

The perception of the working women of the study area has been revealed in terms of Education, Marriage, Family and Employment. These four aspects outline the foundation of the life and living of the respondents.

Education:

A predominance of literates in the sample (92% of the respondents) is discernible in the study area with a general trend towards attainment of higher education. About 99.66% of the working women are aware of the significance of education. About 75% of the respondents admitted that education has given a new impetus and freedom and enhanced their ability for decision making in the family. 25% of the respondents said that education has enabled them to attain social position and helped them to imbibe traditional values as well. Almost 90.21% of the respondents opined in favour of higher education for women.
Marriage:

Marriage for women is one of the most important life-cycle events especially in the context of Indian society as: it is indicative of women’s mobility from parental abode to spouse’s house; it relates to the change in the control of women’s life from parents to spouses and in-laws in the patriarchal set up; it confers social and material status to women.

Most of the respondents in the sample (75.63%) are married (including married and widowed categories) representing stability in their lives and kin relations. 65.96% of the respondents got married in their optimum age (19-30 years). Maturity in age enables one to take up right decisions in their lives and by virtue of which the respondents are able to strike a balance at home and in their offices. The incidence of maximum number of respondents in the referred age group also indicate occurrence of economically active population as well. The present study has drawn out a relationship between the literacy and average age of marriage; which resulted into a positive finding with regard to both the indicators. This again confirms that in the urban areas the women finishes off with their education and then only enters into family life. Education of the respondents has helped them to imbibe ethical values and to break away the futile social practices also. About 85.03% of the respondents voiced against dowry.

Most of the respondents (72.36%) have undergone arranged marriage while 27.64% of the sample experienced marriage by own selection. Since the respondents are found entering family life at matured age, it was presupposed that they would have gone for marriages by own selection or they would have a strong preference for it. On the contrary, marriages by negotiation are preferred the most by majority (53.91%) of the working women of CBM; but with changed characteristics from that of the traditional arranged marriages. The working women preferred to meet the ‘would-be groom’ in order to build an idea of the likings, disliking and compatibility before marriage. The study thus unveiled the changing pattern of marriages in the study area.

Family:

The sample for this inquiry included 60 non-working women apart from 1777 working women in the CBM area. Generally speaking, it is seen that working women have better status in their families in comparison to the non-working women and that the former ones enjoy financial autonomy and command over resources. The status and freedom of the daughters-in-law depends on the type of the family concerned. The study area has no exception to the popularity and
proliferation of the neo-joint families. The composition of which includes husband, wife, their unmarried children and any one relative who has his/her family elsewhere but stays with this family for providing assistance to the working women. 62.97% of the sample resides in the Neo-joint families in the CBT, but the respondents (59%) prefer joint families to stay within.

It has been found that 98.14% of the respondents are aware of family planning. It might be because of education, the respondents have developed matured decision making ability so that 61% of them entered into first pregnancy between 19 – 30 years. Incidence of late pregnancy and delayed pregnancy are also seen here. It is the effect of the delayed marriages that have occurred in the study area. 62.46% of the respondents do not possess any preference for a boy child as the heir of the family.

The respondents have opined that their families have a helpful attitude towards working women in general (96.45%) and the respondents in particular (97.69%). Contradictorily, it is found that most of the working women do all the domestic works; this might have raised the expectation of the families as they expect the working women to do all the chores, to spent all the income for family needs, to look after the children properly. No doubt education and employment have emancipated the working women of the study area, but the respondents work exhaustively at their households. This might led to develop a preference for Joint families in the view of getting assistance in household activities. The respondents also reported that 95.55% of their families prefer working women as brides for their earning. Most importantly, the respondents are fortunate to have co-operative husbands whose role and activities complements that of their better halves.

**Employment:**

The reason for getting into employment for the respondents like most of studies on women’s work might be attributed largely (86.89%) to financial necessity. The working women are mostly (61.11%) found engaged to salaried jobs. The level of education has a positive influence on the average monthly income of the respondents. Respondents with high educational qualification have high average monthly income. About 89.53% of the respondents are satisfied with their jobs while the rest complained about the infrastructural issues mainly.

To 92.91% of the working women, employment has not posed hindrance to their family life. 93.30% of the working women did not felt that they are distanced from their husbands. 88.31%
of the respondents remain concerned with child rearing and upbringing. Furthermore, 90% of them are of opinion that women should go for jobs. The preference list of jobs begins with that of teaching (45.98% of respondents), business (22.57%), administration (11.93%) and miscellaneous jobs (3.15%).

7.6 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HYPOTHESES:

**HYPOTHESIS 1: Financial necessity is not the sole driving force behind female employment for all cases.**

The present study area has a small extent as an urban unit and is located far off from Kolkata. At the initial phase of the inquiry, it was thought that female workers would not engage themselves into bread earning activities. But the idea got nullified during the survey. Majority of the sample was found appointed in organized sector and white collar services.

The respondents were enquired about the reasons which forced them to go for employment. The answers have been tabulated in Table 6.12 of Chapter VI which reveals that majority of the respondents (86.89%) went for jobs because of the financial inadequacy in their families. About 9.90% of the respondents accounted that they got into services to attain a social position, as women with financial authority is held high in the society. While 3.21% of the working women disclosed that in order to get absorbed into professions related to their family tradition and also to occupy time they had taken up jobs. The ward wise representation of this in Map no. 6.11 of Chapter VI also reveals similar findings. So, financial necessity may be attributed as the chief cause behind female employment in the study area. The other factors such as to gain social position, to follow the family tradition and also to occupy free time also deserve special mention.

Therefore, from the above lain table (Table: 6.12) as well as from Map no. 6.11, it is found that though financial necessity largely contributed for the female employment; but it is not the sole reason which acted as the push factor for the same in the study area. Thus the first hypothesis of the study gets proved that **Financial necessity is not the sole driving force behind female employment for all cases.**
**HYPOTHESIS 2: The ‘private’ and ‘public’ lives of the working women are likely to be in conflict**

Majority (83.23%) of the working women engage themselves to cooking for their families; Marketing including grocery and green grocery (35.79%); cleaning & washing of clothes and utensils (61.68%); the respondents also take care of the aged persons in the family (78.28 %); they 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 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.

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.

All the above findings clearly show that the working women under study take up huge workload in addition to their profession. 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. Their relentless efforts and continuous labour to keep both the household and workplace ever functioning are really praise worthy.

Although 97.69% of the working women reported that their families have helping attitude towards them but 54.59% of the sample reported that they have received 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. 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. 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. They seem to remain unaware of the herculean task they endure. So, it revealed that the ‘private’ and ‘public’ lives of the working women are likely to be in conflict.

**HYPOTHESIS 3: Employed women are able to attain a better standard of living and financial autonomy.**

Perception to life and living of the working and the non-working women has also been marked during the interview. The sample of the non-working 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).

The working women on the contrary, are mostly (61.11%) engaged to the 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 jobs of other 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) apart from the income of their spouses. 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.

87% of the non-working women believed that employed women enjoy better status in their family by taking financial decisions independently. 98.33% of them have opined that women should go for employment in order to attain a better living standard. So the second hypothesis of the study gets proved that **Employed women are able to attain a better standard of living and financial autonomy.**

**7.7 CONCLUSION:** Therefore, it may be concluded that the status of the working women pertaining to the study area is in transition from the traditional to that of modern. There is no denying that the social progress was initiated by the royal families as they brought in the global
culture to Koch Bihar. The influence of the Royal Ladies remains immense in the matters of education particularly for the women. This paved way for emancipation to them.

Presently, the working women of the Cooch Behar Town area have developed a pragmatic vision to life and living. Education and employment have emancipated them to a certain extent but they need to be involved more in the household decision making. They are living a strenuous life with a huge workload at their houses nevertheless they are able to strike a perfect balance between the household and outer world. Although their husbands have developed a helping attitude towards the working women, yet more co-operations from their families can make their lives a pleasurable experience.

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Photo Plates
PHOTO PLATES PERTAINING TO THE STUDY AREA

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Plate 16: Ward No.3 along Kameshwari Road
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Plate 35: Working as Nurse

Plate 36: Seamstress at Tailor shop

Plate 37: Working as a Cook

Plate 38: Working as a Domestic Help
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Appendix I
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE: FOR WORKING WOMEN OF CBT

MODULE I: GENERAL INFORMATIONS

1. Name of the respondent:

2. Address & Contact No.

3. Age:

4. M/ F:

5. Ward No:

6. Religion:

7. Caste:

8. Nationality:

9. Married/Unmarried

10. Working woman/ House wife:

11. How many persons earn in your family?

MODULE II: DEMOGRAPHY

12. Family structure and educational qualifications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Members</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Illiterate rates</th>
<th>Can Sign Only</th>
<th>LWFE*</th>
<th>Upto V</th>
<th>V-VIII</th>
<th>IX-X</th>
<th>X-XII</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>PG</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* Literate without formal education)

13. Do you have children? Y/N

14. How many children do you have?

   Age:                      M:                                F:

15. Do you intend to have more children? Y/N    Give reasons:

16. Do you have any preference for male child? Y/N    Give reasons:

17. Do your husband and your in-laws possess same liking as yours? Y/N

18. Have you ever faced any confrontation from your husband and in-laws regarding this? Y/N

19. If yes, specify:

20. No. of births occurred in the family last year. M:                      F:

21. No. of deaths occurred in the family last year:

   Age:                      M:                                F:

22. How did the death(s) occur? Illness/ accident/others

23. Give detail in case of any anomalous information:
MODULE III: ECONOMIC STATUS

24. Do you stay in your own/spouse’s/rented house?
25. If rented, then what is the amount per month?
26. Where is your original house?
27. Why have you come here? Reason: marriage/occupation/migration/to take care of property/others
28. Who is the bread earner in your family?
29. Occupational structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Members</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Monthly Income (in Rs.)</th>
<th>Alternative Occupation</th>
<th>Monthly Income (in Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30. Do you possess any land? Y/N
31. Type of the land: Agricultural/Residential
32. If yes, then state the area (in Bighas/Kathas/Acres/Ha):
33. State the location of the land:
34. Type of ownership of land: Single/Joint
34a. Do you own property? Y/N, Give detail
35. Do you earn from the land? Y/N
36. If yes, then state the amount per month:
37. Are you directly involved in the land management? Y/N
38. Do you supervise in farming/selling of the products/purchase of the inputs?
39. Mention other activity by which you are related to it:
40. Utilization of land:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Area</th>
<th>Crops Grown</th>
<th>Sowing Season</th>
<th>Harvesting Season</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Cost in Rs.</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Cost in Rs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

41. Do you have domestic animals? Y/N
42. Categories: cows/buffaloes/sheep/goats/hens/ducks/others:
43. State their numbers:
44. Income from domestic animals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Cost in Rs.</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Cost in Rs.</th>
<th>Income (Rs./month)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

45. Do you spend your own income? Y/N

46. If yes, then name the things that you buy:

47. Percentage/Amount of income spend on different expenses:
Food, clothing, electric bills, telephone bills, gas, filter cartridge, gifts, education for children others.

48. Percentage/Amount of income spend for own self:
Food, clothing, travel, entertainment, gifts, cosmetics, remittances to dependants, others.

49. Percentage /Amount of income kept for savings:

50. Mention some of the saving schemes: NSC/ MIS/ LIC/SB/FD/Others

51. If you do not spend your income than what do you do with your salary?

52. Did you face any interference regarding spending your income? Y/N

53. Who interferes with your money?
   Husband/father-in-law/ mother-in-law/ others

53a. What kind of gadgets you use at home? Mobiles/Smart phones/ Washing Machine/Microwave oven/ Mixer-grinders

MODULE IV: SOCIAL STATUS
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

54. Do your kids go to school? Y/N

55. How far is the school from your house?

56. What is the mode of transport used? Bus/ train/ tram/ auto/ van/ rickshaw/pool car/walking/others

57. What is the cost of transport per month?

58. What kind of school it is? Girls/ Boys/ Co-ed

59. What kind of school it is? Govt. / Pvt.

60. What is the fee per month?

60a. Who pays the expenses regarding children?

61. Any incentive your children receive from school? Y/N   62. If yes, then specify:
63. Are you aware of the necessity of education? Y/N
64. Opine your views regarding its importance:
65. What is the medium of instruction in the school? English/ Bengali/ Hindi/ Others
66. Do you have any preference for English medium schools? Y/N
67. If yes, then state the reason for your preference.
68. Do your husband and your in-laws posses same liking as yours? Y/N
69. Have you ever faced any confrontation from your husband and in-laws regarding admission of your kid(s) to school? Y/N
70. If yes, specify:

71. Educational profile of the family:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Members</th>
<th>Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex : M/F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Educational Qualification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Institution studied : | Medium of instruction :
| X               |     |
| XII             |     |
| College         |     |
| P. G.           |     |
| Ph.D.           |     |
| Others          |     |

**HEALTH CONDITION**

72. What are the common diseases from which you suffer?
73. What kind of treatment you sought for? Allopathy/ homeopathy/ ayurvedic/ ojha/others
74. Do you prefer to go to hospitals/ clinics/ PHC/others for treatment? Y/N
75. Is there any health centre/ hospital/nursing home situated nearby? Y/N
76. How many doctors, nurses and attendants are available?
77. What amount do they charge?
78. Where have you gone for your delivery?
79. What is the distance from your house?
80. Were you aware of the vaccines and immunization during the pregnancy period and Post pregnancy period? Y/N
81. Give detail of the vaccines that you had taken:
82. What was the nature of delivery? Normal/Caesarean:
83. What was the charge spent for the delivery?
84. Who bore these expenses? Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ yourself/ others
85. How frequently you visit to the nearest PHC/doctor/ hospital/nursing home with your Children?
86. What vaccines you have given to your children? Specify:
87. Do they charge any fee? Y/N
88. If yes, then how much?
89. Who bears these expenses? Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ others
90. Are you aware of the family planning schemes? Y/N Specify:
91. Do you use any birth control measures? Y/N Contraceptives/ Pills/ Gels/ Others
92. Who takes care when you fall ill? Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others
93. Do you take care when any of your family members fall sick? Y/N
94. Who bears these expenses? Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/yourself/ others
95. Have you enjoyed maternity leave from your office? Y/N 96. For how many days?

SOCIAL STATUS

98. What was your age at marriage?
99. What was the type of your marriage? (Own selection/ arranged)
100. What is your preference? Give reasons:
100a. what do you think about Marriage : a. holy union of two souls  b. mutual understanding based on trust
101. Have you ever faced any confrontation from your parents and in-laws regarding your marriage? Y/N
102. Specify:
103. Did your in-laws take dowry at your marriage? Y/N If yes, then give detail:
104. Do you think dowry should be discouraged? Y/N
105. Do your family support the system of dowry? Y/N

106. What was your age at your first pregnancy?

107. What was your age at your second pregnancy?

108. What do you wear in the household? Saree/ salwar suit/ skirt/ pants/gowns/ others

109. What do you wear in the office? Saree/ salwar suit/ skirt/ pants/gowns/ others

110. Have you ever faced any confrontation from your in-laws regarding your dressing? Y/N

111. If yes, give detail:

112. Who cooks for your family? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others

113. Who goes to market? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others

114. Who does the washing and cleaning in your house? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others


117. Who does the festive shopping? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ others


119. Who pays the electric/ telephone bills/ ration etc? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others

120. Where do you work? Address of your office:

121. Is it a Govt./ Pvt. Sector?

122. What kind of work you do? Specify:

123. How much salary do you receive?
124. Are you satisfied with your work? Y/N  If no, then specify:

125. What modification do you intend in your work place?

125a. Do you participate in office related programmes/functions? Y/N Specify:

126. Do you face any harassment in your work place? Y/N Specify: Sexual/ Office politics/ Verbal abuse/ Mental torture/ others

127. What steps have you taken to eradicate that?

128. Was it your decision to work outside? Y/N


129. Do you take your own decisions? Y/ N Specify, if no:

130. What is the attitude of your family towards a working woman like you? helping/non-cooperative/other

131. What are the expectations of your family from you?
   a) Should do all the household chores. b) Should do outside works like marketing/ shopping/ paying bills/ taking sick to doctors/ children to school c) Should take care of the young/ aged and sick persons. d) Should spend all the amount of salary on the family expenses e) others, specify:

132. Do you feel that your employment is posing hindrance to your family life? Y/N Specify:

133. What kind of effect your employment has regarding your relationship with the parents-in-law?

134. Do you feel distanced with your husband? Y/N

135. Do you feel that you are neglecting your children? Y/N

136. Do you feel fatigued for doing your works? Y/N

137. Do your family co-operate with you in your activities? Y/N

138. Do your family prefer working women as brides? Y/N
139. Do you face any harassment in your house? Y/N Specify: Sexual harassment/Verbal abuse/
Mental torture/ Physical torture/ others

140. What steps have you taken to eradicate that?

141. What kind of family do you prefer and why? Joint/ nuclear

142. Do you think that every woman should go for employment and higher education? Y/N

143. What kind of job/career do you prefer as a woman?

Special Note:
Appendix II
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NON-WORKING WOMEN OF CBT

MODULE I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name of the respondent:
2. Address & Contact No.

8. Married/Unmarried
9. How many persons earn in your family?

MODULE II: DEMOGRAPHY

12. Family structure and educational qualifications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Members</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Illiterate Rates</th>
<th>Can Sign Only</th>
<th>LWFE*</th>
<th>Upto V</th>
<th>V-VIII</th>
<th>IX-X</th>
<th>X-XII</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>PG</th>
<th>Others</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

(* Literate without formal education)

13. Do you have children? Y/N
14. How many children do you have?
   Age: M: F:
15. Do you intend to have more children? Y/N Give reasons:
16. Do you have any preference for male child? Y/N Give reasons:
17. Do your husband and your in-laws posses same liking as yours? Y/N
18. Have you ever faced any confrontation from your husband and in-laws regarding this? Y/N
19. If yes, specify:
MODULE III: ECONOMIC STATUS

20. Do you stay in your own/ spouse’s/ rented house?
21. If rented, then what is the amount per month?
22. Where is your original house?
23. Why have you come here? Reason: marriage/occupation of spouse/migration/ to take care of property/others
24. Who is the bread earner in your family? Husband/ father –in-law/mother-in-law/ others
25. Occupational structure:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Family Members</th>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Monthly Income (in Rs.)</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. Do you possess any land? Y/N
27. Type of the land: Agricultural/ Residential
28. If yes, then state the area (in Bighas/ Kathas/ Acres/ Ha):
30. Type of ownership of land: Single / Joint
31. Do you own property? Y/N, Give detail
32. Who spends for the family expenses? Husband/ father-in-law/mother-in-law/others
33. Amount of income per month spent for yourself:
34. Amount of income kept for savings (per month):
35. Mention some of the saving schemes: NSC/ MIS/ LIC/SB/FD/Others
36. Do you face any interference regarding family expenditure? Y/N
MODULE IV: SOCIAL STATUS

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

38. Do your kids go to school? Y/N
39. What is the mode of transport used? Bus/ train/ tram/ auto/ van/ rickshaw/pool
car/walking/others
40. What is the cost of transport per month?
41. What kind of school it is? Girls/ Boys/ Co-ed
42. What kind of school it is? Govt. / Pvt.
43. What is the fee per month?
44. Who pays the expenses regarding children?
45. Opine your views regarding importance of Education: for getting job/ for gaining knowledge
46. What is the medium of instruction in the school? English/ Bengali/ Hindi/ Others
47. Do you have any preference for English medium schools? Y/N
48. If yes, then state the reason for your preference. Essential for higher studies/ communicate properly/smartness
49. Do your husband and your in-laws posses same liking as yours? Y/N
50. Have you ever faced any confrontation from your husband and in-laws regarding admission of your kid(s) to school? Y/N
51. If yes, specify:

HEALTH CONDITION

52. What are the common diseases from which you suffer?
53. What kind of treatment you sought for? Allopathy/ homeopathy/ ayurvedic/ ojha/others
54. Where have you gone for your delivery?
55. Were you aware of the vaccines and immunization during the pregnancy period and Post pregnancy period? Y/N
56. What was the nature of delivery? Normal/Caesarean:
57. What was the charge spent for the delivery?
58. Who bore these expenses? Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/others
59. Have you given all vaccines to your children? Y/N
60. Who bears these expenses? Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ others
61. Are you aware of the family planning schemes? Y/N Specify:
62. Do you use any birth control measures? Y/N Contraceptives/ Pills/ Gels/ Others
63. Who takes care when you fall ill? Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others
64. Do you take care when any of your family members fall sick? Y/N
65. Who bears these medical expenses? Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/yourself/others

**SOCIAL STATUS**

66. What was your age at marriage?
67. What was the type of your marriage? (Own selection/ arranged)
68. What is your preference? Give reasons:
69. Did your in-laws take dowry at your marriage? Y/N  If yes, then give detail:
70. Do you think dowry should be discouraged? Y/N
71. Do your family support the system of dowry? Y/N
72. What was your age at your first pregnancy?
73. What was your age at your second pregnancy?
74. What do you wear in the household? Saree/ salwar suit/ skirt/ pants/gowns/ others
75. Have you ever faced any confrontation from your in-laws regarding your dressing? Y/N
76. Who cooks for your family? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others
77. Who goes to market? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others
78. Who does the washing and cleaning in your house? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others
81. Who does the festive shopping? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/others
82. Who takes your children to school? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others
83. Who pays the electric/ telephone bills/ ration etc? Yourself/ Husband/father -in-law/ mother -in-law/ maid servant/ others
84. Do you take family decisions? Y/N
85. Do you take your own decisions? Y/ N
86. Are you satisfied being a housewife? Y/N;
87. If no why? Working ladies have more status in family/can spend more/have more liberty in taking decisions/can live a better life
88. What is the attitude of your family towards like you? helping/ non-cooperative/other
89. What are the expectations of your family from you?
   a) Should do all the household chores. b) Should do outside works like marketing/ shopping/
   paying bills/ taking sick to doctors/ children to school c) Should take care of the young/
   aged and sick persons. e) others,
90. Do you feel that you are neglecting your children? Y/N
91. Do you feel fatigued for doing your works? Y/N
92. Do your family co-operate with you in your activities? Y/N
93. Do your family prefer working women as brides? Y/N
94. Do you face any harassment in your house? Y/N Specify: Sexual harassment/Verbal abuse/
   Mental torture/ Physical torture/ others
95. What steps have you taken to eradicate that?
96. What kind of family do you prefer and why? Joint/ nuclear
97. Do you think that every woman should go for employment and higher education? Y/N
98. What kind of job/career do you prefer as a woman?

Special Note:
Appendix III
DATA TABLES USED FOR CALCULATIONS AND PREPARATION OF THEMATIC MAPS

**TABLE: 1 POPULATION DENSITY OF COOCH BEHAR TOWN -2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WARD NO</th>
<th>TOTAL POPULATION</th>
<th>AREA (SQUARE KILOMETRES)</th>
<th>POPULATION DENSITY (PERSONS/SQ. KMS)</th>
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<td>1833</td>
<td>0.1263</td>
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</table>

Source: Census Report, 2011

**TABLE: 2 LITERACY SCENARIO OF THE STUDY AREA BY LOCATION QUOTIENT (LQ)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No</th>
<th>Female Literates (fl)</th>
<th>Female Population (fp)</th>
<th>( \frac{fl}{fp} )</th>
<th>( \frac{x}{FLCBT/FPCBT} )</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<td><strong>38921(FPCBT)</strong></td>
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</table>

Source: Census Report 2011
Location Quotient (LQ) = \frac{fli/fpi}{FL/FP}

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.

TABLE: 3 LITERACY SCENARIO OF THE RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY AREA BY LOCATION QUOTIENT (LQ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No</th>
<th>Literate Working Women</th>
<th>Working Women</th>
<th>x= lww/wwp</th>
<th>LQ= x/\text{LWW/WWP}</th>
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<td>1777 (WWP)</td>
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</table>

Source: Field Survey

Location Quotient (LQ) = \frac{lwwi/wwpi}{LWW/WWP}

Where, lwwi= number of literate working women in each ward among the surveyed group, wwp= number of working women population surveyed in each ward, LWW= Total number of Literate Working Women in the CBT in the surveyed group and WWP= Total number of Working Women surveyed in the CBT.
### TABLE: 4 FEMALE WORKERS' INTENSITY INDEX OF CBT-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No</th>
<th>Female Population (fpi)</th>
<th>Female Workers (fwi)</th>
<th>$y = \frac{(fpi/FP) \times 100}{(fwi/FW) \times 100}$</th>
<th>$x = \frac{(x+y)}{2}$</th>
<th>$\sqrt{(x+y)/2}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2294</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>5.89399</td>
<td>5.999641</td>
<td>5.946816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>912</td>
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<td>1.113706</td>
<td>1.728457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>4.868837</td>
<td>4.131489</td>
<td>9.000326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1729</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>4.442332</td>
<td>2.425004</td>
<td>6.867336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1796</td>
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<td>4.598527</td>
<td>9.213003</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1679</td>
<td>147</td>
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<td>2.64056</td>
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<td>252</td>
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<td>4.526675</td>
<td>9.177121</td>
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<td>6.995514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2711</td>
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<td>5.388999</td>
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<td>7.598347</td>
<td>13.33047</td>
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<td>280</td>
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<td>5.029639</td>
<td>10.90564</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>292</td>
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<td>5.245195</td>
<td>9.741482</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1306</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>3.355515</td>
<td>4.131489</td>
<td>7.487004</td>
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<td>1984</td>
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<td>443</td>
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<td>7.957607</td>
<td>13.92097</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>2.37147</td>
<td>2.281301</td>
<td>4.652771</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2980</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>7.656535</td>
<td>9.322795</td>
<td>16.97933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2202</td>
<td>332</td>
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<td>5.963715</td>
<td>11.62133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2549</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>6.549164</td>
<td>7.185198</td>
<td>13.73436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>38921 (FP)</td>
<td>5567 (FW)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Report 2011

Female Workers’ Intensity Index = $\sqrt{\frac{x+y}{2}}$

Where,

$\chi = \frac{\text{No of Female Workers in each Ward} \times 100}{\text{Total no of Female Workers in CBT}}$

$\gamma = \frac{\text{No of Female Population in each Ward} \times 100}{\text{Total no of Female Population in CBT}}$

### SCALE OF INTENSITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEMALE WORKERS' INTENSITY INDEX</th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>MODERATE</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>VERY HIGH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1.50</td>
<td>1.51-2.00</td>
<td>2.01-2.50</td>
<td>&gt;2.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE: 5 SOCIAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY AREA BY COMPOSITE INDEX SCORE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wd no</th>
<th>No. of Resp.</th>
<th>X11/ Mean (X1= No. of Respondents)</th>
<th>X12/ Mean (p = Literacy (%))</th>
<th>Avg. Monthly Income</th>
<th>X13/ Mean (c = Family Co-op received)</th>
<th>X14/ Mean (d = Respondents receiving own income)</th>
<th>Resp. spending</th>
<th>X15/ Mean (e = Interference in money handling)</th>
<th>X16/ Mean (f = Savings)</th>
<th>X17/ Mean (g = Participation in office functions)</th>
<th>X18/ Mean (h = Composite Index)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.125492</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.999732</td>
<td>12353</td>
<td>0.646238</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1.117512</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.044776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.202539</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>23811.11</td>
<td>1.248276</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.207373</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.371517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0.483962</td>
<td>95.54884</td>
<td>1.036123</td>
<td>7646.512</td>
<td>0.400022</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.495392</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.447761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>81.13208</td>
<td>0.881634</td>
<td>4689.623</td>
<td>0.243534</td>
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<td>0.610599</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.36635</td>
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<tr>
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<td>35</td>
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<td>0.352782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>0.6875</td>
<td>0.651289</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.898505</td>
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<td>0.407056</td>
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<td>0.513292</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.189959</td>
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<tr>
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<td>85.36585</td>
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<td>0.538133</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>0.583446</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.141126</td>
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<td>1.053558</td>
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<td>1.096591</td>
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<td>1.290233</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>1.519674</td>
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<tr>
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<td>93.26629</td>
<td>1.013525</td>
<td>17641.35</td>
<td>0.922894</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0.518646</td>
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<td>0.938549</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1.163594</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1.370421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>123</td>
<td>1.384356</td>
<td>93.49593</td>
<td>1.015988</td>
<td>20354.88</td>
<td>1.070656</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1.147051</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.125</td>
<td>1.668926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>104</td>
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<td>93.26629</td>
<td>1.013525</td>
<td>7591.346</td>
<td>0.397136</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1.198157</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.6875</td>
<td>1.411126</td>
</tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1.148002</td>
<td>95.09804</td>
<td>1.033398</td>
<td>16248.04</td>
<td>0.85004</td>
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<td>1.175115</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>1.383989</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
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<td>1.170512</td>
<td>95.19231</td>
<td>1.034422</td>
<td>16596.15</td>
<td>0.686216</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1.198157</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.625</td>
<td>1.411126</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15386.9</td>
<td>0.804955</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2.419355</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.1875</td>
<td>2.849389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
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<td>85.89744</td>
<td>0.933418</td>
<td>9615.385</td>
<td>0.503022</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.762673</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.6875</td>
<td>1.248204</td>
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<td>95.89041</td>
<td>1.042008</td>
<td>13931.51</td>
<td>0.728817</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.840114</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.990502</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean**:
- **88.85**
- **92.02463**
- **19115.25**
- **86.8**
- **80.75**
- **16**
- **73.7**
- **76.8**

**Composite Index** = \((a+b+c+d+e+f+g+h)\)

Where:
- \(a = X1/\text{Mean (X1= No. of Respondents)}\)
- \(b = X2/\text{Mean ( X2= Literacy)}\)
- \(c = X3/\text{Mean ( X3= Average monthly income)}\)
- \(d = X4/\text{Mean ( X4= Family Co-operation received by respondents)}\)
- \(e = X5/\text{Mean ( X5= Respondents spending own income)}\)
- \(f = X6/\text{Mean ( X6= Respondents facing interfere in money handling)}\)
- \(g = X7/\text{Mean ( X7= Respondents who have savings)}\)
- \(h = X8/\text{Mean ( X8= Respondents participating in the office function)}\)

Source: Field Survey, 2014

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### TABLE: 6 WORKERS BY GENDER: INDIA (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42.98</td>
<td>33.08</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>39.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57.12</td>
<td>52.61</td>
<td>52.62</td>
<td>51.61</td>
<td>51.68</td>
<td>53.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27.96</td>
<td>12.11</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>22.27</td>
<td>25.63</td>
<td>25.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports 1951-2011

### TABLE: 7 WOMEN WORKERS AT RURAL & URBAN AREAS: INDIA (1971-2011)

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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Female</td>
<td>12.11</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>22.27</td>
<td>25.63</td>
<td>25.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Female</td>
<td>13.42</td>
<td>23.06</td>
<td>26.79</td>
<td>30.79</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Female</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>11.88</td>
<td>15.4</td>
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</table>

Source: Census Reports 1971-2011

### TABLE: 8 RURAL WORKERS BY GENDER: INDIA (1971-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Workers</td>
<td>53.62</td>
<td>53.77</td>
<td>52.58</td>
<td>52.11</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Workers</td>
<td>13.42</td>
<td>23.06</td>
<td>26.79</td>
<td>30.79</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports 1971-2011

### TABLE: 9 URBAN WORKERS BY GENDER: INDIA (1971-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Workers</td>
<td>48.82</td>
<td>49.06</td>
<td>48.92</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>53.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Workers</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>11.88</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports 1971-2011

### TABLE: 9 REASONS FOR MIGRATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Migration</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>58.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>15.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not migrated</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
### TABLE: 10 LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE RESPONDENTS OF CBT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL NO.</th>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Can Sign Only</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Upto Class V</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Class Vi - X</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Class Xi - Xii</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ph D / M. Phil</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Others (Junior Bt, Lwfe, Nursing, Poly. Tech )</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014

### TABLE: 11 RESPONDENTS IN DIFFERENT JOB CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOB CATEGORIES</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Govt.</td>
<td>21.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>31.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pvt.</td>
<td>41.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

### TABLE: 12 OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS OF CBT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATIONAL STATUS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>731</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey
### TABLE: 13 JOB PERMANENCY OF THE RESPONDENTS OF CBT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Permanent</td>
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<td>Temporary/Part-time</td>
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<td>Contractual</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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Source: Field Survey

### TABLE: 14 MAJOR DISEASES OF THE RESPONDENTS

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<tr>
<th>SL. NO.</th>
<th>DISEASES</th>
<th>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Cold &amp; Cough, Acidity, Gas, stomach related problems, tooth ache, spondylosis</td>
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<td>11.87394</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Allergy, skin infection, Asthma</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.519415</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Arthritis, Thalassaemia, ostioporosis</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>6.527856</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Blood Pressure, Blood Sugar, Kidney diseases, Obesity</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.627462</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cancer, Tumour</td>
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<td>0.450197</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Eye related diseases, Migraine, Neurological problem</td>
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<td>1.406866</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>No specific diseases</td>
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<td>72.59426</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Source: Field Survey

### TABLE: 15 POPULAR TREATMENT SOUGHT BY THE RESPONDENTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TREATMENT</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Allopathy</td>
<td>1673</td>
<td>94.14744</td>
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<td>Homeopathy</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.826674</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ayurvedic</td>
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<td>0.112549</td>
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<td>Allopathy + Ayurvedic + Homeopathy</td>
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Source: Field Survey
TABLE: 16 RELATION BETWEEN FEMALE LITERACY (%) & AVG. AGE OF MARRIAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No.</th>
<th>Female Literacy (%) 2011 (x)</th>
<th>Avg. age of Marriage (Field Survey) (y)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>39.6456</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>17.52775</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>38.40756</td>
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<td>20</td>
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Source: Census Report 2011 & Field Survey

TABLE: 17 FAMILY TYPE PREFERRED BY THE RESPONDENTS

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<tr>
<th>FAMILY TYPE</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neo-Joint</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Source: Field Survey

TABLE: 18 SECTORS OF EMPLOYMENT IN CBT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Unorganised</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organised</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1777</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey
### TABLE: 19 EDUCATIONAL LEVELWISE AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME OF THE RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>AVG. MONTHLY INCOME OF RESPONDENTS IN RS.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can Sign Only</td>
<td>2582.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upto Class V</td>
<td>2582.54717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VI - X</td>
<td>10417.73413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class XI - XII</td>
<td>11198.32215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>18844.81769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>24286.68731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph D / M. Phil</td>
<td>38777.77778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>24750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>15128.57143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates</td>
<td>1479.310345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>11638.03218</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Field Survey

### TABLE: 20 RELATION BETWEEN EDUCATION LEVEL & AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES (x)</th>
<th>AVG. MONTHLY INCOME OF RESPONDENTS (y)</th>
<th>CONVERSION OF CATEGORIES ON LIKERT’S SCALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can Sign Only</td>
<td>2582.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upto Class V</td>
<td>2582.54717</td>
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<td>Class VI - X</td>
<td>10417.73413</td>
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<td>Class XI - XII</td>
<td>11198.32215</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
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Source: Field Survey
### Table: 21 Parameters for Co-relation Matrix, CBT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward Nos.</th>
<th>Ward wise no. of working women</th>
<th>No. of literates</th>
<th>Avg. monthly Income in Rs</th>
<th>No. of Dependents on ww</th>
<th>Salaried employment (No.)</th>
<th>No. of respondents came outside of CoB</th>
<th>No. of respondents translocated within CoB dist.</th>
<th>No. of ww translocated within CBT</th>
<th>No. of resp. spending own income</th>
<th>No. of spending on household items</th>
<th>Savings by resp (no.)</th>
<th>Interference in Money management (no.)</th>
<th>No. of permanent job holders</th>
<th>Co-operative attitude towards resp in office functions (no.)</th>
<th>Participation in office functions (No.)</th>
<th>Avg work performance of ww in %</th>
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Source: Field Survey 2014
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Wardwise no. of working women X1</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>No. of literates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg. monthly Income in Rs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Dependents on ww</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaried employment (No.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of respondents came outside of CoB</td>
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<td>No. of respondents translocated within CoB dist</td>
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<td>No. of ww translocated within CBT</td>
</tr>
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<td>No. of resp. spending own income</td>
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<td>No. of spending on household items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings by resp (no.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interference in Money management (no.)</td>
</tr>
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<td>No. of permanent job holders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-operative attitude towards resp (no.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in office functions (No.)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Avg work performance of ww in %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2014
### TABLE: 23 Communalities

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</thead>
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<td>Avg. monthly Income in Rs</td>
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<td>No. of Dependents on ww</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of ww translocated within CBT</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of resp. spending own income</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of spending on household items</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings by respondents (no.)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interference in Money management (no.)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of permanent job holders</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>co-operative attitude towards resp (no.)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation in office functions (No.)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg work performance of ww in %</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Source: Field Survey

### TABLE: 24 Total Variance Explained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigen Values</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.680</td>
<td>10.498</td>
<td>76.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.133</td>
<td>7.078</td>
<td>83.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>6.195</td>
<td>89.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>3.861</td>
<td>93.644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>.452</td>
<td>2.824</td>
<td>96.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>.345</td>
<td>2.155</td>
<td>98.623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.872</td>
<td>99.496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>99.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>99.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>99.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>99.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>99.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>99.991</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>99.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Source: Field Survey, 2014
### TABLE: 25 Component Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
<th>Component 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wardwise no. of working women</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. of literates</td>
<td>.997</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>-.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. monthly Income in Rs</td>
<td>-.154</td>
<td>.615</td>
<td>.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Dependents on ww</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td>.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salaried employment (No.)</td>
<td>.899</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td>-.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. of respondents came outside of CoB</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. of respondents translocated within CoB dist.</td>
<td>.910</td>
<td>-.236</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of ww translocated within CBT</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.617</td>
<td>-.687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of resp. spending own income</td>
<td>.972</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>-.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of spending on household items</td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings by resp (no.)</td>
<td>.930</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>-.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interference in Money management (no.)</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>.330</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of permanent job holders</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>-.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>co-operative attitude towards resp (no.)</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>-.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation in office functions (No.)</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>-.170</td>
<td>.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg work performance of ww in %</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td>.363</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
a. 3 components extracted.

Source: Field Survey, 2014

### TABLE: 26 Rotated Component Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
<th>Component 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wardwise no. of working women</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. of literates</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. monthly Income in Rs</td>
<td>-.185</td>
<td>.601</td>
<td>.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Dependents on ww</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>-.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salaried employment (No.)</td>
<td>.898</td>
<td>-.174</td>
<td>.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. of respondents came outside of CoB</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.332</td>
<td>-.367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no. of respondents translocated within CoB dist.</td>
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<td>-.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of ww translocated within CBT</td>
<td>.075</td>
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<td>.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of resp. spending own income</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of spending on household items</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings by resp (no.)</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interference in Money management (no.)</td>
<td>.459</td>
<td>.393</td>
<td>.010</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of permanent job holders</td>
<td>.805</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>co-operative attitude towards resp (no.)</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation in office functions (No.)</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>-.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg work performance of ww in %</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.904</td>
<td>.048</td>
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</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Source: Field Survey
### TABLE 27: FEMALE LITERACY & FEMALE WORKERS: INDIA (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>FEMALE LITERACY</th>
<th>FEMALE WORKERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>8.86</td>
<td>23.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>15.35</td>
<td>27.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>12.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>19.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>39.29</td>
<td>22.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>53.67</td>
<td>25.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>65.46</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

### TABLE 28: FEMALE LITERACY & FEMALE WORKERS: WEST BENGAL (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>FEMALE LITERACY</th>
<th>FEMALE WORKERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>11.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>9.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>8.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>11.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>18.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>18.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)

### TABLE 29: FEMALE LITERACY & FEMALE WORKERS: KOCH BIHAR (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>FEMALE LITERACY</th>
<th>FEMALE WORKERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>9.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>22.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011)
Published Research Papers
Place of Working Women in their Family: A Case Study of Some Wards of Cooch Behar Town

Smt. Writuparna Chakraborty

Abstract:
‘Working Women’ is a concept of recent origin. Employment for women was not encouraged since it exposed them to the outer world particularly to men and pollution. Moreover, women working outside symbolized the family’s economic deficiency. The advent of industrialization and urbanization has helped in the radical transformation regarding the concept of work. Now working outside implies a more specialized and skilled activity that can be taken up by both men and women. Employment in organized sector has the assurance of security and remuneration. With the progress of time, women especially in urban sectors have started to take up modern and employment oriented education which paved their way for gainful employment. Today working women has deeper and wider implications in the family as well as in the society at large.

On the contrary, some are of opinion that the role and status of the working women have changed very little as the society continues to be patriarchal. Working women receive little assistance with regard to the domestic works and the major responsibilities (especially child care) are still carried out by them. Women are expected to look after their family first and then go for their career. To the established roles of being homemaker and mother another role of working outside and earning a salary has now been added. It seems that they are in confusion about their private and professional lives. She tries to cope with this situation by spending ‘quality time’ with her off-springs and takes up extra work load like buying grocery, taking children to school, paying bills etc. This might lead to a vicious-cycle of a new form of sophisticated and disguised oppression of patriarchy.

Working outside cannot be limited to a mere economic activity, it indicates the status of women in relation to their husbands, it affects the values underlying the patriarchal family structure and it redefines the roles of family members. Therefore, this would be an effort to study the condition through which an urban working woman passes so as to satisfy her family and work and also to find out whether employment can bring a significant change to their position in the family. The present paper thus tries to find out the place of working women in their family pertaining to some of the Wards of Cooch Behar Town.

Keywords: Emacipation, Patriarchy, Decision making

Introduction:

The concept of status and role of woman has been defined in terms of rights, power, authority and responsibilities, duties and obligations. The status and role of the working women in their families may be adjudged in terms of:

* Department of Geography, A.B.N. Seal College, Cooch Behar
• Position as perceived by the working women by themselves
• Freedom to act
• Involvement in decision making
• Sharing of domestic responsibilities by other family members
• Problem of adjustment to the family

A working woman rarely has freedom and liberty to spend her salary at her will. Though she has been consulted in many matters of the family, but the final decisions are generally taken by the elders and the male members of the family. Regarding domestic responsibilities, husbands and male members makes little contribution. Cooking and serving food continued to be the major responsibilities of the working wives. With regard to the harmony with the family, there are misunderstandings and clashes over family matters, rights, duties and expectations. The conditions through which a working woman goes through must be properly addressed. In order to balance the outside world and domestic chores she finds herself in a dilemma. Prioritization of responsibilities becomes difficult. This is an effort to study the psyche of the working women who is supposed to live a decent life with economic autonomy.

Objectives of the Study:

The study revolves round certain objectives;
• To study the condition through which an urban working woman passes in order to satisfy both household and professional works.
• To find out the position as perceived by the working women by themselves
• To find out whether they can act freely in the family.
• To study their involvement in decision making.
• To see that whether employment could bring a significant change to their position in the family.

Hypothesis:

The researcher holds some presupposition which is relevant with the enquiry;
• Female employment assures economic independence.
• Employment has improved the family status of the working women.
• Female employment redefines the role of family members.
Study Area:

The study was conducted in the town area of Cooch Behar particularly in ward nos. 3 and 13. Mainly, two reasons had made the researcher to select these wards:

a) The researcher’s familiarity.

b) Geographically, both of the wards are located wide apart at the entry points to the Cooch Behar Town area (ward no. 3 to the extreme north and ward no. 13 to the extreme south), so that uniqueness of the study could be brought about.

Methodology:

This was an exploratory study. Survey method was adopted for the study. The whole study is based on primary data. The data was collected by the structured interview schedules designed for the purpose. The researcher had detailed discussions with the respondents pertaining to the area.

Variables Required:

- Basic socio-economic data (religion, caste, occupation, income etc).
- Expenditure on different items such as food, clothing, education, house-building, entertainment, travel, religious festivals, medicines etc.
- Information on domestic work, outside work property successor ship, social activities, decision making ability (marriage, family planning, birth control measures, expenditure etc) was collected from the respondents.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

About the Respondents:

About 83% of the sample was married working women. Reflecting the patriarchal social structure, most of the respondents (67%) resides in their spouse’s house. Of all the respondents 67% were post graduates and the rest were graduates in educational qualification and all were working as Assistant Teachers in Higher Secondary schools permanent in their service. The study covered three different age group categories; namely, ≤29 years, 30-39 years and ≥40 years each covering 33.33% of the universe. This kind of representation is of great significance as it reveals the mental make-up of women belonging to different levels of maturity.
Professional Quality & Income:
Cent percent of the respondents have reported that they were satisfied with their job and take professional decisions independently. Their monthly income of the ranged from 25000/- to 37000/- (according to service seniority) and the household monthly income ranged from 47000/- to 76000/-.

Opinion Regarding Marriage:
So far as marriage concerned, 80% of the working women experienced arranged marriage while the rest had marriage by their own selection. But almost all the respondents preferred marriage by their own selection. All the respondents discouraged Dowry. Cent percent did not practiced dowry at their own marriages, but the family members of some of the respondents (16%) are supportive of dowry.

Family Planning & Parenthood:
Employment & education seems to have a great bearing with regard to the fertility of the respondents. The age of marriage ranged from 26 years to 36 years and that of their first pregnancy from 27 years to 36 years respectively. This is indicative of late marriage, fewer children and smaller families as intended by countries like ours. Another important feature of the study was that 67% of the respondents were mother to female children and 33% of them had preference for male children.

Nature of Expenses:
About 83% have admitted that they spend their own income, majority (65% of the income) pertaining to household articles. 33.33% could only spend 1500/- and 16.66% about 500/- only for own self on a monthly basis. The unmarried handful expended about 7000/- per month on this respect and the rest 33.33% did not spend a single rupee for their own need. Therefore, it clearly shows that the unmarried working women are lucky enough to spend their own income at their will.

Efficiency as a House wife:
Considering the household activities, the working women are vibrant in their role as housewives also. 60% of the respondents cook for their family, takes care of the children, aged and sick persons, does shopping(grocery)for the family; 40% does cleaning and washing; 20% drops children to schools and pays electric bills. The respondents opined that the family members mostly expect the working women cum housewives to perform efficiently in every sphere that is required for their family. They also want that the working wives would give utmost priority to the tasks pertaining to the family.
Decision Making Ability:
40% of the respondents have reported that though they contribute to the economic resources of their families, they are restricted from important decision making processes. Furthermore, they have narrated that their families are not supportive of them and lacked helping attitude. Kapur(1973) found that although working women were allowed to take part in the decision making process in the family, her decision was not final.

Family Interference:
33.33% faced interference from their husbands and mothers-in-law regarding their expenses. 40% have reported that their family expects that they should devote their entire salary for household purpose. Another 20% of the respondents have revealed that their in-laws even interfere with their decision regarding child bearing. Thus, it can be said that in personal matters the family members intrude and thereby individuality of the working women are threatened.

Domestic Violence:
20% of the respondents experiences physical harassment and mental torture inspite of being the sole earning member of the family. Another 20% experience mental agony despite of their substantial contribution to the family income, are barred from taking any vital decision pertaining to the family.

Perception of the Working Women:
Cent percent of the working women supported higher education and employment for women in our society. Most of them (83%) of the respondents prefer joint families. 45% rarely get any help for domestic works from their family. 40% of the working women feel that their employment was posing hindrance to their family life especially related to the rearing of children. 20% feel that they are distanced with their husbands.
All these facts depict that the existence of working wives are threatened the most. She is expected to act like a super human being providing and working in every sphere yet getting nothing for herself.

Social Acceptability:
However bitter be the experiences so far, the brighter side of this is that almost 83% of the respondent’s family prefers their daughters-in-law to be working women.
Conclusion:

The current analysis shows that employment has not brought significant changes in the status and role of the working women in the family. For instance, working women do not have freedom and liberty to spend her salary at her will. Though she has been consulted in many matters of the family, but the final decisions are taken by the elders and the male members of the family. Regarding domestic responsibilities, husbands and male members makes little contribution. Cooking and serving food continued to be the major responsibilities of the working wives. With regard to the harmony with the family, there are misunderstandings and clashes over family matters, rights, duties and expectations.

Therefore the study reveals that employment of woman has brought about changes in the status and their role when compared to the same in the traditional society, but she is far from being equalized with her husband. Her position is yet to crystallize and articulated. Thus familial patriarchy largely remains intact inspite of the woman’s higher external status (as well as educational qualification) and participation in economic activities. Her position is precarious as she is expected to work at the same time bear the responsibilities to conform the image of an ideal housewife. She is expected to fulfill the familial responsibility first and if she fails, the family members would oppose. So, education and employment have brought about only a marginal structural qualitative change in this sphere.

From an optimistic view, it may also be remarked that since the social structure of our country is in a transitional stage, the role and position of the working women would be realized and evaluated properly in the days to come. Probably, the menace of patriarchy would get eradicated.

References:
EDUCATION : UNDERSTANDING THE ATTITUDE & PERCEPTION OF THE WORKING WOMEN OF COOCH BEHAR TOWN

Writuparna Chakraborty*

ABSTRACT

Education has long been denied to women in our country, perhaps to have a strict patriarchal control over the resources and the social goals. Things have altered with the temporal change. Universalisation of education has enabled women to fulfill their desire of getting contemporary education and consequent entry into services (employment). So, the necessity of education was realized. This search therefore becomes relevant to find out the perception of the working women of the Cooch Behar Municipality about education as no inquiry in this respect was done here previously.

KEYWORDS: Education, Emancipation, Working Women, Social Progress, Occupational Diversity

INTRODUCTION

‘Working Women’ are gaining their importance in the present day world. Employment imparts confidence among the women to live a decent life. More and more women are getting employed as a necessity to supplement their family income (as the current market prices soaring high); also to facilitate the women to enjoy financial autonomy and to have an access to the available resources. Education therefore plays an important role in this. The level of education determines the occupational diversity and the development of skill. So, this paper is intended to find out the attitude and perception of the working women of the Cooch Behar Municipality towards Education in the current relevance.

WHY EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT?

Education in India has always been associated with a different philosophy from that of the western countries. It aimed at a totalitarian development of the individual as well as that of the society. The social revivalism of the 19th Century 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.

*Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, ABN Seal College, Cooch Behar
Literacy is regarded as an important indicator of development and is particularly related to women’s position in the society. Societies providing congenial and free environment for social progress also portrays high incidence of female education. Women along with men adhere for higher education and become contenders of white collar jobs. Higher education also enables women to analyze life experiences with a different perspective and develop her own identity. Astige (2006: 75) has summarized the consequential outcome of women’s education in the form of:

a) Greater female work participation
b) Reduction in family size
c) Greater attention by mothers in child rearing in terms of health, character building, educational accomplishments and the like and
d) Enhancement in per-capita income and capital; ensuing better quality human capital.

Astige further cites Joshi (Ibid: 76) and tried to account for the increasing trend of female students for higher education. She justifies the following reasons for such phenomena:

a) Since the average marriage age in India has been increased, the girls like to continue their education in this situation;
b) The educated boys prefer educated brides so, the girls intend for higher education as qualification of marriage;
c) Higher education paves the way for better jobs, so in order to become self supporting in life they go for higher education and
d) For attaining a better status in the society and for economic autonomy women prefer getting higher education.

WORKING WOMEN & EDUCATION

Women along with men have always worked since the dawn of the civilizations. Because of the physical and biological role, women have developed natural instinct of being more caring, cooking and procurement of household requisites.

Her work is not recognized as her activities have always been largely concentrated within the household premises. Of recent, her activities have crossed the threshold of the four walls and she is viewed as a bread earner as well. Her supportive role is of immense significance to the finance of the family. She has stepped into the outer world and is able to make room for herself as a contender of proficient jobs.

This is possible only because education is made available to them. The female literacy rate just after the independence was only 8.86% (1951) which has increased slowly but steadily to 65.46% in 2011 (shown in Table 1.1).

This progression must be interpreted positively as it is directly linked with the national income and with the country’s social progress.
Table 1.1: Literacy Scenario in India through Censuses (1951-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Years</th>
<th>Literacy (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>28.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>34.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>43.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>52.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>64.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>74.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from different Census Years

The emphasis on women’s education has paved way for their emancipation. Exposure of the women to modern education has not only enlarged the scope of employment towards them but also has enhanced skill and efficiency level.

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

Source: Different Census Year Data
The female work participation at the national level (Table 1.2) has increased marginally over the temporal span from 1951 to 2011 from 23% to 25.51% with fluctuations in between and has remained far behind than their counterparts. The rural work participation among the females is high as expected than that of the urban situations. For the study area, the 48.72% of the females are literates and 20.32% of women workers to total workers are found in 2011. Thus, the female work participation is found little above than the national average for the same time frame.

Now-a-days, women are encouraged to have higher education. This probably remains responsible for their careerist attitude to life, to go for employment, to get married at higher age and consequently to have lesser children.

The study has been conducted in the Cooch Behar Town which is located at 26º 22′ N and 89º 29″ E and it encompasses an area of 8.29 square kilometers. The geographical location of Cooch Behar Town is conspicuous since it occupies a meander core of the Torsa River, one of the major rivers of the district of Koch Bihar.

The Cooch Behar Town area is comprised of 20 wards under the Cooch Behar Municipality (CBM). The total population of the urbanites of the CBM 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. The study has been concentrated on the ‘Working Women’ of the CBM area congruent with the subject matter of the inquiry.

**OBJECTIVES**

The present inquiry is undertaken to fulfill the following objectives:

- To find out the level of Education of the Working Women of the study area
- To study the relationship between education and employment
- To unveil the perception of the Working Women regarding Education

**METHODOLOGY**

The present inquiry has been carried out by following a stage wise investigation procedure like: a) Pre-field Stage; b) In-field Stage and c) Post-field Stage

**a) Pre-field Stage:**

- This stage is marked by the collection of the secondary data, documents, reports and other relevant information related to this search.
- The research schedule was prepared.
b) In-field Stage:
   - A meticulous survey was carried out by collecting information from door to door.
   - The nature of the investigation involved thorough interactive sessions through Exploratory Surveys.
   - ‘Multi-stage Random Sampling Design’ have been incorporated for a better representation of the samples from the universe. The samples were selected by adopting Simple Random Sampling without Replacement (SRSWOR).

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

SAMPLE SIZE

The female workers of the CBM area are 5,567 representing 27.51% of the female urban working women of the district. The study was essentially conducted on the ‘Working Women’ of the CBM 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.

SAMPLE DESIGN

While administering the 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 CBM area was chosen. Out of this, the working women of the CBM area were taken up for the interview. This represents a Two-stage sample design. The samples were finally selected by adopting Simple Random Sampling without Replacement (SRSWOR). Therefore, this may be referred to as ‘Multi-stage Random Sampling Design’ (Kothari, 2011: 66).

THE PROBLEM

Education for women has been a challenging experience in our country. The inferior status of women in the society especially since the Later and the Post-Vedic period has been responsible for the denial of education to them. The decadence aggravated in the subsequent periods with the derogation of the women in the patriarchal set up of the society. The era of social awakening in the 19th Century lit the torch of development through education for women. Education is essentially an end in itself; an individual gain experiences from life events and shapes up his personality. Education leads to emancipation especially for the women.
The present paper therefore tries to find out the importance of education in the life and living, the attitude towards attainment of education and the perception of the working women of the study area towards education.

THE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF THE WORKING WOMEN OF THE STUDY AREA

LITERACY AMONG THE WORKING WOMEN

The total literate persons in CBM are 66,404 persons and it portrays a Literacy Rate of 85.20% according to 2011 Census. Of these literate persons, 34,054 are male literates (51.28%) and 32,350 (48.72%) are female literates. While considering the number of Female Literates (32,350 women) and Total Population (77,935 persons) the proportion represented thus shows 41.51%. Out of the Total Female Population (38,921 women) of the CBM, the number of Female Literates are 32,350; representing 83.12%.

Literacy Scenario of the study area can be explained with the secondary and primary data. The literacy data for 2011 census reveals that Female Literacy is highest (92.64%) in ward no. 7, it is high in ward nos. 2, 12, 13 and 14 wherein all the values are >90%. The proportion of female literates is least in ward no. 10 (76.28%). Rest of the wards has values ranging between 77-89%. Similarly, the proportion of illiterate females are highest in ward no 10 (23.72%) and least in ward no. 7 (7.36%). So, literacy considering the female population of the study area is impressive in the sense it is well above the state average (76.26%) as well as the national average (74.04%) as per the Census data of 2011.

A similar picture is also reflected by the respondents of the study area in Map no. 4.8, wherein Cent Percent of literacy among the working women is found in ward nos. 2, 5 and 13. A high percentage of female literates ranging between 90 - 97.32% are found in ward nos. 1, 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14-18 and 20 which obviously has low female illiteracy (2-10%). Least proportion of literates among the working women (71.88%) is found concentrated in ward no. 6 which simultaneously has the maximum concentration of illiterates (28.12%) among the stratified category. The rest of the wards has female literacy rate ranging between 80-90% and 14-18% of illiteracy among the female working women.

Location Quotient for the literacy among the working women of the study area (surveyed population) has been calculated and may be compared with the results of that of the census data (2011) based calculations. Highest LQ value of >1 (i.e. 1.09) is found in ward nos. 2, 5 and 13. High LQ value equal to unity is seen in ward nos. 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 20. Ward no.10 has the least concentration (0.78) of literate respondents in the study area. While the rest (i.e. in ward nos. 4, 8, 9, 18 and 19) has LQ values ranging between 0.88 - 0.98 which may be categorized as low compared to the two formerly mentioned categories.

Therefore, careful observation reveals that the areas of concentration are common in certain wards for both the cases. So, the census data and the sample corroborates with each other in the aforementioned spatial units pertaining to the study area.
LEVEL OF EDUCATION

It is found that almost one-third of the surveyed working women (32%) are Graduates and 19% of the sample have Post-Graduate degrees. 18% of the respondents just crossed the threshold of schools (at Xth Standard) while 10% limited their studies up to the High School level (i.e. XII th Standard). Primary educated respondents cover up 7% of the sample. Only 3% of the respondents can sign their names only. On the other hand, a small proportion is represented by those having Diploma, trainings or still higher educational degrees like M. Phil and Ph.D.

So far, this was the scenario as a whole of the CBM; the ward wise situation shows certain characteristics. Higher education at Post-Graduate level is mostly sought after by the respondents residing in ward nos. 18, 11, 14, 13, 16, 15, 10 and 1(in the order of importance). It is low in ward nos. 9, 4, 2, 3, 7, 19, 20, 17 and 8. Graduates are mostly found concentrated in the ward nos. of 18, 16, 11, 12, 13 and 14. The High School educated respondents occupy mostly the ward nos. 1, 9, 18, 20, 10, 11-17. School educated respondents are prolific in the ward nos. 6, 19, 9, 10, 15, 12, 18, 11, 14, 16, 17, 1, 3, 4 and 5. Primary level education is a common qualification of the respondents of ward no. 19, 10, 16, 9, 10, 17, 1, 3, 4, 15 and 18. While respondents who can only sign their names are found largely in ward nos. 1, 4, 9, 10, 15-19.

The researcher could recognize a strong relationship existing between education and economic profile of the respondents. The south western part of the CBM area, covered by the wards of 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 and 18 have been settled relatively by the high income group of people who can afford higher education. On the other hand, the portions of the CBM especially at the north and eastern parts (in ward nos. 10, 4, 3, 2, 1 and 19) are inhabited by the respondents belonging to middle and lower middle economic classes. People living adjacent to the embankment all along the River Torsa (on the left side of the study area) and those placed juxtaposed at rural boundaries generally belong to this group. These portions show incidence of school level education mainly among the respondents.

LITERACY AND WORK PARTICIPATION

Literacy rate and Level of Education influence the workers’ participation in any region. In the present study area the work participation among the Females is low than that of the Males. This is a common reflection of any Indian urban unit as females get into work more in the fields at the countryside. So, it was no surprise to have found out low female work participation in the study area. There are about 5,567 working women according to Census 2011 representing 7.14% of the total population of CBM. On the other hand, it is 27.75% for their counterparts. While relating the number of female workers and the number of total workers of the CBM for 2011 data, the females have 20.32% share in comparison to the males who represents 78.93%.

With regard to Literacy and Work participation, it shows that female literacy with regard to female population is as high as 83.12%; female literacy to total population amounts to 41.51% and female literacy to total literate population is 48.72%. On the whole, the average of these three figures amounts to 57.78% which might be considered as a progressive figure. The female work
participation values for the two cases (no. of female workers to total population and no. of female workers to total workers) are essentially low. This may be well explained by Dr. Chandna’s opinion as he says “levels of literacy and education influence significantly the participation rates. There is a negative correlation between the two.....because acquisition of literacy and education delays the entry of people into working force” (2001: 244).

FINDINGS

ADHERENCE OF THE RESPONDENTS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The primary data and the census data pertaining to 2011 have been tallied and similar kind of representation have been found. A general finding regarding the education and literacy level of the respondents of the study area is that it has an impressive percentage of female literacy having an average of >75% in most of the wards. The incidence of higher education (including Graduates, Post-graduates, Ph.D and M.Phil, Diploma holders) among the respondents is found the most (54%), 35% of the respondents have School Level Education (including primary, secondary, higher secondary levels); 3% could only sign their names; 4% were Illiterates and 4% did not mention about their educational qualification. Having a situation like this, the working women have been appropriately found to engage themselves mostly (41.14%) with white collar jobs. This might be treated as a positive attitude and an achievement for the respondents.

RESPONDENTS’ PREFERENCE FOR THE SCHOOLS

The Popularity for the Medium of Instructions in Schools

It has been found that most of the working women (63.25%) send their children to the Bengali Medium Schools; 33.60% send their wards to English Medium Schools; 1.24% to Hindi Medium Schools and the rest 1.91 % belonged to the not mentioned category who did not tell about their choice.

The Preference for the Medium of Instructions in School

The respondents were further asked to indicate their preference for the medium of instructions in schools for their children. Surprisingly it has been found that about 81.04% of the respondents (i.e. 1440 in number) have preference for English Medium Schools while only 18.46% of them preferred Bengali Medium schools. The reasons for such preference were also enquired and are displayed in the following table (Table no. 1.3). It is evident from the above table that the respondents prefer English medium schools mostly (50.34%) because they think that it will fetch good jobs for their children; the next 18.98% of the respondents believe that it will remain helpful for appearing in Competitive Exams, almost equal proportion (18.13%) of the respondents stated that it would facilitate higher education since most of the good reference books are written in English. Only 12.55% showed their interest in learning English as a universal language leading to better comprehension.
Table: 1.3 Preferences for English as the Medium of Instruction in Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate Higher Education</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>18.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Job opportunity</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>50.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universality of English language</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>12.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful for Competitive Exams</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>18.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1440</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

Now the most pertinent question arises, that if 81.04% of the respondents prefer English to be the most useful language having a practical benefit, then why most of the respondents (63.25%) send their children in Bengali Medium Schools. The probable answers to this question are many: to some respondents, it has been their inability to cope up with the subject since they themselves have been to Bengali Medium Schools; affordability to English Medium Schools cannot be an undeniable fact; insufficient number of English Medium Schools in the study area is yet another issue.

Popularity of the types of Schools in the study area

About 63.31% of the working women send their children to co-education schools of the study area (ward nos. 1, 3-13, 15 - 20). 18.40% of the respondents admitted their daughters to the Girls’ school (ward nos. 4, 9, 10, 14, 18 & 19) and 16.26% of them admitted their sons to the Boys’ school (ward nos. 2, 9, 12, 13, 14, 18 & 19) respectively. However, 2.03% of the respondents did not have any preference as their children are yet to be born to them.

NECESSITY OF EDUCATION & VIEWS OF THE RespondENTS REGARDING ITS IMPORTANCE

When the respondents were asked about the necessity of education in their life and living almost everyone (99.66%) gave their consent in affirmation; however, 0.44% of the respondents did not mentioned anything.

The respondents were further inquired to elucidate their views regarding the importance of education and they were asked that ‘why do you think that education is important?’ The answer to this question shows some interesting findings:

- About 45% of the respondents told that education has given new impetus to their lives and living, they have been empowered to secure jobs and to lead a decent life.
• 25.47% of the respondents opined that education has given them social position and they have imbibed traditional values by virtue of it.

• The rest 29.53% of the respondents admitted that education has given them freedom and strengthened the decision making ability.

Should Women Go for Higher Education? There is no denying the fact that education in the contemporary world has become crucial for everyone irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex, class, so on and so forth. Still it should be kept in mind that education itself gets affected by the social forces as well. The working women of the study area have already shown positive sign towards education. Literacy level among women is quite impressive. Out of the Total Female Population (38,921 women) of the CBM, the number of Female Literates are 32,350; representing 83.12% as per 2011 Census. About 92% of the working women under study in the CBM are literates. More than one-half section of the respondents (54%) has attained higher education (i.e. Graduates, Post-graduates, Ph. D, M. Phil, Diplomas etc.).

Differences of opinion: The respondents were asked that whether Women should go for Higher Education or not; the answer was quite predictable. Almost 90.21% of the working women under study said in confirmation. On the contrary, 9.79% replied in negation. The reasons were further enquired and it led to the insight of the differences of opinion:

• It was the handful (9.79% of the sample) who held the difference in opinion. They opined that though education has practical implication upon everyone’s life yet, higher education imposes threat to simple living. In other words, a highly educated girl does not show willingness to marry a person having low educational qualification. It is sometimes seen that a Post-graduate woman stays single throughout her life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Qualifications</th>
<th>Young (18-28 years)</th>
<th>Matured (29-49 years)</th>
<th>Aged (50-65 years)</th>
<th>Unmarried Respondents of all Age Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can Sign</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-VIII Std.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-XII Std.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.56</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates &amp; P.G</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>42.78</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>37.97</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total no. of unmarried respondents = 291 working women

Source: Field Survey
The adjacent table (Table 1.4) displays an interesting outcome of the survey. Out of the total number of the respondents the unmarried sample represents 16.38%. These unmarried respondents under study were classified according to their age groups and educational qualifications. It was revealed that the assumption just made above stands almost correct, as the proportion of the highly qualified respondents (42.61% of Graduates & Post-graduates and 32.99% of respondents having technical qualifications such as Advocacy, Medical, Engineering, Polytechnic etc.) outnumber all the other groups irrespective of age. Even if the Young Age Group is not considered (since they still have the chance of getting married), the proportion for the unmarried Graduates, Post-Graduates and Technically educated respondents are more.

- Some other respondents stated that highly educated women refrain themselves from household chores of cleaning, washing, cooking, even child bearing and parenting.

- A respondent also added that education empowers women to get job but sometimes the job demands the employed women to remain outside the house for long hours, this may sour the family relations.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Generally speaking, ‘Education’ and ‘Employment’ are two most significant factors for development and may be seen as important indicators in this study also. They influence each other and have complementary role towards each other. Education among girls is encouraged very much and it has always remained popular among the working women also. Two important aspects have come up through the course of investigation.

On the first hand a relationship has been recognized between Level of Education and that of Average Monthly Income that has been displayed in Fig no. 1.b. The Educational Level already attained by the respondents have been converted on a Likert’s Scale which ranges from values 1-7. The lesser value remain associated with lesser level of educational qualification. The qualitative connotations of those values are as follows: Illiterates= 1; Can Sign Only = 2; Upto Class V = 3; Class VI- X = 4; Class X-XII = 5; Graduates, Diploma Holders and Others (Jr. B. T. & Nursing) = 6 and Post-graduates, M.Phil & Ph.D holders = 7. The Average Monthly Income (in Rupees) of the respondents according to their educational qualification have been tabulated for finding out the relationship. The scatter plot shows that a positive co-relation exists between the two variables. In other words, higher the Level of Education, higher is the Average Monthly Income of the respondents of the study area. This finding corroborates with the incidence of maximum proportion of white collar workers (41.41%) in the sample under study.
Secondly, the Level of education can be related spatially with the economic profile of the study area. It is seen that highest level of monthly income (≥50,001 Rupees) is earned by working women residing in ward nos. 13, 14 and 18. High level of monthly income (20,001-50,000 Rupees) is earned by respondents living in ward nos. 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16 and sporadically found in ward nos. 1, 7, 9, 10 and 17.

Moderate level of monthly income (10,001 – 20,000 Rupees) is generated by the respondents of ward no. 6 mainly and in ward nos. 17 and 18 in patches. Low monthly income (5,001 – 10,000 Rupees) is found to occur among the working women of ward nos. 1 & 20 and intermittently in ward nos. 10-14. Very Low level of monthly income (≤5000 Rupees) is generated by respondents residing in ward nos. 10, 15 and 19.

Female literacy when spatially seen yields almost similar picture. High Literacy Rate (≥91%) among female population is found in ward nos. 2, 7, 12, 13, and 14. Moderate Literacy Rate (80-89%) is seen in ward nos. 1, 3, 9, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20. Low level of Literacy Rate among the females is visible in ward nos. 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 15. So, proportionality between Income level and Education can be perceived from this. In other words, income level of the respondents is positively related with the affordability towards attainment of education in the study area and vice-versa.

**CONCLUSION**

A vivid picture emanated from the present study regarding education, employment and perception of the working women towards them. It is found that the working women of the study area are mostly literate. They have inclination of attaining higher education (54%) and this has been reflected by occurrence of white collar jobs for most of the working women (41.14%). They have
opined that education and emancipation are linked together. It has also been found that the level of education and income is proportionately related.

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