

## Chapter 7

# SELF PERCEPTIONS, SOCIAL ATTITUDE AND THE SINGLE WOMEN

This chapter aim to conceptualize 'I' (self perception) and 'Me' (social attitude) in the context of single women in Agartala town. According to G. H. Mead (1934) 'I' and 'Me' as a part of one's self. 'I' is spontaneous, impulsive, and creative; 'Me' is reflective and socially aware. In this chapter 'I' is mainly concentrate the symbolic dimensions of social interaction and daily life experience of single women with particular emphasis on the importance of language, communication and symbols for making social interaction in everyday life. Whereas 'Me' is consider as the great emphasis on social self. Mead is of the view that 'I' is the un-socialized self, an assortment of personal desire, needs, decisions and dispositions and 'Me' is the socialized self made up of the internalized attitudes of others as experienced in the daily life. In the light of Mead's conception of 'I' and 'Me', an attempt has been here to understand single women's experience about 'I' and 'Me'.

In India, women's are assessed on the basis of their sacrifice which includes not thinking about self. A woman is considered good when she devoted her life towards husband and husband's family without expecting any return from them. Before marriage girl have to obey the decision of her father and brother even she is not permitted to select her life partner. After marriage husband and in-laws expected that newly married bride should have to follow all the norms and values of their family without any question. They are not ready to recognize the bride as an individual human being and have personal liking, disliking, wish, dream etc. Similarly unmarried women in the first part of their life they have to act of according to father's wish and later part brother's and other family members. The respondents were asked about their self awareness; identity, desire and dream related to themselves then various types of responses came. These are discussed bellow.

### SELF AND THE SINGLE WOMEN

G. H. Mead (1934) said that the self concept develops through the process of role taking other. Whereas Cooley's (1902) functional concept of the 'Looking glass self' said self makes a clear cut understanding about individual self-concept which is

directly related with their satisfaction about themselves (Ritzer 2012). Self-concept seemed to go hand-in-hand with life-satisfaction that is whether a person is satisfied with himself/herself in his/her life situation.

Women in Indian society always seen themselves on the basis of others perception. They restricted themselves in different ways because they were socialized in such a way that they believe that their life is for serving others. Majority of respondents' single status is not chosen by themselves. Circumstances and situation compel them to be a single and they accepted it. When people remain happy with his life then he can think about creativity and enjoy life properly. Women normally derive their status from marital relation and capacity to give birth of children. Single status itself lead women in disadvantage position. Moreover increasing number of unmarried, divorced and widows made it same how acceptable for people. Most of single women especially divorced and widows are not satisfied with their life situation because of society's attitude and hardships.

Table 7.1: Distribution of the Respondents on the Basis of Life Satisfaction

Satisfied (Yes/No)	Marital Status			Total (%)
	Widow	Divorced	Unmarried	
Yes	2 (1.56)	90 (88.23)	64 (91.42)	156 (52)
No	126 (98.43)	12 (11.76)	6 (8.58)	144 (48)
Total (%)	128 (100)	102 (100)	70 (100)	300 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during February 2013 – January 2015.

Above data shows that 52% respondents express satisfaction regarding their single status. 48% respondents express their dissatisfaction regarding single status.

Marital statuswise, 91.42% Unmarried, 88.23% divorced and 1.56% widows express their satisfaction with single status. 98.43% widows, 11.76% divorced and 8.58% unmarried respondents express dissatisfaction regarding their single status.

The respondents have mixed feeling regarding their single status, majority of divorced and unmarried express satisfaction about their single status. While among the widows more than three fourth express their dissatisfaction about their single status. Most of them blame on their destiny their widowhood. One respondents said I am inauspicious that is why I lost my husband. She stated her disappointment at the

existing stigma when she faced the reality after the death of her husband (Kritika Das, 48 year).

#### **Case I**

Nomita Sutradhar 44 year old widow working in a private school as assistant teacher share that the length of her married life was five years and suddenly her husband died in a road accident at that time she was sixth month pregnant and falling in trauma and grief due to sudden shock. Later she gives birth of twin baby. Still she is living in her husband's house along with mother-in-law. She said that after 10 years of my husband death I failed to accept my widowhood.

#### **Case II**

Modhumita Rishi Das divorced express her view that she is not at all satisfied with her single status. She said it is only because of my ex-husband, I lost status in the society. I cannot face my friends as they look at me doubtfully. The divorce changes my life totally because people make me responsible for failing of my marriage.

#### **Case III**

Sara Lakhmi Rishi Das (45 year) divorced said that though my parents was against my divorced but I am satisfied with my present single status. My ex-husband was very dominating person, I could not do anything against his will. I had no freedom; even for cooking also I have to asked him otherwise he will through the dish. These types of mental torture compel me to remain depress always. Gradually torture started to increase and lastly I decided to leave him.

#### **Case IV**

Tulshi Sarkar divorced said 'I am satisfied with my single status. My ex-husband was characterless, after marriage also he maintained relationship with another woman. When I listen about this, it affects me mentally. How a man can did this with his wife? He was so hypocrite that first six month of our married life I could not even guess anything about his character. He parallaly maintain relationship with two women. When I think about this, I started to hate myself. After divorce I regain my self-respect, now I can face myself'.

#### **Case V**

Arpita Dey (39 year), Deepti Choudhury (51 year), Sumona Bhoumik (48 year) widows express their view about their single status by saying that it is our destiny to lost husband at the early age. Death of husband felt them in disadvantage

position and suddenly responsibility of children lies on them. Deepti said that only because of the death of my husband I am working others house as a maid. No one of my family work as a maid, but I have no other option to survive.

#### **Case VI**

Koushiki Deb Barman (45 year) Unmarried express that she is not satisfied with her single status. She said that when my sister-in-law scaled and tortured me then I realized that I do not have husband and children that is why she humiliates me in this way. It is because of my parents' poverty I remain unmarried and leading life on the mercy of brother and his wife.

#### **Case VII**

Another unmarried respondent Miss Saptorshi Das 39 year old express her feeling about her present status in this way –‘Normally I do not have any problem with my single status. But when I meet with my married friends and they discussed with me about their married life, children and husbands attitude and behaviour etc, then I fell depress. I started to compare myself with them and find that they have everything like children, husband, love, affection, home, dream, future plan etc. whereas I have nothing. My life is empty. No one will cry for me, no one love me. It affects me for few days and then I overcome from it and tried to remain satisfied with my situation.

#### **Case VIII**

Miss Tripti Paul 42 year old unmarried said that I am happy with my single status because from childhood I want to lead single life. I cannot think that somebody will dominate me. I find peace in ritual and prayer. In my world only lord Krishna is there no body else. I evade peoples comment on my single status.

Among the unmarried respondents around three fourth women said that they are happy with their single status because they themselves choose this life. They are aware about the attitude of society and they did not pay much attention on these. Whereas among the divorced women interviewed a big fraction of them express their satisfaction on their divorce in spite of well aware about the possible negative effect of it on their life.

Manjhu Saha 38 year old divorced said that she is satisfied with her single status, because she gets relief from ill behaviour and tortured. Now she is leading independent life according to her own choice.

## IDENTITY AND THE SINGLE WOMEN

Identity is a mental construct shaped by the context in which the individuals develop and manipulate actions. Identity function at two levels first is how an individual perceives the self and second how others in society perceive that self. So, to a large extent a person's identity mostly depends on the feedback he receive from those who live around him. By following Michel Foucault, Arce (2014) said that identity is not a product of individual freedom but it related to social, historically available identity categories. On three grounds identity is considered social construction, Firstly- identity is based on what matters to others, secondly people need others to endorse their selfhood, thirdly, the aspects of identity is determined by matters at a particular moment (Oyserman et al 2012). According to Foucault identity is temporary construction. Weaver (2001) is of the view that identity is constructed through a person's relationship with others.

Identity of women in patriarchal society largely depends on social, cultural and other factors. Women themselves also search their identity in relation to other. Most of the single women of Agartala are less concern about their identity because they are busy with struggle for survival. So the concept 'I' most of the time assimilated with their children and family's responsibility.

They have no time to think about themselves because they are busy with different types of responsibilities and in these situations they lost themselves. Large numbers (85.33%) of respondents inform that they think about themselves only at the time of crisis, sorrow, sufferings, and loneliness. The following table makes it clear.

Table 7.2: Distribution of the Respondents on the Basis of Self Thinking

Thinking about Self	Marital Status			Total (%)
	Widows	Divorcee	Unmarried	
Occasionally	115 (89.84)	99 (97.05)	42 (60)	256 (85.33)
Regularly	13 (10.16)	3 (2.94)	28 (40)	44 (14.67)
Total (%)	128 (100)	102 (100)	70 (100)	300 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during February 2013 – January 2015.

Above data shows that 85.33% of the respondents occasionally think about themselves and 14.67% respondents were regularly think about their self.

Marital statuswise, 97.05% divorced, 89.84% widows and 60% unmarried respondents occasionally think about their self. 40% unmarried, 10.16% widows and 2.94% divorced respondents regularly think about their self.

Most of the respondents are of the view that when the question of self identity came than it appears to them along with their children, parents and other responsibility, Mrs, Jhuma karmakar (43 year, divorced) said that my identity is now related with my children. When the question of self came I did not find it separately excluding my children. Miss. Moonmoon Roy 45 year old unmarried said that what self identity is? I have no time to think about self regularly because I have lots of responsibility and very busy with my work. Whereas around 15% respondents think about self and search their identity. To know in what situation and circumstances they think about self that is 'I' separately, the respondents are further investigated with question like in what situation they think about their self, what they think about their self etc. the answer of them are discussed bellow.

Table 7.3: Distribution of the Respondents on the Basis of the Situation When They Think about Self

Type of Situation	Marital Status			Total (%)
	Widow	Divorcee	Unmarried	
Sorrow and crisis	54 (42.19)	28 (27.45)	20 (28.57)	102 (34)
Crises and humiliation	18 (14.07)	22 (21.56)	9 (12.85)	49 (16.33)
Insulted by relatives/friends, avoided, humiliation and crisis	24 (18.76)	21 (20.58)	10 (14.30)	55 (18.33)
Vexed/upset, financial crisis	13 (10.15)	17 (16.67)	15 (21.42)	45 (15)
Intolerable life situations	5 (3.90)	12 (11.77)	8 (11.42)	25 (8.33)
Loneliness	8 (6.25)	2 (1.97)	3 (4.30)	13 (4.33)
Every time	6 (4.68)	-	5 (7.14)	11 (3.66)
Total (%)	128 (100)	102 (100)	70 (100)	300 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during February 2013 – January 2015.

Above data shows that 34% respondents think about their self at the time of sorrow and crisis, 18.33% respondents think about themselves when they get insulted by their relatives or friends, avoided, humiliation and crisis. 16.33% respondents feel

about their self when they face crisis situation and humiliation, 15% respondents thinking about their self when they were very upset or vexed and facing financial crisis. 8.33% respondents think about self when they faced any intolerable life situation and 4.33% respondents share that they think about their self when they suffer from loneliness and 3.67% respondents think about their self every time.

Marital statuswise, 42.19% widows, 28.57% unmarried and 27.45% divorced respondents think about themselves when they feel sorrow and crisis. 20.58% divorced, 18.76% widows and 14.30% unmarried respondents think about themselves when they were insulted by their relatives or friends, avoided and humiliation and crisis. 21.56% divorced, 14.07% widows and 12.85% unmarried respondents feel about their self when they face crisis and humiliation situation. 21.42% unmarried, 16.67% divorced and 10.15% widows thinking about their self when they were very upset or vexed facing financial crisis. 11.77% divorced, 11.42% unmarried and 3.90% widow respondents think about their self when they faced any intolerable life situation. 6.25% widows, 4.30% unmarried and 1.97% divorced respondents' share that they think about their self when they feel loneliness. 7.14% unmarried and 4.68% widow respondents think about their self every time.

Thus, it appears that respondents think about their 'self' mainly due to others perception towards them. They share that different situations come in their life when they realize what people think about them and ultimately lead them to think only for 'self' excluding all their surrounding and related people that they try to understanding about 'Me'.

### **Case I**

Shilpa Bhattachajee 47 year old divorce said that she got married at the age of 17 and immediately after marriage ceremony, all household responsibility of her husband's family lies on her. She also said, for small or minor mistake I was torture severally by my mother-in-law and sister-in-laws. My husband Mr. Sandip Bhattacharjee was a drunker. He always come late night at home and compelled me to serve him according to his wish. If I denied then he assaulted me physically. One day, in midnight he would beat me badly and snatched my cloth and thrown me out of the home. I was nude and requested him repeatedly but neither he response nor open the door. Somehow my 4 years old daughter manages a cloth from neighbor and we spend that night one corner of the house and early morning I approach to police

station and file case against him and in-laws. Police send me and my daughter for medical checkup and inform my parents about the incidence. But my father denied helping me by saying that it is her family matter, she must go back to her husbands' house. Then police investigating officer sent us in 'Government Home' where we stayed for two years. Now I am working as a house maid and court case is still going on. She also said that 'in day to day life I do not have any time to think about myself separately but when people blame on me for my single status than I think about myself. Some questions rise in my mind – 'Am I wrong? Why society blame me only? My life could be better than this! Am I not human being? What is my position in social set up?

### **Case II**

Youshna Rishi Das 42 year old childless widow said that I am alone in this world. Nobody is near to me to support. In a car accident I lost my husband after six years of my marriage. After his death I was tortured and humiliated by mother-in-law and two sister-in-laws. They blame on me that I am inauspicious and only because of me my husband died. They called my parents and said if this childless widow stayed with us then other people of our family may die. Take your inauspicious daughter with you and never show your face again. My mother was cancer patient and father working in a tea stall. So they fail to take my responsibility. My cousin sister worked in a private company where she recommended my name as cleaning staff. I was selected and start working that company (Sayak Enterprise Pvt Ltd) and take a small rent house where somehow I manage my daily expenditure. I am living alone, no one is there, whom I share my feelings, happiness and sadness.

### **Case III**

Shefali Deb 37 year old unmarried said that I was regularly tortured by my sister-in-law and my main aim was to propitiate my sister-in-law. But when she scolded me much and abuse physically then I started to think about myself. 'Why my life is like this? Why I am dependent on other? Why my parents do not send me school? What is my future? I am burden of my brother and his wife.

Single women especially those who belong to low income group neither think for creating separate identity for self nor think for their future. Those who are educated and have better economic condition they make plan for their children along



with self. Some of them said future plan for them is a utopian dream. The future plans of single women are shown in the following table.

Table 7.4: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Their Future Plan Related to Self

Type of Plan	Marital Status			Total (%)
	Widows	Divorced	Unmarried	
No Plan	120 (93.75)	95 (93.13)	59 (84.29)	274 (91.33)
Yes	8 (6.25)	7 (6.86)	11 (15.71)	26 (8.67)
Total (%)	128 (100)	102 (100)	70 (100)	300 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during February 2013 – January 2015.

Above data shows that 91.33% respondents do not plan for their future. 8.67% respondents have plan for their future. Marital statuswise, 93.75% widows, 93.13% divorced and 84.29% unmarried respondents do not plan for their future. 15.71% unmarried, 6.86% divorced and 6.25% widows have future plan for their self.

It reveals that over nine tenths of the respondents do not have any future plan for their self. A negligible portion of respondents have future plan for themselves. To understand about the types of plan they makes for their self following table make it clear

Table 7.5: Distribution of the Respondents on the Basis of Types of Future Plan They Have

Types of plan	Marital Status			Total (%)
	Widow	Divorced	Unmarried	
Do something for mental satisfaction	-	3 (42.85)	3 (27.27)	6 (23.07)
For financial security	4 (50)	3 (42.85)	6 (54.54)	13 (50)
To purchase land or home	2 (25)	-	2 (18.18)	4 (15.40)
To get respect in society	2 (25)	1 (14.28)	-	3 (11.53)
Total (%)	8 (100)	7 (100)	11 (100)	26 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during February 2013 – January 2015.

Above data shows that among the respondents those have future plan for their own self; of them 50% respondents make plan for future financial security. 23.07% respondents want to do something for their mental satisfaction. 15.40% respondents

work hard to purchase land or home for their own and 11.53% respondents think to make themselves capable so that they get respect in society.

Marital statuswise, 54.54% unmarried, 50% widows and 42.85% divorced respondents make plan for secure themselves financially. 42.85% divorced and 27.27% unmarried respondents want to work for mental satisfaction. 25% widows and 18.18% unmarried respondents want to purchase land or home for their own. 25% widows and 14.28% divorced respondents think to make themselves capable to get due respect in society.

So, half of the respondents those have future plan want to save money for financial security. Over one fifths of the respondents' were engaged themselves in various social activities like giving free coaching to poor students, taking membership in NGOs and join singing classes and so on. On the other hand some respondents want to make shelter for their own. Most of them feel if they have a secure place to live then it will gives them strong self confidence to face other challenges. One of the respondents Shabena Khatun, 52 years old divorced share that I tried my best to save money to take a land in my name. My father gifted small portion of land at the time of our marriage but it was registered in the name of my ex-husband. He sold that land and married another woman and fled away to Bangladesh. According to my elder brother advice I am now staying in my parental home and working in a spice company. She said I have a dream to purchase a plot of land. Another respondent kothakoli Bhattacharjee, 48 years old physically challenged unmarried said that she is working as a primary school teacher in Pranabananda Junior Basic School. Her hobby is singing and painting. Kothakoli said I am engaged with '*Chetona*' an NGO where I take music and painting class free of cost. I have a plan to open Art and Music school where with a minimum fee I will teach poor children of our locality.

Most of the single women's future plan shows that they are deprived of basic need like shelter, financial security.

#### SELF-ESTEEM AND THE SINGLE WOMEN

Here an attempt has been made understand about the feeling of the respondents of being single. How they feel in the case of acceptance, rejection and abuse they face in certain situation of their life and how it affects their self-esteem. Self-esteem is one of the major indicators of adjustment with the social surrounding. Various studies show that self-esteem of persons rise and fall due to various

circumstances of life. Branden (1987) said that self-esteem is the sum of self-confidence and self-respect. Self-esteem is closely related with person's subjective experiences. Both good and bad life experiences create attitudes towards the self which can be favorable and develop positive feeling of self-worth or can be unfavorable and develop negative feeling of self-worth. Self-esteem is also an important aspect of an individual identity and has impact on man's achievement. Generally self esteem is correlated with many factors like belief, tradition, custom, achievement etc. the term self-esteem and confidence are attributes that affect the power of self and identity of a person such as people's ability to be successful in their life. High educational qualification and positive attitude in workplace makes an environment where people can feel successful in life which involves with their self-esteem and self-confidence. In India, women tack more or less suffer from low self-confidence and low self esteem because of various factors like male dominance, lack of education, economic dependency etc. These significantly affect their level of aspiration. But at the same time women with good economic background, more progressive family background, qualified, level of confidence were high and progressive in their attitudes. Single women developing both the positive and negative concept about them self; like having strong sense of self to makes ability to change, to take decisions and make honest self-evaluation. Above qualities of single women gives them confidence to take own decision and also influence and manipulate others view on them to achieve success in their life. On the other hand single women also have negative concept about their self which indicates lack of confidence, depending nature, fear of future and less ability to make their own choice which not gives them to build ability for achieving success in life. Self-esteem of single women can be identified only how they feel about their own self and make a self concept through believes and thoughts about their own self. To identify self esteem among the respondents, they were asked about understanding of themselves and position in their family and society. After observing their responses three categories of self-esteem were classified; high, average and low. Following table make it clear.

Table 7.6: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Levels of Self-Esteem

Level of Self-esteem	Marital Status			Total (%)
	Widow	Divorcee	Unmarried	
High level	15 (11.71)	8 (7.84)	13 (18.58)	36 (12)
Average level	49 (38.29)	53 (51.96)	33 (47.14)	135 (45)
Low level	64 (50)	41 (40.19)	24 (34.28)	129 (43)
Total (%)	128 (100)	102 (100)	70 (100)	300 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during February 2013 – January 2015.

Above table shows that 45% respondents have average self-esteem, 43% respondents have low self esteem and 12% respondents have high level of self-esteem.

Marital statuswise, 51.96% divorced, 47.14% unmarried and 38.29% unmarried respondents have average level of self-esteem. 50% widows, 40.19% divorced and 32.28% unmarried respondents have low level of self-esteem. 18.58% unmarried, 11.71% widows and 7.84% divorced respondents have high level of self esteem.

Self-esteem among the respondents were mainly highlights their understanding about their self. High and average level of self-esteem mainly shows their level of confidence to make decision of their own. Though various factors affects on its like, level of education, occupation and income, family support and relationship with family members and so on. In many cases respondent's mental as well as physical health condition makes an effect on their self-esteem. It appears that more than two fourth respondents have high and average level of self-esteem and two fifth respondents have low level of self-esteem. Among the respondents majority were express their poor economic condition which directly influence their decision making power and importance in their family. Unemployed single women have the feeling of burden for their family mainly for that reason they have low level of self-esteem.

### Case I

Kanchan Bala chowdhury 42 year old divorced said 'I am working in a doctor's chamber from morning 8.00 A.M to 4.00 P.M. and get 5000/- Rs per month. I have two children. Because of low income my elder brother takes all responsibility of my

son and I stayed in rented house with my little daughter, but it is difficult to manage everything with 5000/- Rs. So three month ago I shifted to my parental house and staying there in a small room. After few days of my shifting I realise the attitude of my sister-in-law changed. She started criticising me, impose many false allegations on me. My elder brother gradually started to justify his wife's allegation. Most of the time they raised various issues related to my divorce in front of my children'. In this situation I lost my confidence and self-esteem. She also said I am not totally depends upon other but my income is low and job is uncertain. She stayed in her parental home where legally she has right to take equal share along with her brother but she did not aware of it due to lack of education. On the other hand she did not have that courage to protest or solve her problem with sister-in-law.

## **Case II**

Deepa Majumdhar 46 year old unmarried lawyer share about self understanding through expressing her views that, 'I always want to make myself independence and self sufficient. From the childhood I wish to be a lawyer. In my young age I have no time to think about marriage or relationship because I was busy with my studies. Though my parents and relatives tried a lot for my marriage but I did not get perfect life partner who understand my thinking and adjust with me. So I decided to remain single (unmarried) and work for women those need help legally. I feel respect towards me in home as well as court area and in my locality. Thought many of my relatives and colleagues asked one common question that 'how you stay single for whole life? Who take care of you in your old age? At That time my immediate reply to them is, 'if marriage, husband and children provide future security to a woman then why huge number of divorcee and abandoned women seeking legal help? Why numbers of old age homes are increasing day by day? Deepa also said that 'I feel myself strong enough though my earning is not so much but due to my profession I am achieving respectable status within society.

This respondent has high level of self esteem because she able to achieve her goal. She is happy with her profession and single status. She can able to understand others attitudes towards herself when she mention the word respect. Many other respondents are trying hard to makes their life stable and secure, but lack of education and skill make them to adjust with low income. These respondents either bound to depend on their family members, relatives, friends or neighbours. Another important

aspect found during research that those respondents have son have more self-esteem and confidence than those who have girl child only. One respondent named Shibani Sutradhar 52 years old widow share that ‘my children are witness of my struggle for them I hope one day my son grown up and able to earn. At that time my suffering will be over.

Sabita Jamatiya, 58 years old widow living with her sister share that she has one son and daughter. Both of them are married and busy with their respective family. Her daughter contact with her occasionally where as son cut off all relation. Sabita get widow pension from government and her sister work in a private company both are somehow managing their life.

Self-esteem of single women of Agartala town is seemed at low level. Around one third have high level of self esteem. Among them most are qualified and have sound economic background. Those who have average and low self esteem are mainly belongs to poor educational and economic background.

#### SELF-BLAME FOR BEING SINGLE

Large number of respondent whether divorced, widow or unmarried express a deep sense of sadness during the time of interview. The women who remain unmarried due to failure in love or due to fear of parents could not marry their beloved one, repent for their activities at that time. Despite of amount of time passed since these incidences, but still it is an important element in their thinking and it affects their life. Out of 70 unmarried respondents 30 percent blame themselves for their single status.

Kakoli Das (47 year) said it was very unfortunate that I could not oppose my parents boldly when they restrict me for marring my finance. She also said I confess that I failed to manage my parents and also failed to flied with my finance. I thought I could do it but I could not. It is only because of my stupidity I remain alone. Another unmarried respondents Gita Sarkar 48 year old said that it was my failure, I hesitated to flied with my finance and ultimately he leave me and married another women. I preferred my parents’ happiness over my own. Now I repent always why I could not be courageous enough and selfish to settle down in my own ways.

Dipti Shil (47 year) said that it was due to the failure of my parents to manage dowry during the negotiation of my marriage I remain unmarried. When groom party demanded one lakh as dowry than father said that it is depends upon Dipti, if she said

yes, daddy pay the money, than I will manage it at any cost. At that time I thought that if I agreed than my father will be in trouble, be a daughter of him how I could do this. At that time I forget that parents will leave me one day and I will be alone.

Another unmarried respondent Sampa Patuyari (45 year) said I was in relationship with one guy at the age of twenty but my brother did not like him. My brother threats him as a result he leaved me and married another girl. After the incidence I never able to settled with another person, because I accept him as my husband.

Whereas situation of widows are quite different. Widowhood is a condition of losing spouse through death. Death of spouse affects widow's social life severally. Death of husband is a moment of devastation and sadness due to the loss of care, company, love and livelihood. Widowhood represents not only losing of friend and bread winner, but also bring radical change in ones life style, social status and behaviors. In India especially among the low income group widowhood affect a women's dressing style, food, habit, social interaction pattern etc (Ahuja 1996). It became difficult for a widow to re-adjust with society after the death of husband. Among the widow respondents very less blames themselves for their single status.

Kolpana Sutradhar (36 year) widow said that perhaps it was my disability to treat my husband properly. If I could manage money at that time then he may survive. I had very good relation with my husband and I did everything which he likes but I failed to give him proper treatment. When I recall these entire things I blame me only.

Jeenifar Rankhol 41 year old widow said that nothing is as bad as loosing husband. Widowhood is a curse of my life. My husband was a drunker as a result he suffers from liver cancer and ultimately died. As a wife I fail to restrict him from drinking wine. If I could did this thing than I would be as happy as other women.

Divorce is dissolution of marriage either by court or by other competent body. For dissolution or cancelation of marriage both the partner are aware and prepare for it. In India divorce still not widely accepted by the society. But few divorce respondents blame themselves for the dissolution of their marriage.

Amili Deb Barman (38 years) said my divorce was mutual divorce. I had certain expectation from my husband but he was just opposite of it. I gradually started to dissatisfied with all his activities and failed to adjust with him. Now I thought that I give more preference on my personal liking and disliking only and ever tried to

understand his liking and disliking so ultimate result is divorce. I have confessed that I failed to continue my marriage. I could do it, but could not.

Another divorced respondents named Sritama Sarkar said that I blaming myself for my divorce. During my marriage I was opposed by many, my parents, relatives and friends all advice me not to marry him. He is not good and responsible person but I was blind with love and failed to find out any defect in his character and against the will of all my well wisher I marry him. After six month of my marriage I realized that I choose wrong person as my life partner. I tried my level best to adjust with him but failed. Ultimately I separated from him after two years of my marriage.

Different types of single women impose different types of blame on themselves for their single status. Some confess they were less courageous to take bold step, where as other confess that they have less adjustment capacity. While some other is of the view that their economic condition stood in the way.

#### THE SINGLE STATUS AND SELF GROWTH

It is very difficult for a woman to remain single because of divorce, widowhood and never married in a patriarchal society. Lots of questions and negative aspects revolve round single women. But in spite of that some of the respondents' especially divorced and unmarried respondents tried to find out positive aspect of their single status. Near about two third divorced respondents express their view that divorce gives them great relief from torture, violence and humiliation. Through for them divorce is the end of marriage and has some negative effects on their social life.

##### **Case I**

Arunduti Das (39 year) said after divorce I regain my self-respect. In last part of my marital life my ex-husband behaves like an animal with me. Some time he stopped talking with me and always said if I kick you out of my home than you will bag for survival. This type of behaviour makes me to consider myself as pet animal. When I get divorce, I get great relief from all these.

##### **Case II**

Srimati Sutradhar, (48 year) said I bound to take decision of divorced because my ex-husband's was cruel in nature. He was a drunker and everyday arrange friends get together in our house. One night after taking four, five pack of wine he became senseless and his drunker friend tried to molest me. After two incident of molestation I started to oppose of arranging this type of party in the house. Since then my ex-



husband started to torture me physically as well as mentally. Gradually the torture increases more and finally I decide to leave him. I file divorce case and return back to my parental home. I do not have any problem with being single. After divorce I get relief from torture, mental stress, fear and molestation. I have one son and now I am earning. During the crisis situation of married life I get full support from my parents which make me stronger.

### **Case III**

Chandrika Saha 34 year unmarried said 'I am very strong and rely on myself. I am doing my own business. I am independent and I take all decision related to my life and future by myself'.

### **Case IV**

Shimultoni Debnath 42 year widow said 'I lost my husband within six years of our marriage. When he died I have two years old son, for survival I open a tea stall in my locality but first two month it's not work. Later, one aged person advice me to contact with different office and take permission to supply tea and get payment on monthly basis. I accept the proposal and now I am supplying tea and snacks more than four offices daily. My income also increases. Now I am self sufficient, I purchased one plot of land in my name. Economic self-sufficiency gives me more confidence. Some of the single respondents believed that single help them to regain self esteem, live free and fearlessly. When they get economic self-sufficiency their level of confidence, self-esteem increases.

## **SOCIAL ATTITUDE AND THE SINGLE WOMEN**

Indian society especially lower middle class and middle class society dislike divorce, though somehow it accept widowhood and never married women. But in spite of that the rate of divorce increases along with unmarried and widowhood. However, this does not mean that society's negative attitude towards this section of women disappear. Single woman especially divorce and unmarried face more criticism and blamed for their single status. The reason behind this might be the fact that marriage is consider as an essential social norm and society easily sympathized widow women because death of their husband is natural phenomenon. But at the same time people generally consider women are responsible for breakdown of marriage. In some extent society also believe that women are responsible for the death of husband. Ahuja (1996) said that in India there is a traditional myth that widows are mainly

unlucky symbols for anyone, in the early morning if anyone sees the face of a widow then his or her whole day will be turn into bad experience. Similarly in the modern era also widows are not invited in any auspicious occasions like marriage, first feeding of child and so on. Society considers unmarried women life is meaningless and their birth is wastage. For divorce women people's attitude depends upon circumstances and situation responsible for divorce.

Therefore, there is a need to evaluate the social attitude towards single women that is widow, divorced and never married in Agartala town of Tripura.

Table 7.7: Distribution of the Respondents on the Basis of Social Attitude towards Them

Attitude of Society	Marital Status			Total (%)
	Widows	Divorced	Unmarried	
Not invited in auspicious occasion	43 (33.60)	16 (15.68)	-	59 (19.68)
Sympathy and Humiliation	56 (43.75)	10 (9.80)	30 (42.86)	96 (32)
Sexual harassment	-	24 (23.52)	13 (18.57)	37 (12.33)
Humiliation of children	20 (15.62)	32 (31.37)	-	52 (17.33)
Humiliation in social gatherings	8 (6.25)	13 (12.74)	13 (18.57)	34 (11.33)
Ignore and avoid by friend, relative and neighbor	1 (0.78)	7 (6.86)	14 (20)	22 (7.33)
Total (%)	128 (100)	102 (100)	70 (100)	300 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during February 2013 – January 2015.

Above data shows that nearly one third (32%) of the respondents experience society's shows sympathy towards them for their single status. 19.68% respondents not get invitation in auspicious occasion. 17.33% respondents children get humiliated due their single status, 12.33% respondents share that they face sexual harassment, 11.33% respondents experience criticism in different social gathering because of their single status. 7.33% respondents ignore and avoided by their close relatives and friends because of their single status.

It reveals that cent percent of the respondents experience negative attitude of society toward them. Attitude of society towards single women creates various psychological problems which affect their confidence. Because of these attitudes they felt insecure and grief. Single women expect support from their family members and friends during the time of crisis. They tried to find out some one trustworthy to whom they can discuss their entire personal problem. It was observed that aged respondents were found extroverted and emotionally stable and had relatively large social networks compare to young respondents.

Malobika Sarkar, of 37 years old divorced had two children. She resides near to her parental home. But even then she does not have any relation with them because her parent was against of her decision of leaving husband.

Syantika Chakraborty said that my 14 years old son get humiliated because of my single status. One day he came back from school and started crying. When I asked the reason of crying then he said that some person of our locality taunt him by saying that tell your mother to spend one night with us. Now to whom your mother will marry? My son said he will not go to school and he also want to leave the locality. She said people deemed divorce women are ‘sexually available material’.

Another divorce respondent Ranjona Sen said that her twelve years old daughter also humiliated by the people of locality. She remain depress because of these and not ready to go outside.

Junumoti Rishi Das widow express her grief by saying that after the death of my husband no one even my own brother and sister invite me to participate in any auspicious occasion.

Rimjhim Das said that after the death of my husband, neighbor invites me in auspicious occasion but not permitted to participate in it, they said me to set apart from it.

#### FAMILY’S ATTITUDE

After marriage, husbands house is consider women’s own home and people expect that women should maintain formal relation with her parents and relative. But practically, many time husbands house cannot be the own house for women, any time she may be thrown from her husband’s house, at that time women need support and

help from their paternal family. Because parental family is the one from where she can get help and support. Large number of women after death of husband and divorce fell helpless and seek emotional, moral and sometime financial support from parental home. Whereas unmarried women from beginning remain with parental family. Their parents always remain with them. But after the death of parents, problem started with unmarried also. The following table mainly discusses the pattern of support the single women get from their parental family.

Table 7.8: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Family Support

Support from Parental Family	Marital Status			Total (%)
	Widow	Divorced	Unmarried	
Always	31 (24.21)	22 (21.56)	34 (48.58)	87 (29)
Sometimes	75 (58.59)	33 (32.35)	32 (45.71)	140 (46.67)
Never	22 (17.20)	47 (46.09)	4 (5.71)	73 (24.33)
Total	128 (100)	102 (100)	70 (100)	300 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during February 2013 – January 2015.

Above table shows that 46.67% respondents sometimes received support from their family, 29% respondents always get support from their parental family's and 24.33% respondents never get any support from their parental family.

Marital status wise, 58.59% widows, 45.71% unmarried and 32.35% divorced respondents occasionally get support from their parental family. 48.58% unmarried, 24.21% widows and 21.56% divorced always get support from their parental family. 46.09% divorced 17.20% widows and 5.71% unmarried respondents never received any kind of support from their family.

The respondents get different types of support from their parental home these are financial support, moral support. These are shown in the following table.

Table 7.9 Distribution of the Respondents on the Basis of Kinds of Family Support

Kind of Support	Marital Status			Total (%)
	Widow	Divorced	Unmarried	
Moral support	74 (57.81)	20 (19.60)	32 (45.71)	126 (42)
Financial support	19 (14.84)	11 (10.78)	24 (34.29)	54 (18)
Financial support in crisis situation	13 (10.16)	9 (8.82)	10 (14.29)	32 (10.67)

No support	22 (17.19)	62 (60.80)	4 (5.71)	88 (29.33)
Total (%)	128 (100)	102 (100)	70 (100)	300 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted during February 2013 – January 2015.

Above table shows that 47% respondents get moral support from their parental family, 29.33% respondents never get any support from their parental family, 18% respondents get financial support and 10.67% respondent get financial support during crisis situations.

Marital status wise, 57.81% widows, 45.71% unmarried and 19.60% divorced get moral support from their parental family. 60.80% divorced, 17.19% widows and 5.71% unmarried never get any support from their family members. 34.29% unmarried, 14.84% widows and 10.78% divorced respondents get financial support regularly. 14.29% unmarried, 10.16% widows and 8.82% divorced respondents get financial support in crisis situations from their parental family.

Therefore over two fifth of the respondents get moral support from their parental family and nearly one fourth of the respondents never get any kind of support from their parental family. Over one fourth of the respondents get financial support from their parental family regularly or during crisis situation.

### **Case I**

Radha Rani Das, 38 years old divorce express grief by saying that my own parents goes against me after divorce. They cutoff their relation with me and said if you visit our house then we cannot able to arrange your younger sister's marriage. Because people will think your sister also adamant, un-adjustable like you. Since then I also tried to remain apart from them.

Almost similar view express by Dipali Dhar (41), Koruna Das (39), Sabitri Rishi Das (44), Gita Biswas (37) said we are so unfortunate that neither husband nor even parents, brother, sister able to understand our problem.

### **Case II**

Nirula Saha 50 years old divorced said after divorce my all brother cutoff their relationship with me. Because they said people vilify you for your divorce and if we

maintain relation with you then certainly we will face problem during the time of our daughters' marriage. So, remain apart from your family.

### **Case III**

Srabonti Dhar said my parents were deadly against of my divorce and after that they clearly told me that do not expect anything from us. Because of you only people and relative criticize us.

Attitude of family member towards divorced women's varies, more than 50% divorced respondents received either moral or financial support from their parents and relatives and rests are not getting any support from their parents and relatives. Still a large number of divorced women are not even accepted by their parents and treated as abandoned in their family. Because in patriarchal domain women are consider as responsible for any inconvenience with their husband. It is women duty to adjust with their husband and his family members. Women should remain silent against any torture or humiliation from her husband or in-laws and they should not disclose her problems with parents. But despite of general conception now a day's woman takes decision to solve their problem through separate from their husband.

### **Case IV**

Krishnakoli Debbarma, 48 years old widow said I received all types of support from my parents, brother and uncle after the death of my husband. She also said after 15 years of my husband death still they are sympathetic towards me and my children. I take advice from my brother for each and every major decision of my family.

### **Case V**

Sritama, 48 years old widow said I maintain effective ties with my brothers. My brother comes to see my children every Sunday. Occasionally on holidays they take my children's to my parental house for the whole day. Though, it is not very far from my rented house. Beside this my elder and younger brothers always provide help and co-operation when I require. Sritama also share that her brothers always take interest in her children's education and she also like to discuss every problems of her life with them.

### **Case VI**

Moroni Saha, aged 45 year divorcee said I always received moral and financial support from my parental home. My father always supports me and elder brother are very sympathetic towards me. They understand my crisis and problem they support me in all spare of my life. It is only because of their support I get courage to lead single life. My mother takes the responsibility of my children's and I am living with my elder sister's family and doing domestic work in her locality for maintains court and other expenditure. My father always repents because he selected Mr, Shuman Saha as my husband.

### **Case VII**

Another respondent Sobita Shil, 48 years old educated divorce shares that after divorce she started to living with her parents. She is working as a consultant in AIDS control society and has one daughter. Her monthly salary is 7500/- Rs which is not sufficient to maintained family. Her parents are very much sympathetic and cooperate towards her. Sobita's aunty Miss. Nrimala Shil is an unmarried retired school teacher who transfers property in Sobita's name. Sobita said that she has no connection with her ex-husband and his family members. She also said my parents support me because my marriage was arranged by them.

### **Case VIII**

Romita Benarjee 44 years old divorced said I got married with my ex-husband by myself going against the will of my parents. But after getting divorce from my husband, my parents' cutoff their relation with me. They even not ready to talk with me.

### **Case IX**

Smita Chakraborty 39 years old divorced said 'I do not know after getting divorce my parents, brother and his family became enemy of mine. They neither communicate with me nor support me. My elder brother's wife spread rumor against me in our locality'.

Among unmarried single women, more than nine tenth received moral and financial support from their parents and relatives. Majority of unmarried respondents are living with their kin. Though in day to day life sometime, they face problem, but in general they get help and support from their kin.

### **Case X**

Punita Chowdhury, 42 years old unmarried shop keeper said my brothers and elder sister always support me and appreciate me for success. I am economically independent and contribute to my parental family. Except me all my brother and sisters are married and they love and respect me.

In sum, majority of respondents especially widows are not satisfied with their single status. Whereas mixed reaction came from unmarried and divorced respondents, around four fifth (80%) divorce women and 91% unmarried express their satisfaction about their single status. Either once married or never married most of them are less concern about their identity. Most of them think about 'self' that is I and social self that is 'Me' only in crisis situation. The level of self-esteem of single women is not high because of various socio-economic problem of their life. Large number of respondents also blame on themselves for their single status where as other consider single status has positive effect on their life.

Single women of Agartala town are stigmatized different way because of their single status. All the respondents face different levels of humiliation, mental torture, ignorance, even their children also victimized for their single status. Majority of divorced women not get support and help from parents and kin, because still for divorce women, society does not shows any sympathy. Similarly different taboos restrict widows' activity and movement. So, all these factors and subjugation create internal conflict, among the single women. The interpretation of I and Me which make the feeling of self perception is mysterious for themselves. Self-perception of single women of Agartala town is always guided by the 'other' view towards them. Majority of them struggle hard for survival as because they are in the midst of different type of socio-economic crisis along with mental pressure. So they get less time to think about 'I' and 'Me'. Most of them suffer from identity crisis and social rejection, which demoralize them and ultimately their level of confidence goes down.