

Chapter 1

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Women occupied low status in comparison to men in Indian society. Patriarchal Indian society always wants to see women as mother, daughter, sister and wife. Hindu religious text stated that in every cycle of life women should remain under the control of man like in childhood she must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband and in old age to her son (Altaker 1938). In patriarchal Indian society, women are subjugated and dominated by male in each and every sphere of life. They are not considered an autonomous being like all human creatures and also not permitted them to lead independent life. A woman's prestige, honour, dignity related to her male counterpart. Indian society considers a woman's life become successful when she gets married and gives birth of children. Unmarried, divorce and widow are considered as unfortunate and occupied low status in comparison to married women. Earlier, patriarchal society denies to recognize single women, sati and sending Bengali widow to *Kashi/Banaras* are the example of it.

Single women may be defined, a woman who is not in any kind of serious relationship, or is unmarried. The term 'single' generally refers to someone who is not involved in any kind of serious relationship, including marriage, engagement or long term dating. Legally a person may be defined as single if he or she is currently divorced, widow/widower, and unmarried cohabiters or has always been single. For various reasons a woman may remain single. For example, by choice she may maintain single status, financial reasons, health problem, widowhood, divorce etc. Women who remain single are stigmatised by society because of prejudicial beliefs. They are not just an insignificant group of single eccentric people. Single women in urban areas are facing various problems whereas a single male is not facing such problems. Different types of single women are facing different types of challenges and difficulties in their day to day life. Single women are considered as vulnerable categories; they juggle out many responsibilities including financial provision, housekeeping and also parenting. According to 2011 Census, around 3.6 crores of women are having single status.

The women who become single due to death of husband face difficulties to survive. Earlier, widows were not permitted to lead normal life. Their dress pattern, food habit and movement were restricted by the society. In the Bengali community, widows were forced to shave their hair, wear white clothes and eat vegetable and lastly most of them were sent to Kashi and Banaras forever where they had to beg to maintain her livelihood. So, single woman as widow was not accepted as a matter of concern in India. Similarly there was no concept of divorce in India. If a woman is married she has to maintain her relationship under any circumstance. It is believed that god selects the mate for everyone and marriage is seven births' bonding between husband and wife. It is the duty of woman to

maintain the relationship by serving her husband and in-laws and giving birth to children etc; at the same time society permits men to marry more than one woman and to leave his wife any time with or without reason. In India there was no permission for a woman to stay single in society, because it is believed that when a girl takes birth she must get married otherwise parents will be outcast, i. e., parents were not permitted to keep their daughter unmarried for a long time. That is why girls are seen as burden. It can be said that patriarchal society does not accept single women whereas a single man get shelter from the extended family. But with the passes of time especially after Independence things have started changing. Due to spread of education, industrialisation, urbanization, passing of several laws like Hindu Marriage Act 1935, Hindu Succession Act 1956, the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 etc. have brought lots of change in the life of women. Now, they can get education, can select their life partners, can divorce their husbands, can remain unmarried, and can work for earning. As a result, number of unmarried and divorced women is increasing in society. Still in India, widows, divorced and unmarried women are subject to social exclusion, harassment, and isolation which makes their life more miserable. In patriarchal society, single womanhood is not a common phenomenon which results in another prominent face of gender injustice. Single women with self-headship face lots of difficulties for maintaining themselves and their children. Many of them undergo psychological pressure because of their single status. They suffer from insecurity, loneliness, financial hardship and so on, which ultimately lead them to face identity crisis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous of studies have highlighted different aspects of women's life in India. Here, some of relevant reviews are highlighted.

Hutton (1935) says single women suffer from insecurity feeling, loneliness and face numerous problems in their daily life both inside and outside of their house. He further stated that those women who refused to settle down in marriages experienced absence of respect, freedom and compatibility, and those women who faced hardship and infinite challenges while walking out of oppressive marriages, or who, after being deserted by men, have negotiated with myriad challenges of life to live with single identity.

Smith (1951) analyzed the problems and patterns of adjustment of single women. He points out that such women, due to social inhabitation, subjugation and exploitation develop a tendency to lead a secure life. Smith further stated that single women in urban setting form every class, include lower class, lower middle class, middle class and upper class face diverse problems. Even though they are educated and employed. Such women do not have the authority and power to take decisions by

their own, they have to serve their family members, spend their income for family. But family has not shown interest in their matters rather creates inter-personal conflicts.

Rama Metha (1975) said that ratio of divorce women is increases in modern time but remarriage of divorce mother is very rare due to social and cultural practice. According to Metha, the young generation is increasingly ignorant of the ritualistic basis of marriage. Therefore in the modern and developed societies divorce are more frequently increases. He also said that due to the social and cultural complexities, mobility of job, impact of capitalism, emerging industrialization, urbanization, change attitudes on traditional norms and value system is causing the disintegration of marital relations.

Lopata (1979) said that social securities are nonexistence for Indian widows. Widows mainly those who are unemployed seem to depend on other's support and adjustment systems made available by nature or tradition. Unemployed widow needs parental support to maintain their life, and such supports could be grouped into economic, social service or emotional support.

Michael Allen (1982) stated that _In recent time the fundamentalists desire to protect the idea of traditional Hindu family system and perform such previous rules for women when they were mere animals without tongue'. The most common example are found from the evidence of _Sati' i.e. the wife jumping into the funeral of her deceased husband so as to finish off the family name with respect. Other forms of Hindu traditional customs like child marriage, taboos on widow remarriage, divorce etc, curve the freedom of women.

Herchant Munira, (1983) conducted study among 50 divorce Muslim women in Bombay, Pune and found that Muslims women are mostly habituated with the divorce procedure or Talak. In many case husbands divorce their wife by oral pronouncement of the word _thalak' three times. She also found that nearly 50% divorce women have brought back with them their entire dowry after divorce and rest has not received any maintenance. She argues that majority of Muslim women face problems during period of divorce and after divorce.

S. Pothan, (1986) talk about the condition of widows and divorce women in different period of Hindu society. Pothan stated that during the medieval period (879 - 1768) widow remarriage and divorcing husband was not allowed among the higher caste society. However, divorce has been permitted under the special legal provision for Christian; on the other hand the dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act III of 1939 has been permitted women to divorce on special ground. He also said that dowry plays significant role in arrange marriage and many cases it directly or indirectly related to marital breakdown.

Krishnakumari (1987) conducted study on 333 single women in three different states namely Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. This study mainly focuses on socio-economic background of single women, her family relationship, social interaction and attitude of society towards them. The author said that the position and status of women in Indian society is not encouraging. Married women accorded a high place in the society and single women are looked inspire upon by the society. They always encouraged by the society to live with their parents, in-laws or children. Even their professional success is often seen with suspicion. He also found that the independent single women face less financial problem compare to those who totally depends upon others for survival. Unmarried single woman have a slightly better position than divorced or separated women and widows.

Allen (1989) mentioned about social desirable position for women which is always found absent for single women. They are living in strain and facing emotional stigma from their family members. Single women face lots of problem regarding their social, economic and psychological conditions.

Dandvate et. al (1989) in their study mentioned that Indian society has lots of testimony about orthodox inhumanity toward widows. They said that every year, more than 20,000 widows have been forcefully send in the Hindu pilgrimage centers like; Mathura, Vrindavan and Varanasi. These types of incidents started during the British period but still continued in different part of the country, especially in Bengal. Their study reveals that large number of widows, both young and old have been forced to leave their homes (husband and parental) by their relatives for grab their land and other movable property.

B. S. Nagi, (1993) conducted study on 570 women of Rajasthan who were married in their childhood but they have no such memories about their marriage. Among them 45% respondents were widow and 32% respondents have been suffered from malnutrition. Nagi said that child marriage always enforces widowhood and it is create hurdles on girl's education and health.

Tuula Gordon (1994) conducted her study on 72 single women in Helsinki at London and the San Francisco Bay area and stated particularly about womanhood in general social context where they honored only if they are in the roles of wife and mother, otherwise they are seen as threatening to social order. Gordon purposively included samples those are single mothers, divorced women and women who have never been married and lesbians. Gordon is her study discussed single women's statements about their feeling and their life style. Gordon found that young widows are more humiliated, harassed, exploited and victimized than married women.

Sandhya (1994) said that widows are the most deprived and neglected individual segment of Indian society, as they are discriminated doubly: one as a women and second as a widow. Problems of widows are always neglected socially and politically. She also said that widow's life is miserable in India and government should take initiative to improve the status of single women and their living condition in our country.

K.G. Lewis and S. Moon (1997) stated that single women mainly classified into two segments, (i) those who are always remain single means unmarried women and (ii) women those are once married but due to some circumstances they return to their single status through divorce, separation or abandoned by husband. This study reveals that single women are ignored by society. Single life of a woman viewed as dreary, where she has no option for the development of relationships with family and family.

Dreza and Srinivasan (1998) Studied the condition of low-income widows north and southern part of rural India. They said that widows are living in a vulnerable condition. The condition of widows in north India is comparatively worse than the widows of south India, where they get more support from natal family. They also found that more widows are head of their family compare to the widows of North India.

Jeuti Barooah, (1998) conducted study on Single Assamese Hindu woman of Gowahati City. He found 42% single women between groups of 30 -39 years are employed in various sectors. He also said that single women of Gowahati city mainly focus on four factors in their life; these are security, independence, economic viability and comfort. Education and separate means of livelihood contribute to the growth of a sense of independence among the single Assamese women. These help those to face challenges arise out of their single status. But in spite of that, they substantially depend on the support of close kin in different circumstances of their life.

Chen (2000) conducted study on widows in *Rajasthan and Vrindavan* mainly those who take shelter in ashrams to explore the problems faced by them staying far from their own family and relatives. She said that widows living *Vrindavan* face lots of difficulties in maintaining their food, clothes and shelter. Chen found that majority of widows get support or periodic alarm from their family members. Though —Regular support| does not mean _full support' rather support on the basis of important requirements of widows. Chan in his study found that widows are most vulnerable section of society than married women and widower. The widows are callously face social negligence. Three stark image of widow in Indian society reflected in his study, these are the child widow, the sati and the ascetic widow. Invisible minority consider as the widows in _*Vrindavan*' live in various ashrams. Chen also stated that, percentage of widow remarriage in India is very low.

According to various government reports only 9% of the widows remarried and most of them live in urban settings.

Singh (2000) gives much attention to the issues of safety and social security of single women in India. He stated that in Indian society because of cultural factors single women can easily survive in urban areas only. He said that in many cases women remain unmarried due to economic problem, no perfect match, irresponsible parents or absence of parents and so on.

Rajul Sogani (2002) analyses the theme of widowhood over the last 150 years in some of the major Indian languages that explored the condition of widows, their role, their place in the family and society and the question of their remarriage. His study reveals that the trend of writing about widows started in Bengal in the late nineteenth century when the first impact of westernization was felt and reformist activities were initiated. Later it spread to Bombay and Madras Presidencies and finally to the Hindi-speaking region at the turn of the century. The theme became popular with writers when the Widow Remarriage Act was passed in Bengal after Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar's strong campaign in favour of it.

Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) conducted study on 30 single women in the rural area called Cotsworld of England and mentioned about those women defined as single, rather work with the typical constructions of their identity available in the public arena. According to them, singleness is a discursively constructed social category and also troubled category. Study reveals that the dilemmas of self representation that single women on their own have to deal with, and stimulate themselves as a troubled category.

Adinarayana Rddey (2004) discusses the problems of widows live in Maharashtra. He is of the view that widows are found in the worst condition in their social as well as familial position. He said that young widows get less support from their family and relatives compare to older widows. Young widows get mentally disturb when they listen any harsh comment from people. Most of the widows face financial crisis because of the death of their husband.

P. A. Reddy (2004) discussed about various problems cope by social prejudice and attitudinal partiality toward widow in North India. Reddy in his study mentioned that the condition of widow in rural areas is worse than urban areas. The economic condition of low-income widows is very vulnerable. Most of the widows especially those who have children are taking shelter to their natal family or village.

Byrne and Carr (2005) in their article *'Caught in the cultural lag: The Stigma of Singlehood'* stated that the macro social changes that encourage and sustain singlehood as a desirable option and

social thinking gradually start changing through new cultural ideas. They also stated that single women are viewed as responsible for their single status due to some characterological flaw or blemish, such as immaturity, self confidences or lack of personal discipline.

Amato R. Paul (2006) in his article 'The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children', said that not only the adults those who are passing through difficult phases of divorce feel stress and emotionally broken but their children also feel stress and helpless. Paul's study reveals that the role of custodial parent (mostly the mother) in promoting children's well-being is clear but the role of the noncustodial parent (mostly the father) is ambiguous. Most important difficulties faced by women after divorce is economic hardship which have negative impact on children upbringing. Paul concludes that divorce has both positive and negative impact. It sometime may give relief to women from torture and exploitation; on the other hand it may create stress, depression for woman and her children.

Devi and Bagga (2006) discuss the morphological changes and health conditions in rural old women of Manipur and Assam. They described the phenomenon of aging which directly affect every aged woman. Most of their respondents were widows and have less financial and familial support. In their study, they examine the economic status, marital status, literacy level, living arrangement, occupation, food habits or dietary practice of Meetai aged women of Assam and Manipur. They found that Meetai aged women of Manipur basically the widows were suffered from different problem comparison to Meetai women of Assam. They said that government takes policies and programme for the welfare of young women but there is a need of some specific programme for improving the condition aged women of this region.

DePaul (2006) talk about the Second-Wave feminism which is directly ignored the presence of single women and only concentrated on married woman. In his study on American Single Women those have strong feeling of rejection by society. There was no tradition of seeing the Single Woman as a person in the community. DePaul discussed about some positive side of maintaining single status, he observed that single status help to lead an independent life. In his study he found that single women's experiences of prejudice, stigmatization and ignored by society in everyday life incidents.

Susan S. Wadley (2008) examines the life condition of widow belongs to lower and upper caste in Karimpure village of North India. Wadley said that when a woman become widow it create lots of problem for her in-law and natal family. She also said that widows were considered 'most inauspicious creatures'. People of the village believe that widowhood is related to accumulated karma. Society put restriction of widow's participation in auspicious occasion. Widows are bound to wear

white clothes, break her glass bangles that symbolize auspicious marital status and remove her toe rings and lead a very simple life.

Women's Policy Research (2008) found in America if women were paid fairly than the income of single women would rise 13.4%, single mothers would earn 17% more, and married women would earn 6% more. These increases would lead to reduce poverty of 84% for single women, 50% for single mothers, and 62% for married women.

Dr. Nehaluddin Ahmed (2009) talk about various incidence of sati (*su-thi or suttee*) from ancient period to modern period. Sati means a widow willingly or unwillingly immolating herself on her husband funeral pyre. This study mainly examines the legal provisions and implantations of laws in various social settings. Ahmed found that Indian government has failed to strengthen the sati laws because of their own political pressure. According to him, in other countries throwing a women in fire would be called murder but in India still this act of murdering widows in consider as traditional rituals.

Trivedi et. al (2009) mainly examine the vulnerable condition of widows and divorce women of India. They stated that widowhood reflects myriad economic, social and psychological problems, particularly just after the death of spouse. This study reveals that most of the widows and divorce women feel lonely and suffer from fear of losing self-esteem. Majority of them feel the loss of personal contact and human association. They said that young widows are not emotionally ready to accept the loss of their husband; most of them face violence from their immediate relatives who forced them out of family. They also face property dispute with in laws. Authors conclude that some specific reasons responsible for marital breakdown in recent time, these are increasing violence, cruelty, character assassination, alcoholism, problems of adjustment especially in a joint family, growing extra marital affairs and lack of understanding and trust between husband and wife etc.

Rick Nauert (2010) conduct interviews of 32 single women of New York City who never married and felt that society's attention was directed to them at their age and single status. According to Nauert, the number of single women has increased and the stigma associated with being single at that age has not diminished. Nauert discussed about common feeling and experience of single women those are found in different segments of social world. These feelings and experience categorize into three parts; (i) Awareness of shifting reality as single women become older as well as single, (ii) Remind that single women are no different life path that most women when others inquire about their single status during events including social gatherings and weddings, (iii) Feeling of insecurity and

displacement in their families of origin when parents and siblings remark about their singlehood and make jokes or rude comments.

Tamilenthi et al (2011) made a comparative analysis between the experiences of women those have no life partner because of widowhood and women those have their partner. They mainly highlights on five issues, these are i) Professional competency ii) Professional qualities iii) Professional attitude iv) Professional psychology and v) concern to the society. They found that single women (widow) and married women are equally perform their duty as like their male colleagues in the organization, but married women get more facilities and help from their partners. Whereas single women (widow) found themselves in a stressful working situation because of single handling the work pressure and found difficulties on their professional as well as personal life. Single women (widow) those have child found in a complex situation to adjust both professional and personal life.

Single Women's Rights (2011), created awareness as well as promote activism for protection of rights of single women. This study indicates that Single women in villages have to wage a tough battle of survival continuously as society takes a prejudiced view of them. Single women mainly those who are widow discriminated and deprived of fare share of food, clothing, and medical attention and the rest are often abused physically deprived financially and denied access to resources. Further, forum has pointed out that there are many households which are practically headed by single women where women take sole responsibility of their children, however they do not receive social benefits since ration cards or other documents do not show them as head of the families.

V. Mohini Giri (2002) in 'Status of widow of Vrindavan and Varanasi: A comparative study' discussed about the traumatic struggle of widows and their social as well as economic condition in India. Giri said that in Indian society customary practice and religious section marginalize the widows and their subsequent struggle for identity. She also said that widows are the most vulnerable to abuse and violence and most of the widows in Indian found with a silent cry, which stresses the need to develop. This study reveals that Indian society denied to accept widows as a normal member of society.

E. Klinenberg (2012) in *'Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone'* explore the living condition of single women in America. Single women are mainly consisting of unmarried women and formally married women (widow, divorce and separated). The study reveals that mature single women are beginning to report advantages to single status in terms of personal autonomy and growth that have made —going solo a psychologically rewarding experience. Klinenberge argues that society no doubt preferred marriage as a vital part of a women life. But due to

social change blind social support to marriage going to reshape and it reveals that women's happiness only depend on her marriage is not true. This qualitative study compare between married and single women on the basis of respondents mental peace and happiness. This study reveals that overall, singles at midlife in the early 1990s continued to fare more poorly on a wide array of measures of psychological well-being than married.

Ramachandrappa (2012) in his study on 'Cause and consequences of divorce women in Bangalore city: A sociological approach' selected 100 respondents randomly who experience divorce in their life. Among them 50% were male and 50% were female. Ramachandrappa said that the real reason for divorce in most of the cases is lack of understanding and communication between husband and wife. If real love and understanding exist between husband and wife then difficulties and problems are easily overcome. But if relationship is not based on trust and mutual understanding, then problems and misunderstanding easily cope and may lead dissolution of marriage. He suggest that divorce is a common phenomenon in Hindu society, yet different forms of marital disputes like separation, desertion and customary divorce are common among the lower caste and class people.

Anthea Taylor (2012) discussed about the single woman during the mid- 1990s, those has been found as hyper visible personalities in western popular culture. Taylor argues that the category 'single women' encompasses those never married, widow and divorcees and this newly emerged category of women were repeatedly coining by mass media at that period which gave new directions for the single women for survive. In western countries single women have been appearing as strong personality and single woman has been pronounced as 'cultural affirmation'.

Gobalakrishnan and Sumithra (2013) conducted their study on 90 widows in Thathampatty division of Ayothiyapattanam block, Salem District of Tamil Nadu and found that widows face two common problems: firstly loss of social status and the secondly reeducation of economic conditions. Due to these they face lots of problems at various levels in their daily life. They found that the perception of the parental family members as well as in-laws' family is unbearable and intolerable for the widows.

National Policy For Women (2016) recently released by the Central Government for deliberation and discussions before final policy making has tried to articulate a comprehensive vision of women's empowerment in India and has taken specific notes for the rights and requirements of single women.

In sum, these studies highlight three aspects of the single women: (i) definition of single women, (ii) social and economic security-identity of single women and (iii) the problems and challenges faced by single women. Unmarried, widow, divorced, deserted or separated women are

single women. Largely deprived of security they negotiate myriads of challenges within their families as well as while walking outside.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

From the above review it appears that some studies were conducted on single women (widow, divorce and unmarried). In these studies especially studies conducted in India highlight different problems faced by the single women. Earlier Indian society does not accept single women as girls were not permitted to remain unmarried, divorce were banded and widows were either burn along with their husband dead body or send to *Vrindavan*, *Varanasi* or *Kashi* forever. But after initiative taken by Raja Rammohan Roy for abolition of Sati and Vidyasagar effort from widow remarriage, bring Indian widows in the limelight of discussion. After that series of studies were done on widows and later part of 20th century to recent past some studies also highlighted the condition of widow, divorce and unmarried women by consider them as single. It also obvious from their work that single women faces different socio-economic problem which ultimately make their life miserable. But very few studies were done on single women of North East India especially single women of Tripura. Keeping this view in mind an attempt has been made to understand the condition of single women of Agartala town the capital of Tripura with reference to ‘I, Me and Other’.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following are the objectives of the study:

- To understand the socio-economic conditions of single women in Agartala town of Tripura.
- To ascertain the difficulties faced by single women in Agartala town of Tripura.
- To investigate identity crisis of the single women in Agartala town of Tripura from an ‘I’–‘Me’ perspective (self-perception and others’ perceptions).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In view of above objectives, the following questions have been framed

- Do political, economic and educational statuses influence social status of single women in society?
- Do single women differ in social, economic, political and health related difficulties?
- Is there identity crisis among single women in society?
- Does social attitude create any pressure on self-concept, self-esteem and identity crisis among single women in society?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Feminist theory

In present era women related studies are wide range. In spite of such wide scale difference, women study by any discipline is attracted by personal qualm related to problematic status of women. Irony is different approaches and theories conceptualizes women problem differently and probably hardly and theory or approach able to address genesis of problem of women irrespective of societies. Never married, separated and widow are all women are victims of the patriarchal social system at different levels. Taylor wrote instead: —Even if every woman, as matters now stand, had a claim on some man for support, how infinitely preferable is it that part of the income should be of the woman's earning, even if the aggregate sum were but little increased by it, rather than that she should be compelled to stand aside in order that men may be the sole earners, and the sole dispensers of what is earned. In short, in order to be partners rather than servants of their husbands, wives must earn an income outside the home. In further explaining her view that married as well as single women should work, Taylor betrayed her class bias. Insisting that women cannot both work full-time outside the home and be devoted wives and mothers without running themselves ragged, Taylor claimed that working wives with children would need a —panoply of domestic servants to help ease their burdens. According to Taylor (1993), contemporary socialist feminists support a comparable worth approach to further reducing the gender wage pay gap, for two reasons—one having to do with addressing the feminization of poverty, and the other with addressing the valuation of different kinds of work. Because 61 percent of all poor families are headed by single women and because women are the primary recipients of food stamps, legal aid, and Medicaid, if wage-earning women in female-dominated jobs were paid what their jobs are worth, these women might be able to support themselves and their families adequately without being forced, in one way or another, to attach themselves to men as a source of desperately needed income. Feminist scholars debated the issue of differences among women, highlighting the relational nature of caste difference and the possibilities it has for understanding feminism in a new light. The new directions mapped by radical feminist scholars thus have suggestions for the practical straggle of women for their single status in India. Self-reflexivity has been one of the strengths of the women status with respect.

Contemporary radical feminists believe that sexism is at the core of patriarchal society and that all social institutions reflect that sexism. Radical feminists focus on the patriarchal family as the key site of domination and oppression (Shelton and Agger, 1993). Radical feminism considers the male controlled capitalist hierarchy as sexist and as the defining feature of women's oppression. Radical

Global feminism is a movement of people working for change across national boundaries. This feminist branch focuses on the intersection of gender with race, class, and issues related to the colonization and exploitation of women in the developing world. Global feminism contends that no woman is free until the conditions that oppress women worldwide are eliminated (Bunch 1987).

Socialist feminism generally adopts the Marx–Engels model described earlier that links the inferior position of women to class-based capitalism and its alignment with the patriarchal family in capitalistic societies. Although socialist feminism is explicitly tied to Marxist theory, there are key differences between the two. Whereas Marxist theory focuses on property and economic conditions to build an ideology, socialist feminism focuses on sexuality and gender. Men and women retain interest in their own gender group, so it is unclear if the socialism being struggled for is the same for both men and women (Hartmann, 1993). Social feminism aims to create the equal social status to every individual, man and women. It appears to adopt some of the essences of Marxism. Social feminism sees domestic work, childcare, marital status of women as ways in which women are exploited by patriarchal system which devalues women in family as well as society. Tong (1998) stated that, “in patriarchal society women are considered as passive (affectionate, obedient, responsive and sympathetic, kind, friendly) and men are active (strong, bread earner, aggressive, curious, ambition and competitive). In India where dominant patriarchal system exist in almost every corner found that men absolutely have the power, dominate social and cultural system and have the authority over women. But this superiority is often misused by men through committing bad treatments over women. Most of the divorced women experience bad treatment, extreme physical tortured from their husband, it’s usually indicates the level of oppression faced by them.

Liberal feminism is based on the simple proposition that all people are created equal and should not be denied equality of opportunity because of gender. Liberal feminism is based on Enlightenment beliefs of rationality, education, and the natural rights that extend to all men and women. This is articulated in John Stuart Mill’s (1869) *The Subjection of Women*, with his statement that —what is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing—the result of forced oppression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others. Feminists have said much about women’s experiences at divorce. Some recognize that the ideology of formal equality advocated by liberal feminists disadvantages divorcing women in financial and custody disputes. Other feminist theorists have worked to dissolve the perceptual barrier between the family and the market, a barrier that devalues the labour that women perform in the home and denies the economic partnership aspect of marriage. Many feminists expose that our society in general fails to adequately value a woman’s work in the home and her contribution to her husband’s workforce participation. Feminist groups have fought for, and in some instances, have obtained, more equitable property distribution laws. Regarding custody issues, feminists have explained the extreme disadvantage of abused women at

divorce and have lobbied successfully for custody laws that address domestic violence. Feminist approach relates to different problematic aspects of divorce, widow and deprivation of women. Subordination of women is core issue of the approach, though some other of the approach differs in their assumption about cause or source of women subordination. Therefore according to socialist feminist Hartmann 1981 struggle against capital and practical society cannot be successful if study of issue of feminism is abandoned. Liberal feminism treats all people equal and no one should be denial of opportunity due to gender. Global feminism believes to build up movement across national boundaries to usher desire change against gender inequality. Radical feminist theory explains about violence against women which preferably blamed by patriarchal system in society. Patriarchal theory believe that patriarchy always found by the relationship with the dominance, where one party is dominant and powerful as much that they exploit other for their own benefit. Central concept of this patriarchy theory is exploiting the subordinate person or group, with the helping tool like, social culture, norms, tradition which is bound to except and obliged to observe by members of subordinate groups. But for radical feminist theory, not for only patriarchal system but the men always use social systems and methods of controlling rules to keep women suppressed (David, 2003). The historical roots of radical feminist theory can be found in the United State's civil rights movement, particularly the student non-violent coordinating committee. Many feminist pioneers of the second wave were found as active volunteers in the struggle against racism in the early and mid 1960. (Dawn, 2002)

Symbolic Interactionist Theory

According to Blumer, the main belief of symbolic interactionism is that people attach with symbolic meaning to object, behaviour and other people. (Ritzer, 2000) From the George Herbert Mead, symbolic interactionism does not focus only one element with in society, but rather how individuals interact with every incident in order to analyzed and intemperate the behaviors of others. For this research work symbolic interactionism can be used as a guiding theoretical framework. The foundational to the understanding and formulation of the title of this research work is mainly borrowed from the Mead's concept of I and Me in relation to the other (generalized others). Meads philosophical work was focusing that individual has various qualities that will play out depending on the situation in which one finds himself or herself. Though this research work is not directly related with the theoretical arrangements of meads idea of behaviorism or philosophical based interpretation about mind self and society, but partly used the social psychological factors to understand Single women of Agartala town more significantly. To indicate I of single women indicate for this study as mind setup, personal opinion, reflective image or observing themselves in their own understanding. Me is accumulated understanding of social norms, conscious opinion and

pattern of social response related single status in Agartala Town. Whereas 'Other' means for this study is the social attitude towards single women. Though, Mead in his unified piece of study discussed about 'I' and 'Me' as a part of one's self, whereas 'Other' mention by him as 'Generalized other'. Mead observed that through language, people have the ability to be both subject and object to themselves. Accordingly as subject individual can act and as object individual observing themselves as acting. He held that 'I' as spontaneous, impulsive and creative, whereas the 'Me' is reflective and socially

aware. Mead's best-known concept generalized other is the attitude of the entire community or surroundings. It is also very crucial that people be able to evaluate themselves from the point of view of the generalized other. (Ritzer, 2000) For the fulfillment of main purpose of this research work 'I' is mainly concentrate on 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, 'Me' consider as the great emphasis on social self and 'Other' indicate the importance of social attitudes influence and exist into single women personal and social life experience.

Mead develops an interpretation of the social nature of the constitution of self. Where he has places great emphasis upon the social self, that each individual fashion a sense of their own selfhood through engagement with other self. No clear dividing line can be drawn between own sense of self ('I') and the self of others ('Me'). I me and other from the perspective of symbolic interactionism is a social product of the structural aspects of social life. Mead's major work of *Mind, Self and Society* makes a crucial distinction between 'I' and 'Me' in conceptualizing the self. The 'Me' is the socialized self, made up of the internalized attitudes of others as experienced in the daily life. The 'I' as Mead used, is the un-socialized self, an assortment of personal desires, needs, decisions and dispositions. For Mead, the achievement of self-awareness arises when the self is able to distinguish the 'Me' from the 'I' and hence attain a level of reflective distance from the demands of society and culture. The term self often refers to a warm sense or a warm feeling that something is "about me" or "about us". Reflecting on oneself is both a common activity and a mental feat. It requires that there is an 'I' that can consider an object that is 'me'. The term self includes both the actor who thinks ('I am thinking') and the object of thinking ('about me'). To distinguish between the mental content ('Me') and the aspects of the mental capacity of thinking ('I'), modern use of the term self includes all these elements (Macdonald, 2005)

The self can be considered primarily a memory structure such that the aspect of self has existence outside of particular contexts and social structures. Self-concepts are cognitive structures

that can include content, attitudes, or evaluative judgments and are used to make sense of the world, focus attention on one's goals, and protect one's sense of basic worth. Self-concepts are cognitive structures that can include content, attitudes, or evaluative judgments and are used to make sense of the world, focus attention on one's goals, and protect one's sense of basic worth. (Oyserman, 1998). The self is an 'I' that thinks and a 'me' that is the content of those thoughts, one important part of this 'me' content involves mental concepts or ideas of who one is, was, and will become. These mental concepts are the content of self-concept (Mennell, 1974).

Functionalist argues duality or multiplicity of function viz. what is functional for one part of social system can be dysfunctional for another part. In same way what is functional for one society may have dysfunctional consequence for another society. Talcott Parsons and Ronald Fletcher argued that rise in marital breakdown stems largely from marriage being increasingly valued. People expect and demand more now in present society end in relationship, which may had been acceptable in past. Ronald Fletcher views that a relatively high divorce rate may be indicative not of lower but of high standard of marriage in society. Thus paradoxically high value placed on marriages may result increased marital breakdown. From a functionalist perspective, the increase in divorce rate is explained by three main categories of factors. The first one is factors that affect the value that individuals attach to marriage. A rise in divorce and separation would suggest that individuals attach less importance to their marriage. Yet, functionalists like Talcott Parsons and Ronald Fletcher have argued that instead of reflecting a loss of value, the increasing number of divorces and separations indicates that individuals have higher expectations from their marriages. When expectations are higher, disappointments are more likely to occur. The problem then may not lie in the type of relationship that partners have, but in the ideals that they hold. The second category consists of those factors which determine the degree of conflict between the spouses. These may include the shift from extended to nuclear family arrangement. As mentioned in the discussion on family, the nuclear family is under tremendous emotional stress as it is an isolated unit. This increases the likelihood of conflicts. Inability to cope with the demands of the spouse and children, and difficulty in finding solutions to crisis can also result in separation and divorce. Health issues are also potential sources of stress and conflict. Mental instability, debilitating diseases and other serious health issues can have a negative impact on the quality of the relationship. The third factor that can impact on the relationship between spouses is the arrangements that are made for working wives. If the wife still assumes the responsibility for all the household chores and for the children even though she is in paid employment, or if she is not allowed more decision-makingpower and access to resources now that she contributes to the economic well-being of the household, conflicts are more likely to arise. The last category identified by functionalists is changes in divorce laws make it relatively easy and cheap for individuals to apply for a divorce now-a-days. The social stigma that previously strongly

discouraged individuals from breaking the marriage bond is now also lessened. It is increasing being accepted as normal for individuals to leave their spouse if the relationship is unsatisfactory, and remarriages are relatively easy. The increasing number of women in paid employment as well as the provision of welfare benefits also contributes to the increase in number of separations and divorces. Women are less economically dependent on their husband and may afford to leave the household if they are unhappy. The functionalists mentioned those factors that the social stigma that previously strongly discouraged individuals from breaking the marriage bond is now also lessened. It is increasing being accepted as normal for individuals to leave their spouse if the relationship is unsatisfactory, and remarriage are relatively easy.

Marxian perspective does not specifically signify women problem but it discusses inequitable social relation as cause of class differentiation. Karl Marx believes that unequal material interest based on economic position result in differing perceptions of social reality that relegate vis-a-vis stratify individual and family in to class. Nicky Hart presents Marxian alternative to other kind of theories. She says that increasing divorce is product of conflict between changing economic condition and social and ideological superstructure especially family. Marxian analysis of the material basis of women's oppression is linked up with the emergence of the patriarchal private property. Patriarchal and capitalism operate effectively together to use women as a profitable source of production and reproduction while keeping control over women's labour and perpetuating their inferior status. Marriage is a capitalistic instrument to enslave women. Marx (1864) believed that female employment would largely free women from economic dependence upon males. From Marxian perspective, class consciousness and class solidarity are essential, before the subject class can overthrow its oppressors. In terms of the Marxian analogy, gender consciousness and female solidarity are necessary for women's liberation. Single women are socially isolated and loyal to and dependent on particular men. These factors limit their ability to unite as a group in opposition to a common enemy.

In the present study symbolic interactionist and radical feminist theories have been combined and used for analysis of the condition of single women in Agartala town.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This section of the thesis mainly focuses on the details related to sources of data, universe and units of the study, sampling of respondents, tools for data collection and analysis of data.

I. Universe and Units of the Study

Agartala Town, the capital of Tripura constitutes the universe and single woman that is who unmarried, widow and divorced constitutes the unit of the study. Agartala town is situated in west district of Tripura and bounded by Bangladesh border in three sides. The total area of the town is 58.38 sq km. After getting permission for field work from Agartala Municipal Council; I contacted with executive officer of four zonal office; namely west, south, east and central of the town. These zonal offices provided me lists of Single women living in different part of the town. From these lists I found large numbers of Single women are concentrated in 14 wards of the council. So, I purposively selected these wards only for my study. Single women living in ward no 3, 5, 11, 12, 14, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, 19 and 34 are the units of the study.

II. Sources and Types of Data

Both primary and secondary data have been used for this research work. Primary data were collected from the field through structured interview schedule, observation and also informal discussion methods. Secondary data were collected from various governmental and non-governmental organizations to derive clear understanding of administrative aspects about this research work. Census handbook is the most applied secondary data source for this research work, books, periodicals, journals, web data and Economic and statistical analysis report, as well as published government circular issues from time to time were selected.

III. Tools and Techniques for Data Collection

Primary data were collected through structured interview schedule. The schedule was finalized after pilot study done on 23 single women and modifications introduced in it. During analysis of the pilot study, some questions about environment of working sectors and information about mental health conditions were not found enough. Therefore, some additional questions were added later to enrich the study. The data collection tool was a schedule consisted of both close ended and open ended questions (Appendix I). The schedule has the following sets of questions:

- First portion of the schedule deals with demographic information like; age, caste, religion, education, family status, etc.
- Second portion mainly highlights economic position of the respondents like monthly income, occupation, monthly expenditure on food and grocery items.
- Third part consists of health related questions.
- Fourth part of the schedule focuses on information related to political participation.

- Fifth part of the schedule focuses on the personal understanding of the respondents about themselves as social being in a particular setting and social attitude towards them with reference to their single status.

IV. Interview

Apart from interview schedule, informal interviews and observation were applied as techniques for collection of data. Face to face interviews were conducted to collect data about the social living condition and self-image or self-identity of the respondents. Most of the interviews were conducted at their residences. The normal duration of an interview was about 80 to 90 minutes. All relevant responses were recorded in schedule. Information regarding the various aspects of single women's life was also collected through informal discussions and observations, because a majority of them were illiterate or semi-literate.

V. Observation

Because of the previous contacts with local resident of Agartala town in Tripura, I easily get an opportunity to observe the various aspects of social and personal life experiences of single women living in different wards of town. For building a rapport and understanding among some high class and highly educated respondents, a few outdoor visits or tours like get-together in a fast-food center or restaurant, visits in local parks and also in shopping malls were arranged. These visits or tours helped us acquiring in-depth knowledge about respondents' own perceptions and self image which helped to relate with the concept me, me and other. Another important lead giver was the local ward councillor, members and also workers of the ward office and lastly the officers of four zonal offices.

VI. Presentation and Analysis of Data

After collecting data from the purposively selected respondents of Agartala's Municipal areas some quantitative data from the schedule were classified systematically with statistical procedures and were tabulated with percentage. Open end questions and interviews were described in forms of case studies.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In order to conduct and complete this study in a meaningful and manageable way with the available time and resources, some limitations have been identified, especially in methodology. The recognized limitations are as follows:

- I. The study is limited among urban women especially women of Agartala town, Tripura.
- II. The study is further limited to deal with single women, especially widows, divorced and unmarried women of Agartala town.
- III. It is again limited to single women living in 13 wards of 4 zones of Agartala town.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

I: The *‘I’* term refers here to a single women’s self- perception, which can be identified with impulse, freedom and creativity of single women. *‘I’* also reflects single women’s immediate reaction toward any social situation and circumstance.

Me: *‘Me’* is based on social attitudes. Single women behave in order to gain approval and acceptance from others. This way *‘me’* of single women takes actions to adjust within society.

Other: The concept *‘other’* refers to the attitude of society toward single women. It includes their level of self-control and adjustment. In this particular study *‘other’* refer to society that includes the social group to which single women belong. Though single women sound as *‘single’*, they always carry society around them. Society criticizes them to control their behavioural attitudes.

Single Woman: Single woman may be defined as a woman who is not in any kind of serious relationship or unmarried including marriage, engagement or long term dating. In this study *‘single women’* refers to those women who are divorced from their husband, widows, unmarried of above 30 years of age and not in any kind of study relationship.

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study divides into the following eight chapters:

Chapter 1: Framework of the Study: This chapter mainly deals with the statement of the problem, objectives, methodology, limitations of the study and organization of the study.

Chapter 2: Field of the Study: makes an overview of the field area, geographical location and the historical background of the state as well as Agartala town. This chapter clearly describes its population, literacy, religion and sex ratio in the Tripura state, west Tripura district and Agartala town.

Chapter 3: Society and the Single Women: describes age structure, religion, caste and tribe, size of the family, marital status, mode of marriage, age of marriage, length of conjugal life and cause of being single etc.

Chapter 4: Economy and the Single Women analyses the occupation, monthly income, control over income, property, savings and their work environment etc.

Chapter 5: Power Structure and the Single Women examines the pattern of family headship, role in decision making process of family and formal organization, awareness about cast panchayat, functions of municipality, pattern of participation in various formal political organizations etc.

Chapter 6: Health and the Single Women analyses various aspects related to single women living condition, personal hygiene habits, food and nutrition, diseases, pattern of treatment, health expenditure, reproductive health and mental health condition.

Chapter 7: Self-perceptions, Social Attitude and the Single Women analyses the understanding of single women own self, level of satisfaction, self-esteem, self-identity and society attitude towards them.

Chapter 8: Summary, Findings and Conclusion summaries the study, brings out the major findings and concludes it along with some suggestions or recommendation for improvement of their condition.

Appendices

In a nutshell, this empirical study is mainly focused single women's life experiences and their own understanding about them through various social circumstances, which mainly evaluate the life experience, social attitude and feelings of single women in Agartala town in the reference of their I' (self-perception) and Me' (social-perception) concept.