Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Conceptual background and focus of study

In India, the position of women has always been rather ambivalent. On the one side, she has been raised to the status of divinity, and on the other side, she has been exploited as somebody lower in status to men in every walk of life. Fortunately, from the middle of the nineteenth century, consciousness rose in our country to eradicate this dichotomy in her existence. Social reformers rose especially in Bengal, like Vidya Sagar and Raja Ram Mohan Roy, founder of the Brahma Samaj who advocated education for girls, marriage after adolescence and the right to widow marriage. In the North, the Arya Samaj movement led by Swami Dayanand Saraswati also wanted to purify Hinduism by preaching education of girl children as well as improvement in the status of women. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, women have started coming out of their homes for education.

Independence movement and women

The Independence Movement was a great boon to the cause of women in India as most leaders came from a western liberal education system. They encouraged the participation of women in the Independence struggle and many eminent women fought for the Independence of our country and women's issues played an important part in the perception of the national leadership. When the Indian Constitution was passed in 1950, it stressed on the equality of sexes in
Articles 15, 16 and 39 and empowered the government both for preventing discrimination against women and undertaking affirmative action to improve their status.

Indian women - A changing concept

In the last fifty years or so, India has witnessed profound changes in almost every aspect. Since the advent of independence in August 1947 the pace of changes has been greatly accelerated. One of the major consequences of the varied process of changes operating in the country had been the emancipation of women from their traditional bound ethos.

Indian women through the ages

A historical study of women in India reveals that there were distinct stages of rise and fall in her status.

The age old tradition of India, made no distinction between men and women all beings were equally “Brahman”. The ideal of Indian women was very much the same as those of Indian men, unity and equality, greatness and fullness, purity and perfection. The very high standard of learning culture and all round progress reached by women during the Vedic age inferred from the fact that ‘Rigveda’ contains as many as 27 women seers.

The position of women in India greatly deteriorated as the Vedic ideal of unity and equality began to fade off with the passage of time during the period of the
Smritis. Women were denied the right to study Vedas, utter the mantras and to perform the vedic rites. Marriage and domestic life became compulsory for women and the unquestioning devotion and self offering service of husbands was their only duty. The Hindu law giver Manu had subjected her to be entirely dependent on man as daughter, wife and mother. From the Smriti period down to the 19th century, women was seen only as a member of the family: daughter, wife and mother and not as an individual with an identity or right of her own.

The British people at first followed a policy of non interference in the social and religious life of the people of India in order to win their co-operation in the administration of the country. So women went down imperceptibly in social status. They moved within the narrow sphere of their household; cooking, child bearing, caring and catering the in laws and husband comprised their work life and activity. They had practically no idea of the busy world out side except what they learned from their men folk. They have been subjected to many kinds of suppression. The Muslim women could not even reveal her face to men and had to have it covered by a purdah. The Hindu House wife hardly stepped out of the house and was like a slave to her husband who was considered as god. Marriage and motherhood were the only valuable achievements of women. Women came to be categorized as the "weaker sex" inferior in intellect as a domestic cattle, a property of the master. The decline of the Indian women's status was reflected in the customs relating to marriage, religion and property.
Beginning of changes

Even though this position of women continued in the beginning of the British period, the spread of English education which helped the blending of western and eastern cultures enabled women to realize their subordinated position and persuaded them to regain their legitimate status. The various Hindu revivalist organizations such as the Arya Samaj and the Brahma Samaj gave great impetus to the awakening of womanhood. Already in the middle of the 19th century, the practice of “Sati” was abolished by law. In 20th century, the Mahila Samitis and women’s organizations took steps to abolish the purdah and child marriage and encouraged widow marriage.

The Indian reforms Act of 1921 enfranchised a small section of Indian population for the first time and women were also included in this. Also, Mahatma Gandhi set the pace for the progress of Indian women in all spheres of life by advising them to emancipate themselves from the drudgery of the kitchen. Adhering to Gandhi’s appeal, women came out in thousands and took part in the national movement.

Many other legal measures were also passed in order to take the status of Indian women. The earliest enactment is the Hindu widow and remarriage act of 1856. Due to the strong pressure from social reformers including women, the child marriage restraint Act was passed in 1929 and amended in 1938. The act fixed 15 as the age limit for a girl and 18 years for a boy. In 1923, women for the first time voted for the legislative assembly and provincial councils. In 1926, they were also eligible
for seats in the provisional legislature. It was felt desirable that widows should have a share in their husband's property. An Act was passed according to which if a Hindu dies, his widow is entitled to a share equal to the son.

After independence, the government of India has taken a number of significant steps which are bound to go long way towards the improvement of women's conditions in India. Thus the constitution provides equal rights and opportunities for both men and women in all spheres of life. It also provides human conditions of work and maternity relief. Further, there are legal enactment relating to women's right against immoral traffic, maternity leave etc. The Hindu women's interests are also protected by the Hindu Marriage Act of 1953, prohibiting bigamy, fixing the minimum age of marriage, for judicial separation or dissolution of the marriage on the specified conditions etc. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 may be considered as landmark in the history of Hindu women in that it recognized for the first time the equality of men and women in respect of property rights.

Indian Constitution also assures equality, freedom and non exploitation to all sections of the people irrespective of race, religion and sex.

The present day proves to be a big contrast compared to the past. It is now an established fact that women should contribute to the economic, social and national development of the country; women power should be used to enrich the common good; their talents and capabilities should not be ignored; the nation should be enriched by their knowledge.
Many factors have constituted to the improvement in the status of women. The scientific and technological progress all over the world has accelerated the process of change in the position of women in India also. The change in the structure of the economy through industrialization offers greater role for women in the productive function.

According to Harper (1961), the needs of economic systems with respect to labour and consumption are seen as promoting a change from traditional sex role to quasi-equalitarianism. The process of industrialization, urbanization and secularization have brought about socio-psychological changes in the attitudes and values of the people of this country. The attitudes of educated women have considerably changed particularly with regard to marriage and their own status. More and more women consider self respect and the development of personality as necessary goals of life.

Besides industrialization, another factor contributing to the emergence of women to prominence was the two world wars of the 20th century. The drafting of men into the army in large numbers left many jobs unattended and women had to be recruited to fill their posts. After the wars were over, the reduction in the male population due to the distraction of whole battalions of soldiers compelled many nations to keep the women in their jobs to maintain economy.

Another factor which is related to change in the social position of women is education. Education and industrialization have gone hand in hand with increased opportunities for education, provided by the society to sustain the tempo of industrialization and women began to enter school system in large number. The
percentage of literacy among women is on the increase. The spread of education has also increased the employment opportunities for women.

As the bearing and caring of children formed one of two important roles of a woman in traditional society and as these occupied most of her youthful period, mastery over this role fundamentally altered the sex roles in society in favor of women and gave her leisure in quality improvement.

The socioeconomic emancipation of Indian women has itself been a product of, and an instrument in the changes in their lives. In an investigation of the socioeconomic constitution of educational Indian by Hate (1970) it was found that a deep and vital change has taken place in their economic condition and personal status. Desai, pointing out the change in the outlook towards women's status writes "Now women is no longer looked upon child bearing machine and helot in the home. she has acquired a new social status" (Desai, N., 1957, p. 53).

It is an undisputed fact that in this 20th century the status of women has certainly risen up compared to that of the past. But it is a reality that even now a woman has not become independent. She faces a lot of problems especially the career women. And the conditions of a married career women is still worse since she has to play a dual role; that of a house wife and of an employed women (Mira Seth, 1995).
Dual role

The term "role" denotes a set of expectations and obligations associated with a particular status within a group or social situation.

The behaviour expected of the occupant of a given position in a social system is called 'role'. The development of the concept of role leads to the interpretation of behaviour in situational rather than personal terms. Behaviour is thus explained in terms of the expectation held by others in the situation and of the individual's interpretation of those expectations. The role exists apart from the personality of the individual performing the role although personality in itself is an important factor in behaviour.

Role is an expected mode of behaviour. An individual occupies many different positions in a variety of organizations and performs multiple roles. Professors may be teachers, researchers, consultants, wives or husbands, community leaders. In organizations, such roles are formally prescribed and others are created by the informal activities of the organization members. There are three types of roles (i) the expected role, (ii) the perceived role and (iii) the actual role. The expected role is what other people expect from an individual. The perceived role is how the individual thinks he or she should behave to fulfil the expected role. The enacted role is the way the person actually behaves in an organization. Thus in the complex stage of modern life, most people play not to one audience but to several, and they act multiple roles simultaneously.
Now more and more women are employed in new avenues of employment and in new occupations. They enjoy more and more opportunities than ever before as individuals, workers, wives and mothers. Their adjustment to social changes is retarded and is generally associated with a high balance between satisfaction and tensions. This is due to the fact that their lives are linked with the existence of the family and the continuation of the race (Rani, Kala 1976).

The sociological analyses of the non domestic work performed by middle class married women have focused so much its contribution to domestic or national economy as well as on its impact on family structure and functions. Spitz (1988), Piotrokowski (1979), Bohen & Vivers-Long (1981) and Voydanoff (1988) have analyzed the linkages between family system and work among dual earner wives with a view to delineate inter-role conflicts, role strain and personal stress among working wives/mothers.

The extent of women's economic need may be assessed by considering the degree to which women contribute economically to the well being of the family or household members. It is shown that there is considerable evidence, which demonstrates that women's contribution to household income provided the means to meet the basic survival needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Women's contribution makes possible improvements in the health and nutritional status of young household members.

It is often found that family organization is a powerful source of resistance to women's work. The contention that women's first responsibility is to her home and hence the course of action women take with respect to her work depends on the
adjustments made between the organization of the economy and the prevailing family system.

Ramanumma and Bambuwale (1987) reported findings of a positive relationship between wage, employment and fertility among low income groups which clearly suggests that the need for additional earrings has a stimulating effect and dominated over the negative influence of child care on women work participation.

Women's occupational status has been closely associated with the home and family. By taking up employment, they have to play a dual role: housewife and career woman. There is a clear conflict between the society-approved status of women as housewives and mother of children on one hand, and their status as more productive workers on the other. Family duties have also imposed restrictions on their role in their employment. For most of them the major role they have to play is that of a wife and mother. The home always revolves around her and she plays the key role in the house. She faces the dilemma of somewhat contradictory role perception. On the other hand she must conform to the traditional ideal person always ready to subjugate her own interest to the happiness of others in the family. She assumes almost a different personality as a member of the personnel in office or factory. Her loyalties, interest and aims differ between one place and the other and it demands two different type of individuals (Shameer & Soloman, 1985).

Marriage and home-making require self negative where as wage necessitates self enhancement for going ahead. The former implies cooperation while the later leads to competition.
Problems arising from dual role burden

Some fundamental problems encountered in combining family and work life are categorized as follows:

1. Problems of overload and time budgeting

Usually, where a women works she also has to keep the kitchen fires burning, and the family satisfied. In order to accomplish everything, she must not only budget her time; but she must also be flexible, since she is expected to be available round the clock. Thus she finds herself in a paradoxical situation.

2. Conflicting expectations of dual roles

Each person identifies oneself with stereotyped gender roles. Behavioural traits like passivity and practicality, found in all members of the human species have become sexualized and are assumed, asserted or expected to correlate with sexual differences. The working housewife faces on obvious dilemma. As a mother and wife, she must conform to traditional ideal of a hard working yet a self effacing woman, in readiness to subjugate her on interests to family's happiness. On the other hand, in her occupational role, she must be result oriented, independent, persistent and innovative. The domestic role requires a cooperative attitude as opposed to the competitive spirit demanded by the work world. Thus two polarised personalities need to be combined. Moreover, dilemmas may arise due to conflicts in
obligations and attachments, desires and so on related to one's networks of relatives, friends on the one hand and work associated on the other.

3. Problem of adverse self evaluation

A dilemma may arise from conflict within oneself about whether one is being a good person in leading a certain type of existence. A working woman may blame herself for neglect of mother's role, wife's role especially if the children develop problems of health, disinterest in studies, unsociable behaviour or the husband becomes irritable or tired.

4. Maintenance of satisfactory family relationship:

This is another problematic area for working woman. As Goode (1963) points out, the modern industrial world is the first cultural system to permit woman to occupy independent jobs. Thus woman may have a "better bargaining position." within the family system and increase their say in decision making. This bring about changes in the traditional family role relationships and power structure.

5. Problems of reallocating household tasks and sharing in childcare

Participation of woman in gainful employment demands upon the husband to get more deeply involved in household chores and raising of children. However, in all societies, women's task have less prestige than those of men. Women thus by taking over "male roles" are moving to higher levels of prestige whereas men are moving to lower levels of work. Thus the new division of labour is harder for the men in the
family to adjust to than it is for the woman. The redefinition of responsibilities from segregated, conjugal roles to joint conjugal roles may not be equally shared by men. Moreover, when the respective careers of both husband and wife assume overriding importance to each of them, both would be equally unwilling to make sacrifices and compromises.

Emerging thrust areas in women studies are:

♦ Women entrepreneurship

♦ Women empowerment

♦ Role related problems of women workers / executives

♦ Status of women in power, politics and social life.

**Women entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is defined as the ability to co-ordinate, organise, maintain and reap the best out of even the worst situations. The main quality expected of an entrepreneur is dedication, which is most important for a women entrepreneur to succeed in her pursuit (Towns & Gentzler 1985).
Women entrepreneurs always display an innate capacity to calculate and shoulder risks with a problem solving approach. They have a very high degree of achievement motivation (Colette V Browne, 1995). Women also do not lay behind men in projecting a positive image of their talents (Minkler & Stone, 1985). The other characteristics of women entrepreneurs can be listed as the ability to think independently, imagination and creative ability, the easy adaptability to any change /transition at home or elsewhere and resistance and ability to cope with setbacks (Hegar & Hunzeker, 1988).

**Women empowerment**

Empowerment is derived from the traditional definition of power—"possession of control or influence over others", legal or official authority, capacity, right or physical might (Webster's Ninth New collegiate Dictionary). Empowerment has been defined as a process (Gutierrez, 1990), an intervention (Parsons & Cox 1989, Solomon, 1976) and skill (Mandell & Schram, 1985). Power is often used synonymously with force, strength, authority, jurisdiction, control and command. Van Den Bergh and Cooper (1986) noted that in most traditional models, power is seen as a finite commodity to be controlled particularly in determining the distribution of rights, resource and opportunities. Empowerment is thus viewed as both the possessions of control authority, or influence over others and as the help provided to assist a person to gain control over his or her life (Colette V Browne, 1995).

The basic understanding principle is that empowerment is often conceptualized as an individual experience primarily promoting individual, not collective good or political power for individual gain.
Studies in role related problems of women workers / executives

‘Role’ plays an important part in every day life of every person. Without playing a role a person does not exist either for himself or for others. Role is essentially a part of human behaviour. In common sense terms, role is a set of expectation people has about the behaviour of a person holding a position. An individual occupies many different positions in a variety of organizations and performs multiple roles.

A person, more or less consciously, plays many roles and it is in these roles that we know each other. It is in these roles that we know ourselves. A role is a socially identified more or less a clear entity. It is being played by different individuals and it serves as a basis for identifying persons in a society.

Linton (1936) identified role as a segment of culture in that it consists of behavioural norms bearing a one to one correspondence with social status. A role includes the attitude values and behaviour ascribed by the society to any and all persons occupying a given status.

Lenvinson (1959) opines that the term ‘Role’ is generally being used in three ways.

1. It is structurally given demands (norms, expectations, taboos, responsibilities and the like) associated with a given social position.
2. It is the member orientation or conception of the part he has to play in an organization.

3. It is the actions of individual members, i.e., the ways in which members occupying various positions act in accordance with or in violation of a given set of organizational norms.

Biddle and Thomas (1966) came out with an explicit definition of the term 'role'. They defined 'role' as the set of prescriptions of what the behaviour of a position of member should be in all the varied aspects of human existence: as a member of a family, as a social unit or organizations. Roles have Universality in human existence and endeavor.

The behaviour expected of the occupant of a given position in a social system is called role. The development of the concept of role leads to the interpretation of behaviour in situational rather than personal terms. Behaviour is thus explained in terms of the expectation held by others in the situation and of the individual's interpretation of those expectations. The role exists apart from the personality of the individual performing the role, although personality in itself is an important factor in behaviour.

Role conflict and role ambiguity as they occur in organizations may best be described around the notion of a role episode that is a complete cycle of role sending, response by the focal persons and the effects of that response on the role senders (Khan et al., 1964.)
Source: Kahn et al. (1964).
In the figure showing the role episode model, the different boxes represent 'events' that constitute a role episode. The arrows connecting them imply a causal sequence. Role pressures are assumed to originate in the expectations held by members of the role set. Role senders have expectations regarding the way in which the focal role should be performed.

In order to examine and integrate the research on role conflict and ambiguity, Khan et al. (1964) role episode model is very useful. The model depicts the interpersonal process between the person being sent expectations (the focal person) and those sending the expectations (role senders). In addition, the model incorporates organizational, personal, and interpersonal factors which affect the role episode.

The organizational factors include structure, level in the organization, role requirements, task characteristics, physical setting, and organizational practices. The personal factors (which can be applied to both the role senders and focal person) refer to such variables as age, sex, and tenure in the organization. The interpersonal factors in the relationship between role senders and focal person include frequency of their interactions, mode of communication, importance of senders to focal person, physical location, visibility, feedback and participation. The role senders can be the focal person's supervisors, clients, co-workers, or subordinates.

All the three set of factors may affect the role episode, by influencing the role senders, the focal person and/or the relationship between the role senders and the focal person.
Role sender - focal person relationship have generally been investigated by gathering perceptual data on role conflict and ambiguity from the objective responses. Affective responses include job satisfaction, job involvement, tension, threat, anxiety, and propensity to leave the organization.

The research investigating these relationships has generally been correlational, although the role episode model implies causality within a given time period. Actually, the feedback loop from focal person to the role senders suggests a transactional relationship between role senders and the focal person; therefore, there may be reciprocal causality over several time periods. The review indicate, however, that the reciprocal nature of these relationship has not been investigated.

Viewed from the perspective of developmental tasks for various periods in one's life span, as defined by Havighurst (1953), modern adult women have to perform the additional female roles as wives, mothers, house keepers on the one hand and their role as employees on the other. Coping with both the roles, simultaneously, has an important bearing on their occupation which leads to conflicts. The time consuming household chores without support have an adverse effect on the fulfillment of their emancipatory aspirations.

The role conflict visualized as mutually competing expectancies and demands confronts the working women as a result of the demanding and pervasive nature of women's family and domestic role. Work and family role conflicts have been well documented (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1971, Gray, 1983, Valdez & Barbara, 1987). Marriage and parenthood appear to be incompatible with a career for women and are seen as conflict arousing. Working women experience greater inter role
conflict than either men or non-working women. Although, the theory of role accumulation (Sieber, 1974) asserts that such conflict and overload may be reduced by the rewards of multiple roles, there is convincing evidence that working women do face tension due to their dual role.

Dak (1986) recognise that much of the household and productive task performed by women in India remains unaccounted for because of socio-biological factors. Between productive and reproductive roles and pregnancy, lactation and bringing up infants adversely affect the duration and efficiency in work. This creates a bias against female employment, especially in organized work situation. Another bias in women's gainful employment outside home is considered to be an indication of low status of their parents or husbands leading to the determination of the prestige of their family. The conflict sometimes forces the women to give up job at the whims and fancies of her parents or husband.

In addition, there are a number of other factors that complicate the dilemma of performing dual roles. A women may not have the desire to take up employment but she is forced to do so against her wishes under economic pressure to supplement the family income. She spends extra energy to cope with the demands and pressure of her family, employment and her own self. All this is done at the cost of her health. Hibbard and Pope (1987) found that married working women faced greater health risks than men because of their dual roles of work and family responsibility.

A working women has also the traditional role of a home maker. The women in this situation has to cope with many stresses caused by the expectations of the
members of the family. They expect her to be efficient at work, smart and graceful and beautiful like a fairy at home and in social functions with all the assets of Alladin’s Gin to be able to cook to create dreams of dresses, and please the gusts by giving them five star treatment. But in most cases, the working and earning women has little control over her own earnings, has little say in decision making and is usually in a subservient position (Uma Shankar Jha; Arati Mehta and Latika Menon, 1993).

In a joint family the married working women has deal with the mother and sister-in-law who are mostly jealous of her status, and always find faults with her style of life (Sethi & Bains, 1990).

Even her own children become demanding and feel neglected. According to Sethi and Bains (1990) the large number of the daughters of working mothers were not in favour of their mothers working.

In facing the guilt of neglecting her family and also not doing justice to her work, a working women falls prey to shattered aspirations. Her sincerity to both type of responsibilities is the cause of troubles. Because there is a lack of proper understanding of her problems, her performance is not appreciated either at home or outside at the work place.

To add to the list, there is restricted freedom of movement for her and there is not time her own recreation or rejuvenation. Working women spends fifty hours per week at work and about the same amount of time performing household chores with
no domestic help hired or otherwise. Usually, men think that domestic work is meant for women and they have nothing to do in the matter.

Besides, married working women face what may be called geographic constrains in that they find it difficult to leave the place where the family and husband stay (Deitch & Sanderson, 1987). As a consequence, she may have to forego prestigious career placements. Rao (1985) feels that problems and dilemma of working women are related to their socio-economic background. Thus, the problems of the women of lower strata as summed up by Rao are:

A) Low and unequal wages paid for the equal and the same job;
B) Double burden of earning as well as caring for the children with no financial security;
C) Large family;
D) Unhygienic living conditions; and
E) Lack of minimum facilities of privacy.

Working mothers have to meet the expectations and obligations corresponding to the different roles which they play within the fold of a family whether it is nuclear or composite. In addition, they also have to play their work related roles in the place of employment. A married women who works outside her home is under various pressures and is most often engaged in a struggle to balance her work and responsibilities inside and outside her home (Itshree Padhi, 1999).

Even today in most families women have to take the sole responsibility for bringing their children up and the fact of a women being in full time employment
hardly alters the situation. Given the fact that most women are socialized to believe and accept child rearing responsibilities unquestioningly there is no protest from their end. It is true that there is an increasing awareness about the need for men to share household work, but this awareness is not widespread. As a result there is tension and conflict between responses and this conflict assumes serious proportions especially in authoritarian families. (Itshree Padhi, 1999).

Reasons for role conflict are many. Among these, prominent ones are age and number of children, type of family in which a working mother lives and of course the nature and extent of participation by other members of the family.

The studies of Kinnunen & Mauno (1998) shows that there is no gender difference in the experience of either family - work or work-family conflict. The level of each type of conflict is the same for both men and women. Frone et al. (1992) Gutek et al. (1991), Duxbury et al. (1994) reported that women had interference from work to family more than men. This is due to the multiple roles of women.

High education and high number of children in the family in the family meant a higher level of work family conflict. This finding indicates the possibility that highly educated men (i.e., men with high socio-economic status) and men with several children living at home (i.e., men with preschool children) appear to feel guilt about neglecting the family because of work. These feelings of guilt may arise out of social expectations; men are increasingly expected to be good husbands and fathers and devote time to the family. Thus the ability of men to maintain a positive family related self image is hindered (Frone et al., 1996).
Role conflict

Role conflict is the incompatible expectations with in and/or between role(s). There are inter role conflicts and intra-role conflicts. It exists when the expectations of a job are mutually different or opposite and the individual cannot meet one expectations without rejecting the other. Four types of conflicts often described in the context of role enactment are:

a) Person role conflict: this type of conflict arises when expected behaviour is incompatible with a person's own basic values and attitudes.

b) Inter role conflict: this type of conflict is the result of facing multiple roles. It occurs because individuals simultaneously perform many roles and they conflict each other.

c) Intra-sender role conflict: this occurs in an individual who is expected to perform task within specified limits but it is not possible to behave in a manner consistent with role assignment.

d) Intersender conflict: When pressures from one role sender oppose pressures from one or more other senders it leads to inter sender role conflict.

Role conflict is defined as incongruity of the expectations associated with a role. This may take the form of
(a) divergent role expectations. It exist when the expectations of a job are mutually different or opposite and the individual cannot meet one expectations without rejecting the other

or

(b) incompatible requests received from role senders in carrying out job related responsibilities

or

(c) incompatible multiple roles enacted by the incumbent.

Role conflict is defined as the subject's experience of incompatibility in role enactment due to any one of the above factors either in separation or in combination.

Khan et al. have defined role conflict as the "simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures. such that compliance with one would make the compliance with the other more difficult" (1964). They identified different types of conflict within the work role: intrasender and intersender. Person-role pressure is in some sense incompatible with the other set of pressures.
Inter-role conflict is a form of role conflict in which the set of opposing pressure arises from participation in different roles. In such cases of inter-role conflict, the role pressures associated with membership in one organization are in conflict with pressures stemming from membership in other groups. Demands from role senders on the job for overtime or take-home work may conflict with pressures from one's wife to give attention to family affairs during evening hours. The conflict arises between the role of the focal person as worker and his role as husband and father (Khan et al., 1964).

Kahn et al. (1964) described a specific instance of inter-role conflict in this passage. In a more general sense, inter-role conflict is experienced when pressures arising in one role are incompatible with pressures arising in another role. Note again that role pressure incompatibility exists when participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in another role.

The theoretical background and conceptual focus of the study came from research reports, articles and books. The empirical studies related to role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload extend to almost thirty-five years. Khan et al. (1964) have defined role conflict as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more pressures such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult. Or in other words role conflict occurs when individuals perform many roles and they conflict with each other.

Khan et al. (1964) in their theory of role dynamics postulated a negative relationship between job satisfaction and conflicting or incompatible expectations.
which cause role conflict, and between job satisfaction and unclear or vague expectations which cause role ambiguity.

Mark (1977) has associated the role conflict to the increased formal participation in paid employment while maintaining the traditional roles. Individuals have a finite amount of energy and when involved in multiple roles, these trends to drain them and inevitably cause stress or inter role conflict.

**Role ambiguity**

Role ambiguity is defined as the degree to which clear information is lacking regarding expectations associated with a role. Ambiguity occurs when an individual is unclear regarding his job. The potential degree of clarity or ambiguity in a role can be assessed by investigating the availability of relevant information within the role set. Ambiguity may be aroused regarding various aspects of the role and of the situations surrounding it. The person may be uncertain about who has a legitimate right to influence him or about the limits of his own authority over others. Confusion may center on organizational rules and regulation to his position. The focal person is likely to experience two types of role ambiguity. One, concerning the task and the related activities; the other concerning the feedback regarding his performance of the task.

Role ambiguity was studied in detail by Indian and foreign researchers as an important factor. Role conflict dimensions along with other dimensions such as role overload job satisfaction, job involvement, job stress, number of years service etc.
Studies of the effects of role ambiguity reveal that lack of clarity about behavioural expectations causes a greater concern with own performance, lower actual and perceived group productivity, less concern or involvement with the group, lower job satisfaction, unfavorable attitudes toward role senders, and increased tension, anxiety, depression and resentment. (Caplan & Jones, 1975). Role ambiguity has also been causally linked to turnover (Johnson & Graen, 1973).

When working women go to work, they actually have to face the problems of combined work at home and office. They have to work in addition to their usual responsibilities. This raises a problem of adjustment of their working hours with their home duties. This dual role burden leads the women executives in the role related problems of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload.

Role overload

Role overload is a condition in which the individual is faced with a set of obligations, which require him to do more than he is able to cope with. Margolis et al. (1974) reported that job performance was affected by overload conditions as it is associated with lowered confidence, decreased work motivation, poor decision-making quality, deteriorating inter-personal relations and even accident rates.

Piotrokowski (1979), Bohen and Viverous Long (1981) and Voydanoff (1988) among others have analysed the relationship between family system and work among dual-earner wives with a view to delineate inter role conflicts, role overload, and personal stress among working wives/mothers. The demands of work and family are often viewed as incompatible and consequently, working wives engage in a zero
sum activity, that is the more they devote themselves to one sphere, the less energy and time they have for the other. More significantly, the positive or negative feelings derived from the work place by individuals have an impact on their family relations. Likewise, domestic relations tend to influence the work role of individuals. The psychological carry over effect from work to family roles or vice versa can affect psychological availability and the amount of energy available for performing the other role.

Role overload and Role stress are two common problem experienced by married women who are employed full time. Simply put women who try to fulfill family roles that are traditionally assigned to wives and mothers (house keeping & child care) and to work outside the home may be overworked and may experience difficulty in performing all of these roles adequately (Rhona Rapport & N Rapport, 1976).

Employed women who still perform most of the household chores and child caring duties have somewhat higher levels of overload (Lewis & Cooper, 1987 Pleck, 1985). However role overload is inversely correlated with maintaining a positive family climate for men as well as women (Weiserma & Vandanberg, 1991).

In the preliminary study conducted, it was observed that role conflict is maximum among women executives with their husband staying in the family, but without much role clarity and role differentiation in managing the house.

The consequences of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload are that they may affect:
• the individual himself physically and psychologically. The physical consequence includes psychosomatic disorders, lethargy and emotional exhaustion. Psychologically the individual might feel anxious, tense and ambiguous about the role alienated, depersonalized and frustrated.

• the organization, in terms of increased employee turnover, absenteeism, grievances, low job performance and morale.

• the organization related individual consequence such as job threat, job tension job satisfaction job involvement, and company satisfaction.

Role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload affect the individual in terms of emotional exhaustion (Schwab, 1981). These factors is also observed to result in low turnover, low job performance, and low employee morale (Parasuraman, 1978; Lyon 1971; Flora, 1977 Helwig, 1979 Lamble 1980; Beehr 1976; Chonko, 1979; Szilagyi, 1980; Bateman 1981; Libby 1978).

The study presented in this thesis focuses attention on the role related problem of women executives working in Cochin-Alwaye region.

Thus the present study was an attempt to investigate role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload experienced by the women executives working in the manufacturing, consulting and service organizations in the Cochin-Alwaye industrial belt. The study also aims at examining the relationship among selected bio-social and organizational variables on the level of role conflict, role ambiguity and role
overload experienced by the women executives so that their dynamic interrelationships and variations can be ascertained with some implications for the practice of Human Resource Management in the industrial belt.

The literature survey depicting selected models, theories and findings of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload research are provided in the next chapter.