

Chapter One

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

AN INSTRUMENT FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

1.1. Introduction

In the present era, the concept of development has been broadened. In addition to its quantitative aspects, like increase in real income, consumption, wealth etc. and their equal distribution, it includes some other qualitative aspects of human livelihood like capabilities of person, reduction of vulnerabilities, freedom to choose alternative opportunities etc. Professor A.K. Sen (1999) has explained development in terms of the expansion of real freedom that the citizens enjoy to pursue the objectives they have and in this sense, economic development is the expansion of human capabilities. This is known as capability approach of development. Capability is one kind of freedom, the range of options that a person has in deciding what kind of life she / he wants to lead. So a person should have capacity to choose best life that she/he likes from the constraint opportunities available to her/him. Sen (1999) has also emphasized on the process of expanding freedom equally for all people. In this view, the meaningful development includes gender equality in enjoying freedom in addition to less poverty or better access to basic amenities and opportunities. Following this view in the recent years the capability approach of development is widely accepted in most of the developing countries for accelerating the developmental process.

In September 2000, in the Millennium Summit held under the auspices of UNDP, the member countries promised to fulfill a series of time-bound targets related to human development with a deadline of 2015. These are known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs have been regarded as the global agreement to combat

human deprivation through collective and multilateral actions. The agenda of the MDGs have been noted below.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

- 1) *Alleviation of extreme poverty and hunger*
- 2) *Achievement of universal primary education*
- 3) *Eradication of gender inequality and improvement of women's empowerment*
- 4) *Reduction of child mortality*
- 5) *Improvement of maternal health*
- 6) *Prevention of severe diseases (AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis etc.)*
- 7) *Ensuring environmental sustainability*
- 8) *Development of global partnership*

In Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) summit, 2010, the international development community recognized gender equality and women's empowerment as the major development goal in their own right (MDG 3 and 5) and as critical channels for achieving the other MDGs and reducing income and non-income poverty. Being a signatory to the Millennium declarations India has paid due emphasis on inclusive development in the recent five year plans to articulate policies with view to achieving MDGs. Several public policies and initiatives in our country reflect that our country is also committed to develop capabilities equally among human beings.

No doubt the process of capability development approach has changed many things towards human development during the last one and half decade across the globe. Our country is also approaching this goal. Despite having some recognised instrumental power of women's empowerment, average women in our country like in most of the countries still have status far behind that of men, particularly in terms of right, opportunity and endowment. Women constitute almost half of world population. In India Women constitute 48.46% of the total population (Census, 2011). Like men, women take the responsibility of human capital formation in the family and hence in building nation and its destiny; but the status of women in our common society is far below the expected level. There is a sharp distinction between male and female in our society in terms of sex ratio, child infanticide, literacy rates, health and nutrition indicators, wage differentials,

access to finance, ownership of land and property and in power and culture. Comparing to their male counterpart, women have lower access for resource, education and health facility, medical care and lower percentage in earned income, lower power, and lower percentage even in food. Not only that they are dependent of others, like father, husband or sons. A common woman does almost all types of works e.g., cooking, tailoring, sweeping, washing, nurturing, taking care of family members, housekeeping, working as laundry person, nursing etc in the home and sometimes they do drudgery. She gets very little time or no time at all to think about herself and her likings which adversely affect her health and mind also. But the tragedy is that these works do not get any recognition in our society. Instead of getting the respect they deserve for their roles in the society, they become vulnerable, marginalised and oppressed population in the society. This gender inequality can be vanished by enhancing opportunities and capabilities of women i.e., by promoting empowerment among women. Against this end enhancing women's empowerment is recognised as a social movement. Simply women's empowerment is the generation of decision-making power among women and providing opportunities to them so that women can precisely decide about themselves and about the world surrounding them.

The convention in our patriarchal society is that male persons enjoy the freedom of taking decisions about all types of household matter and social matter and women only obey the decisions. Although this convention has been changing recurrently, but it does not happen at that rate as we need. We shouldn't forget that nearly half of world population is women and a major proportion of poor is women. Women are poor not for the lack of their ability to participate in the production process but for the lack of opportunity to participate in the production process or for non-recognition of their housekeeping activities as productive. Globally the gender gap in economic activity is very prominent. Women are, generally, unemployed or underemployed and when employed, in most of the cases, they are under paid and employed in informal sectors. Though working hour of women is very high within house, it is not counted as most of the time women are involved in household's jobs. These household's jobs are not included in economic activity of a country.

Different indicators of human development show that women have lesser access to property, resource, education, health facilities, medical care and lower percentage in earned income and finally lower participation in job market, if not least, in decision making power also, (World Bank, 2001). Moreover, they are the victims of domestic violence. The basic cause behind this poor condition of women is the bypassing of women population by the most mainstream development activities. A nation with slightly less than half of women population can never step on the pave of development by bypassing its women population. Without developing women population, developmental procedure will become farce. Swami Vivekananda realised this more than hundred years ago. He said that “There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing”. We, therefore, should not think of true and total development leaving women aside. Further, women become marginalised and vulnerable section of the society as social customs and political system deprived them from their right under the guise of cultural and religious traditions. Women are, also, victimized by the ethnic tradition. The solution to these problems requires the building of the capabilities among women. For the betterment of the condition of women it is necessary to empower women. This urgently, needs the creation of an environment in which the distribution of power and resources, the opportunity to engage in productive work, opportunities to access education, medical care and public services can move in favour of women population.

The remaining part of this chapter has been divided as follows. In section 1.2, we have presented the theoretical idea of women’s empowerment. Section 1.3 shows the existing status of women. Relevancy of the study has been discussed in section 1.4. Section 1.5 deals the justification of the selection of the district of Bankura for studying the empowerment of women. In section 1.6 along with its sub-sections we have presented the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population, particularly women, in the district of Bankura. The objectives of our research work have been specified in section 1.7. Finally, section 1.8 concludes this chapter.

1.2. Idea of Women’s Empowerment

The term ‘Women’s Empowerment’ becomes a catchphrase in most of the developmental studies during the era of globalization. The World Bank and many other

development agencies have emphasised the concept of empowerment, specifically, women's empowerment, in theoretical discussions and policy perspectives. Exercise of the concept of empowerment has a long history. During the mid-seventeenth century, it was used as a legalistic meaning 'to invest with authority'. Thereafter it began to appear as a more general word with meaning "to enable or permit". The present generation meaning of empowerment has been coined in the civil rights movement, which sought 'political empowerment' for its followers (Tripathi, 2011). The concept of women's empowerment has been broadly used in feminist movement across the globe. But we did not get any particular definition of women's empowerment from the feminist form of advocacy. Advocates of feminist movement think women's empowerment as a synonym of gender equality and it is an end in itself. They viewed the empowerment of women as a set of rights towards equality with men (Kabeer, 2001). According to feminist approach empowerment is entirely a subjective matter. The idea of empowerment as an instrument of human development came into discussion after 1980s. The new paradigm concept of women's empowerment was closely related with feminist discourse. In addition to the feminist goals the new idea of women's empowerment had some important policy pay-offs (Alsop, et al., 2005). It was known as instrumentalist form of advocacy towards women's empowerment. Advocates of instrumentalists tried to define women's empowerment with a broader vision compared to the vision of feminists. They had tried to quantify the concept of empowerment. However, this concept has still not been clearly defined and segregated from other closely related concepts. Sometimes empowerment is a process of improving the qualitative aspects of women; sometimes it is a state or the expected effect of empowering process. Different studies have looked into the concept of empowerment from different angles according to the need of their studies and different social contexts.

Many studies have used the term empowerment as the process of empowering groups or individuals (Rowlands, 1995; Molhotra, et al., 2002, Samanta, 2009, Verma 2009). In our study we concentrate on women's empowerment at the individual level and at the community level. Like many other countries, women's empowerment is considered as a social movement in India. First of all, we would, vividly, analyze what the empowerment is. There is an interpersonal variation in meaning and connotation of empowerment depending on the economic, socio-cultural and on many other conditions of the society.

The meaning and the process of empowerment, particularly, women's empowerment varies from time to time, region to region, culture to culture. Let us we present some definition and ideas of empowerment, given by various previous studies.

Literally, empowerment means giving authority or power to powerless in a particular situation. In UNDP Human Development Report, 1995, women's empowerment has been defined as the expansion of choices for women and an increase in the women's ability to exercise choices. Empowerment is the power of decision making i.e. autonomy (Jejeebhoy, 1995). In a working paper of World Bank, Alsop, et al. (2005) state that empowerment is the enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. It is the ability of some people to control their own destinies even when, their interests are opposed by others with whom they interact. Women's Empowerment is a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their self reliance, to assert their independent rights to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination (Keller and Mbwewe, 1991 cited in Rowlands, 1995). Singha Roy (1995) has considered empowerment as a process of creation of social environment where women can take decision and make choices of their own, either individually or collectively, for social betterment. Mehra (1997) has defined empowerment as a process that enables girls and women to challenge current norms and change conditions. Panda, et al. (2003) have argued that self-perception is the reflection of empowerment. The process of empowerment refers to power that controls one's own life. The study of Khan, et al. (2006) has also explained empowerment as a process for establishing control over resources and for acquiring ability and opportunity to decision making process and its implementation.

In the study of Kabeer (2001) we have found a useful definition of empowerment, which can be applied across the range of contexts. She states that empowerment means "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". Reddy (2002) defines empowerment as directing one's life in such a way that she/he can reach the stage where she/he is more likely to be successful in whatever she/he attempts to do. According to him, the processes involved in empowering are increase in people's awareness and confidence, ability to articulate

problems, gaining access to resources and public facilities and negotiating over relations between different social groups.

According to Lillykuty (2003), empowerment of women develops them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent decision in matters that affect them and their nations. For empowering women she suggests five hierarchical steps of equality, namely, welfare (fulfillment of basic needs of women), access (control over power resources such as personal wealth, land, skill, education, social status, leadership etc.), conscientisation (eliminating all forms of discrimination against women i.e., taking actions to fill up gender gap), participation (organizing themselves for being a direct partner of developmental works.) and control (creating an environment where they can enjoy all human rights which, are enjoyed by men and ability of women to take decision over their life and their children). Sen (1998) has argued that poverty led to denial of rights and opportunities to poor for full participation in society and to arrest this kind of social exclusion, there is need for improving their capabilities and entitlements, which is nothing but empowerment.

From the definitions mentioned above the concept of women's empowerment may be summed up as follows. The empowerment of women leads to

- **the generation of decision making power of women in economic, political and societal issues**
- **increasing access to education; health care; and other public services within a geographical and social context**
- **eliminating all forms of discrimination against women**
- **creating the sense of dignity among women.**

Therefore, women's empowerment is a dynamic process and is a multidimensional concept. It is context specific. There are many indicators of women's empowerment which may vary from context to context.

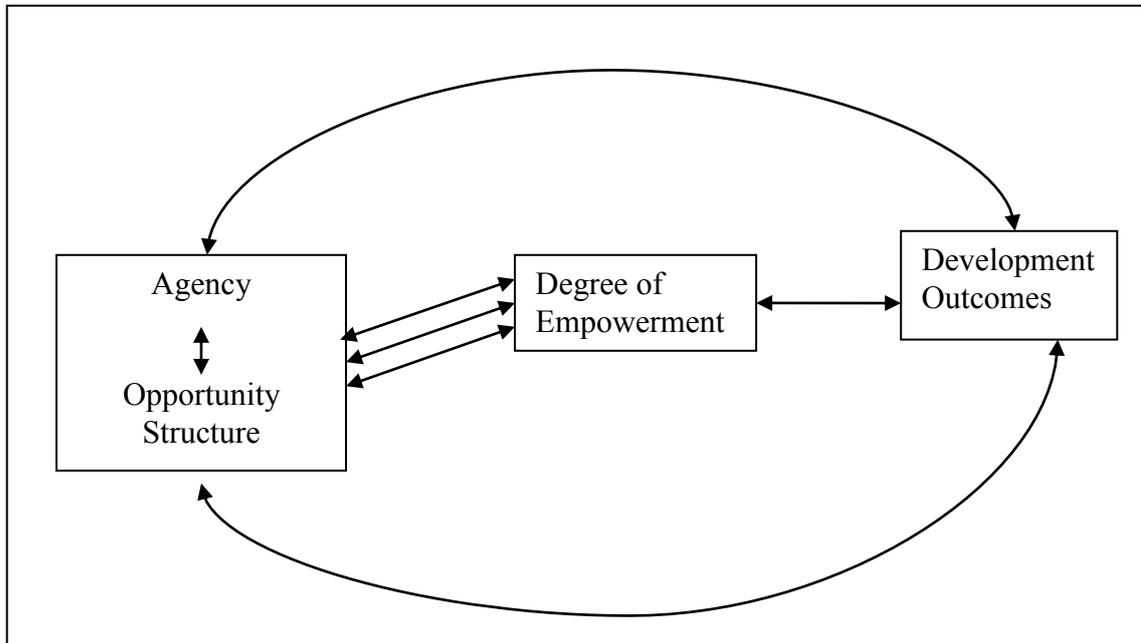
Quantification of empowerment is relatively a new phenomenon in literature of women studies. We have seen that different studies have measured women's empowerment in different ways. Some studies (Sen, 1999, Molhotra et al. 2002, Handy, 2004, Sridevi, 2005, Adhikary and Dutta, 2011,) have attempted to measure the degree of empowerment considering several dimensions of women's empowerment in several fields. It means that these studies have measured the width of women's empowerment. On the other hand a few studies (Kishor, 1997, Becker, 1997, Kabeer, 2001, Alsop, et al, 2005) have proposed to measure empowerment considering the dimensions which incorporate process of empowerment as well as its effectiveness. Actually these studies have tried to measure the intensity of empowerment level. According to instrumentalists, (Sen, 1999, Kabeer, 2001, Jejeebhoy, 2002, Malhotra, 2002, Alsop, et al, 2005) women's empowerment primarily depends on two interrelated sets of factors, (1) Agency and (2) Opportunity Structure. Agency is the person's ability to make meaningful choices. In other words, agency is the attribute of the person by which she visualises the alternative possibilities of action and makes choices. Opportunity structure includes the existing formal and informal framework within which agents operate. Working simultaneously, these two factors generate different degrees of empowerment. The degree of empowerment definitely makes some personal and social welfare which in turn enhances empowerment. Alsop, et al. (2005) have recommended that the degree of women's empowerment can be quantified by assessing the following issues.

- (a) Whether a person has the opportunity to make a choice.**
- (b) Whether a person actually uses the opportunity to choose.**
- (c) Once the choice is made, whether it brings the desired outcomes.**

There is a reciprocal relation between agency & opportunity structure and degree of empowerment. Further, women's empowerment has some impacts on development outcomes. We have represented the dynamic relations in chain diagram 1.2.1 as developed by Alsop, et al., 2005. It shows that the extent of the agency and opportunity structure are both the causes and consequences of the degree of empowerment. The empowerment is an effective instrument of household and social welfare. The identification of the linkage between women's empowerment and welfare or

development outcomes is the main contribution of the instrumentalists' advocacy of women's empowerment. They have recognized women as the agent of change.

Figure1.2.1 Dynamics of Women's Empowerment



Source: Alsop, et al. (2005)

However, this explained association, is a theoretical one. There is not any systematic statistical analysis which confirms this theoretical illustration. Alsop, et al. (2005) have rightly pointed out that due to paucity of suitable data on direct indicators of empowerment, the relationship between empowerment and development outcomes still remains a hypothesis. One of the central objectives of this dissertation is to test this hypothesis empirically.

1.3. Women in India and in the District under Study: A Fact Sheet

All over the world women remain beyond the reach of development project. In all components of human development, women's position is lower than men's. The census reports reveal that number of females per thousand males in India has increased from 933 in 2001 to 940 in 2011. Therefore, female population has grown at a rate faster than that of male population during 2001-2011. It is no doubt a good indicator of gender equality. This ratio for child under six years is, however, 914 as per census report, 2011 which was 927 in 2001.

Table- 1.3.1 Sex Ratio: Number of Female per Thousand Male

Census	2001			2011		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
India	933	946	900	940	947	926
West Bengal	934	950	893	947	950	939
Bankura District	952	952	951	954	954	958

Source: Census Report, 2001 and 2011

In the state of West Bengal sex-ratio is 947 which is record figure of sex ratio in this state during the last century. However, child sex ratio in West Bengal has reduced from 960 to 950 during 2001-2011. The picture is more or less same in the district of Bankura, West Bengal. According to census report, 2001 over all sex ratio in the district of Bankura was 952 which increased to 954 in 2011. But it is interesting to note that in the district, the sex ratios for general castes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes were 937, 966 and 984 respectively. The figures indicate that general caste community has more gender discrimination compared to that for the others communities and the scheduled tribes have positive attitudes towards gender equality. Therefore, in terms of number, females are closely equal with their male counterpart. The recent trend of sex ratio is no doubt a good sign; but many other statistical figures frustrate us.

Illiteracy is a social curse on human beings. It adds impetus in the feminization of poverty and in deterioration in the status of women. India is not free from the curse of illiteracy. In 2001, the adult women literacy rate of India was only 42.2% whereas the adult male literacy rate was 67%. In term of enrollments in the educational institutions they are far below their male counterpart. The combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrollment ratio among female population in 2001 was only 49% whereas for male population it was 62%. The literacy gender parity index in India in 1995-1996 was only 0.8. At present 82% of male population aged seven year and above are literate, while 65% of the female are literate (Census, 2011). It is evident that male female gap in literacy has been declining during the era of globalization. In 2011, 71% of female 7+ aged are literate in West Bengal whereas 60% of female 7+ aged are literate in the district of Bankura. Women's education level is lower compared to that of men population in the state of West Bengal and in Bankura district. It is reported that 60% women are literate whereas 81% men population are literate in Bankura district (Census 2011). The access to education among women in the area under study is not satisfactory

compared to men. In this district 937 girls per thousand boys enrol in the primary section. Moreover, dropout among girls is higher than that among boys within the primary section.

Violence against women is a serious social problem across the countries. Violence against women is now daily news in our country and in our state. Women face violence not only outside home, but also within home. In accordance with the report of National Crime Record Bureau (2013) 106527 women in 2012 have reported the experience of domestic violence from husband and/or in-laws. This number has increased by 7.5% compared to the figure in 2011. In the state of West Bengal, domestic violence has been reported to increase by 18% during 2011-12. In terms of this rising rate West Bengal stands first. The number of dowry death has not been included in this figure. Normally women in our society do not want to confess the experience of domestic violence. Only a small section has reported their experience of domestic violence. Moreover, a number of females are suffering from violence in their natal house. Therefore, the actual prevalence of domestic violence against women is very high in India.

The survey report of UNIFEM (2011) tells us that one fourth of the Indian women faced physical violence at home in 2010 and 37.2% of sample women reported that they have faced domestic violence at least once in their life. In most of the cases violence came from husband or from close relatives. National Health and Family Survey 2005-06 has revealed that 26% of Indian women have faced the incident of physical violence in home within two years of their married life.

West Bengal has got some defamations in this respect. According to National Crime Record Bureau (2011) West Bengal ranks first in terms of percentage of share of crime committed against women in India. In this state the rate of rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry death, cruelty by husband and relatives are 2.6%, 4.1%, 0.6% and 21.6% respectively. Based on 2008 statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau, West Bengal has the highest number of battered wives among the Indian states. In dowry-related deaths, it comes fifth among the states. In the district of Bankura reported number violence against women in 2001 was 210 that increased to 326 in 2005.

So far, in India the protection of women from domestic violence Act has been passed in 2005 which has come into force on October, 2006. But due to improper utilization and implementation of this act and due to our social immoral value a large section of women in India and in our study state and district are suffering from domestic violence. There are several forms of domestic violence. It scratches the root of self-confidence and self-esteem of the woman. Reduction of self-confidence and self-esteem increases the dependency of the woman on husband or father which is main pillar of patriarchal and feudalistic nature of our society. Therefore, the root cause of domestic violence lies in the framework of the patriarchal and feudalistic nature of the society.

However, women are not dependent of men in real sense. Most of them work hard for their family particularly housekeeping. Household jobs are treated as household duties not as economic activities. According to the report of NSSO (2009-10) 347 women per thousand in rural area and 465 women per thousand in urban area are completely engaged in household duties. On the other hand, only 5 men per thousand in rural area and 4 men per thousand in urban are engaged in household duties. The majority of the homemaker women earn some money from outsources working at home. But it is omitted from the mainstream labour force because these women offer these earning to their family heads or husbands and earning is looked as family income. It is a fact that women work more time than men but they earned a very low percentage of income. The female work time as a percentage of male work time for the year 2000 was 117. But male population spends 61% of total work time on marketed activities whereas women population spends only 35% of their work time. Actually women spend most of their work time in unpaid household works. Their activities are not accounted in the National Income statistics. As a result women has lower share in earned income. In India the estimated earned income by women population was only \$1531 in 2001 whereas it was \$4070 by Indian male. Economic dependence of women resists them to become a part of the building of nation.

Further, in India, women are far below their male counterpart in term of access to and control over resources, participation in work force and remuneration. The discrimination of the dignity of work of men and women has been focused in their wage differentials. The daily wage of women labour is Rs 119.76 in rural area, which is Rs 297.35 for men

labour (NSSO, 2009-10). Although the participation of women in unorganised sector is noticeable, their participation in organized service sector is negligible. Census report 2001 reveals that in Bankura district 32.04% women participates in the work force. However, women's participation in the manufacturing and service sector in this district is not commendable. Women of the district are mainly engaged in the primary sector. But their share in landholding is insignificant (Bankura District HDR 2007).

In 2001, 39.44% of total seats in Panchayet Bodies were reserved for women. Though women physically filled up the seats, in most of the cases the male leader influences their activities. In our country, state and sample district the incidence of child marriage is rampant. In West Bengal 53% of women marry before reaching the legal minimum age at marriage (NFHS-3). In our country average age of marriage is 22.2 years while in West Bengal it is 20.3 years. It is evident that average age of marriage for women in Bankura lies in 15-18 years. Bankura District HDR, 2007 has reported that there is social discrimination among women either on the issue of 'caste' and untouchability or on the basis of 'haves and have not's in rural Bankura.

Further, the access to health care facilities by women is not satisfactory in India. The pregnant women receiving prenatal care in India was 62% in 1996 while it was 70% for the whole world. It is reported that 63.2% of women are suffering from anemia. NFHS-3 has reported that 22% of men think that contraception is women's business and a man should not have to worry about it. It has been reported that 37% of women have used sterilization as a method of family planning while it is only 1.2% of men.

In the light of the above information we can conclude that number of women is increasing but the status of women in our society is far below the expected level. A large part of them could not enjoy the minimum facilities which are necessary for their health and dignity. Women in contrast to men have low access to property, community resources and services, education, health facilities, medical care. They have lower percentage in earned income. They are vulnerable and marginalized group compared to men in society. A large number of women face domestic violence. Therefore, it is essential to abolish the gender inequality against women for inclusive development of a country.

1.4. Relevance of the Study

Observing the present status of the women in India and in the district of Bankura we find that globalization fails to develop the status of women population to the expected standard. Women population, particularly in India, has been excluded from the favourable impact of globalization. In the Millennium declaration, 2000, the member states of United Nations declare that for true sustainable development it is necessary to abolish poverty, hunger, disease etc. and announce the empowerment of women as one of the Millennium Development Goals. Literally, empowerment means to give some power in the hands of powerless. It enriches person with power. Many developmental projects have been undertaken by the governments of various countries. But the fact is that most of these mainstream developmental projects, latently or actively, bypass women population. Even when mainstream development projects include women by increasing investment on women's health and education, it is for lowering birth rate and to improve the well being of children. These are the policies not for women's own well being so that they can expand their ability to exercise choices (Mehra, 1997). As a result, women population remain far below the male population not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of various development indices such as literacy rate, employment, access to medical facilities, enrollment in educational institution etc.

Time has, now, come to take special policies, exclusively, for the development of women. Enhanced women's empowerment can serve as one of the strongest weapons to fight against such obnoxious reality. Empowerment is now considered as a component of human development. United Nations declared the year, 2001, as the year of women's empowerment. Women can achieve better familial, societal and economic status and can fight against the various atrocities if some policies are taken to empower them. This requires the creation of an environment in which the distribution of power and resources, the opportunity to engage in productive work, opportunity of access to education, employment, medical care and health services etc. can move in favour of women population. To quest for the suitable policies for empowering women it is necessary to find out the responsible factors of women empowerment and their importance to improve empowerment. Increased level of empowerment among women increases the importance of women in their family and in the society. This may be the panacea of the two dangerous diseases in our society namely the gender inequality and poverty.

Therefore, understanding the concept of empowerment and the study of the determinants of women's empowerment are very much relevant in present context.

In the existing literature still now women's empowerment is a fuzzy concept. In recent times, the instrumentalist form of advocacy has been translating the feminist views into the mechanists' discourse of policy (Kabeer, 2001). There have no universally accepted indicators of women's empowerment in literatures. We find different set of indicators of women's empowerment in different studies depending on the context of the study. These may be helpful to construct the empowerment index. Yet a major portion of the existing studies are anecdotal, informative and descriptive. They have tried to present a theoretical explanation of the relation among intermediary indicators of empowerment, agency and opportunity structure and development outcomes. Several studies have quantified women's empowerment in several contexts. But the study of the impact of women's empowerment on development outcomes is not very much common in the existing literature. In a working paper of World Bank Alsop, et al. (2005) has rightly mentioned that

“while we currently have much anecdotal and case study evidence to suggest an instrumental purpose in empowering people, robust data demonstrating a clear association between empowerment and development outcomes are hard to find”.

This argument justifies the concrete relevance of our study which deals with the estimation of the impact of women's empowerment on development outcomes.

Quantification of the concept of women's empowerment is the main contribution of the instrumentalists. But there is not any unanimously accepted measure of women's empowerment at the individual level. It is not a surprising fact that the nature of individual's empowerment absolutely depends on existing infrastructure that the individual may get access. In other words, the nature of women's empowerment is context and area specific. It indicates the difficulty of the proposition of universal measure of empowerment at the individual level. So, for an area specific study one should be conscious regarding the measure of empowerment. This fact raises the

relevance of our study. In our dissertation we have attempted to develop a measure of individual empowerment for the women in the district of Bankura, West Bengal. We have planned to measure the women's empowerment at the household level and at the community level.

The instrumental advocacy of women's empowerment argued that women's empowerment have some positive impact on household and child welfare. But the impact study of empowerment on development outcomes is not common in the existing literature. World Bank (2005) has explained the theoretical relation between empowerment and development indicators. Theory at best can give the nature and direction of the relation among the factors. However, without an empirical estimation of the relationship, theory can be of little use in policy. Therefore, empirical study relating to the impact of women's empowerment on household and child welfare is immense important in India. It makes our study a relevant one.

The importance of family planning has got attention in our country since the early 1950s. But how the attitude of rural couples towards family planning is related with empowerment of women is not well established. In recent times the problem of domestic violence against women has also received deep attention of the governments. It is expected that women's empowerment is an important determinant of the incidence of domestic violence. Therefore, in the present era, examinations of the impact of empowerment on family planning decision and on incidence of domestic violence against women are important issues which are the central objectives of our dissertation. Recently, in addition to women's welfare the issue of child welfare has come forward as an aspect of inclusive development. Towards this end, our study regarding the impact of women's empowerment on child education is most relevant. Hence, in order to understand the level of empowerment of the rural women level and its impacts on household and family welfare, our study is no doubt important.

1.5. Justifications of the District Selection

In order to study the nature of empowerment of women and its impact on household well-being we have considered the district of Bankura in West Bengal. The justifications behind the selection of the district are stated as follows.

Bankura district is one of the poor and backward districts in India. In this district all the components of human development index is lower than the all India average. It means that people of this district are lagging in position relative to average Indians and average people of West Bengal. The condition of women is worse than that of men. In section-1.3 we have presented the required information for showing that the women of Bankura district are in the lower position than men in all dimensions of human development. To get a vivid picture of the position of women in this district we need to study about their empowerment at the household level and at the community level.

From many primary and secondary sources we know that more than half of the households in the district of Bankura belong to lower social castes. Conventionally women of these lower social castes work outside home for earning their livelihood. However, most of them participate in unorganized sector like agriculture and animal husbandry. So far, our primary observations indicate that although these women support their respective household economically, a large section of them suffers from domestic violence. It is observed that women get less importance in taking decisions on various issues of family welfare, like family planning decision and spending for their children's education. These observations are odd enough and motivate us to study the attitudes of women towards family planning, incidence of domestic violence against women and spending towards education for households in the district of Bankura.

Moreover, in spite of the economic contribution of these women a part of them fails to enjoy the decision making power in different economic and non-economic fields within and outside household. During the course of this study it would be possible to find out the causes of the powerlessness of women and the different factors responsible for this powerlessness. These help the policy makers, the government, the non government organizations take appropriate projects and policies for improving the situation of women in our study area. All these justify the selection of the district under study.

1.6. Socio-Economic-Demographic Characteristics of Bankura District

In order to study the issues regarding empowerment of the rural women we have selected the district of Bankura in West Bengal. With this end in view, first we need to understand the socio-economic-demographic profile of the district, which are relevant to

carry out the research work. These statistics will provide us a clear picture about the relevance of the study and consideration of the district and thereby induce us to empirically estimate the impact of women's empowerment and thereby determining factors of it. In the following sub-sections we would introduce the district under study.

1.6.1. Geographic and Administrative Profile

Geographically, the district of Bankura is fourth largest district in West Bengal. In terms population as per census 2011, it ranks thirteenth. It is located in the western zone of West Bengal, which is called '*Rarhanchal*'. A major part of '*Rarhanchal*' is known as '*Jangalmahal*'. The district of our study belongs to the zone of '*Jangalmahal*'. Once upon a time, a part of the district was kingdom of the Malla Raj. Present administrative area of Bankura District took its shape on 1881 under the Burdwan Division of West Bengal. The geographical area of the district is 6882 square kilometres out of which 6820.51 square kilometres are rural. The geographical statistics of Bankura district have been depicted in table-1.6.1.

Table-1.6.1 Geographical Area (Square Kilometres)

	West Bengal	Bankura District
Rural	85427.26	6820.51
Urban	3324.74	61.49
Total	88752	6882

Source: Director of Census Operation, West Bengal, 2005.

This district is bounded by Burdwan district in the north, Hooghly district and Burdwan in the east. The west line of Bankura district is bordered by the district of Purulia. South line of this district is a border line with the district of Paschim Medinipur. Major part of this district particularly western part is mainly undulating terrain. 'Susunia' and 'Biharinath' are remarkable hill of this district. Land of the eastern part is relatively plain and fertile. In the district of Bankura major portion of the land area is structured by laterite soil and light forestry, which is not suitable for intensive agriculture. Basically, the district is draught prone, only Damodar and Kangsabati river projects provide irrigation to a very small part of the land area of the district. Mundeswari, Dwarakeswar and Damodar rivers also create some fertile valley in the district. Dwarakeswar river flows through the middle of the district and Damodar river separates the district from

Burdwan district. Yet, 82% of total population has engaged themselves in cultivation because there is no better opportunity in the other sectors. Not only that, in the course of our pilot survey we have experienced that the means of transportation and condition of the roads in this district are too bad and remote. These prime features no doubt influence the socio-economic-cultural status of the people of the district.

Table-1.6.2 Administrative Profile of Bankura District

Sub-division	3 (Bankura Sadar, Bishnupur, Khatra)
Community Development Block	22
Police Station	22
Municipality	3 (Bankura, Bishnupur, Sonamukhi)
Gram-Panchayat	190
Village	5178
Inhabited Mouza	3543
Uninhabited Mouza	385

Source: Human Development Report, Bankura District, 2007

We have depicted the administrative system of the district of Bankura at a glance in table-1.6.2. Administrative headquarter of the district is situated at Bankura town. Bankura district is divided into three sub-divisions namely – Bankura, Khatra and Bishnupur. Bishnupur was the capital of the kingdom of the Mallaraj and it has a cultural heritage. There are twenty-two Community Development Blocks and twenty-two Police Stations in the district. The three-tier panchayet system of the district constitutes of 190 Gram Panchayets with 03 Municipalities, 22 Panchayet Samities and one Zilla Parishad. There are 5187 villages and 05 towns in this district.

1.6.2. Demographic Characteristics

In 2011, total population of the district of Bankura stood at 35, 96,292, which is 3.93% of the total population of West Bengal. Out of them 91.64% live in rural area (Census Report, 2011). This figure confirms that most of the people of this district remain far away from urban amenities. Census Report, 2011 shows that 1608635 females live in rural Bankura, whereas 147153 females live in urban Bankura. Based on the census report, 2011, we find that in the district of Bankura the decadal growth rate of population in between year 2001 and 2011 has been 12.64 percent, which is slower than that of our state and nation. Perhaps, it may happen due to the continuous emigration of the people

from the district. In 2001, rural population in Bankura district was 92.63 percent of total population, which has marginally decreased to 91.64 percent in 2011. The figure establishes that almost all people of the district are residents of rural areas. It is interesting to note that decadal growth of urban population in Bankura population increased to 8.36% in 2011 from 7.37% in 2001. It means that the rapid urbanization take place during the last decade. The rural urban population distribution is shown in tables 1.6.3 and in 1.6.4.

Table-1.6.3 Population and Decadal Growth rate by Residence

	Total	Rural	Urban
Person	3596292	3265613	330679
Male	1840504	1686978	153526
Female	1755788	1608635	147153
Decadal Growth rate (person) (per cent)	12.64	11.43	27.8

Source: Provisional Census Report, 2011

Table-1.6.4 Percentage Distribution of Rural Urban Population

State/District	2001		2011	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
West Bengal	72.03	27.97	68.11	31.89
Bankura	92.63	7.37	91.64	8.36

Source: Census 2011, Provisional population totals, Director of Census Operation, W.B, 2005

Table-1.6.4 shows that in between 2001 and 2011 percentage of rural population has declined in West Bengal as well as in the district of Bankura. However, all the urban areas in the district are dependent on agriculture and its allied activities. One distinct feature of the district population is that a good number of rural families are seasonal migrant and move as agricultural labourer to the neighboring districts at the time of cultivation (Our field survey).

Table-1.6.5 reveals that sex ratio in the district of Bankura is better than that in the state as a whole. Sex ratio in the district has slightly improved from 952 females per thousand males in 2001 to 954 females per thousand males in 2011. In the state as a whole this improvement is good enough during the last decade. It is a positive sign towards gender equality. However, the rate in district is much slower than the rate of our state where sex-ratio increases to 947 in 2011 from 934 in 2001.

Table-1.6.5 Sex Ratio in West Bengal and Bankura District

State/District	2001	2011
West Bengal	934	947
Bankura District	952	954

Source: Census Report 2011, Government of India.

Table-1.6.6 Caste Wise Population (Percentage) with Reference to 2001 Census

State/District	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe	General & Backward Classes
West Bengal	23.01	5.49	71.5
Bankura District	31.25	10.36	58.39

Source: Director of Census Operation, W.B.2005.

This sex ratio of the district is different for different caste categories as shown in table-1.6.6. It is 937, 966 and 984 for general, SC and ST population respectively (Census, 2001). This shows that the higher the caste in social status the higher is the gender discrimination. In the district of Bankura 31.25% of total population belongs to Scheduled caste category and 10.36% belongs to Scheduled tribe category (Census, 2001). This confirms the rampant presence of backward classes in this district. These figures are relatively high compared to the figures of our state West Bengal. Thus the district of Bankura is the residence of a large number of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people of West Bengal.

1.6.3. Socio-Economic Characteristics

According to West Bengal Human Development Report (2004) Bankura district ranks eleventh in human development among seventeen districts in West Bengal (ignoring the breakup of Dinajpur and Midnapore districts). The values of human development indices have been depicted in table 1.6.7.

Table –1.6.7 Human Development Index of Bankura District

State/District	Health Index	Income Index	Educational Index	HDI
West Bengal	0.70	0.43	0.69	0.61
Bankura District	0.67	0.26	0.62	0.52

Source: West Bengal Human Development Report, 2004.

It is seen that values of health index and educational index for the district under consideration are slightly lower than that for West Bengal but in terms of income index our district lies far behind the state. Therefore, income poverty is more serious than the poverty in terms of health and education in Bankura district relative to that in the state of West Bengal as a whole. According to NSSO (1999-00) 59.62% of rural households and 52.38% of urban households in Bankura district were below the poverty line, determined by planning commission (West Bengal HRD, 2004). Per capita monthly consumption expenditure is an important indicator of the economic condition of people. National Sample Survey (1999-00) has reported that in Bankura district per capita monthly consumption expenditure was Rs. 350.28 for rural people and for urban people it was Rs. 500.40. Therefore, the district of Bankura is a poor district in West Bengal.

Table-1.6.8 Percentage of Population According to Occupational Status in 2001

Year	Farmers	Agricultural Labourers	Non-farm Occupation
1991	43.2	36.5	20.3
2001	32.6	37.1	30.3

Source: West Bengal Human Development Report, 2004.

From the table 1.6.8 it is clear that most of the people in Bankura are engaged in farm activity. It is an indicator of underdevelopment. The table indicates that during the period 1991-2001 a good percentage of population has shifted themselves from farm to off-farm occupation. It is a good indication for development. So the district under study is a developing district of West Bengal. However, the percentage of agricultural labourers remained more or less same during the period 1991-2001. This means that the agricultural labourers could not change their occupational status. Only some farmers are shifted to off farm occupation. Therefore, agriculture is the main occupation of the people of this district. We find that 32.6% of total population works as farmer, 37.1% as agricultural labourer and only 30.3% engage in off-farm jobs. Hence, nearly 70% people directly depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

1.6.4. Educational Status

Table-1.6.9 has shown the gender-wise education of the people in West Bengal and in the district of Bankura. Though universal human right declaration treat education as one

of the basic right of every individual, the light of education does not reach to a large proportion of population in Bankura district. On the basis of final census data 2011, the overall literacy rate in India is 74.4%, where as it is 77.08% in West Bengal and 70.95% in Bankura district. Female literacy rate in Bankura district is also lower than that at the state and national level. The table reveals that literacy rate of Bankura district has increased during the decade 2001-11 by nine percentage point in respect to total population. Yet, after the twenty years of total illiteracy drive program we have seen that in the district of Bankura 29 % of total population aged not below six year could not read and write. According to Bankura Human Development Report, 2007, female literacy rate is less than 50% in more than 16 out of 22 blocks of this district. This implies that major proportion of rural women is illiterate. This report reveals that the girls' enrolment per thousand boys is 937 in this district in primary and upper primary level and with higher classes, girls' enrolment decreases and thereby, dropout increases.

Table 1.6.9 Gender Wise Distribution of Literates

State/district	2001			2011		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
India	65.4	75.8	53.67	74.4	82.14	65.46
West Bengal	68.2	77.02	60.2	77.08	82.68	71.16
Bankura District	63.44	76.76	49.43	70.95	81.00	60.44

Source: Census 2011, Provisional population totals, Director of Census Operation, W.B, 2005

The table-1.6.10 indicates that there is inequality in literacy rate among scheduled castes and scheduled tribes people. According to census data 2001, the literacy rate is 58.22%, 27.11% and 42.92% in respect of male, female and total scheduled castes population respectively. These percentages are lower than the corresponding percentages for West Bengal as a whole. The literacy rates are 67.84%, 31.13% and 49.60% in respect of male, female and total scheduled tribe population respectively in Bankura district.

Table-1.6.10 Sex Wise Literacy Rate among Scheduled Caste Scheduled Tribe

State/District	Scheduled Caste			Scheduled Tribe		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
West Bengal	70.54	46.90	59.04	57.38	29.15	43.40
Bankura District	58.22	27.11	42.92	67.84	31.13	49.60

Source: Director of Census Operation, W.B.2005.

Based on the statistics we can say that the scheduled tribe communities of Bankura district are educationally advanced compared to other part the state. The percentage of literate persons among tribal people is higher than those among scheduled castes people. Both male and female people of scheduled tribes are better in formal education than those in scheduled caste community. But females in both categories have low access to education in contrast to their male counterpart. This information reveals that the SC and ST women in this district are disadvantageous group in contrast to the men population. It leads to lower productivity and lower social and professional status of the women of Bankura district.

1.6.5. Empowerment Statistics

According to census 2001, the female work participation in India is 25.7 percent against the male participation rate of 51.9 percent. In Bankura district female work participation is 32.04 percent, which is higher than national level. Among the female workers, 21.66 percent work as cultivators, 48.74 percent work as agricultural labourers, 9.72 percent work in household industry and 19.88 percent are engaged in other activities. This occupational pattern of women of Bankura district indicates that most of the women work in fields as agricultural labourers and women's participation in tertiary sector is very negligible. This is an indicator of rural poor economy. We have collected all these information from Bankura HRD, 2007. Women's work participation has been considered as one of the determinants of women's empowerment.

Though Indian constitution does not have any provision of gender bias, there is no significant presence of women in the field of politics. According to UNDP, 1995, women's political participation is considered as one of the major components of gender empowerment measure (GEM). According to the 73rd amendment Act in 1972 one-third of total seats in panchayats and municipalities are reserved for women. Bankura HRD, 2007, tells that 39.44 percent seats of panchayet bodies were reserved for women in Bankura district in 2001 and it is 6.10 percent more than minimum reservation. In most of the cases women's political decisions are influenced by their husband, father, son or other male family members; women are silent spectators in the field of politics. Actually they are not active participants of politics; women's presence in politics is symbolic, ineffective and latent.

Bankura district Human Development Report, 2007, shows that women in this district suffer from protein deficiency and malnutrition and from anemia and tuberculosis. Most of the women do not get antenatal care. In deed women are deprived of their basic right of health. HDP, 2007 of Bankura district has reported that the average age of marriage for women lies below 18 years. However, it is above 18 years for general caste women. Dowry system where bride's parents pay dowry to groom's family, is very much common among the general and scheduled castes marriage. It is reported that the dowry for general caste ranges from Rs. 50000 to Rs. 400000 in 2005. It is important to note that tribal community has no such dowry system. In tribal community groom's family give some jewellery to the bride as gift. Like any part of the world the women in the district of Bankura are not free from violence. In 2005, police stations in Bankura district have reported 326 cases of domestic violence against women.

1.7. Objectives of this Study

Prior to implementation of any development project, it is essential to measure how much it would be effective to improve the situation of poor, women, lower-caste and vulnerable and non-empowered population. After complementation of project, it is equally important to study the impact of the project on the people whom it was implemented for. So it needs to develop an index of empowerment, which would include most of the indicators of empowerment. Empowerment is not only qualitative in nature; it has a number of definitions also depending on the context of the study. Meaning of empowerment varies from person to person and region to region, caste to caste, ethnicity to ethnicity. So it is not very easy to propose a common measure for empowerment or quantify it. We want to divide our whole study into three steps. First, we have tried to quantify women's empowerment. Second, we assess the impact of women's empowerment on household welfare and third step is the exploration of the determining factors of women's empowerment in the district of Bankura, West Bengal.

In the quantification of women's empowerment we are interested to measure it at the household level as well as at community level. There are several dimensions of women's empowerment at the household level as well as at the community level. We, therefore, have to select the indicators and dimensions of the women's empowerment and explain the logic behind the selection. With the use of the indicators of the women's

empowerment we form an index by which we can measure empowerment, women's empowerment in particular at the individual level. We have planned to formulate empowerment index for both at the household level and at the community level. The detailed methodology has been explained in chapter three. It would be helpful to evaluate the impact of women's empowerment on household and child welfare that has been considered as a result of empowerment.

In order to assess the impact of women's empowerment on household and child welfare in the district of Bankura we have considered three issues – attitudes towards family planning, incidence of domestic violence and spending for child education. No doubt all the three aspects of household and child welfares are closely related with women's empowerment. But the question that will be naturally asked is that to what extent or magnitude the issues mentioned above are in reality properly executed or materialised through women's empowerment.

Although India has taken several steps towards family planning since 1952, still now more than 40% women did not use family planning measures. This picture appears better in West Bengal in contrast to that in major states of India. But still here 29% of women in reproductive age did not take decision regarding family planning. More surprisingly, in our country seven percent women do not adopt any short of family planning measure just in order to have maximum number of children. Fifteen percent of women reported their unwillingness to adopt family planning measure either due to the disapproval of the decision making family members or their religion, and another ten percent reported concerns about health or the fear of side effects (NFHS-3). Some women are reluctant to adopt family planning measures until they get male child. This information we have got in our field survey in the process of personal interview. These reasons behind the unwillingness to adopt using family planning measures are directly linked with the unawareness, unconsciousness and lack of empowerment on the part of women. Therefore, women's empowerment at the household level and at the community level is expected to affect the decision towards family planning. With this end in view, we have planned to examine the impact of women's empowerment at the household level and at the community level along with other household and community characteristics on decision regarding family planning for the women in Bankura district, WB.

Our second aspect regarding household welfare is domestic violence against women. Violence against women is common irrespective of social customs, economic status, caste, creed, religion and other cultural backgrounds. The issue of domestic violence has been emerged as a research agendum in the field of social science as well as in medical science. Actually, the manifestation of patriarchal power results in violence against women. In a patriarchal country like India the male enjoys dominance, privileges and freedom in all aspects of life, where as women are deprived of basic human rights and therefore are the victims of social customs. The definition of violence against women (VAW) cannot be singled out. UN General Assembly, in its resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993 defined VAW as “Any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women including threat of such act, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life”. Any untoward action that adversely affects security, freedom and welfare of women, is considered as violence against women. It gets the women deprived of enjoying their basic human rights.

The victims of domestic violence range from the killing aged woman to killing of female foetal. Domestic violence is present everywhere irrespective of time and space, region, religion, class, caste, status and position, economic condition, age etc. The tragedy becomes aggravated because this crime does occur not only in external atmosphere but also within the family at home. When violence occurs within the family, this is commonly known as Domestic Violence (DV). World Health Organization (WHO) has defined DV as “the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners”. Beating, kicking, slapping, harmful restrictions to regular ordinary behaviour, normal activities and freedom of movement, threats to demolish from property, denial of access to resources and control over assets, threat of murder, hurting the feelings of wife by using the putrid idiom, sexual assault, rape, provocation to commit suicide or deliberate self-harm etc. are some examples of domestic violence. It affects not only the woman concerned but also affects the family as well as society.

We have already mentioned that a large section of women suffers from domestic violence in spite of the existence of the Act for the protection of women from domestic

violence. It shows that laws and order are not sufficient to combat the incidence of domestic violence against women. In order to find an alternative way we would like to investigate the association between the incidence of domestic violence and women's empowerment. We actually like to assess the impact of women's empowerment at the household level and at the community level along with other socio-economic factors on the probability of the incidence of domestic violence against women.

The issue of child welfare is equally important in the goal of inclusive and sustainable development. In our patriarchal society, no one would deny the role of mother in child welfare like in child education, health, nutrition and his/her all round development. Women's empowerment is, therefore, a crucial factor for child welfare. In order to examine the role of women's empowerment in child education we consider the issue of spending on education of the children of the sample women in the district of Bankura. Particularly, we are interested to explore the impact of women's empowerment at the household level and at the community level along with some selected household characteristics on spending for her child.

Once we find that empowerment has an instrumental effect on household and child welfare, we need to search for the determinants of the women's empowerment and need to develop a theoretical relation between the women's empowerment and its determinants. Once we establish the theoretical relations between women's empowerment and its determinants we should test the empirical validity of these relations. It can also be used for policy making about how much and what kind of incentive is necessary to improve the empowerment level of women of a particular region.

In this part of our study we have intended to estimate, empirically, the empowerment level of women of Bankura District. Using a set of primary data, we want to explore the significant determinants of the women's empowerment. In this study, we examine the effects of several individual and community characteristics like age, education, occupation, income, financial inclusion, membership in SHGS, caste etc. on women's empowerment. This study tells us what kind of other incentives or policies are required

in the particular region under study to improve the index of empowerment. We have designed the study with the particular objectives as follows.

First, we would like to study the possible dimensions and indicators of the women's empowerment at the household level as well as at the community level for the women in the district of Bankura. With reference to the selected dimensions and indicators we have developed the index of women's empowerment at the household level as well as at the community level for each sample woman.

Second, once we have the women's empowerment as quantitative variable we can estimate the impact of women's empowerment on household and child welfare. In this step we have considered three aspects of household and child welfare – decision regarding family planning, incidence of domestic violence against women and spending for child education.

- a) We, therefore, investigate the effect of women's empowerment at the household and at the community level along with the other socio-economic and demographic traits on the decision regarding family planning for the sample women in the district of Bankura.**
- b) This study assesses the impact of women's empowerment along with some selected factors on the incidence of domestic violence against women in the district of Bankura.**
- c) We also seek to examine the impact of the women's empowerment along with other household and community characteristics on proportion of household income spending for children's education for the households in the district of Bankura.**

Third and finally, we intend to trace out and examine the responsible and significant factors in the determination of the women's empowerment at the household level as well as community level. It will help us develop an empirical relation between the index of empowerment and its determinants.

1.8. Conclusion

Discussion of this chapter clears that empowerment of women and abolishing of gender inequality is essential for inclusive and sustainable economic development. In UNDP Human Development Report, 1995, the main slogan was “Human Development if not Engendered is Endangered.” To empower women many steps, policies and projects have been taken by various international agencies and governments of many countries, but these were inadequate. Under this backdrop, it is necessary to suggest and implement appropriate policies for empowering women. What kind of policy should be effective for empowering women depends on social, economic, demographic characteristics and cultural norms of the region where the women live. Policies of empowerment are region specific and culture specific. We would like to investigate the nature, the dimensions and determinants of women empowerment in the district of Bankura, West Bengal. We have also planned to investigate the impact of empowerment on household and child welfare indicating the decision regarding family planning, incidence of domestic violence against women and proportion of household income spending for child education. In this chapter we, mainly, chalk out the concept of empowerment, the relevancy and objectives of our study and social-economic-demographic characteristics of our study area. The detailed review of the literature for the dissertation has been presented in the second chapter. Later on, in the third chapter, we present the various dimensions of women’s and a proposed measurement of the women’s empowerment. The third chapter deals with the methodology of estimation and hypotheses for our study. We have interpreted and discussed the empirical findings of this study in chapter four and five. On the basis of this empirical study, finally, in chapter six we suggest some alternative policies for improving women’s empowerment and family welfare of the rural households in the district of Bankura.