In the present work, an attempt has been made to find out the reproductive life of the Bengalee female (mother) in the contemporary society in terms of different biological factors like age at menarche, marriage-conception interval, pregnancy outcome, reproductive wastage, age at menopause, and child mortality on the background of different socio-cultural factors like caste affiliations, types of marriage, educational attainments and socio economic positions.

1) For the above mentioned purpose, data were collected from the expectant mothers (8014) and the aged mother (186) (who completed their reproductive life) at the Genetic Laboratory, and Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan (Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences), Calcutta, during the period of 1978 to 1982.

2) Data from Expectant mothers (8014) were collected at the time of their visit of the Genetic Laboratory for routine investigation of ABO and Rh(D) blood groups during 2 to 3 months of pregnancy. During the time of visit they were accompanied by their husbands or other relatives. Detailed biosocial information and reproductive history of the couple (wife and husband) were recorded in a specially prepared scheduled by personal interview method.

Besides that, data on menopause were obtained from 186 aged mothers who registered themselves in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology for hysterectomy. Similar method mentioned earlier, were utilized for the collection of information regarding biosocial and complete reproductive history of the aged mother.

Expectant mothers were followed up till the time of termination of pregnancies. After the delivery, newborns were followed up till discharge from the hospital.

3) Out of 8014 mothers and their husbands (couples), 3523 mothers and their husbands did not use any kind of contraceptive devices or family planning methods. Marriage-conception intervals
and parity patterns were studied from the data collected from them.

4) Out of 3523 non contraceptive user mothers, data on the pregnancy outcome could not be collected from 529 mothers during the time of investigation due to several technical reasons. Analysis of pregnancy outcome, reproductive wastage and child mortality were thus done from the reproductive history of 2994 mothers.

5) Data collected from 8014 couples were analysed for several socio-cultural factors like present residence, caste affiliations, educational attainments, socio-economic position and status of employment.

6) It was further noted that majority of the couple were born in the district of 24 Parganas and also resided at their native homes in the district of 24 Parganas (wives-24.84%; husbands - 24.56%)

7) 57.77% of the couple were found to be living in joint families against 38.40% of them in the nuclear families.

8) For caste affiliations, couples were classified as the Brahmin, the Vaidya, the Kayastha, the Other caste and the Scheduled caste groups. 32% of the couples belonged to the Other caste groups. Frequencies of couples belonging the Brahmin, the Kayastha, the Vaidya and the Scheduled caste groups were almost similar to each other.

9) Inspite of urbanization and industrialization, a small frequency of wives (mothers) was seen to be engaged in gainful employment or service; majority of them (92.66%) were housewives. Majority of their husbands were engaged in gainful employment in different types of the service.

10) Socio-economic status of the couple as judged from monthly income of the husband as well as wards of confinement of the wife (mother) showed the highest incidence (41.45%) of the mother (wife) whose husband's income received between Rupees 500 and Rupees 999 per month.

11) 52.22% of the mother were found having admission in the paying wards (upper middle class) for child delivery.
12) Mean age at menarche of the mother was found to be 13.41 ± 0.02 years.

13) Variation in mean age at menarche on the background of caste affiliations could be seen. Mean menarcheal age of the mother belonging to the low caste groups (the Other caste and the Scheduled caste) was found to be significantly higher than those of the mother belonging to the upper caste groups (the Brahmin, the Vaidya, and the Kayastha).

14) Association between educational attainments and age at menarche on the background of caste affiliations of the mother could be seen. Mean age at menarche of the mother with college education was seen to be lowest, while the highest one was found among the mother with primary school education. The above mentioned trend could be seen among the mother of all the caste groups.

15) A trend towards the decrease of mean menarcheal age with the increase of the level of the socio-economic position (as judged by wards of confinement) of the mother on the background of their caste affiliations could be well appreciated in the present study.

16) Secular trend towards the decrease of mean age at menarche among the mother was found.

17) Mean age at marriage of the mother and their husbands was found to be 21.07 ± 0.05 years and 28.26 ± 0.05 years respectively.

18) Variation in mean age at marriage of the mother and their husbands according to types of marriage on the background of their caste affiliations could be well observed. Mean age at marriage of the mother and their husbands was found to be highest among members of the upper caste groups compared to those of the low caste groups.

19) Beside the above, among the mother the mean age at marriage was found to be low among those who got married within their own caste groups compared to those of their counter-parts who got married outside their own caste in all the upper/higher caste groups (the Brahmin, the Vaidya and the Kayastha).
20) Association between age at marriage and educational attainments could be found. A trend towards increase of age at marriage of the mother and their husbands with the increase of the level of educational attainments could be well observed.

21) Interrelation between age at marriage and socio-economic position of the mother as calculated from the income of their husbands and wards of their confinement could be seen. Age at marriage of the mother was seen to be increasing with the increase of the level of socio-economic positions.

22) Gradual rise of the age at marriage of both the mother (wife) and the father (husbands) could be noted in terms of years of the collection of data.

23) Mean parity of the non-contraceptive user mothers was found to be 1.73 ± 0.07 in comparison to the mean parity (1.90 ± 0.20) of the contraceptive user mothers.

24) Interval between marriage and first conception of the non-contraceptive user mothers was found to be 7.24 ± 0.16 months.

25) 64.70%, 22.37% and 2.92% of mothers conceived first time within 6 months, 12 months and 24 months respectively after their marriage.

26) The teen aged mothers belonging to the age group of below 20 years became pregnant within 7.26 ± 0.37 months after their marriage.

27) Low mean values for marriage-conception intervals could be observed among mothers who belonged to the upper/higher caste groups (the Brahmin, the Vaidya and the Kayastha) while high mean values of marriage-conception intervals could be found among the mother of the low caste groups (the Other caste and the Scheduled caste).

28) Interval between marriage and first conception was found to be 7.37 ± 0.19 months among the mother who got married within their own caste, while it was 6.86 ± 0.32 months among the mother who got married outside their own caste.
29) Relationship between educational attainments and marriage-conception intervals of the mother was found to be present. The mean interval was found to be highest (9.74 ± 0.84 months) among the illiterate mothers, while the lowest (6.66 ± 0.24 months) one was noted among the mother with the college education.

30) Influence of socio-economic condition of the mother on marriage-conception interval could be seen. Marriage-conception interval of the mother was seen to be inversely related with the socio-economic position of the mother.

31) Most of the teen aged mothers (the age-group below 20 years) became pregnant within one year after their marriage who belonged to the low caste groups, to the illiterate groups and to the lower socio-economic (economically poor) conditions.

32) Majority of the aged mothers (the age-group between 30 years and 44 years) who belonged to the upper/higher caste groups, or belonged to high school, to college educated groups or belonged to the higher income groups (economically upper middle to higher class), however, conceived first time during the first year of their marital life.

33) The interval between marriage and first conception could be seen gradually increasing from the year of 1978 to the year 1982. Difference between the mean values of marriage-conception intervals for the above mentioned years, however, was not statistically significant.

34) Mean number of pregnancy of non-contraceptive-user mothers was found to be 1.73 ± 0.02.

35) 82.72% of teen aged mothers belonging to the age-group between 15 years and 19 years were primiparous while only 17.27% of them were multiparous. Incidence of primiparous mother (37.78%) in the age group between 35 years and 44 years was seen to be much lower than that (62.22%) of the mother with multiparae in the same age group. Mean number of pregnancy of the teen aged mother belong-
ing to the age-group between 15 years and 19 years was seen to be 1.19 ± 0.02, while it was 3.11 ± 0.27 among the aged mothers belonging to the age-group between 35 years and 44 years. Difference between mean number pregnancy of the above mentioned two groups of mothers was found to be statistically significant (t = 7.09; < 0.05).

36) Mean age of the mother was found to be increasing with the increase of order of pregnancy

37) Mean number of pregnancy was found to be varying between 1.46 to 2.00 according to the caste affiliation of the mother. Among the Vaidya mothers, it was 1.46; while among the Scheduled caste mothers, it was 2.00.

38) Mean number of pregnancy was found to be higher among the mother who got married within their own caste than those of the mothers who got married outside their own caste.

39) Similar type of relationship between socio-economic conditions of the mother (as judged from the income of their husbands and wards of their confinement) and number of pregnancy could be seen. The mean number of pregnancy was found to be higher among the mother belonging to the lower socio-economic position compared to that of the mother who belonged to the higher socio-economic position.

40) Aged mothers belonging to the age-group between 35 years and 44 years in low caste groups or in the illiterate groups or in the lower-socio-economic groups were found to have higher number of pregnancies compared to those of the mother of the same age-group in the upper/higher caste groups or in the college educated groups or in the upper/higher socio-economic position groups.

41) Mean number of reproductive wastage per mother was seen to be 0.17.

42) Incidence of reproductive wastage was found to be increasing with the increase of age of the mother.
43) Teen aged mothers (belonging to the age-group between 15 and 19 years) of the Brahmin caste groups had the lowest incidence of reproductive wastage, while the aged mother of the same caste groups belonging to the age-group between 35 and 44 years had lost more of number of pregnancies as reproductive wastage.

44) Incidence of reproductive wastage of the mother was found to be almost similar among those mothers who got married within their same caste and among those who got married outside their caste.

45) Mean number of reproductive wastages was found to be highest among the illiterate mothers and lowest one could be seen among mothers with the college education.

46) Mean number of reproductive wastages was found to be highest among the mother who belonged to the higher socio-economic position as compared those of the mother belonging to the lower socio-economic position.

47) Mean number of child death per mother was found to be 0.12.

48) The child mortality rate was seen to be low among teen aged mothers belonging to the age-group between 15 years and 19 years compared to its incidence (child mortality) among the aged mother belonging to the age-group between 35 years and 44 years. The child mortality rate was found to be rising with the increase of age of the mother.

49) Incidence of child mortality was found to be highest (0.19) among the mother of the Scheduled caste groups while the lowest (0.06) one was noted among the mother of the Vaidya caste group.

50) The child mortality rates were not much different among the mother who got married within their own caste and those married outside their own caste.
51) Incidence of child mortality was found to be highest among the illiterate mother while lowest one could be seen among the college educated mother. Incidence of child mortality was seen to be declining with the increase of the level of education of the mother.

52) Influence of the socio-economic condition of the mother on the child mortality could be seen. Incidence of mortality of the child was seen to be reducing from the lower socio-economic position to the higher socio-economic position of the mother.

53) Mortality rate was found to be highest among the male than the female child during the neonatal period.

54) Mean age at menopause of the aged mother who had complete their reproductive life, was found to be 46.67 ± 0.31 years.

55) Although the mean age at menopause was found to be varying between 45.28 years and 48.83 years, it was seen to be lowest (45.28 years) among the mother of the Other caste groups while highest (48.83 years) one was found among the Vaidya mothers.

56) Mean age at menopause of the aged mother who got married within their own caste was seen to be low (46.66 ± 0.33 years) in comparison to those mother who married outside their own caste.

57) The mean age at menopause was seen to be highest (47.86 ± 0.51 years) among the mother with the primary education while lowest (45.87 ± 1.00 years) one was observed among the mother with the college education.

58) The mother who took admission in the cabin ward for hysterectomy showed the higher age (47.10 years) at menopause compared to those of the mother who stayed in the settled wards.