This chapter attempts to lay a framework to conceptualise women's well-being, and based on such a framework it delineates aspects of well-being for detailed analysis. The chapter is organised as follows. After a brief discussion, in the first part, on well-being and other related notions, the second part discusses the major approaches to well-being. The third part provides a detailed account of the capability approach, followed by an assessment of its suitability to advance women's well-being and the role of women's paid work in that process. The fourth part deals with the measurement issues. The fifth part sums up the major arguments.

A. WELL-BEING: THE NOTION

Conventionally, well-being is used to denote the quality or standard of living. It is described as 'the experience of good quality of life' (Chambers 1997, p. 1748). Well-being of a person, viewed in this sense, refers to the wellness of her state of being or living. Though well-being relates to standard of living, the former is broader than, and inclusive of, the latter (Sen 1987a, p. 26). The quality of life implies 'the quality under which the life is lived — including such aspects as freedom from illness and danger, access to nutrition, education and other resources — and thereby refers to material welfare. Well-being, however, constitutes more aspects than material welfare: a person can have a much happier and more successful life than another even though their lives may be lived under same material conditions' (Scanlon 1996, p. 97). Similarly, well-being is a wider notion than welfare, and includes non-welfare characteristics as well (Dasgupta 2001, p. 15).
Personal well-being consists of a variety of aspects and many elements under each of these aspects. Also, what makes up well-being would depend on, and hence vary with, the individuals' conception of a good life. Nevertheless, most people would perhaps agree to include 'living standards, access to basic services, security and freedom from fear, health, good relation with others, friendship, love, peace of mind, choice, creativity, fulfilment and fun' as well-being (Chambers 1997, p. 1748). Attainment of many of these aspects would depend, to a large extent, on the availability and assistance of a number of factors. These factors can be construed broadly as determinants, and the outcomes as constituents, of well-being. The constituents and determinants of well-being can be thought of as means and ends respectively. Assessment of well-being can take the form of an examination of either constituents or its determinants. The assessment of constituents measures output, whereas the latter values inputs (Dasgupta 2001, p. 33). Expectedly, approaches concerning individuals' well-being deal either with means or ends.

For instance, Basic Needs and Rawlsian Primary Goods approaches deal broadly, though not strictly, with inputs to well-being. Conversely, Utility and Capability approaches focus mainly on outcomes. Given the emphasis of the thesis — whether women's paid work is a critical input for their better well-being outcomes — we will focus on the approaches dealing with ends. Nevertheless, a discussion on the means based approaches is necessary for a fuller understanding of the ends based approaches.

B. WELL-BEING: COMPETING APPROACHES

1. BASIC NEEDS APPROACH

This approach presumes that certain needs of human beings are basic, and hence they need to be fulfilled for a minimally decent survival. Lack of fulfilment of those needs implies human deprivation, and such deprivation emerges mainly from lack of material resources. Based on this premise, the approach identifies, and advocates the fulfilment of, the core of the basic needs to ensure a minimally
decent life to individuals (Streeten and Burki 1978; Streeten et al 1981; Stewart 1995). The approach is universalistic in principle as it advocates the fulfilment of the basic needs of all individuals. However, it attaches an order of explicit priority, by orientation and policy, to the poor, since not only do they lack material resources but also they suffer disproportionately from the deprivation of decent life.\(^1\) This is because ‘meeting the basic needs of the poor — feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and succouring the sick — has much stronger appeal than do egalitarian policies’ (Streeten 1984, p. 975). Towards satisfying the basic human needs, the approach emphasises the importance of the provision or possession of certain goods and services. The goods and services include mainly food, healthcare services, water, shelter and education.

The approach tends to suffer from two major limitations. First, it appears to lay far more emphasis on access to, or possession of, goods and services than on the outcomes emerging from such possession. Goods and services are required mainly to fulfil the needs of the individuals. Goods lose their significance, if they do not help the individuals to fulfil the needs. Thus, their value rests on what they can do for people, or rather, what people can do with these goods and services (Sen 1984b, p. 510).\(^2\) Therefore, ‘possession of goods is instrumentally and contingently valued only to the extent it helps individuals in the achievement of the aspects valued by them’ (Sen 1984a, p. 317). Sen argues that this commodity fetishism — a greater focus on goods than they really warrant — appears to limit the base of the approach. The second limitation, on the contrary, stems from its paying much less attention to an aspect than it would otherwise demand.

\(^1\) Deprivation of decent life may also arise due to factors other than lack of material resources such as discrimination based on gender, caste, religion, race, and so on. However, not only would poverty compound such discrimination, but also the poor (among women, disadvantaged caste, race, and so on) are more vulnerable to such discrimination.

\(^2\) Cohen (1993, p. 19) observes that ‘what goods do to people is identical neither with what people are able to do with them, nor with what they actually do with them.’
The approach tends to lay relatively less importance on the factors underlying interpersonal variations in the attainment of well-being. Differences in age, gender, disability, proneness to illness, socio-cultural norms, and so on can potentially lead to varying levels of well-being even when two individuals share exactly the same commodity bundle (Sen 1987a, p. 25, 1999, p. 69). For instance, a child needs more protein than an adult and a pregnant woman needs more nutrients than a non-pregnant woman to achieve a similar level of healthy functioning (Nussbaum 2003, p. 35). Also, nutritional requirements differ for working women and men. Similarly, if educational levels of all citizens of a nation were to be made similar, more resources will need to be devoted to those who encounter obstacles from traditional hierarchy or prejudice. Thus, women’s literacy will prove to be more expensive than men’s literacy in many parts of the world (Nussbaum 2002, p. 56). Since differently constructed, constrained and situated people require different amounts of resources to satisfy the same needs and attain similar levels of well-being, ignoring this variation ‘misses out an important general dimension of moral concern’ (Sen 1984a, p. 323).

It has been argued that Sen’s claim that the basic needs approach suffers from commodity fetishism is erroneous, and hence is an incorrect criticism of the approach (Stewart 1995, p. 88; Alkire 2002, p. 168). Stewart, one of the authors of the basic needs approach, argues that the central focus of the approach is a minimally decent life defined in terms of certain levels of health, nutrition and literacy. The goods and services (food, healthcare services, water etc.) are only means to achieve the decent life. The relationship between decent life and the possession of goods and services is delineated through a ‘meta-production function’ (Stewart 1995, p. 85). Notwithstanding the differing view on commodity fetishism, there is some agreement that the genesis of the approach was not backed fully by a strong philosophical foundation (Alkire 2002, p. 170; Stewart and Deneulin 2002, p. 62). For instance, Stewart and Deneulin (2002, p.

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3 Gopalan (1992, p. 28) furnishes the details of varying nutritional requirements with respect to work, pregnancy, lactation, age and sex.
62) argue that the approach 'did not offer any substantive philosophical justification for the objectives it put forward. Not only did this weaken its appeal (as an alternative to the utilitarian approach), but also meant that the approach is necessarily confined to poor people in poor societies.' Herein, the Rawlsian Primary Goods approach has an advantage over the basic needs approach.

Before discussing the primary goods approach, it is useful to examine whether the basic needs approach offers an explicit base to prioritise a decent life for women. As shown by Leslie (1995), in many developing countries, women, especially poor women, suffer from malnutrition and iron-deficiency anaemia. Similarly, female literacy rate is much lower than male literacy rate in many countries (UNIFEM 2000). The deprivation of women in terms of health and nutrition and literacy would call for, under this approach, some priority to women's well-being. However, the approach may promote women's well-being mainly as a part of broader goal of decent life for individuals, and not as an explicit principle of gender equality.

2. PRIMARY GOODS APPROACH

Based on a clear conception and certain principles of justice, Rawls (1971) has propounded this approach for an assessment of individual well-being. One of the central notions embodying this approach is primary goods. Primary goods are 'social background conditions and all-purpose means generally necessary for forming and rationally pursuing a conception of the good' (Rawls 1982, p. 169). They are composed of five aspects: 1) Basic liberties such as freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, freedom of association, freedom defined by the liberty and integrity of the person as well as by the rule of law, and political liberties; 2) Freedom of movement and choice of occupation against a background of diverse opportunities; 3) Powers and prerogatives of offices and positions of responsibility, particularly those in the main political and economic institutions; 4) Income and wealth; and 5) Social bases of self-respect (Rawls 1982, p. 162).
As a foundational basis underlying the approach, he advocates two principles. The first principle requires that all citizens should have equal access to the first two components of the primary goods noted above. The second principle — referred to as difference principle — suggests that citizens may be allowed to have a differential access to the other three components of primary goods, subject to two conditions. They are: social and economic inequalities should be geared to a) the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of the society and b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. The least advantaged are defined as those who have the lowest index of primary goods, when their prospects are viewed over a complete life (Rawls 1982, pp. 161-4).

The approach takes a clear conception of the justice and of the life a society should value and advance. Also, it delineates the aspects that are required to attain it, and lays out the principles that would ensure equal opportunity and well-being for all. The approach is, thus, both richer in concept and embraces a universalistic character: applicable equally to the poor and rich counties, and thereby goes beyond the reach of basic needs approach. This is equally true for its treatment of the contents of goods. Primary goods are far wider than, and inclusive of, goods needed for fulfilling basic needs. Some of the primary goods, such as income and wealth, have only instrumental value. By contrast, other primary goods, such as self-respect and basic liberties, have intrinsic value (Dasgupta 2001, p. 46). The approach, thus, provides a broader picture of resources that people need no matter what their respective ends are (Sen 1999, p. 72).

The primary goods approach also suffers from both the two criticisms of the basic needs approach: insensitivity to inter-personal variability and commodity fetishism (Sen 1984a, 1999). Sen argues that 'primary goods themselves are various types of general resources, and the use of these resources to generate the ability to attain the valued ends is subject to the same list of variations noted above: personal heterogeneities, environmental diversities, variation in social
climate, and so on (Sen 1999, pp. 72-3). Similarly, it has been argued that 'there is an element of fetishism in the Rawlsian framework, since Rawls takes primary goods as the embodiment of advantage, rather than taking advantage to be a relationship between persons and goods'. Therefore, 'judging advantage purely in terms of primary goods leads to a partially blind morality' (Sen 1982, p. 366).

Along with the importance of means, Rawls does acknowledge the significance of ends as well. For instance, he argues that freedom of movement and free choice of occupation are required for the pursuit of final ends. Also, income and wealth are needed for achieving directly or indirectly a wide range of ends (Rawls 1982, p. 166, emphasis added). There are grounds for believing that, as observed by Carter (2003, pp. 6-27), resources are means to a multiplicity of ends, and an increase in the bundle of resources increases the number of options to which that bundle is a means. However, Rawls does not specify fully what are those wide-rangining final ends. Instead, he lays far more emphasis on specifying in considerable detail the means that are general-purpose in nature and that would help the individuals to attain the life, that they conceive and value. This overriding focus on means, as in basic needs approach, tends to limit the approach. Herein, outcome based approaches assume some significance.

Does the approach offer an effective base for advancing women's well-being? Rawls (1997) claims that 'since wives are equally citizens with their husbands, they do have all the same basic rights, liberties and opportunities as their husbands. This, together with the correct application of the other principles of justice, suffices to secure wives' equality and independence' (p. 597). In many developing countries as in India, the rights, liberties and opportunities are equal in principle for women and men. Despite such equality, women continue to be disadvantaged, as we have mentioned in the first chapter, in a number of realms, including survival. Moreover, social norms and values, which often

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4 Sen's criticisms against primary goods approach, as Cohen (1993, p. 18) puts it, confine mainly themselves to a subset of the primary goods such as income and wealth and do not apply fully to other aspects such as liberty and social bases of self-respect, and so on.
disadvantage women, remain largely outside the purview of, and indeed weaken the applicability of, such laws and rules. The approach fails to factor in explicitly these and other related issues, which affect women adversely in many societies across the world. Herein, the argument of Okin (1995, p. 276) that the approach tends to ignore issues of gender, by failing to discuss many distributional issues concerning women that arise both within and outside the family, assumes significance.

3. Utility Approach

The utility approach views a person's well-being in terms of the sum-total of the utility derived. Utility is viewed either as attainment of happiness or satisfaction or, alternatively, as fulfilment of desires. There is a substantially large body of literature dealing with these two traditions of utilitarianism. However, Pigou argues that 'treating utility both as a measure of desire fulfilment and as a measure of the satisfaction does not do much harm for most purposes of economic analysis' (Pigou 1903, p. 68; 1938, p. 24). Insofar as they do not offer differential bases for economic analysis, it would suffice here to provide a minimalist account of the basic distinction between the two notions of utility, rather than surveying the vast literature. By equating utility with satisfaction, Pigou argues that 'most commodities will be wanted as a means to satisfaction, and will, consequently, be desired with intensities proportioned to the satisfactions they are expected to yield' (Pigou 1938, p. 24). By contrast, Marshall considers utility in relation to the fulfilment of desires (Marshall 1961, pp. 86-91).

The utility approach presumes that a person is likely to have a higher well-being, if she leads a more happy or highly satisfied life. Similarly, a person is well off, if she is able to fulfil most of her desires. Under utilitarianism, income, wealth and other kinds of resources are not valued as physical units worthy of holding them. Instead, they are perceived as important in relation to their capacity to create human happiness or to satisfy human desires (Sen 1982, p. 366). As mentioned already, the approach is concerned with maximising the
sum-total of the happiness of individuals and society. Towards increasing the
total utility, it does not concern itself enough about what causes such happiness
or how this happens and whether it is shared by many or a few (Sen 1984a, p. 308). This impinges on a number of important issues, and two of them have
implications for women's well-being and therefore invite discussion.

The first relates to what Elster (1982, pp. 220-6) calls adaptive preference: individuals often adjust their desires and expectations to reduce dissonance and frustration. Most often, seriously disadvantaged people lower their aspirations or adjust their self-interested preferences to their limited opportunities so as to avoid frustration (Cohen 1994, p. 119; Andesron 2001, p. 2:0). For instance, a subordinate housewife or overworked domestic servant, given the realisation of their predicaments, may reduce their expectation and be content with the limited opportunities available to them (Sen 1984b, p. 512). Their reduced life may not warrant concern nor look dismal if we view it though the prism of the utility approach. Rather, these women will emerge as happier people with a fulfilled life having better well-being.

This would imply that gender inequality and women’s deprivation may not matter much, if women take pleasure out of the reduced, limited opportunities available to them. Alternatively, enhancement of women’s well-being or abolition of gender and other forms of inequalities may not be a cause worthy of pursuing on its own, and may turn out to be important only to the extent it generates a net utility gain (Sen 1984b, p. 512). Similarly, the principle of equal wage for the same work to men and women has no intrinsic value, and men and women should not be paid the same wage as long as women are happier and satisfied with lower wages (Robeyns 2001, p. 4). This leads to the second but interrelated issue, which is crucial for women’s well-being in countries like India.

Preferences are shaped and constructed by social traditions of privilege and subordination. Due to the strong influence of social norms together with
illiteracy, women have often been socialised to believe that a lower well-being is right and fitting for them, and some of the domains are not for them at all (Nussbaum 2000a). In the absence of adequate and appropriate information, such preferences, though disadvantageous to women’s well-being, may not appear to them as such. Victims of such disadvantages may even lead a happier and fulfilled life. Similarly, ‘men tend to have a strong preference shaped by the social norms that their wives should do all the housework and caring work often in addition to working an eight-hour day’ (Nussbaum 2000b). The correction of these aspects is important in the metric of utility, if it increases the total happiness. Thus, the utilitarian approach not only appears to be insensitive to gender inequality and hence inadequate to confront it, but also may promote women’s deprivation by ‘biasing the development process in favour of the status quo, when used as a normative benchmark’ (Nussbaum 2003, p. 34). Happiness, after all, is an experiential state. It is not the same as well-being (Dasgupta 2001, p. 36). Therefore, what is needed is an approach that would not only de-emphasise utility, but also not confine its focus to goods as such. Herein, the capability approach gains significance.

C. CAPABILITY APPROACH

The capability approach — propounded by Amartya Sen (1982) and expanded later by Martha Nussbaum (2000a) — sees development as an expansion of individuals’ capabilities or freedom (Sen 2003). An individual’s well-being is viewed in terms of her freedom to select from the combination of doings and beings valuable to her. The assessment of well-being, under this approach, amounts to an assessment of what kind of a life she is living, and what she is succeeding in doing or being. The approach is grounded in, and built upon, two interwoven notions. The elementary but essential notion in the approach is

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5 The capability approach also employs certain other related notions such as agency achievement and agency freedom. The notion of agency is wider than well-being and cover aspects that may or may not affect well-being. The discussion of these aspects can be found in Alkire (2002), Gasper (2002) and Robeyns (2003), and is beyond the scope of the present study.
*functioning*. Functionings are 'beings and doings': the various things a person may value doing or being (Sen 1993, p. 75). Some functionings are very elementary, and these may be strongly valued by all, for obvious reasons. Others may be more complex, but still widely valued (Sen 1993, p. 31). Some of the elementary (or basic) functionings of a woman would include — but are by no means limited to — being literate, being nourished, taking part in household decision-making, having mobility and so on.

The focal notion underlying the approach is *capability*. Capability refers to a person's ability to achieve various valuable functionings (Sen 1993, p. 31). It represents her freedom to select from the various combinations of available functionings. Capability is, thus, a notion of positive freedom: what real opportunities a woman has regarding the life she may lead (Sen 1987, p. 36). The corresponding capabilities to the functionings noted above include ability to communicate with others, freedom from malnutrition, freedom to decide on and influence household decisions, freedom to move around, etc. Functionings are personal features or achievements. They tell us what a woman is doing. Capability indicates what she *can* do (Sen 1984a, p. 317).

The distinction between functioning and capability is important and worth clarifying, since the approach gives central place to capability rather than to functioning. The difference between the two notions can be explained with a help of an illustration. A literate woman from Kerala preferring not to read or write has a functioning (or outcome) similar to that of an illiterate woman from Bihar. However, the former has the choice or freedom to decide on whether to communicate or not, whereas the latter lacks such freedom. Since the literate Kerala woman possesses the ability to read and write, she can exercise it when in need or circumstances warrant. The Bihar woman, on the contrary, is not able to write on her own to the village administration about the malfunctioning of the public distribution system in her village, even if she wants to do so. Functionings and capabilities, thus, mark the difference between 'the actual and
potential, an achievement and the freedom to achieve, and between outcomes and opportunities' (Robeyns 2001, p. 5).

Due to these and other reasons (some of them will be discussed later), the approach accords overarching importance to capability rather than functioning for individual well-being and public policy. The question that emerges immediately is what determines the capability of a person? Sen argues that capability of a person depends on a variety of factors, including personal characteristics and heterogeneities like age, gender, special needs and talents, disability, proneness to illness, environmental diversities, variation in social climate and arrangements and social norms and perceptions regarding distribution within the family, and so on (Sen 1993, p. 33; 1999, pp. 70-1).

1. CAPABILITY APPROACH: SEN AND NUSSBAUM

It is worthwhile to mention here that in the recent years Martha Nussbaum has progressively expanded the capability approach — both its philosophical base and its reach with an explicit focus on gender justice — in a way that it has emerged as a variant of the capability approach and remains almost parallel to Sen’s version. Though Nussbaum corroborates Sen with new insights, in her recent works (Nussbaum 2000a; 2003) she tends to depart from, and differ with, Sen in a number of important ways. Therefore, a brief discussion on the variant of the capability approach advanced by Martha Nussbaum becomes necessary.

The intuitive idea behind Nussbaum’s approach is twofold. First, humans are free beings worthy of regard and dignity, and given proper nourishment of their capabilities they will function in a truly human way. A life that is really human, according to Nussbaum, is one that is shaped throughout by the human powers of practical reason and sociability or affiliation. Second, there are certain capabilities that are particularly central in human life, in the sense that their presence or absence is considered to be a mark of the presence or absence of human life (Nussbaum 2000a, pp. 71-2). Through years of cross-cultural discussion, she has identified and proposed a list of ten central capabilities for
quality of life assessment and political planning. They are: Life, Bodily Health, Bodily Integrity, Senses, Imagination and Thought, Emotions, Practical Reason, Affiliation, Other Species, Play and Control over One’s Environment (Nussbaum 2000a, pp. 78-80).

She dissects capabilities into three: basic, internal and combined capabilities. Basic capabilities are the innate equipment of individuals that is the necessary basis for developing the more advanced capabilities, and the ground of moral concern. Internal capabilities are matured conditions of readiness. They develop only with support from the surrounding environment. Combined capabilities are internal capabilities combined with suitable external conditions for the exercise of the function (Nussbaum 2000a, pp. 84-5). To put it differently, basic capabilities relate to innate, incomplete personal traits. They become internal, when they are extended into potentially attainable abilities, and transform as combined if they get the suitable external conditions (Gasper 1997, p. 291). For instance, a newborn baby has the basic capability for speech and language, for love and gratitude, and so on. Similarly, most adult human beings have the internal capability for religious freedom and the freedom of speech. Citizens of representative non-democratic regimes have the internal but not the combined capability to exercise thought and speech in accordance with their conscience (Nussbaum 2000a, pp. 84-5). The ten central human capabilities, noted above, are essentially combined capabilities. The list and its component parts will be discussed while taking up measurement issues.

Having presented the two variants of the same approach, the question that springs immediately is how do they differ? It is important to note at the outset that the central focus and traits of the approach — development as capability expansion, each individual as the end of, rather than the means for, development, importance of capability over functioning, and so on — are the same for both the variants. However, they do tend to differ in certain aspects, and some of the major differences are noted below. Nussbaum develops a richer conception of humanity, and its constitutive elements for a dignified human life.
To do so, she derives from and extends Aristotle's notion of human functioning. More recently, she has begun to acknowledge and advance the insights offered by Karl Marx and John Rawls. By contrast, while tracing the roots of the approach, Sen acknowledges and relates to the writings of Immanuel Kant and Adam Smith besides those mentioned above. However, unlike Nussbaum, he does not ground his approach fully with any of their philosophy (Nussbaum 2000a, p.13).

Second, Nussbaum identifies a list of ten capabilities and maintains that all of them are central and equally important, and hence does not allow for a lexical ordering among them (Nussbaum 2000a, p.12). Sen, on the contrary, argues that some capabilities — like literacy, health and nutrition — are elementary or basic, while certain others — such as having self-respect, being happy, and so on — are complex and advanced (Sen 1993, p. 31). Thus, Sen gives a differential treatment and preferential ordering of various capabilities. Though this raises problems on how to identify and prioritise capabilities for various purposes in different contexts, it also allows flexibility to decide on suitable capabilities depending on the evaluation and context. Third, Nussbaum identifies a threshold level capability, without which the life may lack dignity and reason. Sen, by contrast, does not explicitly argue for a threshold level, and he appears to be open-ended in this respect (Nussbaum 2000a, p.12). Fourth, unlike Sen, Nussbaum dissects capabilities into three levels: basic, internal and combined.6

2. Capability Approach and Women’s Well-being

We have already noted, in the first chapter, that girls and women continue to be disadvantaged in many parts of the developing world even in such basic aspects of life as survival, health and nutrition, and elementary education. A number of factors including lack of resources, social arrangements and intrafamily resource allocations breed and perpetuate women’s disadvantage. We have also seen, in

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the previous section, that the capability approach treats expansion of capability of all individuals as the central goal of development and that the capability of persons depends on a number of factors, including social arrangements and intrafamily resource allocation. If social arrangements affect a persons' capability, does the approach offer insights on the diagnosis and treatment of gender inequality in which social arrangements seem to play a pivotal role? Similarly, if intrafamily distribution of resources influences persons' capability, then, does the approach recognise — as do the cooperative bargaining household models — the importance of women's paid work in enhancing their capability? To put it simply, does the capability approach offer an adequate basis for promoting women's well-being?

The central question asked by the capability approach is not how satisfied is a woman. Or, not even how much of the various resources she commands. Instead, it asks what is she actually able to do or to be. Whether she has the freedom to lead or is capable of leading a kind of life she values? (Nussbaum 2002, p. 58). Towards leading such a valuable life, whether she faces any constraints — springing either from personal traits, needs or resources or even from social values, norms or relations, or from any other cultural, regional specific factors (Nussbaum 2000b). Specifically, it asks whether people are being healthy, and whether the resources necessary for this capability, such as clean water, access to medical doctors, protection from infections and diseases, and basic knowledge on health issues, are present. Similarly, it asks whether people are well nourished, and whether the conditions for this capability, such as sufficient food supplies and food entitlements, are met. (Robeyns 2003, p. 7). The capability approach, being concerned with the assessment of individuals' advantage and freedom, among other things, appears to lay a framework to examine gender disparities in well-being.

The approach offers insights on gender division of labour within the household. Take, for instance, a household wherein the husband engages in paid work and the wife performs domestic maintenance and caring work. Let us consider two
likely situations. In the first, the wife has a lower well-being than her husband due to unequal intrahousehold resource allocation. In the second case, her well-being is equal to that of the husband due to his benevolence. Both the situations would imply, in the capability framework, women's capability deprivation at different levels. Both cases limit women's capability set in various ways. Though her well-being attainments (or functionings) are equal to that of her husband, she has much less freedom than her husband in the second case. The first case not only implies the lack of freedom, but also refers additionally to the deprivation in functionings themselves.

These illustrations resonate with, and increase the relevance of, the argument posed by Petit (2001) as we can soon see. Consider yet another illustration: a physically disabled woman, who needs help from others to move around freely, with three alterative options. First, she is not able to go out from her house, as there are none to help her. Second, she is able to go out whenever she wants and able to move around freely since good-hearted volunteers are always available to help her. Third, she is able to move around freely, as she has paid-servants who are bound to help her whenever she wants to go out. The approach treats cases two and three as similar, since she has freedom of mobility as against the case one where she lacks such freedom (Sen 2001, p. 54).

However, Petit (2001) notes a distinction between case two and three. In the second case, her mobility is dependent on the favour or goodwill of others, whereas she is favour independent in case three. While acknowledging the significance of the above distinction noted by Petit, Sen argues that in case one the woman lacks the capability of coming out of her house and is unfree in this respect. In the other two cases, on the contrary, she has the capability and freedom to come out of her house whenever she wants. 'It is this distinction that the capability approach tries to capture, and it is an important distinction to acknowledge' (Sen 2001b, p. 54). However, the distinction between cases two and three — between favour independent and dependent freedom — noted by Petit, seems to have an implication for women's well-being.
As noted and discussed already in the second chapter, women bear the primary responsibility for domestic maintenance and caring work in almost all the societies. This frees men to work longer hours at income generating activities and to acquire more human capital. Conversely, this limits women's employment opportunities, career prospects and acquisition of human and social capital (Anderson 2001, p. 33). A husband compensating his wife monetarily for performing the domestic maintenance and caring work out of his goodwill is different from an institutional setting where compensation is statutory and backed by law. The institutionalised compensation would recognise that the gender division of labour within the household leads to unequal implications for household members, and it is women who bear such an unequal burden disproportionately. It, therefore, legitimises the need to compensate them monetarily for the benefits foregone due to the engagement in maintenance and caring work.

Thus, favour independent freedom may be more valuable — even, perhaps, in a lexical way — than favour dependent freedom (Vallentyne 2003, p. 8). Lack of adequate attention to this distinction, it has been argued, appears to limit the capability approach (Iversen 2003, p. 101). Nussbaum does acknowledge the unequal implications (both material and social) of gender division of labour on women, and offers a hint to deal with this issue both conceptually and politically. By focusing from the start on what people are actually able to do and to be, the capability approach is well placed to foreground and address inequalities that women suffer inside the family: the failure of work to be recognised as work and so on (Nussbaum 2003, p. 39). She argues further that analysing economic and material rights in terms of capabilities may enable us to set forth rationale for spending differential amounts of money on the disadvantaged or creating special programmes to assist their transition to full capability (Nussbaum 2002, p. 69).

An analysis based on the 32nd and 38th rounds of National Sample Survey in India reveals that 90 per cent of the non-working women attributed 'pressing need for domestic work' as the primary cause for their non-participation in outside work (Kundu and Premi 1992, p. 69).
Take, for instance, the rigid social norms practiced in certain parts of North India, as shown by Boserup (1970) and Chen (1995), which limit not only poor women's but also poor widow's freedom to take up paid work outside their home. This lack of freedom seems to matter seriously in the capability approach since it amounts to a denial or restriction of freedom to lead a human and dignified life, and in that sense it implies capability deprivation. The capability approach is also likely to view this as a matter of social injustice, as such social norms exert unequal influences on women and thereby limit women's freedom. By asking whether the existing social structure does justice to women by enabling them to attain a valuable life, the approach tends to go a step forward than the resource based approaches. Consider yet another empirical phenomenon, which is widespread in India: physical assault on women. Physical violence, under Nussbaum's approach, refers to the absence of an element of a central capability of bodily integrity. The approach is concerned not only with the incidence as such but also to the lack of external conditions to ensure the bodily safety of women.

By claiming that the capability approach does not have an advantage over the resource based approaches in addressing societal inequalities including gender inequality, Pogge (2003) advances a couple of important arguments that seem to have a bearing on the present study, and hence invite discussion here. Pogge argues that capability and resource-based approaches do not differ on the issue of intrafamily distribution. 'The resourcist will describe the injustice as men and boys receiving larger shares of family resources than women and girls do. The capability approach will describe the injustice as family resources being distributed so that males systematically have greater capabilities than women.' In any case, he infers, 'the claim (of Sen) that the resourcist approach overlooks the serious problem of intrafamily distribution is not true' (Pogge 2003, pp. 19-20).

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The pro-male bias in intrafamily resource allocation tends to disadvantage women and girls in various ways and forms. The excess mortality of girls in many parts of the developing countries is commonly agreed as one of the outcomes of such gender bias. What really leads to this gender bias in intrahousehold resource allocation? Studies indicate that gender bias in resource allocation can arise due to a multiple, complex web of factors (Bardhan 1974, p. 1303; World Bank 2000, pp. 13-14). They suggest that besides economic factors, socio-cultural factors like kinship structure, marriage norms and inheritance forms may also facilitate a gender bias. Similarly, perceptions on who brings what and who deserves how much influence intrafamily resource allocation, and in most cases the resource allocation is to the disadvantage of women and girls (Sen 1999, p. 71).

What the resource based approaches overlook is the deeply entrenched biases that cannot be simply removed or weakened through resource allocation. Quite often, correcting such gender bias in resource allocation may not in itself guarantee equal opportunities and outcomes. For instance, social norms not only preclude opportunities for young girls for education and play, but also constrain their abilities and skill required to learn and play, as documented in rural Rajasthan (Nussbaum 2002, p. 65). These capability variations stem from, and have roots in, aspects other than just resources. The capability approach, in its effort to correct such variations, concerns itself not simply with effective access to equal levels of functioning but more with access to individuals’ levels of functioning sufficient to stand as an equal in society (Anderson 1999, p. 318). Capability approach, being concerned not only with the unequal allocation of resources per se, but also with the factors that give birth to and sustain such gender bias and the unequal outcomes generated by such unjust resource allocation both in terms of outcome and freedom, seems to have an advantage over other approaches, including resource based approaches.

We have noted that a pregnant or lactating woman needs more resources than a non-pregnant or non-lactating woman to attain similar levels of nutritional
attainment. Pogge also argues that ‘women’s suffering and disadvantage in most parts of the world does not result from social institutions being insufficiently sensitive to the special needs arising from their different natural constitution. Rather, it overwhelmingly results from institutional schemes and cultural practices being far too sensitive to their biological difference by making sex the basis for all kinds of social (legal and cultural) exclusions and disadvantages. Women and girls have a powerful justice claim to the removal of these barriers, to equal treatment in terms of resources viewed broadly in a Rawlsian sense. If these barriers were removed, — that is, if our social institutions assured women of equal and equally effective civil and political rights, of equal opportunities, of equal pay for equal work — women could thrive fully even without any special considerations. So, instead of advancing this resourcist claim for social justice, why stake claim to compensation for greater needs or special disabilities? By opening doors to counter-claims invoking the special needs and disabilities of males, based on their lower life expectancy and large body size, the capability approach may, he argues, even weaken the feminist case’ (Pogge 2003, pp. 24-5).

Does the capability approach relate women’s disadvantage to the insufficient compensation for their differential needs? Partly yes and partly no. Yes, because the physiological differences often complement other factors in making women vulnerable to disadvantages in health outcomes. It is fairly established that significant proportions of pregnant women suffer from iron-deficiency anaemia in most of the developing world (Leslie 1995). Admittedly, the differential nutritional requirements arising out of physiological factors also contribute to the incidence of anaemia among pregnant women. However, incidence of anaemia or lack of adequate nutrients can also arise due to number of other factors such as social norms concerning intrahousehold allocations of resources, lack of resources and so on. Besides indicating the common determinants of female disadvantage, the capability approach also recognises the importance of gender-specific factors, to which resource or commodity based approaches are not sufficiently sensitive, and thereby drives home the point that two individuals with the same resources can attain varying levels of well-being outcomes.
It needs to be emphasised here that the capability approach does not lay far more stress on the physiological variations. But rather, it underlies the contraction in the freedom to attain adequate nutritional functionings and hence likely differences in well-being outcomes for which such variations are only a cause. This emphasis more on the outcome than on the cause does not seem to weaken in any significant way the claim for gender justice. Because, capability approach does not relate all the sufferings and disadvantage of women solely to this interpersonal variation in physiological needs. Instead, it recognises more openly than the resource based approaches that 'capabilities are a function not just of one's fixed personal traits and divisible resources, but also of social relations and norms, the structure of opportunities, public goods and public spaces' (Anderson 1999, p. 319).

Does the lower life expectancy of men weaken the scope and reach of the capability approach? It is fairly established that despite the biological advantage (possession of an additional X-chromosome), girls die in far higher number than boys in most of the developing countries. Also, girls are not exposed disproportionately to infectious diseases or unhealthy conditions including accidents to cause excess mortality of such magnitude (Waldron 1998). The excess mortality of girls indicates that the causes are more likely to be 'man-made' than natural. Studies inform us that unequal allocation of life sustaining resources such as healthcare and nutrients lead to the excess mortality of girls. At the other end, women, on an average, live longer than men in most parts of the world. Does the lower life expectancy of men arise from natural causes? Or alternatively, does it emerge from unequal resource allocation or other forms of overt or covert discrimination against men?

What causes the lower life expectancy of men is not fully explored and understood. But, what is widely agreed and documented in all parts of the world is that mostly women, not men, are discriminated against all through the

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It is likely that aspects pertaining to the social construction of masculinity, indulging in life-endangering activities such as excessive drinking, getting into fights, driving too fast, and so on, may have a role on such disadvantage.
stages of their life in various ways. Despite such pervasive economic and social discrimination and unequal treatment, women's longer life expectancy over men would indicate their natural biological advantage. Contrary to the (mis)perceptions, feminist claims as also the capability approach are not inherently biased against men, and do not justify their lower well-being. The capability approach considers each individual — women and men, girls and boys — and not women or men alone as the end of development. Since lower life expectancy of men implies a disadvantage in terms of functioning or outcome, how the approach treats this situation and what policy options it would propose remain unclear to us.

It is also important to note here that Qizilbash (1996) argues that the capability approach does not pay adequate attention to the means to freedom, and this tends to limit the approach. Take a case, for instance, in which a materially deprived young person succeeds in leading a valuable life by stealing from a rich woman and the stealing does not reduce the rich woman's ability to function well. There is a likelihood of treating such activity, in the capability approach, as an expansion of the poor person's freedom. Hence, it is not only the expansion of freedom that is valuable, but also how such an expansion occurs (Qizilbash 1996, p. 146). This limitation is related to, and stems from, the inadequate description of the conception of good life and its constitutive elements. Sen does not either provide a detailed account of a good human life or endorse a list of important functionings or capabilities. However, by offering a clear conception of a good life and its constitutive elements through a list of central capabilities and according a central place to practical reason and sociability in the pursuit of that human life, Nussbaum (2000a) addresses this limitation.

It emerges from the above discussion that the capability approach being concerned with asking whether people have the real freedom to lead the kind of life they want to lead rather than asking how many resources they possess or how satisfied they are, seems to have a number of advantages over other competing approaches concerning the well-being of individuals. Capability
approach also pays adequate attention to the lower freedom and well-being of women and offers more insights on the diagnosis and treatment of the factors limiting women's freedom and well-being than do resource based or utilitarian approaches. The study, therefore, intends to employ it.

3. Capability Approach and Women's Paid Work

Having identified the appropriate framework, it is important to relate it within the context of the present study. Does capability approach recognise the importance of women's paid work for their well-being? Both Sen and Nussbaum acknowledge the importance of paid work for both women's freedom to have an enlarged set of functionings and in the attainment of well-being. Sen (1990b) identifies at least three important pathways through which women's paid work can enhance their well-being. Women's paid work may lead to a better perception and concern among themselves about their well-being, recognition of their economic contribution to the household and the need for their due share in the resource allocation by other members as well, and give them an element of economic independence which becomes crucial in the times of separation or divorce and other contingent situations (Sen 1990b, pp. 135-7).

Equally, Nussbaum also underlines the need for women's participation in paid work for their higher well-being. She argues, for instance, that a woman who has no freedom to work outside her home does not have the same freedom of association as one who does (Nussbaum 2000b). Further, she notes that women who can seek employment outside the home have more resources in protecting their bodily integrity from assaults within it (Nussbaum 2002). Robeyns (2001) also identifies the various ways in which women's paid work may expand the vectors of functioning available to them. It may lead to a) psychological functionings like increased self-esteem, b) social functionings like having a social network, c) financial functionings like being financially independent, and so on (Robeyns 2001, p. 23). The capability approach, thus, seems to accord due significance to women's paid work for enhancing their well-being.
D. MEASUREMENT OF WELL-BEING

Having accepted the capability approach as an appropriate framework for examining women's well-being, it is equally important to spell out the capabilities that are central to lead a valuable life and specify, given the nature and context of the present examination, the relevant capabilities or functionings. To begin with, let us examine whether those who propounded and advanced the capability approach — Sen, Nussbaum and others — have proposed any specific lists of capabilities or functionings that are central to lead a valuable and dignified life? As noted already, Sen has not endorsed any specific list of valuable capabilities or functionings. There are two major reasons why he refrains from doing so.

First, his attempt to sketch the capability approach was aimed primarily at pinpointing the various inadequacies of the approaches that offered the basis for the evaluation of individual advantage (Sen 1982). His attempt is oriented more towards specifying a space rather than suggesting a particular formula for an evaluation of individuals' well-being and advantage. Second, he is aware of the diverse and complex nature and construction of societies and individuals, their differing perceptions of advantage and varying availability of information. Thus, he seems to respect the pluralistic nature of the society and indeed allow individuals to identify and prioritise the relevant capabilities depending on their context and purpose. He argues that 'a general approach can be used in many different ways, depending on the context and on the information that is available. It is this combination of foundational analysis and pragmatic use that gives the capability approach its extensive reach' (Sen 1999, p. 86). However, such an open-ended treatment is not altogether free from criticisms.

For instance, Deneulin (2002) argues that 'if no content can be given to what people have reason to choose and value, and if one refuses to take any position regarding the ends that are to be promoted, how then can we (or governments) know which opportunities have to be given to people in order to improve their
quality of life? How can we give people conditions for a better human life without knowing what that better life consists of?" (Deneulin 2002, p. 501). Others have also expressed this view. Though Sen provides an insightful sketch, by leaving a great detail out the master sketch remains rather incomplete (Qizilbash 2001). Nussbaum also shares this concern. She argues that though Sen gives us a general sense of what societies ought to be striving to achieve, because of his reluctance to make commitments about substance (that is, what capabilities a society ought most centrally to pursue), even that guidance remains but an outline (Nussbaum 2003, p. 35). Instead, she holds the firm view that a definitive list of central capabilities, however tentative, is necessary, if the capability approach is to provide a definite and useful guidance in the pursuit of gender justice (Nussbaum 2003).

However, Elson (1997) argues that 'some of the incompleteness of the Sen's framework reflects the incompleteness of human life itself, leaving a necessary space for open-ended historical processes to operate; some comes from paying insufficient attention to exactly how and under what conditions people convert commodities into capabilities' (Elson 1997, p. 60). While highlighting the scope of the capability approach for gender justice, Sen argues that 'I have not gone beyond outlining a space and some general features of a combining formula, and this obviously falls far short of being a complete theory of justice. Such a complete theory is not what I am seeking, and more importantly it is not especially needed to analyse gender inequality' (Sen 1995a, p. 268). Instead, he maintains that in some types of social analysis, especially in dealing with situations relating to poverty, an analysis of a small number of centrally important functionings will serve meaningful purpose (Sen 1993, p. 31). This, then, prompts us to ask what are those small number of centrally important functionings suggested by him.
Table 3.1: List of Important Functionings and Capabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sen</th>
<th>Pattanaik (1997, pp. 3-4)</th>
<th>Robeyns (2003, pp. 71-2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Being able to live to the end of a complete human life, so far as is possible</td>
<td>• <strong>Life and Physical health:</strong> being able to be physically healthy and enjoy a life of normal length</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being able to have good health</td>
<td>2) <strong>Mental well-being:</strong> being able to be mentally healthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being able to be adequately nourished</td>
<td>3) <strong>Bodily integrity and safety:</strong> being able to be protected from violence of any sort</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being free from avoidable disease</td>
<td>4) <strong>Social relations:</strong> being able to be part of social networks and to give and receive social support</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being able to have adequate shelter</td>
<td>5) <strong>Political empowerment:</strong> being able to participate in and have a fair share of influence on political decision-making</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being able to move from place to place</td>
<td>6) <strong>Education and knowledge:</strong> being able to be educated and to use and produce knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being able to avoid unnecessary and non-useful pain and to have pleasurable experiences</td>
<td>7) <strong>Domestic work and non-market care:</strong> being able to raise children and take care of others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Capability to choose, ability to form goals, commitments, values</td>
<td>8) <strong>Paid work and other projects:</strong> being able to work in the labour market or to undertake projects, including artistic ones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being able to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life</td>
<td>9) <strong>Shelter and environment:</strong> being able to be sheltered and live in a safe and pleasant environment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being able to visit and entertain friends</td>
<td>10) <strong>Mobility:</strong> being able to be mobile</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being able to participate in the community</td>
<td>11) <strong>Leisure activities:</strong> being able to engage in leisure activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Capability to have self-respect</td>
<td>12) <strong>Time-autonomy:</strong> being able to exercise autonomy in allocating one's time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Capability of appearing in public without shame</td>
<td>13) <strong>Respect:</strong> being able to be respected and treated with dignity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to achieve valuable functioning</td>
<td>b) 14) <strong>Religion:</strong> being able to choose to live or not to live according to a religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crocker (1995, pp. 174-6)
Crocker (1995), through a careful reading of Sen’s work, has identified the functionings suggested by Sen. Employing the capability approach, Pattanaik (1997) and Robeyns (2003) have also proposed a separate list of functionings and capabilities for empirical analysis. It merits a mention here that Robeyns’ list is intended explicitly to assess gender inequality in post-industrialised societies. Table 3.1 contains these three lists. Finally, the list of ten central human capabilities proposed by Nussbaum is also given below but separately. Since she has revised her list a couple of times, the list given below is her most recent one.

The Central Human Capabilities (Nussbaum 2003, pp. 41-2)

1. **Life.** Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. **Bodily Health.** Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. **Bodily Integrity.** Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4. **Senses, Imagination, and Thought.** Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.
5. **Emotions.** Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one’s emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)
6. **Practical Reason.** Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)
7. **Affiliation.**
   A. Being able to live with and towards others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able
to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)

B. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

8. **Other Species.** Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. **Play.** Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. **Control Over One's Environment.**
    A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association.
    B. Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason, and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

It is fairly clear that many aspects appear commonly on all the four lists. The approach recognises the ability to have a good health and nutrition as one of the central aspects of valuable life, since health and nutrition emerges as the foremost item in all the four lists. Further, aspects relating to bodily integrity, especially mobility and physical safety, figure in almost all the lists in one way or another. Yet another aspect that appears in all the lists is participation in the matters of community, society and family. Also, all the four lists underline the importance of mental health for valuable life. Expectedly, Nussbaum and Robeyns specify certain gender specific aspects, as they propose the approach as the basis to further, among other things, women's well-being and freedom. Both recognise reproductive health as one of the important elements of women's well-being. Admittedly, Nussbaum provides more detailed and wider elements than others, as she expands the capability approach towards a theory of social justice, including gender justice.
1. Basis for Identification and Analysis

Two important aspects, such as informational basis underlying the specification and the empirical analysis, merit discussion here. As discussed already, while assessing individuals' well-being and advantage, the approach attaches the central place to capability rather than to functionings. Arguably, capabilities have a value that is independent of functionings. A life is made better to some extent not only by the functionings, but also by the mere possession of capabilities to function (Carter 2003, p. 18). At the same time, it is also important to acknowledge that it is 'functionings, not simply capabilities, that render a life fully human in the sense that if there were no functioning of any kind in a life, we could hardly applaud it, no matter what opportunities it contained' (Nussbaum 2000a, p. 87). This obviously raises a question about what is more important for individuals' well-being and public policy?

Deneulin (2002, p. 502) argues that 'if the government aims at basic capabilities, aims at creating a context in which a person might live well and choose a flourishing life, then how we can assess if a country succeeded in giving people the necessary opportunities to function well except by looking at how people are functioning, for freedom cannot easily be observed unless it has been exercised?' Nussbaum argues that capability, not functioning, is the appropriate public goal for development and well-being (Nussbaum 2000b). This is because focusing on capability gives due importance to individuals' choice. A woman, for instance, who has opportunities for play can choose a workaholic life. But, there is a great difference between the chosen life and the life constrained by the double day of work that makes women unable to play in many parts of the world (Nussbaum 2002, pp. 64-5). Also, if functioning were taken as the goal of public policy, it would preclude many choices that citizens may make in accordance with their own conception of the good (Nussbaum 2002).

To assess a persons' well-being through capability, the information on capability set — that is, information regarding all the functioning vectors which were
available to her — as well as information on functionings achieved by her is required (Sen 1992, pp. 49-53; Basu and Lopez-Calva 1999, p. 43). Though such detailed and appropriate information is certainly needed, the availability of such information is the exception rather than the rule. This inherently limits the scope of the empirical analyses. More importantly, the capability set, like the budget set in consumer analysis, is not observable, and has to be constructed on the basis of presumptions. In practice, therefore, one might have to settle often enough for relating well-being to the achieved — and indeed observed — functionings, rather than trying to bring in the capability set (Sen 1992, p. 52). Also, ‘the assessment of capabilities has to proceed primarily on the basis of observing a person’s actual functionings, to be supplemented by other information’ (Sen 1999, p. 131).

Due to these and other factors, most of the analyses using the capability framework fall mainly within the category of analysis of achieved functionings using distinguished capability comparison method. Distinguished capability comparison implies the comparison of some particular capabilities chosen as the focus, without looking for completeness of coverage (Sen 1999, p. 82). For instance, Sen’s (1987b) analysis given in the Appendix of Commodities and Capabilities is confined largely to certain central functionings. Similarly, Dreze and Sen’s (1995, 2002) attempts to evaluate the development performance of India in the capability perspective were also confined to achieved functionings. In line with these studies, the present study also tends to examine, through distinguished capability comparison approach, certain central functionings so as to assess women’s well-being. Specifically, the study will examine whether women’s paid work plays any significant role in enabling them to attain certain central functionings. The analysis of achieved functionings may provide valuable insights into a number of aspects and may also offer informed direction for policy and action.
2. IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT FUNCTIONINGS

Against the backdrop of the preceding discussion, we present below certain functionings for assessing women’s well-being. We intend to examine women’s well-being through three interrelated aspects: 1) Household autonomy consisting of three elements such as freedom of decision-making, freedom of mobility and freedom from domestic violence 2) Physical Health consisting of three elements such as freedom from avoidable diseases, freedom from malnutrition and freedom from anaemia; and 3) Reproductive Outcome. Information on the elements coming under each of these three aspects is given below. We would like to admit at the outset that the choices of these indicators of well-being are driven partly by data constraints. What we have attempted here is to select certain indicators of well-being using the available data. At the same time, we would also like to emphasise here that the selection of these three aspects of well-being is also informed by the capability approach. For instance, these three aspects inherently belong to or come under the constituents of well-being included in all the three lists presented above in one way or other. The importance of each of these aspects, though mentioned briefly in the first chapter, and also the issues concerning the measurement of each of these indicators, will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

3. ASPECTS OF WOMEN’S WELL-BEING

I. Autonomy: contains the following two aspects
   (1) Participation in Household Decision-making
   (2) Bodily Integrity contains two aspects such as
       a) Freedom of Spatial Mobility and
       b) Absence of Domestic Violence

II. Physical Health: includes the following two aspects
   (1) Being Healthy: denotes the lack of incidence of certain preventable diseases such as Malaria, Jaundice and Tuberculosis.
   (2) Being Nourished: denotes the absence of
       a) Undernutrition (measured through body mass index) and
       b) Iron deficiency Anaemia.
III. Reproductive Outcome: includes the following three aspects
(1) Absence of Reproductive Health Problems (confined to currently married women);
(2) Current Use of Any Modern Contraceptive (confined to currently married but fecund women); and
(3) Institutional Delivery (also confined to currently married women for the last two births during the last three years).

E. SUMMING UP

It emerges from the preceding discussion that the capability approach not only has advantages over other competing approaches in assessing women's well-being but also lays an appropriate framework for identification and analysis of women's well-being. Based on such framework, three interconnected aspects of women's well-being — Autonomy or freedom of decision-making and bodily integrity, Physical Health and Reproductive Outcome — are identified for detailed analysis. The next two chapters will attempt to analyse these aspects in detail and ascertain the role of women's work on them.