CHAPTER II: SOCIAL ROLES AND PROFESSIONAL ROLES:
REVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE
(A) SOCIAL ROLES

There has been a clear difference in social and professional roles of males and females right from the primitive hunting societies to our most recently modern industrial societies. The basis of difference may have either been biological, social, cultural or professional requirements.

First of all, social roles are linked with the "ascribed" status which can be distinguished from achieved status on the basis of age, sex, marital status, blood relations and kinship. Second, social roles can not be professional roles, which any person, regardless of his/her caste, class, creed and religion, may achieve, after having acquired professional attributes, values and norms.

Third, the basis of professional roles are professions that have their own separate entities in the modern professional world. Professions are no more skilled activities or philanthropic work, but highly paid salaried jobs with well-defined working hours, whereas, social roles are neither paid nor are limited in terms of time.
Having made a distinction between social and professional roles, it would be appropriate to make it clear here as to why the term 'social role' has been used in this study in preference to other terms such as "home roles" or "familial roles". The word 'home' is commonly referred to imply a 'place' where one lives with one's family. In sociological literature, it is widely used (though not strictly) to define a place where people who are homeless, sick, mentally retarded, or deviant etc. are kept for providing shelter and security. Here, roles which are related not to home but attached to women in the family have been considered. Indeed familial roles seemed to be appropriate to the prescribed roles for women in the family. Family is a small unit and therefore family "A" may be different from family "B" in the normative patterns of behaviour. For instance, family "A" may adhere to the traditional values of life while family "B" may internalize the modern values of life style. Thus, roles related to women in both the families may be contrary to each other and may reflect two different patterns of behaviour. Some operational terms have also been used to describe social roles e.g., two roles, sex roles, dual roles and life roles etc. To understand the universal model of roles of women in the society, social roles have been adopted in this study. Whenever and wherever the role has been defined in terms of
social relations between men and women, it has implied 'social role'. It is almost impossible to isolate 'role' from social role. Social role is the expected behaviour of persons associated with social positions and make demands on the different occupants of particular social position. Social role mainly comprises two attributes, viz., social differentiation and social normation. In every society, the process of allocation of tasks is organized according to definite principles and methods. Also, each society has a framework of behavioural normation which is laid down in advance as rights and duties, obligations and bonds. In the same way, every society has a differentiated social structure as a framework composed of socially dissimilar parts but related to one another. These two attributes - social differentiation and social normation - may be treated as determinants in assigning men and women different types of social roles. The basis of social differentiation was biological. Since women had to undergo pregnancy, delivery, and child nursing as natural processes of reproduction, they were kept apart from the work of production which involved men who did not have to undergo these biological processes and as a result, had to be primarily responsible for livelihood and earning for the family. Thus, they were assigned the role of husbands and fathers and treated as heads of households under a patriarchal system. Women in the
family, on the other hand, had the tasks of household and child care as befitting a status of righteous wives and mothers. Women had to perform their social roles in the first place, and they might or might not go outside to work. The social responsibility of women was restricted to the husbands and children through the institutions of marriage and family.

The image and social position of women as wives and mothers did not change as the centuries passed by, and has not changed even in today's modern world. According to the anthropologists, this can be explained in terms of genetical and biological differences. Men, with greater physical strength and women with comparatively less physical strength are bound to be assigned different types of social roles. The functionalists assume the necessity of women's social roles as wives and mothers if society has to sustain and continue. However, Marxists argue that women's social roles are the results of men's maneuvering strategy to keep women their subordinates. Finally, feminists question the system which is a partial to men, and the society which is consequently dominated by them. To have a clear perspective, all these theories of female social roles will be examined in the proceeding section.
Anthropologist's Perspective

The basis for differentiation of roles between men and women, according to the anthropologists, is "biological differences", which make human beings behave in certain ways. This was discussed by Lionel Tiger, and Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox in two books. In the first book, Tiger maintained that the differentiation of work between men and women has "direct biological roots", whereas in his book in association with Fox, he also added the "genetical differences". These differences are partly due to genetic inheritance from man's primate ancestors, and partly to a genetic adoption to a hunting way of life. Thus, men were responsible for the protection of the band and for alliances or wars with other bands and dominated all positions of power over women in the family, trade and marketing and social life. Thus, women were restricted to the house, family and children.

Murdock, on the basis of quantitative data, proved biological differentiation of roles. He presented a list of

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activities done by men and women of 224 societies ranging from hunting to modern industrial societies and observes, "man with his superior physical strength can better undertake the more strenuous tasks such as lumbering, mining, quarrying, land clearance and house building. Not handicapped by the physiological burdens of pregnancy and nursing, he can range farther afield to hunt, to fish, to herd and to trade. Woman is at no disadvantage, however, in lighter tasks which can be performed in or near the home, e.g., the gathering of vegetable products, the fetching of water, the preparation of food, and the manufacture of clothing and utensils". 3

(b) Functionalist's Perspective

Women's social roles have been described by Talcott Parsons in the context of modern industrial nuclear family. He saw family as one of the important institutions which fulfill the basic requirements known as "functional prerequisites" of the society; the socialization of the young and the stabilization of adult personalities. At this point, two questions arise. First, how to achieve these requirements? And second, to whom these responsibilities

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should be assigned? In answer to these questions, Parsons formulated social roles of women. This time, the basis of differentiation was biological. He stated "In our opinion, the fundamental explanation of the allocation of roles between the biological sexes lies in the fact that the bearing and early nursing of children establish a strong presumptive primacy of the relation of mother to the small child and this in turn establishes a presumption that the man, who is exempted from these biological functions, should specialize in the alternative instrumental direction".  

Thus, the relation of mother to the small child or the dependence of child on mother creates a social atmosphere in which a woman as a mother provides warmth, security and emotional support. This is perhaps why Parsons refers to this 'expressive' role of woman in the family. In his views, this is essential for effective socialization of the young. The second function of the family, viz., the stabilization of adult personalities, is also part and parcel of the expressive role of a woman who provides warmth, emotional support and love not only to her child but to the male breadwinner also who is certainly busy with his instrumental role. To Haralambos et al., this

'instrumental' role leads to stress and anxiety. In this context, they stressed the importance of expressive role of the female. She relieves this tension by providing the weary breadwinner with love, consideration and understanding.\(^5\)

In short, in Parsonian terms, if a family has to be an effective institution of a society, the expressive role of women should necessarily be continued through a clear cut division of labour which sends woman home where she is primarily responsible for her social roles as mother and wife.

(c) Marxist's Perspective

Marxist perspective begins with the explanation of women's subordination which resulted due from the emergence of private property. To protect this institution of private property, women's social roles as mother and wife were set clearly through monogamous type of marriage Engels stated, "monogamy arose out of the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of one person - that of a man"\(^6\).


This statement clearly shows that men intended to establish their supremacy over women. This was possible only if women were deprived of economic independence and privileges such as free movement, and control over wealth.

Thus, both Marx and Engels believed that egalitarian status between sexes could be achieved only in a socialist society in which the forces of production were communally owned. Women would no longer be engaged in the production of heirs since there would be no property to be owned. They also asserted that the demand for the female wage labour would raise the status and power of woman in the family and society at large.

(d) Feminist's Perspective

Feminists argue that subordination and seclusion of women in society are reflections of the prevailing culture and society rather than merely a result of female biology. As for the biological interpretation, Hegel's concept of women as being passive and men as active was proved "false" by the feminists. The famous feminist Simone de Beauvoir thus observed, "the truth is that these notions are hardly more than vagaries of the mind. Male and female gametes fuse in the fertilized egg; they are both suppressed in becoming a new whole... in its whole
structure sperm is adopted for mobility whereas the egg, the big with the future of the embryo, is stationary; enclosed within the female body or floating externally in water, it passively awaits fertilization. It is the male gamete that seeks it out. The sperm is always a necked cell; the egg may or may not be protected with shell and membranes according to the species but in any case, when sperm makes contact with the egg, it presses against it, sometimes shakes it and bores into it. The tail is dropped and the head enlarges forming the male nucleus, which now moves towards the egg nucleus. Meanwhile the egg "quickly" forms a membrane which prevents the entrance of other sperms... thus the egg - active in its essential feature, the nucleus - is superficially passive, its compact mass, sealed up within itself evokes nocturnal darkness and inward repose."

With the vantage point of human physiology, feminists explore the cause and effect of women's subordination in the society. Firestone writes that women busy with bearing and nursing children became dependent on men for their survival. This complete dependence on men resulted in unequal distribution of power relations in the family. She claims

that men derived pleasure from their power over women which led to 'power psychology' - desire to dominate others. However, this desire of men, in her views, is borrowed from the economic class where some men came to dominate other men. In her opinion, all domination is bad and she stresses not only on the liberation of women but also of men from their sexual class and economic class respectively.

There are some other feminists like Betty Friedan, Cynthia F. Epstein, Sherry B. Ortner, Jessie Bernard, Sheila M. Rothman and many others, who either supported women's liberation movement or demonstrated women's place in the family and society. But, a strong ideological input has been provided by Ann Oakley, who provides enough material on the theory of social roles emphasizing that the conceived social roles of women as wives and mothers are "myths" and were laid down on the basis of convenience to men than female biology. In this context, one may wonder as to how myth is playing such a positive role as inculcating the value of

social roles in the society? She explains "the primary function of 'myth' is to validate an existing social order. Myth enshrines conservative social values, raising tradition on a pedestal. It expresses and confirms, rather than explaining or questioning the sources of cultural attitudes and values. The notions expressed in myth are always held as sacred they are perceived and transmitted as sacred. Because myth anchors the present in the past it is a sociological character for a future society which is an exact replica of the present one". 10

There is a positive hint in the above statement that myth is sacred and sacred is religious and religious values are transformed and inherited by people through culture. This is perhaps the reason she strongly stresses on culture rather more than female biology. She attacks Murdock's assumption of biological differences as assigning men and women different types of work "activity during pregnancy and lactation is not ruled out by the "facts" of biology, but variously prescribed or prohibited according to cultural custom, what nature (or biology) decrees is not gender role differentiation but reproductive specialisation. 11 She also

11. Ibid, pp.167-68.
dismisses Murdock's data on different activities and his judgement that more strenuous work are for men and lighter tasks are for women. She examines the list of activities given by Murdock in which biology appears to have little or no influence on women's work.

Friedle an anthropologist also shows the variations in the work of men and women in various societies. In some societies activities such as weaving, pottery making and tailoring are thought to be naturally men's tasks, while in others, as naturally those of women. Such tasks, if carried out by males get higher prestige than in societies where these are assigned to women.12

Not only the feminists reject the idea of female biology as a determinant of different types of roles of men and women in the society but even psychologists, scientists, philosophers and trend setters of the modern times also contend that "the exact femaleness or maleness" does not exist in any of the sexes biologically or psychologically. Those who make it a governing rationale themselves live on flat lands.13

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In a recent study on gender differences of men and women, Janet Watts noted these findings of the psychologist John Nicholson, "the two sexes are remarkably similar... take babies, when it comes to what babies actually do, there is little difference between the sexes but as they grow up, they develop the gender differences that their families and societies expect and impose on them". 14

(B) PROFESSIONAL ROLES

Unlike social roles, women in their professional roles do reflect gender differentiation. There is a dividing line between masculine and feminine professions. Though, professions in their evolutionary process were neither masculine nor feminine. Addison in 1711 referred to three great ideal type professions of 'divinity, law and physic', and even at that time medical profession was in the process of change - "some apothecaries were assuming some of the functions of the physicians". 15 Women entered the professional arena "two centuries" later than men. Within this span of time, men had fought against many inadequacies and shortcomings of the professions, extended their

boundaries, protected their interests, set rigid rules, code of conduct, values and norms for their members. In the Western and European countries, a movement had started with two objectives: ideal type occupations should be recognised as full-fledged professions and those which lack one or the other characteristic of professions should be deemed as semi-professions. This could happen because of divisions and subdivisions within an occupation or with the origin of new occupations. Clearly, professions were designated as intellectual or noble, skilled or menial, and achieved different statuses as full-fledged, semi-professions or non-professions.

In the 19th Century, when women entered professions, they had before them a long history of denial and rejection. Thereafter the twentieth century was marked by a growing number of women entering professions, particularly after the World War II, as a result of labour shortage, economic necessity, expansion of bureaucracies, increased level of education, women's movements and consciousness of their body, mind and self. More often than not women are

found concentrated in nursing, school teaching, factories and in clerical jobs. This trend established itself in the modern commercial world where men considered women to be "the best" for selling products and employed them in great numbers as sales girls, shop assistants, cashiers, catering workers, guides and advertising models.

Thus, most of the soft and less skilled occupations were labelled as feminine occupations. The reason for women taking to less skilled activities may be associated with the primary importance of their social roles as wives and mothers. However, professions are still genderless in their basic character as we will find in the following discussion.

A profession is defined as a vocation one professes with a sense of commitment, consistency, theoretical and scientific knowledge based on a prolonged specialised training of that particular work, which is derived from altruistic motive that occupations lack. Sociologists have endeavoured to identify some basic attributes of profession

in order to find out how a profession differs from an occupation. This is done by them in two ways. First, by defining certain discriminatory characteristics of some of the full-fledged professions such as law, medicine, engineering, university teaching etc. Second, by explaining the developmental sequences through which an occupation becomes a profession. These two approaches are commonly known as structural approach and processual approach. They have been discussed in the following sections.

(a) Structural Approach

The sociological explanations of the concept of profession is given by Durkheim in his study of division of labour. According to him, increasing struggle for survival resulting from demographic complexities such as the growth in material and moral density, increase in social volume etc. leads to the development of division of labour as a strategy to increase productive capacity. Improved productive capacity or industrialization of productive activity could then be regarded as a consequence of specialization. In response to generated social need, this, in turn, causes the emergence of specialised occupational

groups. Therefore, Durkheim recognised profession as specialized occupational group based on division of labour. This work can be treated as preliminary explanation of the profession.

Before going further deep, it is necessary to state here that the present discussion is not attempted to give a historical account of the concepts of professions, but to build up a theoretical basis for the ongoing discussion on masculine and feminine professions. However, Flexner, following structural approach, initiated a debate on the concept of profession. As early as 1915 he wrote a paper entitled, 'Is social work a profession?' and clearly established certain discriminating attributes of profession. To quote him, "professional activity was basically intellectual, it was learnt, being based on great knowledge and not merely routine, it was practical, rather than academic or theoretic, its techniques could be taught, this being the basis of professional education, it is strongly organised eternally, and it was motivated by altruism, the professionals viewing themselves as working for some aspect of the good of the society". 19

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The long citation enables us to understand the efforts of sociologists following the structural approach to identify certain specific characteristics, "structurally distinct"\(^\text{20}\) as what Greenwood calls them from other occupations. The proponents\(^\text{21}\) of this approach are: Goode, Greenwood, Barber and Hughes.

(b) Processual Approach

Under this approach, it is argued that no skilled activity can be permanently labelled as either a profession or an occupation. It also probes into these processes which mark the progression of occupations towards professions. Turner and Hodge thus explained, "the main issue in the study of professions and professionalization centres around the problems of distinguishing a profession from non---


profession and discerning the process of professionalization.\textsuperscript{22} This approach provides some useful insight into the exploration of the developmental processes associated with the nature of professions and professionalization than defining some discriminatory attributes of professions. Turner and Hodge suggested four main areas of analysis:

1. the degree of substantive theory and technique in the practising of professional or semi-professional activities;
2. the degree of monopoly over claimed professional or semi-professional activities;
3. the degree of external recognition of a profession or semi-profession.
4. the degree of recognition of a profession or semi-profession\textsuperscript{23}

It is evident from the above noted areas that a profession is determined by the extent to which an occupation has professional knowledge autonomy, ethics, and


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, p.25.
professional association. These attributes may have affected the degree of professionalization which could be understood in the context of a movement popular in America and other Western and European countries, while several occupations and their associations are trying to claim a professional rank. The impetus behind this type of movement could also be related to the governmentalization of services of the basic needs of common people under the concept of 'welfare state' in the socialist countries, and more particularly in India due to wide ranging governmental policies.

In this direction, Etzioni explains that profession should be categorized on the basis of organisations, which can be divided into three types:

1. professional organisation: this is further divided into two sub-types:

   a) full-fledged professional organization in which knowledge is produced, applied prescribed, presumed or communicated, which recruits a large number of


professionals on their staff, in which professionals have superior authority in influencing the objectives and activities of the organisations.

b) semi-professional organisations which employ professionals having a shorter training and less theoretical knowledge.

2. Service organisations in which the professionals are provided with the infrastructural facilities and auxiliary staff required for their work. However, they are neither employed by the organisation nor subordinated to its administrators.

3. Non-professional organisations in which the professionals are assigned to specific division or positions depending on the situation.

In India, the Western frame of reference to the concept of profession, and professionalization is uncritically accepted by the sociologists in their work relating to the sociology of professions. The emphasis is more on the developments of the Western professions in the reality of the Indian situation. There is a rare instance of adopting a standpoint of one of the two approaches: (a) Structural Approach and (b) Processual Approach, discussed in the
earlier section. However, it is noteworthy that some of the sociologists have probed into the emerging areas of research in sociology of professions, or the accessibility of professions and Indian stratification system. A relevant presentation made by Sharma explores both the gaps and trends in sociology of professions. He finds gaps both at ideological as well as material levels. He also suggests that researchers tend to concentrate mainly on modern specific professions; rise of modern specific (medical, legal and academic) professions, studies of specific professions as a case, and studies of cross-professional group. As a result, other professions and occupations often remain unexplored. The point made by


Sharma is considered by Lal et al.\textsuperscript{29} in their recent study on professions. In a welcome attempt, they have included both the much researched specific professions as well as less researched professions and occupations, e.g., social work, and dance as professions.

Having elaborated on the both Western and Indian inferences on the concept of profession and professionalization, it may be said that the professionals are endowed with both objective attributes with theoretical based knowledge, specialised training etc. and subjective attributes viz., service ideal, altruistic motive, humanitarian attitude towards clients of that profession, on the one hand, and a member of a professional organisation on the other. Thus, it would be appropriate to recapitulate here that professions are genderless in their basic character. This is particularly true in case of full-fledged professions e.g., medicine, engineering, law and university teaching, where professionals receive equal status, autonomy and salary on the basis of having similar attributes of professions. It is argued here that women professionals, especially full fledged professionals, are not different from men professionals. The visible difference between them is mainly social.

\textsuperscript{29} S.K. Lal et al. (eds), 1988, op.cit.
At this stage, it is safe to recognize the professional role. It refers to a person who possesses to discharge the knowledge and techniques based on science and its application to the advancement of science of that profession (what he has learnt already) with a sense of duty, commitment, consistency and service motive. Sociologists define the image of professional as standing above the sordid considerations, enactment of self concept of professional, self made entrepreneur, who is considered by their colleagues to be a member of a professional group. As a result, he commands, holds autonomy and possesses authority, but he is considered as selfless, devoted and working for the welfare of the society. Although this ideal image has been attached with all types of professionals, this is more pronounced and static with medical professionals. They are the ones who are specifically called upon to help, to cure and to restore the health of the masses of their own society. Parsons in his famous book 'the social system' has given a primary definition of the physicians responsibility as to "do everything possible" to

forward the complete, early and painless recovery of his patients. In addition, Parsons described physician's professional role as a "perfectly straightforward technical job. His knowledge and skill give him adequate tools for accomplishment of his profession. It is only necessary to exercise sufficient patience, and to work steadily and competently at the task". However, Parsons, seems to have been interested more in highlighting the problems that come in the way of a physician's work than in the definition of physician's professional role. Carr-Saunders defined this role more in terms of patient care than on the physician's 'skill, ability and knowledge of the profession'. The main professional function of a doctor is to diagnose and treat, to advise patients on how body may be kept in good health and how it may be restored to health. Chandy in one of his lectures in the memory of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel stressed, that the "physician is for the society and not society for the physician". Though Chandy has not made a typology of the role of physicians, he has


32. Ibid, p.447.


put forth three roles of physicians viz., (a) caring for the patients, (b) doing research to find solutions to the new problems in medical science and (c) teaching, not only as a function of teacher but in making possible further advancement in medical science.  

Adding to these roles, Blum suggests seven types of professional roles of a physician. They relate to the physician as a (1) Healer, (2) Businessman, (3) Gentleman, (4) Counsellor, (5) Teacher, (6) Treatment Partner and (7) Administrator.  

Jeffery has further expanded the physician's role as friend, philosopher and guide to their patients.  

The typology of physician 'role' suggests self denial, and of a person working for the welfare of the people in all respects, doing what can be done to save the lives of patients. This normative aspect brings about a gap in the ideal image of physicians and their actual role performance. This is debated in almost all studies concerned with the work of physicians. The question arises as to why a gap

35. Ibid, pp.20-33.  
exists between the ideal role image and actual role performance. This is due to lack of clarity in understanding the phenomenon of (a) profession (b) role system. The professions have been conceptualized either in the form of certain discriminatory attributes along with the symbolic expressions of profession (as Flexner himself ended his discussion on an ethical tone), or the degree and extent to which an occupation attains the professional rank. The two approaches are different and it is hard to apply the notion in reality with one denominator.

As Turner & Hodge have pointed out, the problem lies in discerning profession from professionalization. The former demonstrates the objective attributes of profession whereas the latter is concerned with the process. Not only that, the former group treats profession as a pure type, as a scientific and technical job and also includes some symbolic expressions such as service ideal and altruistic motive. Thus, profession seems to have a dual definition which is the source of a gap between the ideal and actual situation. This type of duality is discussed by Becker\textsuperscript{38} at length.

This situation becomes more crucial in case of medical profession. As perceived by Carr-Saunders in his discussion

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of doctor's professional role, the main source of trouble is
the doctor-patient relationship. He has given a useful
comparison between a doctor and an engineer, "To an
engineer, clients come in a composed and relaxed manner with
already set plans to discuss, but to a doctor, patients come
with ailments, sufferings. They are irritated, reluctant
and non cooperative and want immediate solutions, sometimes
impossible solutions. Also, patients have no knowledge of
the processes through which a doctor reaches at sound
diagnosis. Thus, if treatment prolongs, the patients run
away to quacks whereas clients of an engineer cannot do
so." 39

Thus, gaining confidence, making quick diagnosis, and
curing faster etc. pose a problem for the doctors to make a
choice between coming up to the ideal image and facing the
actual situation. However, in recent years, this type of
dilemma about the profession has declined. This is
particularly due to increasing specialization of jobs and
decreasing moral values and symbolic expression as we will
discuss in Chapter VI.

In the same way, role is also used in both ways in its
most strict sense as well as in its loose sense. Role has

pp.102-5.
both normative and subjective value, but it is conceptualized in a normative way and the subjectivity of role may pose a problem in actualizing the expected role. In this regard, Goffman suggested that a distinction must be made among typical role, the normative aspect of role, and a particular individual's actual role performance.\textsuperscript{40}

Following this perspective, Indian sociologists\textsuperscript{41} clearly define physician role in two forms viz., role perception and role-performance. However, they have described the major roles as patient role, professional role, academic role and bureaucratic role.

Going by these types of professional roles, professional roles of physicians have been conceptualized in

\textsuperscript{40} E. Goffman, Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction, Harmondsworth: The Penguin Press, 1961, p.82.

two forms in the present work: physician role (prescription, guidance and duties), and academic role (teaching and research).

(c) **SUMMING UP:**

Theories on social roles differ because their historical backgrounds are different. This is not unusual. What is relevant here is a gender differentiation in the ideological inputs of male social scientists and female social scientists most of whom are labelled as feminists. Theoretical inferences of male social scientists suggest the female biology as a determinant of social differentiation. Women are passive, expressive, physically weak, genetically different and more close to nature. They are busy with the reproduction of offsprings and heirs to the family. Thus, if they venture to involve themselves in higher tasks, they may contribute their assistance in their family occupations. This idea is totally opposed by the feminists. In their opinion, women are active, instrumental, biologically strong and are victims of male dominance in the family and society. It is the state, society and culture which give women second rate status second citizen, second sex, shadows, assistants, and supplementary workers, etc. These inferences, however, do not provide an adequate explanation of the present time
rightly termed by Alvin Toffler as 'the third wave'. This is reflected by high fashion, modern technology, computer revolution, western culture, higher standard of education, specialization of jobs, new professional avenues, competition, etc. In such a situation women cannot be considered the same as they were in the past, not long past but even in 1950s or 1960s, when Parsonian concept of women as 'expressive' and men as 'instrumental' was introduced in the explanation of social roles in the society. Parsons however did not present a list of activities as Murdock did but provided his explanation in a broader term which envelops everything that may occur in the family including child care, husband's care and other's care and all menial activities such as cleaning utensils washing, cooking, sweeping, home maintenance etc. Thus, the first step to define social roles in the present context would be separating activities from a role. A woman may well perform her expressive role as a wife and mother without doing menial work. In case of working mothers, children have to be looked after by either supportive network or leaving them at creche. Thus, there is a need to develop a healthy perspective about mother role so that working mothers feel guilt free and perhaps less confused about their roles and

more committed towards their profession. Also, much hue and
cry is made about the reproductive role of women, and it is
believed to be a hindrance in instrumental type of work.
But, they can be equally instrumental even when witnessing
pregnancy or delivery. Abidi, in one of her papers
entitled, "Biological factors of women and their work:
Determinants and Rewards", has found the variation in the
efficiency of work in women during pregnancy and delivery.
The determining factors are age, physical fitness,
psychological pressures, moral and social support rather
than the reproductory phases, which are transitional in
their character. Once this period is over, one can take up
all types of work. In addition, what hinder women's work
more are gynaecological problems than those of obstetrical
complications in the actual process of reproduction. Thus,
what is more important to change is mother role in its
"social" context than the mother role in 'gender
specialization' context.

In the Marxian perspective, it is believed that
socialism will liberate women and equality of sexes would
come about. But studies, made by scholars in the

43. N.F. Abidi, "Biological Factors of Women and their
Work: Determinants and Rewards", in T.M. Dak (ed.),
Women and Work in Indian Society, Delhi: Discovery
capitalist society as much as socialist society, reveal that the demand of women labour did not significantly change the position of women in the society. Women are still underprivileged and have to cope with hard household tasks. These household tasks can be shared by the other family members. These can be shared and divided accordingly with need, time and energy.

Thus, we can safely say that there is a need to redefine the social roles of women both conceptually and socially, so that it creates a new image of women as wives and mothers who would cope up with the needs of the twenty first century.

The image of women in professions is wrongly perceived in terms of masculine professions and feminine professions on the basis of gender differentiation. The attributes, education, ethics, and practice of profession do not provide


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a basis to divide professions between males and females. However, the notion of masculine and feminine professions is conceived more in other professions than medical profession. This is because of its objectivity, education, specificity of work and ethical code. Consequently female physicians are considered equal to their male counterparts. They shoulder the major responsibility of health care, delivery system, and are responsible for the welfare of the people.

Studies on professional roles of physicians reveal the main concern for patient care, as the basic function of a physician's 'professional role'. Physicians study etiology, diagnosis and treatment and put their knowledge into practice to alleviate the pain and sufferings, to eliminate disease and to restore the health of the people. They are expected to help and guide the patients in their problems. This does not mean that physicians do not get attracted towards academic role. But doing academic work is preferred by those who are employed in higher institutes of medical sciences where they are assigned the role of teacher and researcher. As a part of their service, they guide and motivate students for the advancement of science and also contribute their own share in it. Keeping these in view, professional roles of physicians have been described as physician role (prescription, guidance and professional duties) and academic role (teaching and research).