Case Studies
CASE STUDIES

This chapter records fourteen case studies of single working women. Of these, six are case studies of Hindu women and Eight studies of Muslim women. The case studies were conducted by the researcher herself in the homes of the respondents. Their cooperation is deeply appreciated. The interviews were conducted over a time span of almost two years – between 2000 to 2002.

In order to maintain anonymity of the respondents it was necessary to give pseudonyms. Without meaning any disrespect to the respondents, the researcher, for convenience, has not prefixed any title or designation to the names of the respondents.

CASE NO. 1

Ruby, a young woman of thirty six is a sedate and soft spoken Muslim lady. She welcomed the researcher and responded to the questions quite comfortably.

Her family includes her parents, two sisters and two brothers. Her father is a clerk and mother is a housewife. Her brother and sisters are students and she is the eldest child in the family. The family belongs to a small town near Aligarh U.P. The family moved to Aligarh when her father came to Aligarh to join his duties as a clerk in a government organization. Ruby was born in Aligarh and received her
primary and higher education at Aligarh. Her ambition was to go in for medical studies, and with the support and encouragement of her parents, she achieved that goal. She is very grateful to her parents and expressed the feeling thus “...I am a practicing doctor today, just because of my parents especially my father, who himself wanted to be a doctor but due to his parents' ignorance, combined with low economic status he could not achieve his occupational goal and had to be satisfied with his occupation as a clerk. As I was the eldest child, he made all efforts to prepare me to make his dream come true. Now he wants to bring high prestige to the family in the society through me”.

Of all the five children, Ruby’s parents found her to be the most intelligent and efficient child. Her younger brothers and sisters did not show much academic promise. Ruby, on the other hand, was very hard working since her childhood. Her aim in life was to become an educated and independent women involved in some prestigious profession; and to make her parents happy and proud of her. For Ruby, the medical profession is one of the most prestigious occupations in India, and she is fully satisfied with her profession. In Ruby’s own words : “Being a doctor, I feel as if I am the most prestigious and satisfied person in the world”. Her relatives and friends also feel happy
with her occupation. She spent her first salary on buying gifts for her family members and friends. But, as a good Muslim, she did not forget to share a small percentage of her first salary with the poor.

While talking about her income and expenditure, she made it clear that she is fully independent, and spends her income according to her own will. She spends a handsome amount on her family members specially her mother. She said “you know my mother’s prolonged illness and associated problems demand extra expenditure. My father’s income is sufficient only to meet the normal family expenses. I bear most of the expenses related to my mother’s illness. It is my father and mother who have given me the present position. So it’s my duty to make them comfortable”. Despite the fact that she spends a large proportion of her salary on her mother’s illness and other family expenditures, she is able to save enough to maintain an independent Bank account. She is planning to buy a house of her own in a housing complex. It appeared to the researcher that the reason behind this plan may be to attract some matrimonial proposals.

Ruby’s parents, are keen to get her married off as soon as possible but in absence of a suitable match as per Ruby’s educational and occupational qualifications, they are unable to do so. Ruby is ready
to compromise with regard to some of criterion of selecting marriage partner for her. In Ruby's words “What to do ? We are not receiving proposals which suit our expectations and requirements. Whatever proposal comes to us we do not find it worth considering. You know, in Muslim society it is considered bad for the girl's parents to invite proposals through newspapers. Despite this, my parents did put in advertisements but in vain. Sometimes, I feel that had I been a simple Graduate, I would have got married at an earlier age. Giving a second thought it seems that marriage is not the only aim of life. Career is equally important. Oh ! I am rather confused on this issue”.

Ruby accepts that working and practicing as a doctor has resulted in bringing about change in her life style specially in terms of her style of dressing, and her speech, she has developed taste for sober outfits. Earlier, due to her father's limited income, she had a limited number of dresses, but now not only the number of dresses has increased the variety and quality of dress material has also improved.

She is also able to communicate with people more effectively and has developed the art of speaking local dialects to deal with patients who come from villages for treatment.

Since she is financially well off, she is able to buy various types of reading material and has developed reading habits and spends time
studying literature and painting. She visits restaurants and cinema Halls with her friends and sometimes with her siblings. Since she is an earning member, she is not burdened with household chores. Her younger sisters do the needful. Sometimes, she prepares special dishes for the family, as this is her hobby.

Her family gives her prime importance in all matters relating to important family decisions. "These are the benefits of being employed and the second bread winner in the family. Perhaps my single status is also an advantage. Had I been married, I would have been considered an "outsider" and my parents may not have taken me into confidence. I would have had my own family problems. As the oldest daughter of the house today, my opinions are valued. I am thinking of dropping the idea of marriage in future. How would I get these benefits as a married working women? Marriage is a "Bandhan" and imposes restrictions on a woman. I am more privileged as compared to married working women. But in one way or other, they are superior to me as they have got emotional security which I think is very essential for a person to lead a balanced and satisfactory life. After my parents death who will take care of me? I don’t trust my brothers.

The most pressing problem I am facing now a days as a single women is that everybody inquires about the reasons for not marrying.
When are you getting married? Aren’t you thinking of your marriage? When will we get the chance to attend your marriage party? are some the questions which I have to face several times a day. I find it quite embarrassing and depressing. These are some of the reasons which force me to think positively towards marriage”.

Ruby feels that education, employment and marriage are equally important for a women to get high social position in the society and to lead a balanced life but supportive social atmosphere plays a very important role in this regard.

CASE NO. 2

Rana hails from a small village in Eastern U.P. She is presently residing and working in Aligarh as a Lecturer. This average looking but active lady, in her forties, was initially reluctant to be interviewed for fear that the researcher would probe into her personal life. But as the preliminary informal discussion progressed, she was convinced that the information given by her will remain confidential. Her initial inhibition did not last long, and she soon began to reel out details about her family. As it turned out, she was brought up in a typical patriarchal joint family which included her grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters-in-law, unmarried sisters, nephews and niece. Rana recalled that her
forefathers were *Zamindars* (landlords) and in such traditional *zamidar* patriarchal families, women have always played a subordinate role. Men were encouraged to attend *madrasas* for religious education and formal school education. On the other hand, girls' education was confined to religious education through private tutors only.

As per the family traditions, Rana's elder brothers were sent to Aligarh to attain higher level of education and her elder sister was denied the right to receive any kind of formal education. She was allowed to receive formal education up to High School only. When Rana passed her Intermediate examination, she requested her father, through her mother, to allow her to proceed to Aligarh for higher education. Her father did not agree to this proposal. However, her brothers, who were studying at Aligarh tried to persuade their father that Rana should be given a chance to study at Aligarh. Her brothers, who had by now changed their outlook and attitudes with regard to women's education, at long last convinced her father, and, after a long struggle she was able to take admission in the Aligarh Muslim University. While pursuing her studies she was inspired by her lady teachers and other working women. She developed a desire to be economically independent and to have an individual identity. She found
higher education to be the only way to achieve the desired goal. On the basis of her untiring efforts she finally succeeded in achieving her desired aim – the profession of a teacher at a higher level.

Rana recalls “It was like a dream come true when I was appointed as a lecturer. I was so happy. But this happiness lasted for a very short period of time because my family reacted negatively and wanted me to return home. As long as I was living in the girls' hostel they had accepted my decision. But as a lecturer I could not continue with my hostel accommodation and my brothers had already left Aligarh after completing their studies. I had to stay at Aligarh in a rented house all alone. This was not acceptable to my family. Moreover, they did not want me to stay at Aligarh just for monetary gains. A lecturer's position is not easy to come by and I struggled to convince my parents to allow me to avail this golden chance. They finally agreed and I was able to rent a small separate portion of a relative's house”.

Once she was settled in Aligarh, she did think about marriage and as luck would have it, she met a young man at her relative's house where she was living as a paying guest. These two young persons, by now well acquainted with each other, decided to share their lives with
one another. The boy sent a proposal to Rana’s family and Rana was more than happy. The parents took the proposal seriously and began to make inquiries about the boy and his background. The results of the inquiry revealed that the boy was already married. Rana recalls those agonizing moments this way: “It was a real shock for me. But I had to accept this fact. I knew I could not spend my life with a married man, but I loved him too much to let him go. Life without him would be impossible. I made a compromise and decided to marry him and be his second wife. But my family would not hear of it and put their foot down. They were unhappy that they had allowed me to take up a job and stay on in Aligarh. They considered my education and employment responsible for my decision. Efforts were made to take me back to my village but I did not change my decision and kept on staying here at Aligarh. And, no doubt, my gainful employment has given me the courage to do so”.

Rana did not marry against her parents wishes but is still interested in getting married to the same person but only with the consent of her parents. Neither her parents nor she herself are ready to change their decision.

“My problem is that I love my parents as well as the person whom I want to marry equally. I am not able to resolve the problem.”
Rana said. She further added: "I am satisfied with my career as a Lecturer but I am not satisfied as a single woman because it is affecting my family and my own life in a negative life. My younger sister's age at marriage is delayed just because of me. No body is ready to marry my sister in that small village as they believe that I am a deviant and my sister must be the same." She feels that as an employed woman she is leading an independent life similar to that of a man. She operates her own Bank account, and with her savings she has now bought a small house where she has recently shifted. She moves freely and leads a socially active life. She has observed drastic changes in her dress pattern and style of conversation after getting educated and employed at Aligarh. She prefers cotton and silk to synthetic dress material. Had she been at her home town she would have never been allowed to wear 'sari' before marriage. But now, at her work place she mostly wears 'Sari'. Her style of conversation has improved greatly having a literary touch. Had she been staying with her parents at her village she would have definitely observe purdah but at Aligarh she does not observe purdah.

She considers her loneliness as the major problem in her life. "Though it appears that I am enjoying my life to the fullest. But
actually I am really very depressed and lonely. My tension and depression have affected my health adversely. I have no one around me to help me except my maid servant who is not always there for me. My family members rarely visit me and I rarely visit them .... perhaps for a few days in six months. My family members have to bear the criticism of the neighbours and relatives in the village because of my single status. In Aligarh too, people ask me why I have not married. My ill-health has negatively affected my work efficiency. I want to continue my work but I do not find myself as efficient as before... but I have to continue my job because this is the only way and the only reason to continue my stay at Aligarh. If I resign and go back to my home, my family will get me married off to some other person which I can never do"

Rana’s younger sister was not allowed to leave the village in pursuit of higher education just because of the fact that their experiment with Rana had brought shame to the family. “It was my great desire to take my sister to Aligarh for higher education and to support her financially and morally. I wanted her to achieve a lot but unfortunately, because of me she has lost the opportunity to study further” she regrets.
She finds a change in her attitudes towards women’s employment after getting herself involved in gainful employment. Earlier she was very keen to be a working woman and struggled hard to achieve that position. But now she realises that her efforts were in vain because a woman must start and continue to work only with her family’s support. Without their support neither the daughter nor the parents can be happy. She has achieved what she wanted to but it has not necessarily made her happy as she is not able to share this with her parents.

Had Rana married, there would have been somebody to support and make her comfortable at home after returning to home from workplace. There should be somebody to share some personal problems. What a woman really needs is a companion who can share her joys, sorrows, successes and failures. Such a man can only be a husband. He provides her security.

Rana also faces some problems at her workplace. Due to her ill-health whenever she is unable to perform her duties in a perfect manner, her colleagues criticize and consider her as a ‘frustrated’ and confused unmarried woman. She also suffers from the problem of insecurity while staying alone at her house.
She concluded, "... whenever I compare myself to other married working women specially my married colleagues, it appears that as if they are leading a complete life. I also consider those single working women more privileged (as compared to myself) who are staying with their parental family. Now at this stage of my life I believe that education and marriage are more important for a woman’s life as compared to gainful employment”.

CASE NO. 3

Ms. Mamta, in her forties, is a well behaved and polite lady. She met the researcher warmly and tried her best to provide relevant information. She was born and brought up at Aligarh. She completed her education at Aligarh, and is now a school teacher at a local school in Aligarh. Her father studied up to the Intermediate level and owned a house and small departmental store in Aligarh. Her mother was a housewife. When Mamta was a graduate student her parents expired in an accident, and thus the responsibility of taking care of her young sister and herself shifted to her at a young age. She devoted herself to her studies and to take care of her younger sister. Her younger sister had some psychological problems so she could hardly study up to High School. The family circumstances converted the young, emotional and
ambitious Mamta into a mature and responsible woman. When her parents were alive, her aim was to go in for higher education, to involve herself in research and to become a lecturer in the University. Her parents encouraged and supported her all along to enable her to attain the desired level of education. But after her parents untimely death not only did she suffer from the lack of her parents support and guidance but it also caused great hardship. Mamta somehow managed to run the departmental store by herself and continued her studies. Her sister could not go beyond High School. But Mamta completed her B.Ed. (Bachelor degree in Education) after graduation and applied for teaching positions in different schools. She worked in a primary school for three years. But now she is presently working as a teacher in a Government College on a permanent basis.

She recalls: “After my parents death, I considered myself as the parents of my younger sister. She was not good at studies due to some mental problems and the doctor suggested early marriage as a solution to her mental problems. I did not think about myself and started searching a suitable match for my sister. After a long struggle I found a suitable match for my sister. For that marriage I had to give a huge amount of dowry as a compensation for her mental condition. Whatever
money I saved was given as dowry to my sister’s in-laws. But I felt a deep sense of satisfaction after performing my duties as a guardian of my sister. I kept myself busy in performing these duties and could not think even of my own future. I had to refuse all marriage proposals for me, for the welfare of my sister. My sister’s marriage was a great relief for me. But when I thought of my own marriage it was too late..."

She further adds: "...I decided to remain unmarried but my colleagues suggested that I should consider marriage keeping in view the psychological problems that might arise in future due to loneliness. I too, realised that there is nobody to take care of me at an older age. I discussed the matter with my sister and brother-in-law because, you know, among us (Hindus) proposal is sent from girl’s side. But I noticed that they were least interested in the matter. The reason behind was that I used to spend more than half of my income on buying clothes and other gifts on several occasions and festivals for my sister, her husband and children. They did not want to miss that source of income keeping in view that after marriage my income and property will belong to my husband. Then I realised that I must do something for my own future."

Mamta continued giving gifts to her sister’s in-laws voluntarily or sometimes on demand or under pressure as her sister was sent to her
home with a new demand every three four months. To protect her sister's married life she fulfilled their demands but, simultaneously, started searching a matrimonial match for herself. Whatever proposal was suggested by her colleagues she herself would pursue the matter, but could not find a suitable match.

Most part of her income is spent on her sister's home, a large proportion is spent on food as she is very health conscious and fond of eating. She includes dry fruits, fruits, vegetables and milk daily in her diet. She does not have any interest in decorating or beautifying her home. "For whom should I do that?" She asks. She moves freely in the society with her male colleagues and friends. Continuous interaction with males made her politically aware and she frequently takes part in political and general discussions. She uses her leisure time in watching television and reading newspaper and magazines.

She lives in her parental home alone. Her maid servant helps her in doing household chores. Perhaps to overcome psychological problems arising from her loneliness and to overcome emotional and psychological stress, she turned to religion for solace. She is a very religious lady and keeps herself busy in performing various religious rituals like 'pooja', 'Shradh', 'Barsi' etc. She blindly believes in the
piousness of a religious head ‘Swamiji’ and wants to devote her life to the service of Swamiji’. She visits him to pay respect and serves him meals twice a day.

While talking to Mamta the researcher observed that her dress was very simple and she was wearing no jewel ornaments but she suggested that the researcher should wear some ornaments all the time. “You must wear at least two bangles and ear rings all the time. It is very necessary for a girl. I never did that but now I realise that I should have done something like that. Now it’s too late for me. I suggest two things to every young girl. First to take care of her beauty and smartness and second to get married within a certain age limit. Whatever I lost in my life, I do not want others to loose.” She said.

So far as her work place is concerned she finds herself in a friendly atmosphere. She shares things with her colleagues and feels as if she is talking and working with her family members. Her colleagues are very concerned about her and are always there to share her happiness and sorrow.

Mamta considers her social position equal to men. She explains this way. “From the point of view of independence, I find no difference between a man and myself. I am staying alone, leading an
economically independent life; moving freely in the society, and doing whatever I want to do just like a man. And like a man, I do want somebody to share my life with. Men, too, require a companion and are dependent on women as their life partner. Isn’t it?"

Mamta considers gainful employment to be essential for her life. She feels that it is only because of her income that her sister’s in-laws keep in touch with her and feels that the married life of her sister is safe. But she often realises that the money she is earning by hard work is being used and will be used by “others” after her death.

**CASE NO. 4**

Ms. Salma is a thirty six years old, Charming and well behaved Muslim lady. She is working and serving the community as a teacher in Aligarh. She belongs to a small town in U.P. where she received her primary and secondary education. For higher education she came to Aligarh. Her father is a successful businessman and mother is a school teacher. Like her brothers she was also encouraged by her parents to go in for higher education. Since her childhood, her ambition in life was to become a doctor or a teacher. She tells “I always opted for the roles of a doctor or teacher while enacting in children’s plays perhaps in anticipation of my future roles in the society. I used to gather a group
of children and treat them as patients sometimes by giving them sweet drinks in small bottles pretending to give them medicinal syrup. Sometimes I used a pen or a pencil as an injection syringe or I would wear a Sari (my mother's dupatta) and taught the children as though I was a school teacher.”

When Salma passed class eight she expressed her desire to opt for the science subjects as she wanted to be a doctor. Her parents were happy with her decision but the social environment of that small locality where Salma lived pressurised her parents not to allow her to attend a boys' college to pursue her goal. The girls' school which she attended did not offer science subjects and, if Salma wanted to opt for science, then she would have to transfer to a boys' college. The traditional environment of the locality did not allow her to join a boys' college as segregation of sexes was a prime social norm and could not be overlooked. She was compelled by her circumstances to take up Arts and humanities and continue her studies in the same girls' college. Salma says: "...at that time, I easily accepted the decision of my family members regarding my studies. Perhaps because of the fact that I had been socialized to believe in segregation by sex and to respect my parents' decisions. I was fully convinced and considered it bad for girls
to join boy’s college just for the sake of education. That is why I took it as normal and did not pressurise my parents to send me to boy’s college. But now I feel that I have spoiled my life myself. Had I been able to prevail over my parents at that time, I would have definitely been a doctor. Tell me, what is wrong with co-education?... in absence of separate educational colleges for the purpose? Girls may become immoral without studying with boys and in my opinion these uneducated girls cannot distinguish between good and bad and may be misled by miscreants. They may fall into unsocial traps which educated girls who develop a philanthropic friendship with boys, may be able to avoid. ...Whatever it is, I just can not forget that I could not fulfill my great desire because of these social restrictions imposed on co-education. I am satisfied as a teacher also but you know.......

With the passage of time, however the attitudes of people somehow changed and after she passed her Intermediate examination and secured a high percentage of marks she was sent to Aligarh for higher studies. No objection or criticism was raised by her neighbours or relatives despite the fact that she was going to stay in a hostel. At Aligarh, she made it a point to become a teacher after she dropped the idea of becoming a doctor due to unavoidable pressing circumstances.
To be a teacher was her second choice as she was inspired by her mother who had her own independent identity in the society. She succeeded in achieving her second goal at quite a young age. She donated her first salary to a mosque and subsequent salaries are spent mostly on dresses, literary and general books, furniture and decorative items. A small amount of money is also spent on helping the poor. She feels happy giving gifts to her family members and friends. "Despite my willingness and efforts, I am unable to save money and I do not understand as to how I spend the whole salary. At the end of the month, I find the whole salary has gone. My parents do not interfere or ask as to how I spend my salary. And sometimes, you would not believe, I ask my parents for money", She laughs.

Salma feels that her education and more so her economic independence has given her an opportunity to lead her life the way she likes to live it. For her, an educated unemployed woman does not enjoy that much freedom which is enjoyed by an educated employed woman. She made it clear by saying: "I do not like to be simply an educated housewife. We must utilize our educational qualification for our own benefit and independence. And I feel that being an employed woman I am enjoying the social position equal to men. It has become possible not only because of my gainful employment but also because
of my single status. I am staying alone in a working women's hostel; I can move freely in the society; visit my parents and friends whenever I want to. There is no burden of household chores. It all depends on my mood what is to be done. Whenever I want, I prepare different dishes otherwise I ask the attendant to provide me with the food from a hotel or I visit some of my friends and have lunch or dinner with them. I do not have to wash my clothes and utensils, I do not have to cook under pressure, I do not have to do any other household work. I, sometimes, watch television the whole day and there is no body to question my activities. I can never be allowed to wear house coat and nightie or a 'Sari' at my parental home but I am free to wear the same at my 'own' home. I do not observe purdah while staying at Aligarh while most of the women in our family observe purdah as they live at a place where purdah is strictly observed. I keep myself busy in my work and enjoy watching television, listening to music; reading newspapers, magazines and novels; and visiting friends. What else should I expect from life to be happy? You know, there are benefits to be a single and economically independently woman.”

Salma considers her delaying age at marriage as a favourable condition for her independent life. She further adds with a naughty smile on her face: “you will definitely agree that my beauty,
qualifications and pleasing personality can impress anybody. When I was pursuing my studies, several matrimonial proposals for me came to my parents but my parents did not pay any attention to them keeping in view my continuous educational pursuits, the number of these proposals increased after I got the job. Since my value after getting the job had also increased by that time, my parents refused every proposal in anticipation of a better one. This prolonged search for a perfect match resulted in delaying my age at marriage. After I crossed a certain age limit, the proposals we received were not up to our expectations. People still approach me rather than my parents but I am not interested in marrying now as I do not want any compromises. I believe that one should marry up to a certain age so that we can enjoy the married life. Since I have crossed that age limit, why should I lose my freedom just for a formality. Now, I am enjoying my status fully. "Har Cheez ka ek waqt hota hai aur mein 'Gunah belazzat' nahin karna chahti" (there is a right moment for every action. Why commit a 'sin' when you cannot fully enjoy it?) That is why I have decided to remain unmarried”.

She told the researcher that she is planning to save money to buy her own house because at a later stage of her life she will need somebody to stay with her. She will take her brothers’ children to
Aligarh for studies that will help her to create a family atmosphere. “I love children too much. Unfortunately, there is no possibility of having my own children but I can satisfy myself by contributing in my brothers’ children upbringing. I also want to do something for needy and poor children.” She said.

The only difference she observes in the privileges of married working women and single working women is that married women are more privileged just because they enjoy the pleasure of bearing and rearing of children. “This pleasure is essential for their life because otherwise they have to lead their life under continuous pressure and tension” She argues.

Salma strongly favours women’s education and employment and prefers them over marriage.

**CASE NO. 5**

Renu, forty three, is the second of six children out of whom five are daughters and one is a son - the eldest of all siblings. Her father was an upper division clerk in Aligarh and mother was a housewife. Despite his limited income, her father tried to provide the best educational opportunities to his children. Since her brother was the only male child in the family, special efforts were made to get him
highly educated. Unfortunately, he could hardly pass the Intermediate examination and left the school. After getting the job as a driver he got married. But after his marriage he moved away from the family and did not extend any kind of help or support to the family. Now, Renu considered herself as the eldest among the children. She realised the financial problem of the family and was concerned about the future of her younger sisters. Renu was good at her studies and she wanted to go in for higher education in medicine. But keeping in view her family problems, she resolved not to marry till the family problems were solved.

She told the researcher that since her childhood, inspired by her mother, she developed an interest in sewing and embroidery. So she set up a sewing center in her own home and sewed and embroidered clothes for her neighbors and friends. She helped her mother in household chores also but, simultaneously, she continued her studies. After Graduation, she took a course in Costume Designing and Garment Technology and obtained a diploma in it.

She said “My practice and experience of sewing had already made me perfect. After obtaining the diploma in Costume Designing and Garment Technology my next aim was to run a boutique of my
own. Through contacts, I somehow managed to take a Bank loan. With the help of this loan, my savings and two 'Karigars (skilled tailors) I started running my boutique. People liked dresses designed by me and I soon saw success knocking at my door. My family members were very happy as the standard of living of our family improved day by day. Not only several delectable dishes were prepared daily, but we could now often visit restaurants — something which we could never dream of earlier. Fruits became an integral part of our diet. Dining table replaced the traditional system of eating on the floor. My sisters developed a habit of wearing designer dresses. They often visited cinema Halls with their friends. Though we had no time or interest for reading magazines except the fashion magazines, we subscribed to different magazines perhaps to exhibit our newly acquired status."

While talking about the changes in the life style of her family members as a result of her entreprenual efforts, she further adds: 'I developed interest not only in designing the dresses but in furnishing and beautifying our house as well. Our enhanced status brought matrimonial proposals for my sisters and soon three sisters got married in well off business families. My mother was relieved not only of her responsibilities but also in performing household chores, as a maid
servant was employed to help her. Now, I am so busy that I can not help my mother.”

The most important change Renu observed, is that her parents honored her by giving her the status as the head of the family. She now enjoy the power and prestige as did her father earlier. No decision in the family is taken without her approval. Her sisters as well as her parents respect her. Not only family members but her neighbours and relatives, too, appreciate her efforts and performance in maintaining the family, and for bringing them out of the morose situation.

It appeared to the researcher that she did not marry because of her responsibilities towards her family. While keeping herself busy in taking care of her family she did not think of her own future. But the real reason was something else and this was revealed later by the respondent: “Yes this is one of the reasons as pointed out by you. But the main reason is that I am a cancer patient and this fact is known to most of the people familiar to us. I received several proposals but refused in view of my family responsibilities. But that was before the disease was diagnosed. I planned to get married after getting all my sisters married off but soon after the diagnosis I dropped the idea and decided not to marry in future. And tell me, who will come to marry
me? Nobody asks me or my family members as to why I am not getting married. They simply know the answer.”

Renu is fully satisfied with her profession as it has brought her fame, respect and prestige in society – the kind of fame and prestige that can not be acquired by a highly educated woman. Her family members love her. She sometimes, feels that the respect and extra attention that is paid to her by her family members is not because of her employed status and subsequent responsibilities but because of the fact that she is a patient and may die anytime. Their love and affection appear to her as more of sympathy.

For Renu, Marriage is an integral part of one’s life be it a man or a woman. She says, “Like my sisters, I do want to get married, I do want to have my children. I do want a partner to share my life with. But I often ask myself how much life is left with?”

CASE NO. 6

Ms. Saba, thirty seven, is a very beautiful, smart, polite and well behaved young lady. She welcomed the researcher warmly and provided the information in a friendly manner.

Hailing from an urban area, Saba is presently residing and working in Aligarh as a Lecturer. Saba’s father is an Engineer and her
mother is a housewife. Her mother is a very religious minded lady while her father is not much inclined towards religion. He has a western outlook.

Saba is the eldest of her parents’ four children- three daughters and one son. Saba’s father tried his best to provide his children with best quality of education. No discrimination was observed between daughters and the only son. All the children were sent to convent schools. Now, they are pursuing for different professional courses like M.B.A. and engineering. Her mother did not want her children to acquire english education thinking it would keep them away from religious education. But Saba’s father made arrangements not only for formal english education but for religious education as well keeping in view his wife’s desire. Now Saba’s mother feels happy seeing her children’s performance in education and their subsequent success in their various occupations. Initially, Saba did not want to be a career woman. It was at the behest of her parents’ specially father’s, uncle’s and teacher’s guidance and encouragement that she is now working as a lecturer. She explains: “Though my academic record has always been very good but I was more interested in acquiring knowledge rather than in gainful employment. While pursuing higher studies, I never thought
of leading a working woman’s life. I just wanted to get myself involved in research and more research throughout my life because of my interest in acquiring more and more knowledge about society. But in view of my academic excellence my teachers, my father and my uncle suggested me to utilise my potentials and to pursue a career as a Lecturer. Following their suggestions and guidance I applied and got selected as a lecturer in Aligarh. I feel happy about it but the problem is that I have to stay away from my loving parents and siblings”.

Saba still prefers research over teaching. She says: “These household chores like cooking, washing clothes etc. are not meant for me. In addition to the problem of loneliness what is the most difficult thing for me is to cook for me though my maid servant helps me in other household related activities. I wonder why is the food necessary for one’s life? I really hate cooking.”

Saba is fully independent to spend her salary or to save it. She spends most part of her income for academic purposes or to lead a luxurious life. She likes to give gifts to her siblings and friends occasionally. Saba does not find any marked difference in her life style before or after taking up employment. She was already leading a luxurious life with her parents in a well furnished house in an urban
atmosphere. There is no change in terms of dress pattern or reading habits. She observed some change in her style of conversation as a result of her improved Urdu vocabulary under the influence of Aligarh culture. Her favourite pass time is reading magazines and watching television.

The most important change she observes in her personality as a result of gainful employment is that she has become more active, more independent and mature to understand and adjust to different kinds of people in the society. She said: "It is because of these changes in my personality that I now strongly favour woman's employment otherwise I was least concerned about."

On question of marriage, she smiled and said: "Oh my God this is the question, I did not want you to ask. I am fed up of this question. Everybody says that God has given me all the qualities to be called a perfect girl. I am beautiful; I belong to an educated and well off family; I possess a pleasing and impressive personality and a very good nature, then why have not I got married? Perhaps the same question might be arising in your mind also?" The researcher felt that she touched her heart because while talking to Saba the same question troubled the mind of the researcher continuously. Saba continues: "Actually these
God gifted qualities or you can say that excess of these qualities is the only reason for my delaying age at marriage, nothing else? My parents have not been able to find a perfect match for me. This is the only reason. And perhaps this is the only deficiency that compensates the excess of all my qualities as it has become a major problem for my parents and it hurts me also.”

CASE NO. 7

Ms. Lata, an active and well behaved lady, in her forties, runs a utility store in Aligarh. Her father shifted the responsibility of running the utility store to her due to his ill-health and also because of the fact that she is the only child of her parents. Her parents encouraged her to attain formal education. Since her childhood, her aim was to go for civil services. While she was doing her M.A., her father suffered a serious heart attack and doctor prescribed complete bed rest. Her mother, who was a housewife, was already sick. So the circumstances compelled Lata not only to assume the responsibilities of her father but to take care of her ailing parents also. Such responsibilities diverted her attention from her studies. After completing her M.A. she devoted herself to looking after her parents. She applied for and joined as a teacher in a private school. She said: “As a teacher, I was satisfied having my own independent existence and identity in the society. But
soon I had to resign because during my working hours I had to stay away from my parents and at that time they badly needed me. Then I decided to run my father's departmental store with his guidance. I did not have any idea of running the same as I never thought of doing so. Several criticisms were raised against my decision by my relatives and friends arguing that being an unmarried woman I should not do that because some anti-social elements may take liberties and create problems for me. In response to their arguments I said just one sentence “somebody from you take the financial responsibility of my parents and myself, I will keep myself within the four walls of home” and at this, all of them kept quiet. My parents, too, were not happy rather they were very sad thinking that such an educated and loving daughter of theirs is forced to do such kind of work”.

Lata continued her job successfully and provided her parents with best medical facilities and personal care. She has employed a maid servant to perform household activities and for nursing of her parents. As the departmental store is attached to her house she always keep in touch with her parents and home.

While talking about her hobbies and leisure time activities Lata said “Most part of my day is spent in the departmental store. Rest of the time I spend with my parents and watching television. I regularly read
newspapers and different magazines at my store whenever I am free. It is my favourite pass time. I notice an improvement in my dress style as during my college days I had to wear home stitched clothes but now I have no time to stitch the clothes so I prefer readymade clothes or get my dresses stitched by tailor. On the other hand, I notice a deterioration in my style of conversation. During my college days, I had to interact mostly with educated rather highly educated people so I used to talk to people in a very sophisticated way. But, you know, at my workplace I have to deal with different kinds of people mostly local people and their language has negatively affected my own language”.

Lata believes that working outside the home has become necessary for a woman to have her independent identity and to gain respect in the society. But simply working outside the home is not sufficient. A woman can gain respect in the society only when she gets herself involved in some respectable and prestigious professions in society. She says : “I am also working outside my home but no body pays me that much respect which is paid to other professional women like teachers, doctors, engineers etc. People do respect me not because of my work but because of my personal qualities like my nature, my behaviour, my honesty etc.”.
She continues: “My parents have become totally dependent on me. I am responsible of taking all kinds of decisions regarding the matters concerning outside and inside the house. I feel satisfied with my job as it has enabled me to take care of my parents at that stage of their life when they badly need me and my services. But my job has negatively affected my own life just because my parents have started considering me as their son. In our society it is a privilege for a daughter to be treated like a son so are you not surprised to know that to be a son had a negative impact on my life? I will make it clear. You see! When I was pursuing for my studies, I often overheard discussions between my parents about my marriage. They wanted me to get married in a well off and educated family and they approached several people for the same. But soon after I shouldered the responsibility of running the home, I noticed that they did not give due consideration to any proposal they received. Perhaps they had become too selfish to think of their life only. Actually they were looking for a boy who, after marriage, could come and stay with me at my parents’ house. What do you say? Am I not like a son to my parents? They could not find the kind of boy they wanted and, as a result, I am leading a single woman’s life”.
Lata told the researcher that her neighbours and relatives criticised her parents for not getting her married because of their dependence on her income. Saba knows the reality but she says: “They have become selfish but I can not do the same. I love my parents and I will sacrifice my whole life for them. A woman’s fate is always to serve her family. Therefore I do not find any difference between married working women and myself as a single working woman. They are serving their family as wives and mother and I am serving my family as a daughter. I was born as a ‘single child’ of my parents and will die as a ‘single member’ of the society”.

**CASE NO. 8**

Hina was born in a business family in a big U.P town. She was brought up and was given her primary and secondary education there. After completing her High School she came to Aligarh to join Aligarh Muslim University and obtained her M.A. and B.Ed. degrees from A.M.U. This forty one year old smart lady is presently teaching at a school at Aligarh.

Hina describes her family in these words: “I had two brothers and one sister. I was the youngest one. My father owned a laundry shop and a transport company and my brothers after graduation helped my
father in running his business. My elder sister was also a graduate while my mother was literate in Urdu and Arabic. All the members of our family were very religious and were very punctual in performing ‘Namaz’,(prayer) observing ‘Roza (fasting during the Holy month of Ramadhan) and indulging in other religious duties”

With regard to her educational and occupational goals she told the researcher that she did not have any occupational goals but she was interested in getting herself educated just to bring her prestige and respect in the society as an educated woman. She said “There was no need for me to be involved in gainful employment as I belonged to a very economically well off family. As I was engaged to my cousin since my childhood, I knew that his family was much superior to us and they would not allow me to take up gainful employment after marriage. So I did not have any interest to be employed. When I was doing my High School, my close friend told me that after High School she was planning to go to Aligarh Muslim University for further studies. Her father was an Aligarian (colloquial expression meaning a person who had studied at the Aligarh Muslim University). My friend told me how her father talked about the University and specially about hostel life. I was so inspired by her narration that I developed an interest in going to
Aligarh and enjoy hostel life. I expressed my desire to my father, and while he did not object, instructed me not to get myself involved in immoral or anti-social activities and to maintain the prestige of the family. I promised him to do so. And, thus, I along with my friend got admission in the Aligarh Muslim University. During my stay at Aligarh as a student I received several matrimonial proposals and some personal offers but I did not pay any attention to them keeping in view the fact that I was already engaged to my cousin. Since my childhood I was told that I had to share my life with him and as I grew up I became emotionally attached to him. I did not even think of any other boy as my life partner as our engagement lasted for about sixteen years. During my stay at my home after appearing for M.A. previous examination, some dispute over land and business related activities occurred between the two families (my parents and would be in-laws) and this dispute resulted in breaking off the engagement. The boy’s family made it clear that they are no longer interested in me and to my surprise, the boy did not say anything or raised criticism against his parents’ decision. This dropped a bombshell on me and my family and this incident brought about a drastic change in my attitude towards woman’s employment. I realised that a woman should not rely on men. She should be educated and qualified enough to lead an economically
independent life. Thus, I decided to remain unmarried and to be gainfully employed to lead my life independently. I did not want to be a burden on my brothers after parents' death. Therefore, I prepared for B.Ed. and obtained the degree and after sometime got the job in a school. I did not want to return to my home-town because of the painful memories associated with the place. I stayed in a rented house in Aligarh with my elder sister, who was also unmarried, and kept myself busy in my job and other literary activities. The memory of those painful moments led me to express my feelings through literary work”.

After getting a job, Hina refused many proposals which were sent for her. Her family pressurised her to get married arguing that people would think that there was something wrong with the family that both the sisters remained unmarried. Her elder sister had been unfortunate enough not to get any matrimonial proposals for her and consequently remained unmarried. Despite the strong pressure from her to get married, Hina did not change her decision to remain unmarried and took her sister to stay with her at Aligarh.

While talking about change in her life style after employment she said: “Yes! I notice change in my life style but not positive changes. I
have lost all interest in moving outside home for entertainment; interacting with people; visiting restaurants; and watching television. While before this particular incident happened I was very lively. Talking to friends on telephone and visiting their homes frequently; visiting cinema Halls and restaurants with friends; listening to romantic songs; buying dresses and shoes of latest fashion and design; and watching television were some of my hobbies and leisure time activities. But I have totally changed, my attitude towards life has changed. Whenever I think of myself I never find in me that young and lively girl”.

Hina feels satisfied with her profession as a teacher. But at her work place, she sometimes has to face a different kind of problem, Whenever she is late or is unable to do a particular work within time her married female colleague pass comment : ‘You are late or unable to do this work despite the fact that you are leading the life of a “single woman”. We may get relaxation in our duties as we have to assume different responsibilities at home relating to our husband and children. What is there for you to do at your home ?” Such comments hurt Hina a lot. She explained to the researcher : “I, too, have to do lots of work as, due to my single status, I have assumed the role of a man. There is a
clear cut division of labour in our small family. My sister stays at home so she is responsible for all household activities and I am responsible for all the works outside the home including earning the bread for my family”.

**CASE NO. 9**

Radha, aged thirty eight years, a doctor by profession, very sweet by nature, lives with her parents, younger brother and sister at Aligarh. Her father is a businessman and her mother is a teacher. Her brother is pursuing the Engineering course and her sister is working for a Bachelor’s degree in Science.

The profession of a doctor always attracted Radha since her childhood. “I always wanted to be a doctor. During my childhood days I liked this profession because of the white uniform which give the doctors a smart look”. She laughs and continues “But I now realise the role of this noble profession in serving the community and I like it because of the prestige and respect in the society associated with this profession. My parents’ wholehearted support helped me achieve my goal in life. And, now, as I am a medical practitioner, and I feel a deep sense of satisfaction. I worked hard for my educational and occupational pursuits. Those college days, My God! I do not remember
those days. Study, study and study! What else is there to remember except some joyous moments like welcome and farewell parties, college week and of course! frequent visits to canteen and restaurants? In comparison to those college days now I feel myself more free to do what I like to do during my leisure time. I am not expected to do any kind of household work. Our maid servant do the same. Painting, listening to music and reading magazines are my favourite hobbies. I do not notice any remarkable change or difference in my life style before or after taking up employment except that I have become economically independent and my income is many times more than the 'pocket money' given by my parents. I spend my income the way I like but I save most part of it in order to buy a car on my own. My economic independence has also given me the freedom to take decision regarding important matters of my life”. On question of marriage she told that she wanted to marry a medico friend whom she meet in the college. But the problem was that he was a Muslim. For them religion was no bar so they agreed to marry after completing their studies. But neither her parents nor boy’s parents agreed to their decision. The parents from both side were against inter-religious marriage. After a long struggle the boy got his parents convinced through emotional blackmailing but she could not press her parents too much. The boy offered her for a
court marriage but she did not agree. Perhaps because she was a girl and was very closely attached to her parents. She said: “I did not want to hurt my parent’s feeling as they love me too much. In this particular case they would have been selfish. I did not marry the person they did not like but I decided not to marry any other person and remained single”.

For Radha, education and marriage are important for a woman’s life but employment is essential to have an independent identity. Employment gives woman courage to be firm in their decision regarding important matters concerning their life. She believes that both married working women and single working women face some kind of problems. The difference is only in the kind of problems that they face. “Though marriage restricts the freedom even of employed women, yet it is essential for a woman’s life to lead a complete life” she concluded.

**Case No. 10**

Nida showed interest in the topic of the present research and provided the relevant information quite comfortably and willingly. This thirty six years old, well behaved, good looking and confident young career woman is presently working as Education Officer in a semi-
government institution. While taking interest in the problem under study she started the discussion by emphasizing the problems of single working women specially the problems faced by them at their work place. She described the problems faced by herself at her work place this way: “Working women specially single working women have to face several problems at their work place. In my office, being a single working women, I have to face several problems and these problems arise from the fact that I am the only woman in the whole institute and holding the post of an officer rank, so all my male colleagues except the one who is senior and superior to me have to work under my supervision. This subordinate position to a female colleague and to work under her supervision is not acceptable to them so they adopt different measures to get me in trouble and let me down. Since my father is a retired Professor and my brothers stay away from home most of the time for their educational and career pursuits, they think that there is no body to take care of me and get me out of trouble. On joining my duties when I was trying to adjust myself to the new environment they, sometimes, misguided me and did not extend any help or cooperation for the simple reason that they resented working under a 'woman'. It is strange that at my place of work I am in a superior position to men. Yet we find that invariably, in this male -
dominated society, men hold top positions and women work in subordinate position. My colleagues perhaps find it difficult to accept the reversal of positions”. Nida faces no other problems in the family or society as a single working woman except those at her work place.

While talking about her family and educational background, Nida told the researcher that she was born at Aligarh and stayed there throughout her academic and occupational pursuits. Her father is a retired Professor and mother is a housewife though socially active lady. Her younger sister and brothers are doing well with regard to their educational and occupational pursuit. Nida recalls: “To be very true, I was not a good student at primary and secondary levels as then I had no ambitions. I continued my studies under my family’s pressure up to the Intermediate level. It is only during my pursuit for Bachelor’s degree that I realised the importance of not only women’s education but also women’s employment perhaps because of my increasing interest in academic and extra-curricular activities and consequent achievements in these field”. She considers herself to be a responsible and mature person since her childhood. Therefore, she started thinking of her family’s future and that of her own, She soon realised that the only way to do something for her family and to lead a balanced life is to get herself highly educated and economically independent. But she did not
have any specific or definite occupational goals. She was rather confused. Her interest and emphasis shifted from the career of a lawyer to a news reader and finally to a teacher at a higher level. Her parents also wanted her to be a lecturer. Though she wanted to be a Lecturer she did not stick to this profession only. She kept options open as she just wanted to be career woman occupying a respectable and prestigious position in the society. That is why she joined her duties as an officer. She said “Before joining this duty, I worked at some other places also on temporary basis but my parents always wanted me to be a Lecturer. For them the profession of a Lecturer is the most prestigious occupation. They are not fully satisfied with my present job but I am satisfied with my job for the time being as I want to keep on doing something independently. But this is not the end. My ambition and plan for future is to be a ‘Boss’ anywhere be it a government organisation, business, or in a private institute etc. I want to be placed at the highest position in any organisation and to be the only one to be in command. At present I have been placed in a second position but I want to improve my position further”.

Nida believes that her parents' support and balanced relationship with people have played a very important role in providing her the present social position. She contributed her first six months salary to
her family at a time when her family needed her financial support. After that first financial crunch, she is now free to spend her salary freely. Since her student life she is operating an independent Bank account. At that time, however, her source of income was confined to her pocket money and scholarships. Now she does not have to ask her parents for money for her personal expenditure. She does not notice any remarkable change in her life style. She was allowed to move freely in the society even before her employed status. In her own words: "I have been socialised to lead a very balanced life so I did not notice any remarkable change in my life style after getting employed. I never liked cinema shows and nor did I like to eat out in restaurants frequently though sometimes I do visit there. I helped my mother in the kitchen before getting employed. I do the same after getting employed also. And, in fact, I do not have to do much as our servant is there to help my mother, sister and myself". The only change which I observe as a result of my employment is that my style of conversation has changed. I used to be a very polite and soft spoken person but at my work place I have to deal with such people that I have to adopt a very rude attitude and behaviour towards them".

As regards marriage, Nida said: "I consider marriage to be essential for one's life but only after one is well settled in his or her life. During my student life my family received several proposals for
me but I refused those matrimonial proposals keeping in view my career pursuit. I did not want, myself to be identified as ‘D/o (Daughter of)’ and ‘W/o (Wife of)’ throughout my life. I wanted my own independent identity. So, at that time, I preferred career over marriage. I believe that education, career and marriage are equally important for a woman’s life. I am now a well educated and well placed single working woman, capable and ready to assume all the responsibilities associated with married women. I would, therefore, like to be a married working woman in future”.

**CASE NO. 11**

Priya, the eldest child of her parents lives with her mother and two younger brothers. She is a good looking, smart and active young lady of thirty eight years of age. She assumed the responsibilities of her father to run the house after her father’s death. Her father was a businessman and mother is a housewife. After her father’s death nobody was there to take over her father’s business. Her mother is an illiterate lady. Her brothers and she herself were too young, at the time of their father’s death, Because of their inexperience they suffered a heavy loss and finally they had to sell off the whole property except their house. The money which they received by selling their property
including her father's shop of furnishing items was used by Priya in establishing a primary school.

Priya was born and studied at Aligarh. At the time of her father's death she was a graduate student. After Graduation she obtained the B.Ed. degree and started running a self-financed and self-managed primary school. Her brothers have also set up their import/export business after their graduation and are away from their home most of the time. Thus, Priya and her mother stay at their home together most of the time. Though Priya's brothers are busy with their business related activities yet whenever they stay at their home they not only help her in running the school but in doing household chores also.

Priya said: "I am playing the role of the head of the family in my family as I am the only person to take care of the whole family specially my mother. No decision in the family is taken without my approval or consultation. My brothers pay respect to me and acknowledge my role in their upbringing and educational pursuits. I am responsible for working outside home and my mother is responsible for household chores. My brothers do help my mother in doing household activities whenever they visit us. In fact, they are the perfect cook and prepare more tasty dishes as compared to my mother and myself. I do
not take much interest in household activities. My family, too, does not expect me to do the same. A large part of my day is spent in the school. Rest of the time is spent in reading magazines and watching television and buying goods for home”.

Priya’s father wanted her to be an I.A.S. officer and encouraged her for the same. With her father’s support Priya made up her mind to prepare for Civil Services Examination. But her father’s untimely death resulted in changing her career plans and she opted for an alternative occupation. Priya seemed very grieved while talking about her father’s death. She said: “My father always said that “I want to see Ms. Priya Sharma, I.A.S. written on your name plate”. But, unfortunately, her desire could not be fulfilled. But I am satisfied with my life as I got myself involved in a very noble profession shaping the future of the coming generation of the society. My mother and brothers are also satisfied with my job”.

The greatest change Priya observes in her life as a result of gainful employment is that she has become more confident and independent. She is free to spend her salary on her own. Initially a large part of her income was spent on her brother’s education and business and in running the house. But now her brothers also contribute
some part of their income to the family so Priya have started saving some money for her future life.

Priya said: “I observed some changes in my life style after taking up employment. During my student life I was a very simple girl and liked wearing simple cotton suits. But now, being the principal of the school, I have to appear to be quite mature and confident. I always wear Sari at my work place and outside home with simple jewel ornaments like gold necklace, gold bangles and earnings. And the most interesting thing to be noted is that people often get confused due to my dress style and ornaments. They consider me to be a married woman. Sometimes, to my embarrassment, parents of school children who have no idea of my marital status ask about my children and husband’s occupation. Depending on my mood I sometimes accept that I am a married woman. I do not understand as to how to explain them the reality”. The researcher also noticed that she was dressed up in a Sari, with gold ornaments. ‘Bindi’ and light make up and if anybody observes her one would certainly think that she is a married woman. Culturally and from the Indian perspective she appeared to be a married woman. One thing that clearly indicated her unmarried status was absence of ‘Sindur’ (red coloring used in the hair parting of married
Hindu women). She continued: “I do not understand as to why people think that only a married woman can wear gold ornaments. ‘Bindi’ and use cosmetics. I think that these things help in making me more confident. God has given me the money to buy and use all these things. Why is it necessary to first get married than use all these things? who knows when will he be getting married?”

Priya believes that her dietary habits, specially meal-time has changed due to her employment. She often has to miss her lunch if she is busy at school during her working hours. She does not face any problems in family or in society as a single working women except that people criticise her family members for not getting her married arguing that as they are economically dependent on her they are not interested in getting her married off. Priya justifies: “My mother and brothers do want to get me married as soon as possible. In fact, my mother’s health has greatly been affected by the problem of my delaying my age at marriage. But we have not been able to find out a person who can fulfil our expectations. And if we meet somebody of our choice, he does not find us up to his expectations that is the main problem”. She further adds: “And my problem is that like a normal woman I want to get married and due to my delaying age at marriage I am suffering from
depression because like a normal human being I do want a life partner in the form of a husband. But my mother’s ill health associated with my delaying age at marriage has enhanced my problems as it appears that as if I am a burden on her. But I can not marry just for the sake of my mother. I will get married to a person of my own choice and whose views and attitudes are similar to that of mine. You know! A young girl can easily mould herself in accordance with the wishes of her husband and in-laws but being a mature and independent woman how can I do the same?"

In Priya’s opinion, educated married working women enjoy their life to the fullest as compared to their uneducated, unmarried counterparts.

**CASE NO. 12**

Iram considers herself unfortunate to have some visible white spots on her face and hands. This condition of leukoderma has affected her life to a great extent. Now in her forties, this tall, slim and religious lady leads an economically independent life, working as an Office Assistant. Iram is youngest of her five sisters and one brother. She belongs to a small town where her father was a teacher in a primary school. Her mother was given religious education and was a simple
housewife. Iram received her primary education there. Her parents died when she was only thirteen years old. Her eldest brother who, by that time, was also working as a teacher in Aligarh took over the responsibility of taking care of her younger sisters and took them with him to Aligarh. After the marriage of the three younger sisters, he himself got married to a primary school teacher. Soon after his marriage one more sister got married. Now the search for getting a suitable match for Iram began but even before some proposals could be considered, she noticed a few white spots on her face. This was perhaps the beginning of her problems as over the years, the skin disease had spread all over. She had by now advanced in age as well. Her family members and even friends assumed that under these circumstances it would be doubly difficult for Iram to find a suitable matrimonial match. She too began to consider herself as a physically abnormal person. In her own words: "I was too depressed and became an introvert. I did not talk to anybody and confined myself to my room. Initially my family members were sympathetic and affectionate. Later, however, they became preoccupied with their own problems. "...This greatly affected my attitudes towards my own life, and I realised that I should no longer be dependent on others and must lead an independent life..." said Iram. And the only way to lead an independent life and keep
herself busy was to secure employment. She continued, "Thus I obtained a diploma in Office Assistantship and Secretariat Practices. Through contacts, I got the job of an office Assistant. My employment affected my life style both in positive and negative ways. I developed a sense of confidence and I became socially active. While working and interacting with my colleagues and other people in my office I got myself better exposed to the outside world. My employment not only diverted my attention from my physical problems but also attracted the attention of my family members towards me. My sister-in-law did no longer expected me to do the household work all alone. She often performed all the duties related to house work so that I could devote my time to my ten to five job. This concession came my way because a large part of my income was contributed to the family budget. My brother's children always asked me for their pocket money and other expenses. Earlier I had to ask my brother for a new dress and rarely did so but now I just can not count the number of dresses I have. Directly or indirectly, I am pressurised to contribute a definite amount of money to family expenses. And perhaps this is the only reason why my brother and sister-in-law refused the renewed matrimonial proposals that were sent for me. The proposals were sent because of my steady income and economic prosperity. The reasons why my brother and his
wife refused to consider the proposals are but obvious...they did not want to let go of the hen that was laying golden eggs. They, however put forth many justifications for refusing various proposals sent for me. And, needless to say, that this is how I remained unmarried." She sounded sad and listless. "But then this is life...(she continued) ... After my employment I felt socially more secure and my independent income compensated my physical weakness.”.

Iram has completely lost the hope of establishing herself in a home with a husband and children. She keeps herself busy with her office work and, more so than before, finds solace in performing religious duties.

She feels that married working women are more privileged as compared to single working women. She argued: “Married working women have to assume dual responsibilities of home and work place but they get emotional security and satisfaction through their husbands and children. When I compare myself to my sister-in-law, I find her to be more privileged than myself. Both of us work outside home and inside the home but she is more satisfied both emotionally and psychologically. Whereas I am still socially dependent on my brother despite the fact that I have an independent identity in society. Had I
been living with my husband and my own children I would have been
more satisfied with life. But my religious faith helps me overcome
depression and other psychological problems and, therefore, I thank
God for what he has given me and do not complain for what has not
been given to me”.

CASE NO. 13

Anu, thirty six, is the youngest of her parents four children –
Two daughters and two sons. Her father is a retired government officer
and mother is a housewife. Her mother worked for ten years as a
teacher but due to her ill health she had to leave the job and confine
herself to her home. Her elder married sister also lived and worked as
a teacher at Aligarh, but six months ago she died in childbirth. Anu’s
brothers stay away from home for their occupational pursuit. Thus,
now, Anu stays with her father and ailing mother and works as a
teacher.

Anu was born at Aligarh and studied in a christian school up to
10th standard. The years she spent in her school had a great impact on
her mind. She was influenced by the ‘nuns’ who dedicated their whole
life to serve the community and humanity. The influence was so great
that Anu also decided to dedicate her life to serve the society as a
teacher. She had grown up with this determination and after her elder sister's marriage, she told her parents about her decision to stay single and serve the community. Her parents and brother were aghast and tried to persuade her to marry. They argued that she could serve the society even after marriage. But she turned a deaf ear to their advice. And so after completing her studies she joined as a teacher in a school near her own locality. She spends larger part of her salary on helping poor people including poor students. Rest of the income she spends on her mother's medicine, nourishment etc.

She appeared to the researcher to be a very simple young lady dressed up in a very simple cotton suit with no fineries or make up. She said: "I never developed an interest for designer clothes, jewels or cosmetics and always want to lead a simple life. I just can not describe in words the kind of satisfaction I get in taking care of my ailing mother; helping the poor; and playing with little and cute children. Had I been a married working woman I would have become too selfish and would have confined myself to the care of my husband and children only. But being a single working woman I can spend my income on the needy people and can take care of a large number of children simultaneously. And this is the greatest change I feel in my life style
after taking up employment. Before taking up employment I was dependent on my father and he often pressurised me to get married. But after I got my job he became least interested in the matters relating to my marriage. But my elder sister’s death raised the same issue in my family once again. My sister’s in-laws and my family members want me to get married to my sister’s husband for the sake of my sister’s small children. They think that being the younger sister of their mother I can better take care of the children as compared to anyone else. They want to convince me by arguing that this would also become a means of social work and serving the society. But I know that once I get married I will lose my independence and will get myself involved in the problems associated with married life. That is why I am firm in my decision to remain unmarried and this is only because of my employed status that helps me to be assertive with regard to the decision regarding my life. And in this way I consider myself similar to men”.

Anu spends her leisure time in reading magazines and social work. She teaches the poor children of her locality in the evening and arranges books and stationery for them. Besides performing her duties at her school she spends lots of time in the service of her mother. Her maid servant is responsible for doing all the household work. She
considers education and employment to be very important for a woman's life. "I do not face any problems in the society as a single working woman. In fact people pay respect to me as a person who has dedicated her life for a noble cause" she concludes.

**CASE NO. 14**

Born at Lucknow in a well-to-do and highly educated family, Zeba now in her fifties, is a smart and soft spoken lady. She is a Professor by profession, but she herself does not consider teaching as her profession. It has always been fun for her to be a teacher. It is a pleasure and a hobby for her to teach.

Zeba's father was a Civil Servant. Her mother did M.D. in homeopathic medicine and practiced homeopathy at home. The whole family including her uncles, aunts, brothers, their children are highly educated and most of the members of her mother's family were teachers. Living in such an academic atmosphere encouraged and inspired Zeba to seek higher education. She studied in Lucknow, taught there for some time and then came to Aligarh on her appointment as a Lecturer. But this was not her first visit to Aligarh. Inspired by Pandit Nehru's call for more engineers to build a new India, she had come to Aligarh for obtaining a degree in Engineering. Unfortunately, due to
some health problems she had to go back to her home-town later she came to Aligarh as a teacher. To be a teacher has always been her aim of life. Her family members suggested other options, but did not force her in this regard. In her own words: “I was fully independent to select my career. My family members had different views. Some wanted me to go in for the medical profession or opt for the civil services, but by and large nobody opposed my decision, (even after I qualified the civil service written examination when I decided not to go for the interview nobody pressurised me to go for the same. My personal choice and desire was to become a teacher but I opted for the career of an Engineer because Jawahar Lal Nehru at that time said that the country needs engineers. I was much inspired by his speech and call for young engineers and I decided to be an engineer.... but, you know, due to some health problems I could not pursue the engineering program. Zeba was happy and excited after her appointment as lecturer. She had inadvertently entered the profession of her own choice.

After her father’s death her uncle was considered to be the head of the family whom she gave her first salary. She recalls: “I remember that when I got my first half month salary (she joined in the middle of the month) I gave it to my uncle. He smiled, took it and kept it with
him for two days then on the third day he doubled the amount and returned it to me. Afterwards I gave my subsequent salaries to my aunt for running the house, but she mostly spent it on me. I am now fully independent to spend my salary on my own”.

Zeba enjoys her profession to a very great extent. She acknowledges the role of her uncle in giving perfect guidance for teaching. Study, study and study are some of her leisure time activities and hobbies. She is most of the time busy in preparing her class lectures. But sometimes poor performance of students hurt her a lot. Yet, she still continues in her efforts in anticipation of their good performance in the future. She said: “To earn money is important for one’s livelihood and I do earn money through teaching but I do not need anything else. Teaching itself gives me all the pleasures of life”.

While talking about her household related activities she made it clear that she never learned how to cook nor was she expected to learn because of the large number of servants hovering in her parental home. Knitting was her hobby and she learned embroidery and other related skills as a Home Science student. Her mother, too, did not know how to cook. It is only after she came to stay in Aligarh and took her mother with her she had to cook because of the scarcity of good cooks. She
considers herself to be a “self-trained cook”. Thus her employment resulted in bringing about change in her life style this way.

After she became established in her place of work and began to make friends, she had to face several problems as a single working woman. People made scandals and she was criticised for wearing ‘bell bottoms’ – a dress which was not known to the Aligarh crowd, and also perhaps, because girls were prohibited from wearing clothes similar to that of men. The criticism did not stop there-- She was criticized for studying during late hours at her work place and for walking the lonely roads at night while returning home. As a ‘single’ woman her movement in her male colleagues' personal vehicle etc. fetched more critical remarks. “If I can travel in buses and trains with totally unknown persons sitting besides me what is wrong with travelling with a known person?” she questioned. Things later on got settled down. But she is now surprised when she observes that the same people who had criticized her, allow their daughters to do the same." ...perhaps times have changed and these modern forces of change have brought about drastic changes in the attitudes and behaviour of people...." she said.

As regards marriage she recalled that she was brought up in an environment which had given her full freedom to take every decision
regarding her own life. She said: "To remain unmarried was not my decision it was time's decision. I did not find anybody who could suit my expectations though neither religion nor caste was a bar".

She observes that married working women often suffer from role-conflict and spouses often hold one another responsible when matters go amiss. Her colleagues often say: "You do not know because you are single. We have lots of work to do at home". She feels that despite her single status she, too, has to assume the responsibilities of her home. She believes that education and a specific attitude towards life affects the social position of a woman in society to a greater extent.