PART - I

CHAPTER - I
CHAPTER - 1

1.1. Introduction.
1.3. Role of Women in Micro and Macro Aspects of Development.
1.4. Women in Economic Activities with Reference to Informal Sector.
1.5. Rationale.
1.6. Review of Literature.
1.7. Objectives.
1.8. Hypothesis.
1.9. Methodology.
1.10. Distribution of Chapters.
INTRODUCTION:

"Social science affirms that a women's place in society marks the level of civilization" - Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Mother nature has created the universe with equal opportunity for both men and women. Generosity bestowed upon two parts of Homo Sapiens speaks of her boundless benevolence, which is unfortunately been overshadowed by supremacy of patriarchy leaving no other alternative but practice of gender disparity in all aspects of life in the name of stereotyped role of women.

Artificially construed barriers have deprived the womenfolk to acquire knowledge and lead a life of humiliation with suppressed feeling of inferiority complex. Such injustice to particular gender over the centuries has caused damage to proper utilization of human-resource intensity of which is projected by United Nations and Human Development Report serving as a warning to underprivileged countries to rectify in current scenario in order to synchronize between physical and human resource, if benefits of economic development are to be realized specially after globalization. Women representing 66 percent of world's population and 70 percent of world's poor depict self-explanatory picture of harsh-truth that advancement of civilization always bypassed them, rather installing conviction in their minds that they are sub-human beings, withholding the view that right to live with dignity enshrined in "Human Rights" is a forgotten chapter for them.

Few decades back concept of underutilization of resources was limited to only "land" which was later on extended to "human-resource" giving worldwide impetuous to think in new horizon created by academicians engaged in "women-studies" from mid of 1970s. With gradual change in mindset of people "women-capital" is no more a foreign term in the jargon of economic dictionary. It is now widely accepted that underutilization of human-resources in the form of women-deprivation exposes the country about its inefficiency to utilize resources of all forms which can be corrected by increasing investment on human-resources if global challenges are to be counteracted qualitatively.

Women's economic subjugation is outcome of rigid distinction of sex roles that every society follows leading to women's exploitation in working places inspite of their sincerity, drudgery and long hours of working. Such pitiable conditions the women face in informal sector because of their in built deficiency, poor level of literacy, lack of expertise and poverty; they join the sector out of strong desire to survive in struggle for existence and growing sense of economic self-sufficiency with their very limited means of resources.

Existence of informal sector was not unknown to the modern world; the only difference is that its impact was realized only when ILO/UNDP mission put concentrated effort to study income employment scenario in Kenya (1972) followed by formal-informal dichotomy (1973) of Keith Hart.² Irrespective of economic status of country informal sector absorbs surplus

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labour force but its role is more significant in developing nations where majority of the people are poverty-stricken and illiterate.

In recent time global forum admits that poverty is being feminized because women are excluded from the ongoing technological revolution due to lack of education in them and as a result of this they get shelter in low paid jobs of informal sector making the sector more quantitative rather than qualitative in comparison to formal/organized sector. So women labour force throughout the world is now integral part of informal sector. The good mingle between women and informal sector opens up new vistas to study possibility of economic empowerment of women in the backdrop of women-emancipation. The rapid expansion of informal sector specially after New Economic Policy of India has created confusion like "egg-hen puzzle" among policy makers as with limited fund they seem to be confused in decision making "which is to improve first" - the informal sector or women capital in order to bring desired level of qualitative change both in informal sector and social sector simultaneously. Under such coverage of mistiness it seems relevant to study the complex situation in all the cities of India big or small, urban or rural to reach solution to knotty question so that women as tool of economic transformation are atleast given chance to bring qualitative change in overall economic scenario of the country, by which they will be able to ameliorate their social status and attain gender equality - the one of the cherished objectives of constitution.

It is to be admitted that large-scale participation of women-workers in informal sector is two-way traffic. If one can be regulated definitely it will bear positive effect on the other - making human resources more meaningful in the process of economic development of country.
1.1. Status of Women in Changing Scenario of Society:

Social status of a person in simple word means "position of the individual in his relationships with other individuals by virtue of which he derives respect and prestige and whereby he exerts influence it being known by the symbols or signs and actions of the respect tendered to him". Before penetrating into the subject matter the following quotation is drawn to highlight the status of women in the society.

"Our women have a very great part to play in the progress of our country as the mental and physical contact of women with life is much more lasting and comprehensive than that of men. For nothing was it said that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world". In the apron string of women is hidden the revolutionary energy which can establish paradise in this earth".

Dr. Rajendra Prasad

To start with, the term "women", seems to originate from the old English "Wifmannetymologically" meaning a wife or the wife division of the human race, the female of the species Homo etc, whereas dictionary meaning of status is relative importance, rank or relation to others.

Discussion on status of women in relation to men over the centuries remained fascinating, as no two scholars were ever cohesive in their opinion for which till date women remain focal point of attraction among anthropologists and social scientists.

1.1.1. Women in Indian Society:

The status of women in society should be studied with holistic approach taking into consideration the interaction that takes place in various aspects of life rather than emphasizing on mere unidimensional view while studying fluctuating trend in status of women, throughout history of development of women-studies. In Rig veda\(^7\) (composed in between 1500 and 900 B.C.) women enjoyed great respect and equal fights with their husbands; epic wars were fought to take avenge; the figure of "Ardhanarishwara"\(^8\) completes the circle of the then societal attitude towards women. But hence after there was declining trend due to change in socio-political scenario of the country. The great humiliation that women underwent for more than centuries was at last retrieved when social reformers with their broad vision realized the necessity to bring change in societal outlook to help women live in dignity and honour. To achieve their goal, the social reformers like Keshab Chandra Sen, Bankim Chandra Chattapadhyya, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Raja Rammohan Ray, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Mahatma Gandhi raised strong protest against the then existing system of polygamy, sati, child marriage, female illiteracy and advocated for remarriage of widows and monogamy.

Freedom movement of India is presently considered as beginning of new era of women emancipation as large number of women participated at the clarion call given by Gandhiji. During the post independence period women

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are considered as part of development process which is in tune of both Gandhiji and Vivekananda who believed that real power of India was vested in womenfolk.

The view was strengthened by global perception of "significance of women-studies" and "International women's year" consequent upon which "Towards Equality" (1974) came to limelight. While constitution has empowered women both politically and economically, it is medley Indian society, which has restricted mobility of women in the name of patriarchy reducing them to weaker section of human species, reflection of which in recent days is found in sex ratio, (female) literacy, nutrition and women employment, the combination of which only lowers down status of a country by way of publication of Human Development Report.

1.1.2. **Women in Global Scenario**:

Women's status throughout the world more or less is same; if in some cases there is improvement, in another way they suffer.

The French Revolution (1789), which had direct and indirect influences on both English Revolution (1688) and American Revolution (1776) failed to provide true "liberty, equality and fraternity" to men and women equally as distinction in education was openly made by clearly mentioning that education should be planned in such a way that it pleased men. In Scandinavian countries women had stronger position than the rest of the Western Europe, but in economic sphere specially in Sweden, economic discrimination was found. In both Federation of Russia and China women had to fight against oppression to improve their status, whereas in Africa, status

movement in large-scale. Gandiji held high ideals of marriage and motherhood but on the contrary opined that women should be treated as individuals in their own right with full potentialities for self-development and not merely treated as sex symbol.

Despite his natural respect for women, Gunner Myrdal while referring to socio-economic condition of under developed countries remarked that though Gandhiji was an "enlightened liberal", but on "status of women" he was "radical", rather than "liberal". Like Gandhiji Nehru viewed women as individuals and under influence of western education he wanted to give them equal status, equal opportunities and equal respect in a planned economy. He involved women like Sarojini Naidu, Harsa Mehta, Renuka Ray and others in the important task of constitution making. About women's right to property he was radical. Preamble to Constitution made it clear that there would not be no discrimination whatsoever on the ground of sex and this would bring socio-economic revolution in the form equal pay for equal work, just and humane working conditions and maternity relief to women. But it is unfortunate that makers of constitution who accepted the principle of equality found the logical consequences of equality inconvenient specially at the time of amendment of Hindu Code Bill in 1950. Oswal women who once showed their conservation with aid of ghunghat gradually showed deviation from traditionalism under changed political and economic situation that took place in 1948 when state of Mewar Merged with Union of Independent India. The change in attitude towards female education enabled girls to go to colleges, and became professionals, ghunghat became shorter, early marriage lost its significance, males became more interested in qualifying themselves to
survive in competitive world as a result of which they preferred trained girls rather than traditional. The social revolution among Oswal women establishes the fact that process of women-emancipation can be accelerated when their community stands by them and rights are accepted by larger section. In turn they gain confidence and strength to take advantage of modern world.

"Women her problems and her achievements" ed. by Shintri et. al (1977) almost in like manner admits that theoretically battle for women's equality is won, but in practice it is a myth. Only blanket coverage is given to the term "equality" rather than showing sincerity in proper translation in all spheres of life. Because of social and economic disparity only microscopic number of women could attain high status in society while majority of them remained far behind; unless conceptual horizon is extended to include women as "equal partners" nothing is going to change status of women. In changing social scenario women are trying to improve their status that experienced deterioration during post Vedic period, but significant achievement could not be achieved as level of technological development is not same between men and women, resulting into fall in female workforce, for which panacea lies in strict implementation of laws.

Women's development (1978) while discussing relative issues affecting status of women simultaneously laments that women have lagged behind inspite of constitutional guarantee as they are to live within the given network of social system which ultimately curtails their freedom to have better alternative life-style. Unless women are involved in the process of development, social and economic emancipation for them will remain distant dream.
Enlightened minds are always in favour of women's "right to property" reflection of which is found in Indian Constitution in order to realize "equal status to women". How "right to property" can raise status of women is discussed with reference to "The effects of the Chinese revolution" embodied in edited volume of Harris and McNamara (1984). The land reform system gave Chinese women right to property which further enabled them to fight for equal rights which is yet to be achieved in all aspects.

Since there exists vast literature on role and status of women, interpretation seems to vary according to place and time, keeping theme more or less same. As such Das (1962), Shakuntala Devi (1999) Chaurasia (1992), Baruah (1992), Barooah (1993), Reich (1908), Rege(1938), Desai and Patel (1985) Schatt (1997), Azim and Zaman(1994) Pujol (1992), Mehta (1982) and etc observe that women were never given free chance to enjoy their lives as a result of which they were placed in socially disadvantageous position inspite of potentialities to record their names in history in different ways.

Total women emancipation can be realized when changed social set up help women-capital to flourish and judiciously engage them in economic activities without gender disparity. Since women except in few cases are treated inferior to men, they occupy lower position in employment hierarchy reflecting their negative aspect of qualification. As such it is found that women with poor quality of human resources are mostly absorbed by lower rung of the informal sector without showing much improvement in their socio-economic aspect.

Over the ages, reproductive function of women is considered to be prime function of womenfolk but how productive capacity of women can be
increased by restricting reproductive function with aid of education is shown by Dreze and Sen (1995, 1996). Sen has given due recognition to gender issues/women while discussing economic issues from different angles (1989, 1999, 1993) in order to emphasize that women play significant role in economic process but unfortunately they became prey to economic-crisis because of their vulnerability. As such to bring change in quality of life of people particularly in women development of human resource is of paramount importance which is rightly pointed out by Shrivastava (2000), Batra and Dangwal (2000), Arya and Tandon (1998) and Michael (1999). Different books available on economic development and planning have also discussed relevancy of human resources elaborately along with pinpointing how Indian planning has bypassed women.

Informal sector, which gained prominence in developing countries, in 1972, because of ILO/UNDP Mission that was carried out to Kenya and Ghana to make sample investigation about employment scenario with reference to developing nations has suitably proved to be best alternative to formal sector where employment opportunities are limited. Subsequently other Missions were also sent with same purpose and it noticed that unskilled, migrants, and under qualified human resources are absorbed by informal sector as it provides opportunity for easy entry. On the other hand scholars like Hart (1973), Sethuraman (1976, 1981), Lubell (1974, 1978), Chickering and Salahdine (1991), Hernando de Soto (1987) Papola (1980), Joshi and Joshi (1976), Living stone (1981) etc have immensely contributed in the literature on informal sector. In the same way different studies have established good linkages between formal and informal sectors.
The emergence of urban informal sector has encouraged rural-urban migration as observed by Todaro (1997), Mitra (1994) and many others. Woman either as "single woman" or as economic partner of spouse joins this sector in order to overcome economic hardship. Ultimately women face extended form of gender disparity in informal labour market making them further victimized of existing social structure. Their both way suffering is projected through different sample studies carried out by Banerjee (1985), Tripathy (1996), Chandola (1995), Mathur (19840, Panda (1999), Papola and Sharma (1999), David and Loganathan (1993), Manohar (1994), Arputhamurthy (1990) and many others. It is pitiable to note that modernization has failed to bring change in working condition of women, as women till now work in traditional way carry out domestic chores and at working places they are engaged as unskilled workers. This reflects that how badly they are technologically backward (Manushi). Thus the document "Towards Equality" (1974), which rightly seeks to secure fundamental freedoms of women on an equal basis with men in the spheres of political, economic, social, civil and culture is a milestone in the history of women emancipation in India.

1.7. Objectives:

The primary objective of the study is to investigate the status of women workers in the informal sector. In this connection the objectives may be laid down as follows:

1. To investigate causes of concentration of women-workers in informal sector.
2. To investigate reasons behind differences in level of earning among workers of informal sector.
3. To investigate problems of women-workers in informal sector.
4. To investigate professional relationship between employer and women workers who equally participate in economic activities of informal sector.
5. To investigate sources of women labour forces in urban informal sector of greater Guwahati and their possible contribution towards human-capital.

1.8. Hypothesis:

It is intended to test the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant wage-difference among workers of informal sector in greater Guwahati.
2. There is no significant relationship between level of earning and number of children born to women workers of informal sector.
3. There is no significant relationship between literacy and income that determines quality of life of women workers in the informal sector.
4. There exists welfare scheme for benefits of women workers of informal sector.
5. There is economic empowerment among women workers of informal sector of greater Guwahati.
1.9. **Limitations of Study and Methodology**

To study socio-economic condition of women workers of informal sector of greater Guwahati an empirical investigation is carried out on the basis of primary and secondary sources of information. But during the field survey the researcher is confronted with following limitations while doing field work in connection with her Ph. D. work:

i) In some cases the sample-size found to be reluctant to part with information regarding salary and other amenities provided by sample units.

ii) It is felt that the self-employed and petty traders are not forthcoming with data relating to income and saving according to expectation of investigator.

iii) In case of construction and brick-kiln workers, the female workers are found to be guarded by male co-workers or even by supervisors for which they are not in comfortable position to express their minds freely.

iv) In case of ARTFED workers, everyone is found eager to speak about their respective problems but only few are given scope to talk to investigator while others are kept busy on looms by the supervisor.

v) Only few selected factory workers are made available to be interviewed in presence of supervisor.

1.9.1. **Methodology**

To collect data both primary and secondary sources of information are used. The data are of two types - 1) Primary data and 2) Secondary data which are discussed below.
Primary Data:

Primary data are collected by using tools like "Structured schedule", "Personal-interview" and "Observation" providing scope to study sample-size closely. The selection of tools are so made as they facilitate to know the universe deeply. Since informal sector represents heterogeneity both in terms of workers and economic activities, "Stratified sampling" method is used so that:

a) There exists great homogeneity as far as possible within each stratum.

b) As it marked a difference as possible between the strata.

Keeping in mind the purpose of field-survey, "Socio-economic status scale" (urban) is used rather than simple "Sociometric scale".

People in general maintain low profile about personal problems relating to family life, income and saving position. To get such information, tool of "Observation" as another technique to study sample-size is used during the luncheon time. The time in this regard is so selected as everyone casually talks about their personal problems in friendly manner. Moreover to have better interaction with the sample-size "Photography" is used to have positive impact.

Secondary Data:

In this case attempt is made to collect data both for national and state levels. While there is no dearth of information for national level, in case of state level very limited information is available as the very "Concept is virgin".

The secondary sources of information are official publications journals, magazines, paper-clippings, websites, seminar papers and few unpublished works.

While at state level, information is collected from National sample service Organization (NSSO), Directorate of Economics and Statistics (DES), office of Labour Commission, Department of Planning, Labour and Employment Department, Labour (RC) Brnach. North Eastern Development Finance Corporation (NEDFi). District Employment Exchange, District Industrial centre; at national level different libraries are utilized.

1.9.2. Selection of Sample Units:

The selections of sample-units are made in such a way where women-workers are visible in large number; accordingly following units are identified:

1. Weaving (handloom).
2. Factory.
3. Construction site.
5. Petty trading.
6. Others (domestic helpers and scavengers).
8. Self-employment.
1.9.3. **Sample-Size**

Since weaving, next to agriculture, is backbone of state-economy, highest number of sample-size is collected from among handloom weavers. Prior to survey no exact figure for sample-size is fixed, but it is not unjustified to decide that raw data should not be less than 150. Accordingly 132 (after scanning) are women-workers and 27 are male workers (after scanning). During the process of investigation two child-workers from construction site and three government women-employees working along with casual workers under same roof of ARTFED are also included. These all are side views to give actual picture of informal sector. The spectrum of urban informal sector of greater Guwahati is presented in chapter - V.

1.9.4. **Variables**

The end object of study is to see how far women-workers of informal sector are in position to contribute towards growth of human capital. To realize this goal it is thus necessary to study independent variables first, which in turn will affect quality of dependent variable i.e. quality of women-workers. The selection of variables are made in such a way that if the quality of women-workers i.e. women-capital is found to be dissatisfactory, then corrective measures are to be taken so that they can play better role in bringing total change in quality of human resources.

While designing the structured schedule, the variables are given due weightage in consultation with supervisor and few like-minded academicians. The independent variables include following characteristics:

a) **Background variables**: Age, sex, level of literacy size of family, original settlement (migration or not), husband’s status and income, family background etc.
b) **Living condition variables**: Condition of dwelling houses, civic amenities (water, electricity and health) educational facilities for children, consumption pattern, saving pattern etc.

c) **General awareness variables**: It includes consciousness about family planning, existence of voluntary organizations, financial institutions, legal remedies, societal set up, and etc.

d) **Attitude towards self-development**: It is selected to ascertain their self-attitude. "It is always aspiration for better life that helps one to undergo training, educational facilities and etc."

e) **Work-related variables**: Working places always influence workers in bringing change in outlook of person, at whatever level he or she works. As such, working hours, working condition, remuneration, fringe benefits, work-experience, attitude of co-workers, employers and job satisfaction are studied under this heading.

f) **Need variables**: To know reasons behind joining job-market these variables are selected. The need may be economic, social and intellectual satisfaction.

The success of dependent variable depends on satisfactory performance of independent variables, and to determine how much (they) the women-workers are qualitative "five-point" scale is further used to know their relative position in the sample-size. The impact of independent and dependent variables can be known only after processing of raw data.

1.9.5. **Data Analysis**:

Once data are collected, it needed interpretation to realize objectives for which some more statistical tools are used for analytical