Introduction

The issue of women's development has become an important concern for planners and policy makers today. Although, the earlier paradigm on women in development generated a large body of information about their contributions, actual as well as potential, and their problems and needs within the changing socio-cultural milieu. It has also brought home the recognition that this type of development process has heightened the differences between women and men from different strata and therefore, women have to be included more centrally within the established paradigms. Studies on gender issues point out that women need a variety of efforts to be able to bridge the gender gap such as involving them in the economic and political processes, breaking their isolation, and forging a sense of solidarity and self-reliance among them (Chaurasia, 1992; Kalbagh 1992a; 1992b; Kishwar and Ruth, 1991; Somjee, 1989; Dayal, 1987; Verma, 1987; Maithreyi, 1986; Caplan, 1985; Patel, 1982; Young, 1982).

Social planners today aim at the development of Indian society largely by involving women in the socio-political activities. The Sixth Five Year Plan proved a landmark in accepting the importance of women as economic actors and the subsequent plans were made to bring them into the mainstream.
of the developmental process. Its participatory approach emphasizes the concerted and sustained efforts to improve the socio-economic status of women. Thus, considerable interest has been generated in recent years on the issue of women's development. This has given rise to a multitude of women specific projects and programmes both governmental and non-governmental and at local and national levels whose main aim is to narrow gender inequalities and put women at the vanguard of social change.

During the last two decades (1975-95), the Government of India has formulated a number of development programmes for women's overall development in general and economic empowerment in particular. Literacy and education, legal and political rights and health were taken as the instruments for removing existing disabilities of women and involving them in the overall development process. Training, credit and infrastructural facilities are some of the main concerns of the planners. Such as training of Rural Youth through Self Employment, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA), Support to Training-cum-Employment Programme (STEP), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and National Rural Employment Programme (NREP). The underlying philosophy is that through these schemes women can gain some power and improve their position. Women's economic power means degrees of control over key resources: income, property and other
means of production. In other words, neither mere work in economic activities nor even ownership of economic resources is enough if the person does not control them. Thus, by launching various projects, women's economic empowerment is being sought by equipping them with employable skills and providing them loan to start various economic activities. The Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) is an initiative to empower women by raising their economic status. It aims at enabling women to gain control over their resources by promoting savings among them. A scheme called Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (National Women's Fund) was also set-up with the objective of developing a national network of credit services in the informal sector to generate micro enterprises. Thus, the above analysis shows that there has been a shift in the planning process that is, it started from welfare to developmental approach and now to empowerment. However, the basic agenda for all these perspectives was women's development. In the present scenario development is a matter of conviction. It is seen as the creation of those essential conditions by which every human being can live with dignity and autonomy and be assured of the basic means to fulfil their material and non material requirements. As distinct from growth, which is mainly concerned with the quantitative aspects of material production, development means development of human beings with an emphasis on quality of life. The human development
index, 1993 shows that women are the largest excluded group. Though they form half the adult population, and often contribute much more than their share to society inside and outside the home, they are frequently excluded from positions of power (Human Development Report, United Nations Development Programme, 1993). Women continue to be the victims of inequality and discrimination. Blumberg (1984) says that the level of gender inequality may and probably often does vary by class or other social stratification variables. One of the objectives of development is to empower women, to strengthen their capacities, and to bring improvements in their status within the existing hierarchical structures and also to become a means of socio economic and political change.

The above brief analysis of the public sector planning process shows a constant shift in strategy throughout the planning process. Before the Sixth Five Year Plan, the assumption was that the benefits of development would flow automatically to women and therefore, a separate consideration to their development was not necessary. The net result was that women in the earlier development plans found a place primarily as passive beneficiaries of welfare programmes rather than active participants. With the result, development failed to bring any significant change for majority of the women. It was only when the 'gender perspective' was
incorporated in the development policy that gender sensitive programmes and projects were launched for their development. Women's education, health, training, income-generation and credit programmes were given utmost importance. Nevertheless the pace of change remained slow. The main reasons identified for the slow progress of these programmes were the bureaucratization of programmes and lack of commitment in implementing them. Besides, there were many other drawbacks at the policy and planning level. Rakowski (1991:149) studied the impact of policy and planning on women's development. She found that patriarchal ideology was firmly rooted in the less developed societies and it affected their developmental policies in a significant way. It resulted in "underdevelopment of women" and often was an obstacle in their and their children's well-being. Women's access to knowledge and tools of development was severely restricted and male authority was promoted in the conception of the "modern family". Women were left to perform the "backstage tasks" or subsistence activities such as employment in the small scale "informal sector" of the economy. Under such circumstances the planners' expectations become self-fulfilling prophecies as women find their choices constrained by the options permitted them.

In fact, gender inequality is widespread and the institutions in which it is embedded have a long and complex
history. Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974) say "everywhere we find that women are excluded from certain crucial economic and political activities, and their roles as wives and mothers are associated with fewer powers and prerogatives than are the roles of men". Wide inequalities persist in economic structures and access to resources. Policies meant for women's development such as education, health, income generation, training and credit have remained gender biased. The inability to get credit is one of the contributing factors in disadvantaging women (Howarth, R. 1992:32; and Chapman, J.R. 1976:265). Besides, the structural adjustment programmes under the liberalised market further contribute towards the marginalisation of women.

Thus, given the failure of the public sector to cope with women's development programmes, new strategies emphasized the shift towards the involvement of voluntary sector. Voluntarism as a form of organisational effort has been suggested to complement government efforts since it is seen as a de-bureaucratizing influence on areas of social action where bureaucracy is not very suitable (Bhattacharya, 1988). It is also felt that governmental machinery alone is not in a position to handle the gigantic tasks that lay ahead. This alternative approach emphasizes that women through voluntary organisations help themselves to become the greatest asset towards meaningful development. Exposing the creativity of
the women and mobilizing their potential are considered to be the means as well as the end of development. Under the prevailing circumstances, the voluntary sector can play an important role in achieving the objective of women's development. The voluntary sector has an advantage over the non-governmental sector as it operates with greater flexibility and bases its activities on the felt needs of the people. The unique strength of the voluntary sector lies in its ability to pressurize the government and yet not succumb to it and lose its own identity. Its role is that of a lobbyist vis-a-vis the government and the people. Considering the magnitude of the problems faced by women, the government has felt the need to associate voluntary agencies in its various programmes aimed at women's development. The thrust of these programmes is towards developing women's potential and their productive participation in development. Thus, voluntary organisations provide the essential variable in the nation's attempt to integrate women in development (NPPW 1988: 185-87). They also play a positive role in creating awareness of their potential and leadership through their mobilization. The growing importance of non-governmental organisations could be seen in their emphasis on providing micro-credit to poor women. It is thought that access to credit can strengthen capabilities of poor women.

The present study, therefore, makes an attempt to study
voluntary associations of women that have been organised mainly for the purpose of savings and micro credit facilities for the members. These associations have been termed as Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) by social anthropologists such as Shirley Ardener and Sandra Burman (1995). These associations are commonly found in the rural and urban areas and fulfil the contingency needs of poor women apart from providing access to resources and social support to the members. These associations are informal in nature and members make regular contributions to a prefixed lump sum fund which is distributed among the contributors by rotation. A peculiar feature of these associations is that the amount of total savings is small and the interval between each instalment is also small. They provide access to accumulated capital through informal channels and help generate savings among those sections of society that have been left out of the organised sector (Sethi, 1995:176).

Review of Literature

Many studies have been made by social scientists from various disciplines in India and abroad on various aspects of life, activities, contributions of women in the development process. These studies point out that Rotating Savings and Credit Associations play an active role in women's development, however, they have failed to attract significant
attention. A few isolated attempts have been made since the 90's to study these associations. A review of all such literature will provide an insight into the nature, depth and perspectives of these studies and the issues that have been discussed.

Although the publications of Geertz (1962) and Ardener (1964) appeared nearly three decades ago, their studies on Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) are still unique works in the literature, and are much quoted. The publication by Geertz contains one of the few probably the earliest descriptions of ROSCAs. He conducted his study in a small town in Indonesia known as Java. In his article, "The Rotating Credit Associations: A 'Middle Rung' in Development", Geertz says that ROSCAs are 'a product of a shift from a traditionalistic agrarian society to an increasingly fluid commercial one' in the case of underdeveloped nations. Further, he believes that this process involves a problematic shifting of "the whole framework of peasants. From one emphasizing particularistic, diffuse, affective, and ascriptive ties between individuals, to one emphasizing-within economic contexts-universalistic, affectively neutral, and achieved ties between them. He describes ROSCAs as a link between the largely unmonetized economy of the past and the largely monetized economy of the future."

Geertz also tried to analyse the rise and evolution of
ROSCAs from the general framework of social change. He conceives these institutions as 'middle rungs' between traditional and more modern forms of social organisation. He also considers them as mechanisms for educating the peasants to become traders, not merely in the narrow occupational sense, but within the broad cultural contours. Geertz's notion of peasants' learning to be traders, even in this broadest sense, has not been accepted by other scholars. The critics argue that in some communities, associations are confined to non trading wage earning classes also. They find it hard to accept that increasing amounts of interweaving of international, national and local economies provides the momentum for the modernization process which reduces all economies into different phases of one and the same development plan. Yet Geertz treats whole countries and provinces as homogenous economic units including ROSCAs despite varying degrees of complexity. Geertz's evolutionist model does not take into account the possibility of very different types of ROSCAs co-existing within the same place or region. Further, Geertz considers the formation of ROSCAs as 'irrational' which has to be replaced by banks, co-operatives and other rational credit institutions. His critics such as Kurtz (1973:55-6), point out explicitly negative attitudes of the poor towards financial institutions such as banks and loan companies. Members of these groups found that banks were
unfriendly or demanding, or placed restrictions on loans which the "Cundina" did not. Williams and Johnston (1983); Prabowo, (1989) find little evidence of ROSCAs that have transformed themselves into non-rotating savings and credit associations. Geertz also fails to explain why ROSCAs became popular in one community while they were less popular in others. Moreover, he studied only the "economic" aspects of ROSCAs and ignored their social significance.

The second great attempt, on the study of ROSCAs was made by Shirley Ardener in 1964. Her study "The Comparative Study of Rotating Credit Associations" can be termed as a classic survey of ROSCAs. Her work extends the knowledge base of ROSCAs and provides a critique of Geertz's work whereas Geertz uses a deductive approach and takes ROSCAs as an illustration of the process of modernization. Ardener emphasizes the inductive approach and develops a few research questions on the basis of her observations. Ardener is not convinced of the evolutionist model of Geertz, and points to exceptions and contradictory developments in it. On the basis of her systematic study she challenges Geertz's hypothesis on ROSCAs and considers them a social insurance for the contingency needs of the members. Therefore, even the presence of formal financial institutions in relatively developed societies has not obliterated these traditional institutions. They continue despite their 'unbusinesslike nature,' and do
not deter members from preferring to wait till the last rotation. She emphasizes on the social and moral sanctions that make these institutions stable and reliable. Her study focuses on the origin, structure, and the economic and social significance of ROSCAs.

In a recent publication titled "MONEY-GO-ROUNDS: The Importance of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations for Women" (1995), Archer and Burman put together a wide variety of empirical studies that look into the reasons for the widespread prevalence of ROSCAs. It provides disaggregation of the material by gender, and looks at ROSCAs as instruments for the empowerment of women.

Another anthropological study of ROSCAs was also made in 1964 by Raymond Firth. In his study entitled, "Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies: A Viewpoint from Economic Anthropology," he looks at the economic system as part of the overall system of social relationships and believes that they can be understood only in the context of social, political, ritual, moral and even aesthetic contexts. According to him, the most significant practical problem of peasant economies is their level of income and capital operations. Peasants, in order to sort out their credit problems develop temporary loan clubs in Asian and African societies. These loan clubs are sources of credit financing which provide security and savings. They provide alternative
M.G. Swift in his article on "Capital, Saving and Credit in a Malay Peasant Economy" (1964) says that the nature of occupation, income level and marital status of the people determine their methods and habits of savings. He describes the temporary loan associations of Malay peasants known as "kutu" as a source of saving for those who survive at the subsistence level, the mode of operation of these associations is that a number of villagers agree to pay a fixed sum at regular intervals into a common pool which is taken by each contributor by turn. If a breakdown occurs due to default, it is partly due to the peasant perennial difficulty to meet a regular cash obligation and partly due to their attitude towards debt. Swift further found that those who were earning regular income from rubber industry, were able to save. And the savings were possible because of "kutu" or hire purchase method which was popular among the unmarried youth. He also found a close relationship between the cropping pattern, wage income and savings.

In his article, "Capital, Saving and Credit among Mauritian Indians" 1964, Burton Benedict attempts to examine the network of credit relationships of Indo-Mauritians. He obtained information from shopkeepers, wholesalers, businessmen and government officials and found various kinds of credit systems among the Indo-Mauritians such as co-
operative credit societies, middlemen, and roulement. The roulement a kind of capital investment makes the return of capital secure. He also found the villagers using the chit system to fulfil their needs of cash. Friends and neighbours pool and 'cycle' the fund as a co-operative arrangement.

Recent anthropological contributions on ROSCAs have been made by Jane Khatib-Chahidi and Nici Nelson (1995). Chahidi conducted a study in Northern Cyprus. She said that the formation of ROSCAs can be seen as a reaction to the weakening of social bonds within the extended family in favour of extra-familial links with friends, neighbours and work colleagues. Gold coins offered as a gift to the prize-winner, gave women some individual security and financial independence from their husbands. Women who join these groups usually belong to middle income groups and were working though housewives too have joined them. The popularity of ROSCAs could be assessed from the fact that even bank employees had joined them.

Nici Nelson (1995) has conducted a study in Nairobi. In her study, "The Kiambu Group: A Successful Women's ROSCA in Mathare Valley" Nelson studied the economic and social importance of ROSCAs. She describes ROSCAs as small scale capital forming groups that provide a measure of security and credit on a very small scale. Citing an example of Mathare Valley, she explains how ROSCAs got expanded and consolidated
into an investment co-operative. In this way they assisted a shift from a more informal sector of economy to the more complicated formal sector.

Edgar Fernando (1987) has conducted a study in Sri Lanka and found that an indigenous saving institution locally known "cheetu" is still quite popular among the villagers, inspite of the establishment of formal banking institutions. It was popular because of its informality, flexibility and adaptive potential in generating both savings and credit. It could help poor people to get rid of their chronic dependency on moneylenders and traders because indebtedness is one of the major reasons of their prevailing poverty, apathy and sense of hopelessness. Women played the key role in these institutions persuading their friends to lay by some part of their earnings for an emergency.

A recent study conducted by Bortei-Doku and Aryeetey (1995) in Ghana shows how ROSCAs could help to meet the cash needs of rural women traders and farmers who have fewer opportunities for securing financial savings than their urban colleagues. This study is based on fieldwork observations of 1000 women. It shows that inspite of thirty years of formal banking in Ghana, informal savings and credit facilities continue to dominate the market and account for 55 per cent of the total money supply in the country.

Some studies such as those of Light and Deng and
Srinivasan (1995) point out that ROSCAs are a great source of help to the marginal populations such as women and ethnic groups. These studies reveal that obtaining loan capital was an obstacle in small business ventures especially for immigrants, ethnic minorities and entrepreneurs who lack credit ratings and collateral security. They help to circumvent slow, unfriendly and bureaucratic channels such as banks and insurance companies. They represent cultural resources that support the consumption, home-purchase and commercial needs of groups endowed with its tradition. They also point out that the use of ROSCAs was more frequent among entrepreneurs.

Srinivasan (1995) conducted a study of Asian shopkeepers and restaurant owners in Oxford. Her study shows that culturally specific economic institutions continue to flourish among Asian migrants especially among women in Oxford. They flourish within close friendships and social networks based on mutual trust and their continuity indicates ethnic solidarity among the migrant communities. National boundaries do not appear to be crucial in their formation.

Brink and Chavas (1997) in "The Micro-economics of an Indigenous African Institute" mention that ROSCAs enable members to undertake personal lumpy investment projects and provide a solution to the economic problem of indivisible goods within certain bounds. Analysing the difference, these
scholars say that urban ROSCAs rely less on the sanctioning mechanisms of the kinship based social structure. Rather, members directly and forcefully seize property of defaulting members. They were not in favour of the inclusion of ROSCAs in development projects because they believe that government intervention in the credit sector has its own limitations; such as informational problems and the lack of incentives for government agents to monitor and enforce credit transactions. The government is typically not part of this "moral economy" and is often unable to enforce loan repayment rather direct government intervention would increase default rates. The article gives two important suggestions. One, the need to develop a legal framework for ROSCAs to improve the recovery of loans, but adds that the ultimate decision will depend on the explicit demands of the associational members. Two, the need to establish linkages between ROSCAs and commercial banks. This will raise domestic savings and the potential for an increase in clientele from those sections of the population that are considered a credit risk.

Jean-Philippe Platteau in "Mutual Insurance as an Elusive Concept in Traditional Rural Communities" (1997) says that during the last two decades, scholars have paid increasing attention to informal risk sharing arrangements as a privileged way through which traditional rural communities achieve a significant degree of protection against income
fluctuations and other hazards beyond their control. In his article, however, he argues that when they enter into such arrangements members are guided by a principle of balanced reciprocity rather than by a true logic of mutual insurance. None the less, traditional agrarian societies have proved their ability to develop a restricted range of sustainable forms of mutual insurance.

Studies of ROSCAs in the Indian sub-continent are few and mostly conducted by the economists. Most of these studies, therefore, highlight the pure economic dimensions of ROSCAs. The first well researched study within this category was done by V. Krishnan in 1954 in the Tambraparni area of Tirunveli district of the erstwhile state of Madras. In his Ph.D. thesis, 'The Tambraparni Ryot', Krishnan focuses on the economic aspects of some commonly found indigenous institutions of credit and points out their base among the lower strata of population. His study shows that apart from the borrowing and savings aspect, these associations developed a sound financial basis for the use of initial capital for starting entrepreneurial activities.

H.L. Chawla et.al. 1962 in their study (1962) describe the origin, spatial distribution and methods of functioning of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs). Their study reveals that ROSCAs were called 'Kametis' in India and had been started by women at about the turn of the century and are
commonly found today. The more formal type of these associations were known as 'Chit Fund Groups' that were popular in Madras and to some extent in Travancore and Kochin from where they spread northwards.

C.P. Somanathan Nayar (1973) in his book, "Chit Finance: An Exploratory Study of Chit Funds", has come out with some important findings. His study was conducted in South India, where this indigenous institution is known as "chitty". The author has analysed ROSCAs from the pure economic point of view. He observes that the basic principle of these associations is accumulation of savings. An element of self imposed obligation that motivates the subscriber to save and simultaneously helps the traders to get loans when there is an intense need of it. He considers ROSCAs as institutional alternatives to moneylenders. According to him the emergence of daily or weekly chitty has proved a great help to the small traders and petty vendors. The greater importance of this association can be assessed from the fact that many banks in the south have not only started patronising chitties but have also begun to thrive on them.

K.Dinkar Rao (1994) in his article, "Self Help Groups and Credit", says that the culture of self-help is evolved as a strategy by the poor for survival. These self help groups are the outcome of basic instinct to save for a rainy day, and are also a response to the exploitative practices of
moneylenders. Their advantage over formal credit institutions lie in (i) accessibility (ii) flexibility and (iii) lower transaction costs. Mutual interface and responsive interaction satisfies the need for self-help. He points out that thrift is more common to women than men, therefore, these are women's groups. Self-help today has emerged as a new paradigm for combating rural poverty and self-help promotion is the main orientation of the non governmental organisations for creating the capacity of the rural poor for reaching out to such agencies as they are willing to work with and which can provide them with additional productive resources and for increasing their bargaining power to an extent that formal agencies can not.

Bhole and Bhavani (1995) in "Restructuring Rural Credit System: Issues And An Alternative", highlight the causes for the failure of the rural credit system and to resolve the problem quickly, they have introduced a model of an alternative decentralised rural credit system (DRCS). They also believe that NGOs can play a significant role in this regard. And that the failure of the formal credit delivery system has, in recent times, led to the formation of self-help groups which are democratically formed by persons of the same locality. In this direct link model (DLM), banks are linked up with self help groups and non governmental organisations. They further said that self help is a way of life rather than
a means, instrument, strategy of "the poor to negotiate with the market economy or the state" for obtaining, seizing, extracting concessions, subsidies and credit. The authors caution that SHGs should not promote particular "group interest" at the cost of the interest of other individuals of groups. In SHGs the group is for convenience, while help is fundamental. SHGs ought to be constructive work organisations which are engaged in spreading the spirit and culture of self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

The first sociological study of ROSCAs was made in India by Desai (1967). In his study, "Social Aspects of Savings", he studied the impact of socio cultural factors on savings. His study shows that the incidence and volume of savings depend upon the age of the householder, age of the wife of the householder and the size of the family. He reports the deep-rooted prevalence of Rosca system in the state of Kerala which even the modern financial institutions could not dislodge.

Anita Abraham (1985) in her article, "Subsistence Credit Survival Strategies among Traditional Fishermen," explains the importance of this indigenous method of savings in Poovar village of Trivandrum district of Kerala. Her study is an in-depth ethnographic study of ROSCAs, a system based on mutual support of poor fishermen who have no regular source of income. As a survival strategy, every household lends its
surplus to a needy one. This mechanism of generating minimal level savings is based on the idea of reciprocity and mutuality. An important finding of this study is that a person withdraws from the system immediately when their economic conditions improve.

Raj Mohini Sethi's study entitled, "Women's ROSCA in Contemporary Indian Society" (1995), looks at the social and financial significance of ROSCAs. She conducted her study in Chandigarh and collected data from both primary and secondary sources. She gives a detailed description of this indigenous institution right from its genesis, structure, membership, organisation and legislative aspects to its financial and social significance. She refers to ROSCAs as "crude forms of non-bank financial institutions" that provide savings for meeting the contingency and income generation needs of women. She considers them a potential source for facilitating the initiation and expansion of micro enterprises to achieve the goal of self-reliance among women.

Mayoux and Anand (1995) conducted a study of silk reeling industry in Silkapura of Tamil Nadu state. In this study titled "Gender Inequality, ROSCAs and Sectoral Employment Strategies : Questions from the South Indian Silk Industry" women labourers from the silk reeling industry were interviewed. They found that in sectoral strategies, credit has frequently been singled out as "the missing factor"
inhibiting poor women from increasing their incomes. Major problems for women were lack of access to adequate resources and restrictions on their movements outside the home. For poor women obtaining credit was even harder than for poor men because of lack of resources, prejudice in the lending agencies and power relations in the family. ROSCAs help women to increase their control over their incomes and also their upward mobility to entrepreneurship seen as the ultimate aim of development programmes for women in the industrial sector.

**Focus of the Present Study**

The above review of literature reveals that most of the studies of ROSCAs have been done from economic point of view. Though recently attempts have been made to study these groups by sociologists also. Studies on ROSCAs in India have been done largely in the southern zone of the sub-continent which is considered as the place of their origin, growth and development according to historical evidence. There is a dire lack of in-depth studies on ROSCAs in the northern zone where their growth and development is quite recent. However, in the absence of a wide range of studies it becomes difficult to compare the data across the sub-continent and look at their significance for resolving the developmental issues. Moreover, most studies concentrate on the economic aspects of ROSCAs despite their deep-rooted social basis. Although some
attempts have been made recently to study their sociological dimensions such studies are very limited in number. Also there is no immediate reply to the question as to why even today when many formal financial institutions have appeared to fulfil the financial needs of the people, these traditional institutions continue to remain in demand and their popularity is increasing.

In view of the above facts, I was prompted to reconsider the institution of rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs) from a sociological perspective and find out the reasons of their popularity among different sections of the women population of the city of Lucknow.

Objectives of the Study

The present research focuses on the role of rotating savings and credit associations in women's development. It enquires the organisation, structure, pattern, and importance of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) from a sociological focus. The study is based on the following assumptions: one, that ROSCAs represent an important resource and play a positive role in women's development. Two, that ROSCAs perform multiple functions for the members which explains their wide spread among the different socio economic strata of society. In this study I have emphasized on the study of small informal groups of women and have excluded all
those groups such as chit funds and other similar associations that are governed by the Chit Funds Act 1982 (Act no. 40 of 1982) from the purview of my analysis.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the socio demographic profile of women subscribers or organisers of ROSCAs.
2. To study the organisational structure and recruitment patterns of ROSCAs.
3. To study the manifest and latent functions of ROSCAs.

The manifest functions to be studied are:

a) Locating the reasons for joining ROSCAs;
b) Finding out who utilises the ROSCA savings of the subscribers/organisers and for what purpose are these savings used;
c) To find out whether ROSCA savings help women in the expansion of capital and income generation and help them to attain autonomy over their lives;

The latent functions to be studied are:

a) Whether ROSCA membership helps women in developing alternative institutions of social support;
b) Whether ROSCAs help women in the flow of information through these networks;
c) Whether ROSCAs help women in solving their day-to-day problems and in gaining control over their lives;

In the analysis of data, the resource theory has been applied in the explanation of gender based inequalities. According to the resource theory, the position of men and women is determined by their control over the resources. It has been found that men's greater economic power at the macro
level gives them leverage at the micro level. Therefore, man gains not only economic but also social leverage over women. Women's control of resources can improve their position to a great extent. Blood and Wolfe (1960), Cromwell & Olson (1975), Burr (1973) and Sethi (1982) have clearly demonstrated that personal resources influence the balance of power and decision making process by gender. They have also identified certain resources such as education, control over income, employment status, age and life cycle stage as the main factors of gendered decision making. They said that women's participation in the outside world increases their public contact and lessens their dependency on men. This affects their role in the decision making process. Conversely, women staying at home often lack personal and community derived resources and are therefore more dependent on men. Simmons and Rosenberg (1975) have added self-esteem as an intangible resource which according to them enriches the possessor. Sharma (1978) has interpreted networks as a resource. He says that members in a particular society form a network to get access to scarce resources which ensure survival and security of a group and a community. These networks are based on the criterion of shared interest for personal ends. According to him networks represent counter-balancing the system.

One of the reasons for women's marginalization is that they lack accessibility of network resources. Their isolation
restricts them to participate in the mainstream society. Formation of ROSCAs and participation in them is one way of reducing their isolation and establishing contact with the outside world and also gain access to financial resources (savings as well as credit) apart from other social benefits. In the present study, we are looking at ROSCAs as resource networks. Women's networks provide important resources. They help women to obtain direct control over economic resources, they help in breaking their isolation and are important resource for gaining autonomy and obtaining support and acquiring skills from other women who are similarly placed.

**Research Methodology**

The choice of methods for research is to be made on the basis of several considerations such as the nature of the social system in which the study is launched, the subject matter and the purpose of the study. The relationship between the research procedures and the nature of data to be collected is well recognised in social research. The present study, "Role of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations in Women's Development: A Sociological Assessment", focuses on small savings and their role in women's development especially in the context of rotating savings and credit associations. For the present study, ROSCA refers to "an association formed upon a core of participants who agree to make regular contributions.
to a fund which is given in whole or in part to each contributor in rotation."

Universe
The present study has been conducted in the city of Lucknow. Lucknow is the capital city of Uttar Pradesh and a metropolis that since the Mughal period has remained a hub of various activities. Proliferation and growth of ROSCAs in this city was quite surprising as it presents a curious mix of the old and the new. The choice of Lucknow was considered relevant in view of the paucity of studies dealing with ROSCAs in north India and the positive functions they perform in women's lives. Their important role in effecting women's savings is yet to be recognised. Moreover, no such study has yet been conducted in the city of Lucknow despite the tremendous growth of ROSCAs in this region. Besides, when so many programmes have been launched for women's development, lack of gender specific data on different forms of women's groups can be considered a hindrance in making interventions. Under these circumstances, the present study explores the nature of ROSCAs and their role in women's development.

Sample Procedure and Sample Size
Sampling procedure and the ultimate selection of the units of the sample was really problematic in the absence of any documentation of ROSCAs in this region. Since most of
these associations are unregistered because of the smallness of the group and a certain amount of secrecy attached to their operation. For example, few ROSCAs have more than 20 members and women who join these groups do not often divulge this information to their spouses. The city of Lucknow is divided into 40 municipal wards, each ward comprising of several socio-ecological formations called localities. Thus the sampling procedure had to be purposive. The researcher, therefore, located a few resource persons or social contact resources who were helpful in gaining information and access to and identification of ROSCA groups in different localities, and in some cases also happened to be the organisers of these groups.

Zelditch (1962) in "Methodological Problems of Field Studies" says that certain combinations of method and type of information may be regarded as formal prototypes, in the sense that other combinations may be logically reduced to them. For example; instead of a sample survey or enumeration, an information is employed to list dwelling units, or to estimate incomes, or to tell who associates with whom or what each person believes with respect to some issue. The information is obtained from a single informant, but he is treated as if he himself had conducted a census or poll. The resource persons in the present study proved useful reference in conducting the interviews and in confidence building with the
respondents later on. The use of resource persons had a snowball effect in locating ROSCAs in different localities.

On the basis of the information provided by these resource persons around 1000 women ROSCA groups were identified in 48 localities of Lucknow. Since one of the assumptions of the study was that ROSCAs were popular among all social classes, therefore, it was decided to interview around 267 ROSCA members from 15 localities of the city keeping in view the neighbourhood pattern, living arrangements and income group of the residents. Table 1.1 gives the distribution of ROSCA groups surveyed for the present study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the localities covered</th>
<th>No. of ROSCAs covered</th>
<th>Total no. of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hazratganj</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gokhale Marg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliganj</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirala Nagar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhenti Nagar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiserbagh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alambagh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purana Kila</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi Tola</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hind Nagar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vikaas Nagar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chitwaapur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makbara Mehandi Hasan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akbar Nagar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nai Basti</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** In this ROSCA members lived in different parts of the city.
In all, sixteen ROSCA groups representing different social classes such as upper, middle and lower were studied. These 16 ROSCAs were spread over 15 localities within 14 municipal wards of the city. The different social classes were almost equally represented in the sample. Table no. 1.1 shows that one ROSCA group was constituted by members of only one particular caste group spread over different parts of the city. Most of the groups were constituted by the combination of members from upper and middle social classes or from middle and lower social classes with a predominance of members from the lower social classes.

Methods of Data Collection

There is an inextricable relationship between the technique of data collection and the nature of data required for the study. The basic mode of collecting information for the study was the interview schedule. It was supplemented by personal observations, life histories and in-depth interviews of a few chosen respondents and resource persons.

The interview schedule was divided into six major parts. The first part covered questions pertaining to the socio economic profile of ROSCA members, the second to those of the household and social class background of the respondents. The third part contained questions related to the membership and organisational aspects of ROSCAs such as
funding, deductions and the order of rotation. The fourth part contained questions relating to the origin of ROSCAs. The fifth part elicited information related to the manifest functions of ROSCAs such as subscribers' reason to join ROSCAs, utilisation of savings and the extent of their use in the expansion of capital and income generation. The sixth and the last part of the interview schedule contained questions related to the latent functions of ROSCAs. This part of the schedule addressed to issues of social networking and support structures that might exist within the women's groups and their role in making women autonomous individuals through the flow of information and/or various types of tangible and intangible support. After the construction of the interview schedule, it was pre-tested on almost each type of ROSCA and social class and suitable modifications were introduced accordingly.

Interviewing and Field Experiences

Field experiences of various studies on savings have shown that to extract information on matters related to savings, credit and expenditure pattern have remained quite a difficult task. Experiences gained during field visits for the present study were not an exception. While doing field work, the researcher came across a variety of field experiences. Before starting an interview, the researcher had
to introduce herself to the respondents, and inform them about the purpose of gathering information from them. Only after establishing a rapport, the respondents were interviewed. Initially, to establish rapport and the conduct of interviews took a long time but gradually the time spent on each interview diminished. Once the interview process started, it took place in a pleasant and congenial atmosphere. Sometimes, though rarely, it ended up on an antagonistic note. It happened when the respondents did not like to be asked a question such as about the financial affairs of their household. But once the purpose of the meeting was made clear, a great deal of co-operation was received from them. Usually, it was found that the respondents from the very low or very high income groups were suspicious of the researcher. The basis of their suspicion, however, varied. Women of the high income group had deep down the fear of income tax authorities catching up with them and the women of the low income groups got perturbed because they were afraid that their husbands or the government might get hold of their hard earned savings. Contrary to this, experiences of the slum area were found different in nature. Whenever the researcher visited slum areas, women perceived her as an agent of some financial institution who had come to collect all their savings. Some of these women showed a desire to become members thinking that would help them in gaining access to
some loan or resources through such institution. Sometimes, the respondents tried to derail the interview procedure by shifting the conversation from the main subject and narrating their own personal familial problems and experiences. In these situations, the researcher had to make a special endeavour to elicit and sift out the required information.

Locating a house was another problem that the researcher often faced. Sometimes, after locating the house, the respondent was not available at home. Some of them were working women. To avoid all such obstacles those who had the facility of the telephone were asked to make an appointment for a particular day and time that suited them. They were then contacted on their due date of meeting. And the poor working women have been interviewed at their place of work.