Chapter-III
Conceptual and Theoretical Frame Work
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3.1. Introduction:

This chapter examines the conceptual and theoretical frame work of the study “Women and Poverty”. Poverty is a state of being, where by people lack (a) Income and assets to obtain basic necessities (b) Voice and power in the institutions of state and society (c) freedom and a level playing field to live their lives on the basis of equality and Justice and (d) are vulnerable to adverse shocks and unable to copy with them. In this contest, Poverty may be defined in a three dimensional perspective, economic, human and environmental.

Economic or income Poverty includes extreme or absolute Poverty, defined as lack of income necessary to satisfy basic needs, food usually defined on the basis of minimum caloric requirements clothing and shelter. Relative Poverty, defined as lack of income necessary to satisfy culturally determined minimum standards of living.

Environmental and ecological Poverty includes degraded land, lack of clean air and water, inadequate access to natural resources, and lack of basic physical infrastructure necessary to sustain basic human capabilities to increase the accessibility of goods and services and to face natural disasters, typhoons, floods, landslides etc.

Human Poverty includes absence or reduced capabilities such as illiteracy, malnutrition, an abbreviated life span, poor maternal health, lack of access to services and morbidity and death from preventable diseases. Following Amartya Sen, human Poverty is understood to include lack of tight on freedoms that enable people to realize their full potential and lack of voice in the government process.

Poverty is a complex and multi faceted phenomenon which involves multifarious problems and deserves proper understanding without which it will be like grouping the elephant by the blind man. Thus, Poverty line can be explained as the level of income sufficient to purchase the minimum standard of nutrition food. However, analysis reveals that Poverty not only reflects Economic status rather entwine the over
manifestation in terms of deprivation. Poverty such as status of health, education, isolation, ineffective access, powerlessness and gender based disadvantages.

The unequal access to economic resources and economic opportunities within a family which reflects itself in such inequality in the Society, may be captured within the Theory of Co-operative Conflict of Amartya Sen. The theory refers to the co-existence of conflict as well as convergence of intersects within the family as far as access to economic resources are concerned. Feminization of Poverty can perhaps be better explained within the context of this theory. The decision regarding the division of resources and opportunities among male and female member, is the result of the co-existence of co-operation and conflict. In such an arrangement of intra – household sharing of resources in a typical patriarchal setup, males tend to secure a higher share in comparison to the female counterparts in the family.

3.2. Intra-household Inequality:

Amartya Sen’s capability approach is very much important task for evaluating the quality of life, especially in developing countries. The concept intra–household inequality is a conventional measure of deprivation and it is based on income inadequacy. The capability approach is a multidimensional and facilitates interpersonal comparisons of opportunities for achieving well - being of the people. The concept capability approach occupy a central space and it reflects the various things a person manages ‘to do or be in leading a life’ (Sen 1993). There are various Principal of capability approach such as being adequately nourished, having decent shelter, being able to read and write and achieving self respect. A person’s capability or well – being approach is a alternative combinations, and it reflects the freedom or well – being of the people. ‘Development as freedom’ is closely, but not exclusively, associated with an enhancement of well being freedom (Sen 1999).

Sen’s framework inter personal comparisons and it is necessary to recognize the capabilities approach within the realm of the household, where extensive conflict often
co-exists with pervasive co-operation (*Sen 1990*). Well – being approach is generally associated with the household members. This reality poses two types of capability approach: first, a framework geared of capability evaluation like, agency, freedom and choice and this framework is always presence of domestic power. Second, capability approach deals with gendered power imbalances. In developing countries, individual well-being, material and non-material foundations of power and intra-household inequality are interconnected. Gender and intra-household inequality are compatible with the capability approach.

3.3. Intra – Household Distribution:

In the intra-household distribution, *Sen* observed market demand, labour supply or intra-household resource allocation and he also explained in this work the systematic intra-household disparities in developing countries. The *Nash* bargaining models of marriage developed by *Marilyn Manser* and *Murrays Brown (1980)* and *Marjorie. B. Mcelroy* and *Mary. J. Horney (1981)*. In a *Nash*- bargaining model of marriage, the intra-household allocation of resources is determined broadly. In *Nash*-bargaining model they suggest that, if the “Women and female children relinquish leisure, education, and food would be somewhat more persuasive they were in a position to demand their fair share”. They again said that the “Juxtaposition of women’s lack of economic power with the unequal allocation of household resources that lends the bargaining power approach much of its persuasive appeal”.

*Folbris (1986)* focuses on gendered differences and it is closely related to the well-being of the capability approach. The intra-Household inequality approach is focusing on alternative types of power and material and non-material foundations. *Sen* says that, the development of the capability approach is also related to the welfares of the people. *Sen* also rejected the individual preferences as foundations for evaluating well-being. *Sen* argues that, women in traditional societies may lack a notion of personal welfare because their identities are too closely tied to the interests of the household.
Naila Kabeer (1999) and other feminist scholars, also expressed that, gender relations within and beyond the household, have sought to articulate the multiple facets of female agency which is related to female empowerment. Sen (1990, 1999) also focused on female labour force participation and literacy, which as means of strengthening women’s agency and intra-household bargaining power. Female agency enables women to mediate intra-household power relations and improving their opportunities for achieving well-being.

3.4. Development as Freedom:

Amartya Sen (1999) observed that, development as freedom means the real freedom that people enjoy. Sen (1985) distinguishes between well being freedom and agency freedom. Well being freedom reflects the capability approach. Robeyns (2001) claims that “capability represents an individual empowerment”. Amartya Sen is very much concerned for gendered intra-household inequality. Sen also mentioned his work that, the capability approach would be enabling to distinguish between women who live in an oppressive household. In the intra-household Structure of authority, where the husband always makes decisions on the wife’s behalf and in this context, Becker (1981) mention that “a male household head, while acting altruistically, will condition income transfers to his partner on her choices”. This given him considerable power over her.

The main goal of capability approach is capturing the importance of human diversity in judging advantage sRobeyns (2000). In the discussion of the well-being freedom, well-being freedom will be necessary but not quite sufficient to Judge individual opportunities. Severine Deneculin and Frances steward (2001) make a different point in claiming that Social expectations or cultural conditioning may more directly influence well-being freedom. In the development of freedom, the Women’s access to literacy may still differ. If the Women’s literacy rate developed, the intra-household decision making is more circumscribed.
Women may have more power than most theorists assume (Macgaffey 1988). He again said that, “educated Women from middle class backgrounds may offer less resistance than poor, illiterate women, who are more likely to fight back.”

3.5. Gender and co-operative conflicts:

‘Gender based’ analysis is very much important place in the development of Economics. The ‘Position of women’ is also noticeable in the standard literature on economic development. ‘Gender’ is closely related to the social and economic analysis and it is complementary to the variables of class, owner ship, occupations, incomes and family status. In the discussion of the women’s inferior position both inside and outside the household in many Societies, ‘gender’ development analysis plays an important role in the society as a whole. In the empirical research, women occupy disadvantage positions in traditional economic and social arrangements. The economic hardship of women headed households is a problem both of female deprivation and of family poverty.

On the other hand the class of problem can be called ‘co-operative conflicts’. Gender analysis is always related to the Social and Economic relations. Capabilities, well-being and agency are the most important conceptual structure in the gender and co-operative conflicts analysis. According to Sen, “freedom is the end as well as the means of development”. In his work, he mentioned that there are various kinds of freedom, like political, economic and social. Women’s well-being always promotes women’s agency. A women’s agency approach takes women to be active. Sen also expressed that, Social and political transformations that can then better the lives of both women and men. Sen acknowledges that the two approaches overlap, women’s well-being and strategies need to draw on women’s agency to effect real changes.

In the promotion of women’s agency, women’s agency as vital improving the economic and social power of women, but for challen
gender biases in the distribution of basic goods such as food and health care in the treatment of women and girls within families. Sen also claim that, ‘changing agency of women’ is one of the major mediators of economic and social change and this is the most important feature of the development process of women (Sen 1999).

On the other hand, feminists could hardly quarrel with Sen’s emphasis on the promotion of women’s agency as a way of enhancing their well-being. Sen noted in his work that, women’s well-being is strongly influenced by ‘women’s ability to earn on independent income, to find employment outside the home, to have ownership rights and to have literacy and be educated participants in decision inside and outside the family (Sen 1999).

3.6. Co-operative Conflicts:

Interest, contributions, and perceptions – The co-operative conflicts must be related to the interest perceptions and well-being of the people. The co-operative conflicts problem can be divided into three dimensional features – (1) well-being levels at the breakdown points (2) perceived interest and (3) perceived contributions.

The breakdown position indicates the person’s vulnerability or strength. The ‘breakdown position’ is an important property of co-operative conflicts. Perceived interest means the self interest, and it is closely related to the co-operative outcome and it also favorable of the perceived contributor. The breakdown position, perceived interest and perceived contribution both are inter related with each other. For example, greater illiteracy and less higher education of women in most developing and some developed countries, and these would tend to make the breakdown positions worse for women.

Ester Boserup (1970) has rightly taken Margaret Mead (1949) “The home shared by a man or men and female partners, into which men bring the food and women prepare it, is the basic picture of the world over” (Mead 1949, Boserup 1970, Das Gupta 1977,
and Slocum 1975). But it is never the less a common enough picture in may primitive and modern Societies. Ester Boserup (1970) has noted that the women who play the major role in acquiring food from outside and their position are better in the society. But in India, women have little outside earning and the picture is totally different in some of African regions where women have lot of scope in outside earning.

3.7. Women’s Role in Production, Earnings and Perceived Contributions:

When women get better opportunity to earn something in ‘gainful’ activities, beyond household, their earning would help the family and their Social Status would also be improved. In the discussion of the ‘co-operative be conflict,’ it is very much clear that women’s role in production earnings are all interrelated to the ‘co-operative and conflicting’ feature. The women those who are outside employer, the employment would enhance the over all command of the household, that is, the family entitlement. For a given family entitlement, the women’s relative share may also respond positively to her outside earning. Outside earnings can give the women a better breakdown position, individuality and well-being and a higher perceived contribution to the family’s economic position. A greater economic role for women would definitely improve their status within the family. But the low level of outside work and earning may also generally harm women’s Social Status and perceived entitlements (Sen, 1984, 1989). The outside earnings and the so called productive activities of women is very much related to the inter-regional contrasts. The care of female children in comparison to male in terms of nutrition, medical attention etc may also be positively influenced by the size of outside employment and earning of women in comparison to men. Maria Mies in her works (1982) notes that, the women workers do not get much benefit from their work, because despite the fact that the products are sold in the world market, the women are recruited as house wines as produce lace as a so called spare time activity, in their own homes.
3.8. Well-being Agency and co-operative conflicts:

Women’s Economic development is closely related to the well-being, agency and co-operative conflicts. The word ‘conflicts’ means ‘conflicts’ of interest between men and women. ‘Gender conflict’ is very much special characteristics in the well-being agency and co-operative conflicts theory the 'gender conflict' relate to the co-operative behavior of the people. On the other hand, ‘Gender division is also closely related to the household arrangements. ‘Conflicts of interest involved in the choice of Social technology well-being, agency and co-operative conflicts including intra-household divisions, both are related with the qualitative and quantitative structure of Social and personal parameters.

The involvement of women in any productive activities, and in earning from outside is one of the most important parameter. The ‘productive activities and in earning from outside’ are of obvious importance for female headed households without adult men (Buvinic and Youssef 1978, Visaria and Visaria 1985). The ‘Productive’ and ‘earning’ activities of the women can help the development of the family and improve their status and position both in the family and the Society as a whole. The Social influence of female activity and earnings from outside made by women and of women’s better position and share of the households. Sometimes it is observed that women’s agencies opposed to their own well-being. It may also be noted that the actual agency role is often over shadowed by Social rules and by conventions perceptions of legitimacy.

The Principal objective of our Present study ‘women and poverty. A case study of South Assam’ is to identify the poverty level and deprivation of women in various socio-economic conditions, so that the problems could be brought to light for their betterment and solution. From the study of ‘conceptual and theoretical Framework’ and following the points as discussed, intra-household inequality, intra-household distribution, development as freedom, gender and co-operative conflicts, women’s role in Production, earning and perceived contribution, and also well-being society and co-operative
conflicts, it can be noted that these theories of different scholars, researchers and
feminists like Amartya Sen, Marilyn Manser, Murray Brown, Mary J. Horney and
other help us to identify the miserable and pitiable socio-economic conditions of female
dolk of this area of South Assam. It has been observed during our field work and survey,
in various parts of South Assam, that gender power and domestic power are closely
related to inequality. Low rate of women’s literacy in this surveyed areas as observed,
less educated women are deprived of taking part in decision making. Therefore
development of Women’s Social Stats. On the other hand it is employment and their lack
of economic power leads them to unequal allocation of household resources. Female
work participation ownership and income from both within and outside household lead
them to improve their family status but unfortunately such scopes are almost absent in
this surveyed areas. It has also been observed that women who play an important role in
acquiring food etc from outside for their family, their position in society is better. It is
also noticed during survey that women who are employed, though their number is
limited, have command over the household and family.

Considering all these factors of women’s deprivation in different sectors and
keeping them in mind, we are to proceed on with our present study indicating their
solution. This area of South Assam, has been noticed for a long since deprived of getting
proper education, employment, other sources of earning etc. both in rural and urban areas
specially the women. It has been felt urgently to improve the socio-economic condition,
education and earning source of the women of this area as observed fertile for the
research work. Gender inequality of women, deprivation both in social and economic
condition, earning source, proper education etc are to be considered carefully in our
present study, so that, the women’s social – economic study can be improved and various
women’s related problems may be solved in coming future considering their well-being
and mostly survived of the women of this neglected South Assam region.
3.9. Conclusion:

Sen rightly argues that capability approach is very much important task for evaluating the quality life, especially in development countries. Intra household inequality is doubt a conventional measure of deprivation of women and based on income in adequacy the analysis presented in this chapter, the importance of observation and agency comes our as being central to achieving a better basis for female well-being in various parts of the world. In the very recent development new literature, it is observed that there is a rapid growing awareness regarding inequities in gender divisions and also of the neglect of women’s well-being which may be considered or a good sign. Sen also argues that intra household distribution of resources leads to disparities in most of the developing countries. It is needless to mention that if women get proper education, they can rightly demand their fare share. In the intra household structure of authority it is observed that husband always makes decisions on behalf of wife which is not as all desirable. The main goal of capability approach is capturing the importance of women. It may be mentioned here that there is a danger in taking a women, as a ‘patient’ rather than as an agent.

The political agency of women may play an important role in encountering women’s need and claim. It is also need less to mention here that the Economic agency of women has an important role in elevating the visibility of women’s contribution to Social living. The special influence of women’s in various activity rates and their outside earnings and the important role of agency can greatly influence gender division, well-being and mainly survival of women. Ester Boserup has rightly noted that the women play the major role in acquiring food from outside and their position in the Society is better than the other which leads them to enjoy better social status. It is also to be noted here that women’s involvement in productive activities and earning from outside is the most important parameter. The analysis of co-operative conflicts in gender divisions invites for a better understanding. This study of women’s issues in respect of their development can also benefit from informer diversification.
References:


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