INTRODUCTION

Beginning at the time of the International Year of Women, 1975, and through the years of the International Women's Decade, 1976-1985, achieving Equality for Women, especially in the fields of employment, health and education, is a major preoccupation all over the world.

Further, the National Policy of Education of 1986 opened up a clear possibility of achieving the goal. In the New Education Policy, the need for empowerment of women through education for securing equality is given a place of utmost importance. It is justly believed that strengthening of women can be achieved by helping them in building a positive self-image and in gaining self-confidence, which in turn is accomplished by inculcating the ability to think critically and by fostering the power of decision making. Further, aiding their participation in the process of bringing out social change and providing the where-
withal for their economic independence are important for the empowerment of women.

Further, efforts are being made to carry this message of equality and empowerment of women to all sections of the society in our country and also to enable women to be self-sufficient, self-confident and economically independent.

Thus, the expectation is that through education and by providing opportunities for gainful employment of women, equality can be achieved for women on par with men. In light of this expectation, it is felt necessary to undertake the present study to know the attitude of educated female students towards equality of women and also to explore their aspirations in the fields of education and occupation.

The impetus for the study of educational and occupational aspirations of female undergraduate students has also come from the suggestions made by Ahmad (1984). In his article "From Secondary to Higher Education: Focus on women", Ahmad analysed the gap between the education of men and women at secondary and higher stages along with regional variations, focussing on the impact of educational growth on the development of education for women. While offering socio-cultural factors as responsible for regional variations in the enrolment of women at different
stages of education, he suggested the need for further probe into the goals of women's education, and the motivating factors behind the same.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

The status of women depends on a wide range of health, educational, economic, legal, political and other related factors. Hence, these aspects are taken into consideration for analysis of the situation of women in India.

The role of women in a society is as important as that of men. No nation can afford to ignore this fact, if it is to make any real progress. With this understanding, the Constitution of India pledges equality of opportunity, social, economic and political justice, and dignity of the individual to both men and women. But the law alone is not enough to bring about a radical change. A change has to come in the social attitudes of both males and females in the society.

Though some improvement is seen in the status of women as related to the fields of education and employment in the past few decades, the rate of progress is not on par with that of men. Further, demographic trends related to sex ratio and female mortality rate clearly bring out the prejudice and discrimination prevailing against women in our society.
A. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The proportion of females to males is on the decline in India, where as an excess of female population is the general pattern in other parts of the world. Overall, India has had an excess of males over females from the beginning of the century. The sex ratio declined from 972 females per 1,000 males in 1901 to 935 in 1981. As a result, in 1981 there were 22.9 million more males than females. The corresponding figures of sex ratio for Andhra Pradesh were 985 females per 1,000 males in 1981 and as a result males were in excess by four percent.

The major causes of the adverse sex ratio are reckoned to be:
- Higher risk of female deaths from infancy to the end of reproductive age, partly due to discrimination against females in health care and nutrition; and

The mortality among females is greater than that among males at all ages, more so in the age groups of 1-4 years, 5-14 years, 15-24 years and 25-34 years. The age specific reported deaths of males and females of these age-groups are as follows, the total number of reported deaths among males and females being 9,677 and 7,995 respectively in 1980.
Age-wise Distribution of Reported Deaths of males and females in India in 1980 (Percentages in Parantheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group (years)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7.8)</td>
<td>(10.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.9)</td>
<td>(6.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.6)</td>
<td>(5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
<td>(6.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNICEF, An Analysis of the situation of children in India, 1984

If female infants die at a faster rate than male infants, despite their biologically superior strength, the inference is that social neglect of female health is deeply entrenched (UNICEF, 1984).

Unequal Access to Health and Nutrition

Analysing the situation of women in India as related to access to health and nutrition, UNICEF (1984) expressed the view that though an improvement of health services has helped to
bring down the death rates of both males and females, men appear to have benefited from it more than women. They further wrote that because of social barriers, women do not go to male doctors. And there are not enough women doctors in these villages. Large scale under-reporting is widely suspected, especially from the rural interior.

In the man's world women get low priority, when it comes to using available services. It is reported, on the basis of records of indoor and outdoor patients of medical institutions, that for every three men who avail of health services, only one woman does so. Yet the percentage of sick women appears to be higher than that of sick men at any given time. Generally, a woman is seen not to seek treatment unless severely ill (UNICEF, 1984).

The nutritional status of the generality of men, women and children appears to be low, but within this spectrum that of women seems to be even poorer. The agricultural labourers are the worst sufferers, along with women in slums, drought-affected areas and remote tribal regions. The sex bias in nutrition for the male and against female infants, girls and women, has been exposed by several studies. Girls enter into marriage and motherhood from their pre-existing malnutrition and impair their health further. Cultural traditions of intra family distribution
of food, rooted in rural areas, compel women to eat last and often eat least both in quality and quantity. It is estimated that on an average an Indian woman becomes pregnant eight times and gives birth to 6 to 7 children of whom 4 to 6 survive. Out of 30 years of reproductive life, she spends 16 years in pregnancy and lactation. And she typifies some 140 million malnourished women (UNICEF, 1984).

B. EDUCATIONAL STATUS

Education, one of the important factors counted upon for improvement in the status of women, determines aspirations, technology, productivity, and social mobility. It also influences the perception of values of individuals and their contribution to the economy of the family and of the nation.

Against a backdrop of widespread illiteracy, elementary literacy is a prime objective of educational policy in India. However, the women of India seem to have made only a marginal progress in this aspect.

According to a study conducted by I C S S R, in 1971, only 18.4 per cent all Indian and a mere 13.2 per cent of rural women were literate. During the decade 1972-81, only a slight improvement has occurred in female literacy rate. According to
the National census, 1981, out of a total literate population of 36.23 per cent, the percent of literate females was 24.88 per cent and that of literate males was 47 per cent i.e., almost twice that of literate females. However, the provisional population totals of 1991 census projected the current literacy rate of the nation to be 52.11, the percent literate males and females being 63.86 and 39.42 respectively.

A comparison between the literacy rates of 1950-51 (total literacy rate being 16.67, the rates of male and female literacy were 24.95 and 7.93) and that of 1981 shows that the gap between literacy rates of males and females is not closing but rather widening, from 17.02 in 1951 to 22.07 in 1981. The provisional census figures of 1991 show that the gap has further increased by 2.37 percent.

Social attitudes towards women's education appear to be still rather negative. According to a survey carried out by the Committee on Status of Women in India (1971), 16.8 per cent of the respondents rejected the view that girls should be educated at all, and as many as 64.5 per cent disapproved of higher education for girls, even if they have proved themselves to be very intelligent (UNICEF, 1984).

The drop-out rates of girls at primary and secondary levels are high. According to a study done by Planning Commission in
1978, only three out of ten girls who had enrolled in class one of a sample of primary schools, completed five years of formal schooling. And, only one out of ten completed eight years of formal schooling and less than eight per cent of all girl students passed the matriculation exam. The reasons for high drop-out rates are, 1) female children by custom are expected to look after siblings and perform household chores as their mothers go for paid work in order to supplement family income, 2) expenditure on girls' education is considered to be a wasteful investment, 3) the problems of transportation and security involved in sending girls to schools that are located far away, 4) the bias against sending girls to co-education schools or to schools where teaching is done by male teachers, and 5) the notion that school education has no relevance to the role that a girl plays in her later life (Eves Weekly, 1985).

The low representation of women continues at the higher stage, in general as well as professional education. The enrolment of women students in 1950-51, in undergraduate and postgraduate courses and in research field of arts, commerce and science was 13.79 per cent of total enrolment, and it has grown only to 31 per cent in 30 years i.e., by 1980-81. At state level, the enrolment of women students in higher education was 26.6 per cent during 1980-81.
In professional and technical colleges, the progress in the representation of women students since 1950-51 is almost negligible. They formed a low per cent of 9.09 of total enrolment in 1950-51 and the corresponding figures in 1980-81 being 13.04 per cent.

Improvement in educational status of women is essential for achieving improvement in the status of women related to employment, health, the exercise of legal and constitutional rights, and in attaining equality of status and equal opportunities in education itself.

C. EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employment certainly holds the key to improvement in the status of women. For, it determines the level of food availability, nutrition and other essential demands. It has a decisive influence on productivity as well as the structure of the household and the relationships within the family (UNICEF, 1984).

The low employment status of women is reflected in their work participation rates since 1951. Female work participation rates were 23.31, 27.93, 14.22 and 20.85 per cents in the census of 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981 respectively. The National Committee on Status of Women (1975) as well as some researchers
feel that not only that the female work participation rates were low, but also there was a sharp decline in female work participation rate over 1961-71, even after allowing for the changed census definition of work. Under the new definition the female work participation rate was 12.06 percent by the 1971 census and 13.99 percent by the 1981 census, showing a marginal improvement. Though the census of 1991 has been completed, the relevant data could not be presented as the report on the related results is not yet released.

The Organized sector in India absorbs less than one eighth of the actual work force. Of this, women formed 11 percent in 1971 and 12.4 percent in 1978, showing only a slight improvement.

In Andhra Pradesh as per 1981 census, in the organized sector 7,75,940 employees were working out of which about 12 percent were women i.e., 89,770. The state public undertakings have the lowest percentage representation of women of 2 percent, while the urban local bodies present a better picture of 1/3 of their total employees being women. In the rural local bodies, i.e., the Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samithies and Panchayats the percentages of women are 11, 19 and 15 respectively. While the judiciary has 8 per cent, the universities have 11 per cent women employees. The State Government, which is the single largest
employer has a 11 percent representation of women. In the State Government Services, 92 percent of personnel in Gazetted category and 86 percent of them in Non-Gazetted category are men. Even in class IV and contingency categories, men constitute 84 percent and 75 percent respectively. These figures clearly bring out the insignificant rate of participation of women in organized sector, which is a matter of concern demanding positive action.

Of the unorganized sector, official statistics do not provide a full picture. The participation data for women do not include the majority of rural women who work as unpaid labourers at home and in the fields or who help in family occupations like dairying, poultry rearing, weaving etc. Not only that, even today, after forty four years of freedom, equal pay for equal work is still a distant dream in unorganized sector.

It has been observed that the average hours of unpaid work done by married women outside the home varied from 6.13 to 7.53 hours per day. Apart from domestic duties, women engaged in agricultural operation, work on an average about 12 hours on the farm and in taking care of cattle at home (UNICEF, 1984). The plight of the women who attend to unpaid work is still worse. They are economically dependent and hence, more powerless.
D. LEGAL STATUS

Not only that the Constitution of India pledges equality of opportunity, social, economic and political justice, and dignity of the individual to both men and women, several laws incorporating social reforms are being made to remedy the injustice being done to women. To cite, a few of these acts are Child Marriage Restraint Act aimed at prevention of child marriages, Suttee Regulation Act aimed at prevention of cremation of widows on the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands, Widow Remarriage Act, Dowry Prohibition Act, Equal Remuneration Act etc.

However, cases of gross violation of the legal provisions relating to women are all too common. Despite the efforts of social reformers and legislative and social efforts, the evil customs and practices that affect the status of women prevail. The practices of dowry, female infanticide and child marriage are rampant all over India. The evil custom of Suttee is still alive in North India. Further, there are a few practices which are region specific. For ex., in Telangana Region of Andhra Pradesh there exists an evil tradition called "Jogin System", wherein young girls are married to the "Grama Devata" (Deity of the village) and are made the property of the villagers, to appease to their carnal instincts.
In addition, the immoral traffic in women has perhaps grown in size and complexity rather than diminished. Exploitation and violence against and abuse of women continue.

Thus, equality in law becomes meaningless in light of the prevailing ignorance and complete lack of education among large masses of men and especially women, and the fact that social attitudes have not changed much except among a limited number.

§. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The extent of political participation of women as reflected by the voter turnout and the proportion of women contestants and winners in elections serves as an index of their social standing.

Female voter participation has always been lower than male voter participation. For ex., in January 1980 Parliamentary Poll, the overall voter turnout was 59.92 percent with 62.16 percent for men and 51.17 percent for women. Again, sharp inter-state variations exist in female voter turnover in all national elections, revealing a close correlation between the rates of literacy and voter participation.

The political participation of women as reflected by the number of female contestants and winners in elections is very poor. The number of female contestants in the ten parliamentary
elections from 1952 to 1991 has been a negligible fraction (within 2 and 4 percent of the total number in the field). The proportion of seats won by women has been slightly better, between 3 and 7 percent.

F. SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

Social solidarity among women is very essential for their upliftment. Unfortunately, this is not present among the Indian women to the extent needed.

The economic contribution of millions of uneducated women in our country continues to be unrecognized, primarily because these women are unorganized. Though efforts are being made to raise the public awareness on issues related to women, hardly do these issues figure in election campaigns.

Though Mahatma Gandhi and his followers succeeded in mobilizing the Indian women, across the spectrum of castes and classes during the freedom struggle; the same spirit of active participation of women in fighting their own social disabilities was not seen in the years that followed. After a long period of inaction, lately a number of organizations have come up with efforts to alleviate the social disabilities of women.

A hopeful feature of the present is that a large number of women's groups exist mostly in rural areas, an estimated 70,000
Mahila Mandals with a membership of around 1.75 million women. But only about a tenth of these Mahila Mandals are active. Social workers are trying to promote Mahila Mandals where there are none, to reactivate the inert ones, and to reshape all of them into a movement that could liberate women in the low income groups from their social and economic disabilities, instead of being dependent organizations of dependent individuals, delivering at best a few welfare services (UNICEF, 1984).

The report of the world conference of the UN Decade for Women (Copenhagen, July 1980) states, "while women represent 50 per cent of world adult population and a third of official labour force, they perform nearly two-thirds of all working hours, receive only a tenth of world income and own less than one per cent of world property". This would be true, more or less, of India too.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that education, employment and economic and social security still elude millions of Indian women. Simply increasing the work participation rates would not help to raise the status of women. They need educational opportunities that would enable them to go for work that is rewarding both economically and psychologically, which in turn would help them gain a higher degree of control over their own lives.
Further, the fundamental root causes for the present low status of women such as social values, attitudes and practices related to the women's civil rights and status, caste structure, institution of marriage should be attacked (Chatterjee, 1980). This aspect gains its significance in view of the nature of women. With women many traits are conditioned by upbringing and environment. This is the reason why women are flexible and compliant when it comes to various external influences and opinions. For women, judgements of their immediate environment are more meaningful than for men (Zatsepin, 1986).

THE GENESIS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The existing poor status of women itself stresses the need for a thorough appraisal of the women in the society i.e., of their problems in making their share of life, the influences they are undergoing and the effects of these influences in shaping their lives and destiny. This is of great significance to decide what should be and can be done to help them to take a more aggressive attitude towards life and towards achieving things so as to make best use of their potentialities.

The changing needs of the society have resulted in a changed role for women. In the present times it has been increasingly
plain that the contributions of a woman as an individual to her family, country and the human society as a whole are very important. To participate in the modern world effectively, she needs the total development of her personality so that her capabilities and faculties are put to a better and wider use which results in the realization of her life in its fuller sense.

Though disappointing when viewed at a mass level, significant changes are taking place in the traditional concept of what is man's work and what is woman's work. So far as the position of those women who have facilities for education and training is taken into consideration, opportunity has opened up for them in all occupations. With the increase in the educational facilities for girls, more and more women are entering in the fields and professions which were considered to be the provinces of men alone in the past.

In this context, in light of the positive changes taking place in the educational and occupational scenes of the society, a study of educational and occupational aspirations of female undergraduate students aids to have a picture of what sort of participation they would like to envisage in future, in the social and economic spheres of the nation. The study also helps to have an insight into the respondents' aspirations for social and economic status and their value orientations in the changing society.
A number of researchers conducted studies on women since fifties all over India. But only research or law cannot improve the status unless women themselves are conscious about their rights and responsibilities and they make an attempt to be responsible for themselves and exercise their rights. Hence, the present study is an attempt to know whether the female students are conscious of the issue and to what extent they are concerned about the prevailing discrimination and what are their plans in terms of realistic aspirations in the fields of education and occupation, to combat the inequality.

In general, every girl gets influenced by certain factors like socio-economic status, the available role models, self-concepts, parental expectations etc., which play a major role in shaping her attitude towards equality of women and her aspirations for education and occupation, apart from the quality and style of her life. These aspirations not only mould her lifestyle, but they also determine how much a part of the society she is, how much she can contribute to the society and how much she can derive from the society in turn.

Among the factors that influence the educational and occupational aspirations, socio-economic status is one of the most important factors as it determines various other influences that are vital in moulding one's aspirations, as well as one's
attitude towards equality of women. The investigator's observations, and interaction with women students belonging to different socio-economic strata revealed that the women students belonging to high socio-economic group, normally experienced little discrimination in the opportunity for education, freedom of movement, freedom to choose their career etc., though the students themselves impose certain restrictions on themselves in accordance with their parents' wishes. The women students of middle and low socio-economic strata, experienced and expressed their pain regarding the discrimination they face in the families pertaining to the opportunity for education and training, attention being paid during ill health, freedom of movement, freedom of decision making regarding education and career, etc.

Not only that, the various factors like the educational status of the family members, occupational status of the family members etc., which are taken into consideration in assessing the socio-economic status, influence the assistance and guidance the students receive from the family and other social groups in choosing and planning their courses of study and careers wisely, these factors also determine the availability of role models. In case of majority of students belonging to low socio-economic stratum, the absence of informed and sympathetic parents acts as a serious handicap in enabling them to aspire high as related to education and careers.
Further, the treatment the women students receive and the experiences in their families and other social circles they move about; the exposure or lack of it to the mass media communications related to the opportunities for women in the fields of education and occupation, the qualities and qualifications required to make avail of these opportunities, the success stories of women in different careers, etc., influence their attitude towards equality of women. And so, the female undergraduate students of different socio-economic strata may tend to have differences in their attitude towards equality of women as also in their educational and occupational aspirations.

Attitudes influence the covert as well as overt behaviour. According to Oppenheim (1973), an attitude is a state of readiness, a tendency to act or react in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli. Attitudes are reinforced by beliefs (the cognitive component), and often attract strong feelings (the emotional component), that will tend to particular forms of behaviour (the action tendency component).

Some attitudes are more enduring than others. For ease of understanding, social psychologists make a rough distinction among these different levels, calling the most superficial, the beliefs; the next attitudes; a deeper level values or basic attitudes and still deeper level, personality. These rather
vague distinctions amongst different levels of belief must be thought of as more versus less enduring, deeper versus more superficial, relatively stable versus relatively changeable, and more general versus more specific (Oppenheim, 1973).

Attitudes form the core of one's personal life and determine the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of a person to a great extent. Hence, the study of attitudes is supposed to be very important and indispensable in understanding any aspect of human behaviour.

In view of the importance of the study of attitudes, the investigator felt the need to study the attitude of the respondents towards equality of women and its influence on their educational and occupational aspirations. Economic independence is a pre-requisite for achievement of equality of women. Hence, the positive or negative attitudes of respondents towards equality of women influence their aspirations or lack of aspirations for occupations as well as for further education.

In order to know how the women students are responding to the poor status of women in the society and the prevailing discrimination against women in all spheres of life, it was decided to collect the data from women students. Though the society bears the greater share of responsibility for the prevalence of discrimination against women, women themselves are also responsi-
ble partly for the continuation of inequality of their status. Many of the educated women also tend to fail to make full advantage of the opportunities available because of their self-imposed restrictions, and underestimation of their capabilities.

Final year undergraduate students were selected for the study because they would be mature enough to give some definite information regarding their educational and occupational aspirations. Further, the educational and occupational opportunities open to them are many and varied if they are competent and capable to avail the opportunities. They can choose to (i) pursue higher education in the field of their interest, (ii) go for short-term courses as a preparation for future employment, (iii) go for entrepreneurship, and (iv) seek direct employment in public or private sector enterprises. However, some may stay at home and get married either because of their own wish or to fulfil the wishes of their parents.

Students from all faculties of study were included. The expectation is that the students from different faculties will differ in their educational and occupational aspirations and their attitude towards equality of women, owing to the differences in exposure based on their subjects of study. For ex., the students who opted for sociology, wherein they are exposed to the changes in the role and status of women in
different times, may give more thought to the issues of women than others who did not have such an exposure. This in turn may influence their attitude towards equality of women as also their educational and occupational aspirations. Secondly, the educational and occupational opportunities, that are open to the undergraduate students vary considerably based on their faculties of study and subject specialization, though there are a few educational courses and careers open to all undergraduate students.

In view of the scope for differences in the educational and occupational aspirations and also in the attitude towards equality of women, of the women students from single sex colleges and mixed colleges, respondents were taken from both the types of colleges. The investigator feels that education in mixed colleges may help to erase the wrong notions of female students about the assumed superiority of the capabilities of male students as related to their studies. Moreover, male students in general tend to have greater exposure as their freedom of movement is not restricted as that of their female counterparts. The opportunity for interaction with their male classmates may help the female undergraduate students of mixed colleges to develop a broader outlook for life and also may increase their self-confidence. Thus, the interaction and the type of exposure the women students receive depending on the type of college may influence
the attitude towards equality of women as well as their educational and occupational aspirations. Greater the interaction between the students of both the sexes, greater will be the impact of it on the specific aspirations and attitude of female students and vice-versa.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Undergraduate Students

In Indian context all the students of the three year bachelor's course and the students in any year of first professional degree course come under the purview of the term "undergraduate".

In the present study, however, only those female students who were in the final year of their three year bachelor's degree course were considered.

Educational Aspirations

The term "Educational Aspirations" refers to what the respondents aspire to achieve in the field of education immediately after the completion of bachelor's degree course.
Occupational Aspirations

The term "Occupational Aspirations" refers to the occupations the respondents aspire to take up after completion of their studies.

Though the terms 'Occupation' and 'Job' are used synonymously in general, there is some difference in what they refer to. For clarification, let us consider the definitions of these terms. According to Shartle (1961), occupation is "a group of similar jobs found in several establishments" and job is a "group of similar positions in a single plant, business establishment, educational institution, or other organization. There may be one or many persons employed in the same job".

Socio-economic Status

Different researchers used different combinations of factors to determine the socio-economic status of their respondents. Some of the factors used as indicators of socio-economic status by various researchers are educational level of family members, sources of income, social position of relatives, material possessions, property owned by the family etc.

In the present study, the term refers to the socio-economic status of the respondents as determined by using Rao's (1970) socio-economic status rating scale.
Equality of women

The term "Equality of Women" is used with a meaning that both men and women as persons are equally entitled to opportunities for optimum development and have equal rights and responsibilities as regards to the life in the family and the society.

Faculty of Study

The term "Faculty of Study" is used to refer to the different branches of study at undergraduate level i.e., Commerce, Arts, Science and Home Science.

FACTORs INFLUENCING EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF WOMEN STUDENTS

A number of influences taking their roots from four major factors (depicted in figure 1) namely, (A) Socio-economic Status of the family, (B) Self-imposed restrictions, (C) Socialization process, and (D) Individual's educational background, play an important role in determining the educational and occupational aspirations of women students. An attempt is made in this section to touch upon a few of the influences under each of these major factors.
Fig. 1: Net-work diagram of factors influencing the educational and occupational aspirations of women students.
A. Socio-economic Status of the family

Socio-economic status of the family determines the opportunities for education and training, the social groups in which one moves, the exposure to mass media, parental expectations, availability of role models, the assistance and guidance one receives from the family and other social groups regarding the choice of faculty of study, careers etc.

Further, the informal education at home and the formal education at the educational institutions and the interaction in other social groups either hinders or furthers the development of qualities like independence and individuality. These qualities play a greater role in the formation of self-confidence of an individual, which in turn influences the goals one sets for oneself in the fields of education and occupation.

B. Self-imposed restrictions

Self-imposed restrictions like, unwillingness to move into new places, restricted social and work values inhibit the educational and occupational aspirations of women students. Though working women's hostels maintained by government are available in many places, many of the women job seekers want to go in for employment in the local or near about areas, within close proximity of their parental residence. This tendency among women naturally restricts the opportunities open to them.
In addition to this, the notion that only a few jobs are suited for women prevails in a large section of the society. Though practically it is being proved that women can take to any job and work as effectively as men, this notion continues, influencing many women to aspire for only those jobs which are considered as suitable for women.

C. Socialization Process

Fitzgerald and Crites (1980) have rightly referred to "...that combination of attitudes, role expectations, behaviour, and sanctions" as socialization process, which is found to be affecting the achievement motivation of women, lowering their aspirations.

Girls and women have low expectations for success in many achievement activities. This is explained in terms of sex role training of girls which develops "...the belief that achievement strivings are incompatible with femininity and successful achievement can be accomplished at the price of loss of femininity and social rejection which leads to avoid achievement" (Horner, 1972).

As a result of internalization of sex-role stereotypes girls feel less pride and confidence in their abilities. The sex stereotypes held in the society indicate that men are viewed as more achieving, more active, striving, intelligent, powerful and independent than women.
Further, a perceived split in the role demands of wife/mother and worker (Ginzberg et al., 1966) also affects the career aspirations of women students and thereby their educational aspirations.

D. Individual's Educational Background

Education aims at scientific humanism, development of reason, creativity, the spirit of social responsibility, and search for balance among the various intellectual, ethical, emotional and physical components of personality and in a positive perception of mankind's historic fate (NCERT, 1974). Therefore, it can be expected that education helps women to overcome the irrational prejudices they hold against themselves as regards their capabilities. Further, it can also be expected that it helps them to develop a healthy attitude towards the equal participation of women in social and economic activities and thus the related aspirations.

This being the general influence of education on one's educational and occupational aspirations, the other aspects of an individual's educational background like level of education, faculty of study, type of college, technical training received etc., also exert an influence on their educational and occupational aspirations. These aspects either directly
determine the opportunities open to one in the fields of education and occupation or indirectly influence the aspirations by having a hold on the exposure one receives that may help to overcome the biased notions fed into them about the supposed inferior capabilities of women.

ROLE OF CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO IMPROVING THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The vital role guidance and counselling can play in giving an appropriate direction to the student's educational and occupational choices or aspirations and in helping them to solve their educational, vocational and personal problems is well established. However, counselling and guidance for women students is of special significance as it should focus on combating the influences that inhibit the women students' achievement motivation and restrict their educational and vocational aspirations.

The ambivalent attitude the society displays towards the working female has socialized women to be more concerned about their success in love, marriage, and family than they are with the choice of an occupation. Even intellectually gifted women often prefer not to jeopardize their success as home makers by employment outside the home (Ohlsen, 1968). This tendency persists among many women of our country too.
But, achievement of equality for women presupposes economic independence of women. Women will not be able to develop to the optimum extent of their potentialities and desires unless they have access to financial resources and are not dependent on others for their livelihood. Proper guidance and counselling at the right time forms a very significant means to achieve economic equality of women.

Not only that many women tend to stay at home in spite of their abilities to be successfully employed, in order to avoid home-career conflict. Even those who want to enter the employment market tend to have low occupational aspirations that are unrealistic in terms of their aptitudes, interests and level of intelligence. The reason for this is explained in terms of "fear of success" (Horner, 1972), which indicates that the achievement motivation of women is inhibited by the effects of sex-role socialization. As a result, substantial numbers of bright young women consciously choose careers well below their level of ability.

The case of an young woman presented by Shaw (1955) is worth quoting in this context, to show how counselling and guidance can help women students to get out of the cultural stereo-types and aspire for the occupations which are suitable to them in view of their potentialities. An extremely bright high school
senior who was headed toward elementary school teaching, put it when asked why she preferred this vocation. "I guess I am just a traditional girl". But when urged by the counsellor to consider other career options for herself, ones that were non-traditional for women, yet more consistent with her obvious high level of ability, she not only became more involved in the choice process but thought of several occupations that would better utilize her potentialities.

Realizing the need for optimum utilization of potentialities of women for nation building, the National Policy of Education, 1986 has rightly indicated that (i) identification of certain skills and occupations as suitable or relevant for women will not be entertained any further, (ii) the selection of subjects will be based on the employment potential and (iii) counselling services will be provided to enable women to opt for new subjects, aimed at technical or vocational education of women.

Having considered the why of counselling and guidance for women, the how of it becomes relevant. During the process of counselling and guidance the counsellor has to take necessary steps to counteract the inhibitions of many female students to proactively engage in decision making. Some of the steps that can help women students to develop their potentialities and to
aspire for their righteous place in the fields of education and occupation are suggested.

1. Promoting an understanding of the effect of environment in moulding them the way they are at present as regards to their role expectations, achievement related expectations, attitudes, inhibitions, fears etc.

This can be done by helping them to examine and analyse (i) the cultural influences that inhibit achievement motivation of women, (ii) the effects of socialization process that have limited their aspirations, self-related expectations, desires, attitudes, etc. As the research by Osborn (1977) and others has revealed, a historical perspective of women also will be helpful.

2. Aiding them to gain an insight into their abilities, interests, aptitudes, values, level of intelligence and other personal qualities through psychological testing and evaluation. This self-knowledge helps them to gain self-confidence and also will be helpful in the selection of educational courses and occupations on a realistic basis.

3. Assisting them in examining and selecting the appropriate faculties of education and occupation in view of their talents. This helps them to achieve optimum personal satisfaction and to make maximum possible contribution to the benefit of the society.

At this juncture, an overview of the counselling and guidance services available to Indian students is worth considering. In India, guidance to young people is provided by State and Central Bureaux of Educational and Vocational Guidance and the National Employment Service.

National Employment Service offers a programme of employment service specifically addressed to University students through University Employment Information and Guidance Bureaux (UEI &
GB). The functions of these Bureaux include dissemination of educational and occupational information, rendering of vocational guidance, registration of professional graduates and post-graduates of all disciplines, and arranging coaching classes for various competitive examinations like civil services examinations, Banking services examinations etc. However, the range and quality of the activities catered to by these UEI & GB depend on the financial and professional assistance provided by the concerned Universities.

Apart from the UEI & GBs, a number of Universities have student counselling centres, started in 1950's and 1960's with the support of U.S. Educational Foundation in India and University Grants Commission (UGC). The objective of these counselling centres is to offer practical service to students with educational, vocational and personal problems; conduct guidance and counselling research and train guidance personnel. The initial agreement was that the UGC supports these centres for a period of five years. Later on either the State Government or the University has to take over the responsibility of funding these centres. Thus, the survival of these centres depended on the interest of the State Governments and the concerned Universities.

Moreover, neither a mechanism of coordination among these institutions nor a network to facilitate communication among the
staff responsible for these services exists. The counselling services which are referred to as student services since 1963 suffer from a number of drawbacks i.e., lack of teamwork, paucity of professionally trained personnel, lack of academic status for counsellors and the University Politics etc. (Pasricha, 1976).

Further, the assurance of National Policy of Education, 1986, that guidance and counselling services for students will be strengthened also reflects the inadequacy and poor quality of the available guidance and counselling services, in general.

On the positive side, production of career literature has been making a good progress. The Directorate-General of Employment and Training (D.G.E.& T.) of the Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation, Union Ministry of Education, National Council of Educational Research and Training, State Bureau of Educational and Vocational guidance, University Educational Information and Guidance Bureaux and State Directorates of Employment are producing occupational information. However, the sex bias prevails in this literature i.e., depicting certain occupations as suitable for women, which needs to be rectified.

Apart from the information dissemination by the governmental and educational institutions, the mass media are also rendering worthwhile service to the youth in this regard. In the recent
times, some regional newspapers have started offering educational guidance by answering the queries of the news readers regarding the availability of specific educational courses, the educational background needed to enter the different courses, time of admission into the course, duration of the course etc.

In summary, in the back drop of the various influences contributing to the present poor status of women, it is very clear that economic independence of women is decisively a prerequisite for achieving an equal status for them on par with men. Education is an effective and essential tool to lead to gainful employment. However, owing to the influences of various factors which have their roots in the socio-economic background and socialization process, even the educated women tend to have either low vocational aspirations which are unrealistic in view of their potentialities or no vocational aspirations at all. This unfortunate state of affairs calls for effective guidance and counselling through intervention programmes aimed at enhancing these aspirations. As aspirations determine the goal seeking behaviour of a person, an enhancement in the educational and occupational aspirations of women students can be expected to lead to an improvement in the status of women.

To plan appropriate intervention programmes, the knowledge of the variables that influence the educational and occupational
aspirations becomes necessary. Hence, the present study is undertaken to explore the influence of a few selected variables, namely, socio-economic status, attitude towards equality of women, faculty of study and type of college at which one is studying, on the educational and occupational aspirations of women students.