CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION AND MODERNITY OF WOMEN:
A STUDY OF BENGALI WOMEN
There is a sharp distinction between a man's activities and a woman's activities in the inegalitarian society of India. It is generally assumed that women's roles must be confined to rigidly defined limits as mother, wife, daughter and sister. They are expected to be home-makers, who confine themselves to domestic activities. But the spread of female education and other concomitant changes in socio-economic order have called for a fundamental redefinition of sex roles in recent years. We now see that traditional ideas, segregating women from the world of economic activities, have begun to change, with educated women taking up white collar jobs. Economic status of women is now being recognized as an
indicator of their status in society\textsuperscript{1}.

In the present Chapter, we propose to examine the relationship between education and women's economic status. We study the contribution of education towards women's economic independence in two aspects. First, we examine the extent to which education has contributed to enhancing the prospect of women's getting honourable employment, and to ascertain whether education has ensured male-female parity in the employment market. Secondly, we explore the extent to which education has brought about modernity in the attitudes and mental make-ups of women with regard to their economic self-sufficiency through employment. An attempt is also made to ascertain the extent to which women's employment has ameliorated their status.

The findings of this Chapter are based on various studies and reports already presented by scholars and officials on women's position in the employment market, in India as a whole and in West Bengal, in particular, and on the findings of our case study, made in Calcutta and Burdwan, the two districts of West Bengal.

Let us try to see the extent to which education has contributed to enhancing job opportunities for women. There is no doubt that education, particularly higher education, increases the opportunities for one's entrance into gainful white-collar categories of employment. The relation between education and women's financial independence via employment is also proved by this consideration: previously, until women had gained an access to education, the higher caste and middle class women were strictly confined to work done for their households. Women of the lower classes were employed in the traditional occupations. But it would not enable them to enjoy an honourable status. The middle and upper class women did not have economic independence. They never imagined that they could participate in the economic activities of the society, beyond their family life. We have already mentioned in the previous chapter that they had an inferior status in the family. In the society, the wife's status was determined by the position of her husband. Unmarried girls derived their status from the position of their fathers. But at present, due to the development of women's education, they can enjoy economic status. Education, especially higher education of women, enables them to gain an access to prestigious employment which gives them both regular incomes and
Owing to the spread of higher education among women, they are coming to various high status occupations, hitherto monopolized by menfolk. Now-a-days, women in India are working in administrative - managerial apparatus (13% of all employed), and in scientific and research institutions. They can be found among company, bank and enterprise managers. There are women among lawyers, economists, journalists and radio and TV editorial staff. Educated women are also working as stenographers, clerks, telephone operators and receptionists. The development of education has resulted in a remarkable rise in the number of female teachers; at present they comprise one-third of all school teachers in India. Before 1947, medical career was almost entirely a prerogative of men, whereas at present, women account for 7.1% of all doctors.

Now, we present some figures in order to provide a tentative profile of educated Bengali women, engaged in various non-traditional occupations. In modern occupations, i.e. occupations


"which require modern education, skill and training and involve use of sophisticated tools and modern technology and the occupations that have mainly come into existence after the spread of industrialization and modernization" ⁴, like those of architects, clerical workers, pilots, athletes, service, sport and recreation workers, etc. West Bengal had 713 females for every 10,000 females of India belonging to such occupations, in 1971 ⁵. Further, we may cite that during 1975-76, 166 women were in university faculty positions, 1,769 in colleges for general education and 459 in colleges for professional education ⁶.

In West Bengal, a handful of women have come to occupy eminent positions in some services. For instance, they have become District Magistrates, Judges, Heads of various University Departments, etc.

Here it may be referred to that there is a branch of a bank at Calcutta where the entire staff - from manager to bearer

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⁵ Ibid., p.73.
are women. In recent years, a large number of educated women of West Bengal are finding it relatively easy to get jobs in libraries of schools, colleges, universities, and also in public libraries of villages and towns, opened at the initiative of the Government of West Bengal. That is why, they have opted for careers in librarianship. They are joining under-graduate and post-graduate courses of study in Library Science in the Universities of Calcutta, Jadavpur and Burdwan. The preponderance of female students in Library Science is proved by the fact that out of every 100 students, there are 72 girls against 28 boys.

That more and more educated Bengali women are coming into the employment market can also be confirmed by the fact that Calcutta has provided special tram and bus services for the working girls.

Although, formally and theoretically, it is admitted that women are eligible for any kind of white-collar job according to their educational qualifications, the intimate link

8 Ibid., p.256.
9 Ibid., p.264.
between education and women's employment is found neither at
the all-India level, nor in West Bengal. In India, women
constitute only 6% of the workforce in the organized sector\textsuperscript{10}.
The proportion of women in 'Professional-Technical Work' in
India is only 8% of the total employed in that sector. All the
sectors have a small proportion of women\textsuperscript{11}. As far as various
prestigious, professional jobs are concerned, we find that
women are very poorly represented. Today, we find a small
number of women participating in such honourable services as
administrative jobs in both the public and private sectors,
engineering and legal professions. Particularly, in scienti-
fic and administrative services, the proportion of women is
very low. In science, they form the bulk of researchers, but
they are rarely seen in decision-making jobs, in production

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Status of Women in India: A Synopsis of the Report of
the National Committee (ICSSR), Allied Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 1975, p.63.}

\textsuperscript{11} Maithreyi Krishnaraj, 'The Status of Women in Science
or management, or in positions of authority. Education and medical services alone constitute areas of significantly expanding women's employment but as yet their proportions are too low to make a marked impact on overall participation of Indian women in economic activity. Presented below are some figures relating to the status of Indian women in a few prestigious jobs, in comparison with that of men. (See Table 1)

The position of educated Bengali women in the white-collar employment market also resembles the all-India pattern. Although, educated Bengali women have made a dent in various white-collar occupations, the number of educated job seekers among them have been increasing over time, causing a spurt in female unemployment. This is substantiated by the fact that in West Bengal, the number of job seeking women enrolled in the Employment Exchange in 1971 was 5,83,000. In 1974, the number went up to 9,73,000, i.e., 11.53% of the total number of job seekers. Out of the number in 1974, 47.7% are educated


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Titles</th>
<th>Workers (in 000's)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Administrators, Directors, Managers, Government Executives etc.</td>
<td>1762</td>
<td>2586</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Architects, Engineers and Surveyors</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Jurists</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Physicists, Chemists, Geologists and Other Physical Scientists</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Biologists, Veterinarians, Agronomists and related Scientists and Physicians, Surgeons and Dentists</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social Scientists</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers</td>
<td>1265</td>
<td>2104</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>638</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

from School Final to Post-Graduate. According to another report, 20% of 4,805,226 work seekers in West Bengal, men and women together, had graduate and higher degrees in 1975, the percentage being a little higher among women. 83% of women graduates in agriculture, residing in rural areas, and 20.6% of female medical graduates with additional qualifications, in urban areas, were unemployed around the same time.

The proportion of women, in relation to men, is low in all types of modern occupations. Taking West Bengal's total non-agricultural work force into consideration, we find that in 1971, there were only 846 females per 10,000 males. The figure was low compared to most of the other states in India. In fact, West Bengal ranked 10th. Similarly, out of every 10,000 females of India engaged in modern occupations, West Bengal's share in 1971 was 713, which was lower than the corresponding figure for 1961, when it had been 814. Again,

18 Ibid.
out of West Bengal's total non-agricultural female workforce of 401,147 in 1971, only 22% were in modern occupations.\(^{19}\)

Even in teaching profession, which absorbs a large bulk of women, total number of them engaged in all types of educational institutions in West Bengal were 48,352 out of a total of 2,563,74 teachers in 1975-76, i.e. about 20%\(^{20}\). The pattern of male-female disparity in white-collar occupations in West Bengal, is indicated in Table 2, given below\(^{21}\).

From the two Tables just cited, we find that in the sphere of employment, educated women are at a disadvantage in West Bengal as they are at the all-India level.

The positive correlation between education and women's participation in white-collar occupations is dependent on a host of factors, the absence of which from the socio-economic and cultural patterns of India, and also of West Bengal, mainly accounts for the lower percentage of educated women in white-collar jobs.

Educated women's poor representation in the job market is intimately connected with the overall economic condition of the country. The general economic situation in India is far from

\(^{19}\) Ibid., pp. 72, 145.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of occupations</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Elected and Legislative officials, Administrative and Executive officials, Government and Local Bodies, Other Supervisors (Inspectors etc.) and Village officials</td>
<td>36214</td>
<td>21805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Life Scientists, Physicians and Surgeons (Allopathic, Dental and Veterinary Surgeons)</td>
<td>49760</td>
<td>23952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Physical Scientists, Civil Engineers, Overseers and Technicians, Architects, Engineers, Technologists and Surveyors</td>
<td>18109</td>
<td>13590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Jurists</td>
<td>15328</td>
<td>11044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teachers</td>
<td>201780</td>
<td>63760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

satisfactory. The real difficulty pertaining to the entrance of women in honourable employment market lies in the failure of the economy to absorb all its labour power\textsuperscript{22}. Not only the womenfolk, but also the menfolk are not in a position to get jobs easily because of the unemployment problem in India. The uneven development of the country, coupled with faulty economic planning, have made the unemployment problem more acute in India. West Bengal also has its share of the burden.

Owing to socio-political pressures, education, especially that of women, has expanded. The spread of education has resulted in a sharp rise in the number of educated job-seekers. Educated women, too, are expecting economic independence through suitable employment. But the expansion of job opportunities in India has failed to keep pace with the rise in the number of educated persons, both males and females, who are crowding the job market, but are denied such opportunities. Consequently, women, the weaker section, have been the worse victims of such economic maladies. We may refer here to the observations of the Planning Commission: The higher rate of unemployment among women has resulted in the disturbing fact that nearly 40% of total unemployment to-day is accounted for by women. Their share in unemployment (about 40%) is higher than

their share in the labour force (about 33%) \(^{23}\). The plight of educated women is even worse. For instance, in 1971, educated and skilled women in India formed 55.6% of the total unemployed. The figure shot up to 64.64% by 1978\(^{24}\).

In West Bengal also, the figure for educated women's unemployment continues to escalate and is relatively high compared to males as we have already shown. It may be noted that the economy of West Bengal is no better than the overall economic condition of India. Successive State Governments of West Bengal have failed to satisfy the increasing demand for white-collar jobs. As a result, we find limited involvement of Bengali women in such jobs. Since the labour market in India, and West Bengal too, does not provide full, productive, and freely chosen employment, many educated women prefer to avoid competitive pressures\(^{25}\). In the process they have to accept an inferior economic status in society.


Educated women's unequal position in white-collar job is also largely due to the nature of socio-cultural set-up in India which does not still fully recognize the new role of educated women as breadwinners. The process of discrimination against women begins at the early stage of their socialization in an Indian family. The Bengali families also are no exceptions. The role of a girl is considered to be that of a typical homemaker. Family, the primary agency of socialization, pays much less attention to girls' education than it does to that of boys. Since women's education is still viewed as an asset in the matrimonial market, not many of the parents visualize a career for their daughters 26. While there exists no hesitation on the part of the parents to pledge their family wealth for the education of the boys, none can deny that they are unwilling to do so in the case of girls 27. As a result, although the girls somehow manage to pass their examinations without much financial and moral support, they cannot prove themselves professionally afterwards.

26 Ibid., p.30.
On the contrary, it is considered that male members are main breadwinners. So studies and career motivations are emphasized for boys. They are made conscious of their future role as breadwinners right from their childhood. A career-oriented education is imparted to them for this purpose through family. This is how the male-members come to dominate the job market.

In a different way also, early socialization of Bengali girls may be held responsible for their limited entry into prestigious jobs. The girl learns early in life the need for flexibility, adjustment and submissiveness, and hesitates to develop strong opinions and commitments. She is taught to bear hardships and adversities of family life with equanimity. But she is not encouraged to acquire similar qualities - hardiness, struggle-mindedness, etc. - for securing an independent source of livelihood. As a result, we find educated women getting inwardly and shy in the larger environment, beyond their family lives. These constrictions and inhibitions affect most women when they have to compete with men for their careers. Many educated women cannot boldly face the interview for getting a job. They express their views with a bit of nervousness before the interview board and fail to get through because of their shyness which, one regards as lack of smartness.

Educated Bengali women's marriage poses a major obstacle to their becoming independent breadwinners. Child bearing, child rearing and housewifery are the three typical functions to be performed by a married woman. Even higher educated women are to satisfy these role-expectations of their relatives and family friends. An educated housewife may opt for a job only on condition that she will be able to combine the dual roles of home maker and wage earner. The married women who come to the employment market, notwithstanding such constraints, find it difficult to continue with their jobs, unless offered a helping hand by their husbands or other supportive institutions. But such support is still not forthcoming in the socio-cultural situation of West Bengal, marked by "perpetuation of the traditional division of labour based on sex".

Now-a-days, a husband welcomes his wife taking up a job and making financial contribution to the family. But he also expects at the same time that his wife shall perform all the household chores and spend time in acquiring accomplishments to please him. As a result, what really happens to married women, who are educated and also employed, is that, despite

their economic self-sufficiency, they are not allowed the luxury of getting relief of their domestic works. Employment only adds to the burden of work they have already to bear. The change they experience in lives is brought about by 'role-extension' or 'role-expansion', with hardly any modification of the roles of others with whom they interact. This 'role-extension' creates strains and tensions in the lives of working women. Faced with the strains of such dual commitments, many women prefer to opt out of the employment market and concentrate on the home.

Let us see certain other problems which affect the employment prospect of educated women in India and also in West Bengal. Here we shall stress the issue of job location. Educated women are not in a position to take up all types of jobs at all places even if they are offered such opportunities. We often come across instances where an educated woman cannot accept a job, otherwise suitable to her, because of the problem of finding living quarters away from home. Not only the problem of housing but also lack of proper security arrangements force many women to refuse a job. It is also found that some of the

working places lack the atmosphere congenial to women. It is not uncommon that a girl faces severe mental tortures – humiliations, teasing, etc. in her place of work, or on her way to and from the working place\textsuperscript{31}, and also in the place of living in case she has got to stay alone. We may reasonably argue here that in India, and also in West Bengal, people in general are still hesitant to look upon employed women with dignity and honour. With a view to avoiding such an unsavoury cultural atmosphere, some educated women want to live within the home and known environment under the protection of their male-relatives, even at the cost of their economic status.

The present imbalance in the position of women in the prestigious job market has been, to some extent, the result of discriminatory recruitment policies. There are conscious and unconscious biases of employers that operate against women's employment in various occupations\textsuperscript{32}. There is a higher degree of involuntary unemployment among Indian women scientists than among men. This is due either to employer's reluctance in employing women or the disinclination of an institution to make

\textsuperscript{31} E.M.S. Namboodiripad, 'Perspective of the Women's Movement', \textit{Social Scientist}, Vol.4, No.4/5, 1975, p.5.

any allowance for women who have often to combine a home-making role with that of a wage earner. It is fairly clear, then, that a woman scientist is often discriminated in the high prestige job because of her sex. It is believed that in high status employment market, women are incapable of assuming higher responsibilities. Male managers still have a preconceived notion that women are not serious about careers, or that they have little business or organizational capacity.

Many private concerns, and even a few in the public sector, admitted in response to the questionnaire, circulated by the National Committee on the Status of Women, that they do not recruit women at the managerial level as a matter of policy.

As a result, we find that though the educated women are participating in white-collar occupations, most of them have been engaged in lower cadre jobs. For example, 80% of the women in the Central Government services belong to class III. Only 9%


of the staff in banks are women who are mostly engaged in clerkships. The discriminatory policies of the Government of India can also be seen from the fact that of the ten class I services of the Railway Ministry, women are accepted only in Accounts and Medical services, and are denied the opportunity to enter the traffic or other services. It goes without saying that educated Bengali women also are the victims of such disabilities and discriminations.

Even the very centres of education harbour this discrimination. Very few of the universities in India have women in non-teaching positions. In West Bengal also, the participation of women is very low in non-teaching position of colleges and universities. The few educated women, who are in non-teaching positions, are mostly engaged in libraries of such institutions. For example, in The University of Burdwan, there is only one woman among the 38 officers, and she is attached to the library. Out of a total of 996 non-teaching employees, women number only 63, out of whom 32 are farm labourers, sweepers, bearers and hostel attendants, 4 are matrons of the


girls' hostels, and 27 are stenographers, typists, clerks, supervisors etc. 14 out of this 27 are attached to the library.

In the light of these evidences, it may be appropriate to cite the observation of the Planning Commission that "the labour market, as it is operating, is not neutral as between men and women." The lower involvement of educated women in honourable employment market is, to some extent, caused by the educational system of our country, which does not make a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to change the traditional value-system, based on inequality between men and women. Naturally, it fails to develop the new value system which accepts equality of the sexes. On the contrary, the educational process has been helping to uphold and fortify traditional prejudices through its curricula, classification of subjects on the basis of sex and

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39 Information concerning male-female break-up of officers and non-teaching employees of The University of Burdwan has been collected by the researcher, from the Office of the Registrar of the University.

the unwritten code of conduct enforced on the pupil. In
West Bengal, policy-makers, planners and educationists have
failed to restructure education so as to weed out sex biases
from its courses and curricula. May be, their unconscious
male bias stands in the way of their sober appraisal of this
particular problem and its long-term implications.

Let us explain the kind of socialization, pupils receive in
the educational set-up. Like the family, the deep foundations
of the inequality of the sexes are instilled into the minds
of boys and girls through education. Directly or indirectly,
such themes as reinforce the traditional sexual division of
labour, are included in school curricula. It will not be
irrelevant to cite the findings of a study of the text-books
used in Kerala Schools conducted by Kamalesh Nischol. He ob-
serves that in these books, most of the stories are male-
dominated and girls when they appear, are represented as
playful and submissive, while boys are daring and assertive.


42 Kamalesh Nischal, Influences of Exposure to Educational
Materials and Teacher Attitudes on School Children's
Attitudes Towards Sex Role in Society, Kerala, mimeo,
1979, Cited in Andre Beteille (ed.), Equality and
Inequality : Theory and Practice, Oxford University
The same pattern is found in West Bengal. Here also one can find the sex-biases in text books, e.g., we find frequent references to Sita and Savitri as ideals of womanhood in school text books. These tend to perpetuate the traditional values glorifying the subordinate and dependent role of women. The characteristics which ennoble a woman are sacrifice, self-denial and above all, devotion to husband. This results in the development of social attitudes among even many educated persons, men and women, which accept a woman's dependent and unequal status as a natural order of society. Hence, one may legitimately argue that education indirectly injects into the minds of girls, the idea that they should emphasize their traditional role, instead of making economic self-sufficiency their motto in life, as boys do. Traditional values and norms are also being imparted to the male-members of the society through education. Thus, curricula of our education encourage the existing sex-biases pertaining to the sphere of activities of men and women.

In this connection, it may be stated that there are arrangements for imparting lessons in home science in some of the girls' schools and in a few colleges for women. But it will be rare to find boys' schools and colleges, offering instructions in domestic science. Here sex bias, rather than any
assessment of aptitude, underlies the decision that boys should learn science, and girls be better equipped for the future with lessons in home-science. It may be legitimately argued that educational system in this way fosters the traditional division of labour between the two sexes.

It should also be noted that the quality of the girls' schools and colleges is comparatively poor. Many girls' schools at the middle and secondary level suffer from inadequate teaching facilities and low standards, particularly for subjects such as science and mathematics, limiting the student's choice of subjects. Many girl students do not have options to choose those subjects which might help them to gain some footholds in the employment market. The extremely rapid expansion of women's colleges in India, from 81 in 1953-54 to 435 in 1971-72, has resulted in low standards of teaching. In case of West Bengal, the increase was from 14 in 1947-48 to 41 in 1971-72. But such quantitative expansion has not been matched by an improvement in the quality of such educational institutions. The spread of sub-standard or limited education cannot help the achievement of equality of opportunities.

We also find sexual discrimination in vocational education which has resulted in imbalance in the growth rate of women's employment. Training facilities developed for women in the past few years display the existing social biases concerning suitability of women for particular occupations, and this has led to their over concentration in a limited number of courses. Women do not have an equal access to technology, polytechnic, engineering etc., with men. It may be pointed out that women's vocational/professional education is entirely related to the traditional jobs which are regarded as feminine. Some of these jobs are, in effect, extensions of housework.  

Due to all these factors, Bengali women's participation in the white-collar occupations is not quite satisfactory. Education, even higher education, has failed to produce adequate changes in the position of women in the prestigious job market and thereby ensure male-female parity. We may note that education alone cannot remove the relative disability imposed on women by the male-dominated job market.

However, it has to be acknowledged that in recent years, educated Bengali women are coming into the field of employment in increasing numbers, albeit with much difficulties. Women's exposure to education on the one hand, and economic compulsions on the other, have prompted educated Bengali women to be on the look out for jobs. Though, in a situation of "acute general unemployment", they cannot snatch employment chances from men easily, yet the very fact of their coming out of homes has significantly "posed a threat to the old myth that women's place was in the home". Education and employment have brought Bengali women into the open "where they can observe themselves in relation to others and measure their own maturity and experience" 47.

III

Since, in this study, our concern is chiefly to examine the impact of education, especially higher education, on the Bengali women's mental make-ups/value orientations in respect of their economic independence, through suitable employment,

we have studied the attitudes of 200 educated women - 100 in Calcutta and 100 in Burdwan - the two West Bengal districts. Both the questionnaire and interview methods have been followed by us in our survey.

With a view to observing the extent to which higher education has changed the ideas and values of women pertaining to their economic emancipation, in comparison with those of lower educated women, we have included both the higher educated and lower educated women in this study.

Let us see the attitude of women towards some of the questions related to their economic status. From the survey of our respondents' attitude and mental make-up, we find that higher education motivates women to achieve higher economic status. 77% of higher educated respondents (80% in Calcutta and 74% in Burdwan) express their urge for higher education mainly because of achieving economic self-sufficiency. Their goal behind taking education is to get jobs or to build up their careers. Only 23% of them (20% in Calcutta and 26% in Burdwan) do not agree to this view (See Table 3). They do not think that the goal of education is to achieve economic independence. They are of the opinion that one may participate in educational system for gathering true knowledge. Some of them even think that higher education ensures better marital prospects, while others
Table 3. Distribution of Responses to the Question Whether Employment is the Goal of Education, According to District and Level of Education. Total Respondents 200

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employment as the goal of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
look upon higher education as a means of utilizing spare time. But a relatively high percentage of the lower educated women do not offer unambiguous responses to our question. Nearly 48% of them (46% in Calcutta and 50% in Burdwan) state that women take education without any goal. Due to the initiative taken by their parents, they engage themselves in education. 52% of the lower educated respondents (54% in Calcutta and 50% in Burdwan) feel that the purpose of taking education is to secure a better economic position.

It should be noted that most of the married women in this category do not see employment as the goal of education. To examine whether marital status of a woman has any impact on her perception of the goal of education, we have made further investigation into the response patterns of married and unmarried respondents belonging to both the lower and higher educated categories.

In our sample of married women in the lower educated category, education and job-motivation are not found to correlate. Out of 50 respondents, only 12 identified employment or a suitable career as the goal behind their pursuit of education. The remaining 38 do not look upon education as providing an access to suitable employment. A few of them are not clear in their minds as to the goal of education. Some of them link up education with marital prospects. Others view education as a means
of utilizing leisure. The response pattern is similar irrespective of the areas of our survey. For example, the sample is evenly distributed between Calcutta and Burdwan. While in Calcutta, out of 25 respondents 7 (or just 28%) indicate their preference for education mainly for the sake of obtaining suitable career opportunities, in Burdwan, similar views are expressed by 5 out of 25 (or 20%). Only 24% of the sample look upon education as a means of gaining employment (See Table 4).

In the category of higher educated and married women, employed or otherwise, in Calcutta and Burdwan, however the response pattern is different. Majority of such respondents identify employment or a suitable career as the goal of higher education. In this category, again 50 respondents have been chosen, 25 each from Calcutta and Burdwan. While in Calcutta 18 out of 25 hold the view that employment is the goal of education, the corresponding figure for Burdwan is 16. Altogether 34 out of total 50 respondents, i.e. 68%, belonging to this category, see clearly employment or a career as the goal of education. Only the remaining 16 (7 in Calcutta and 9 in Burdwan), or a bare 32% are either undecided as to their object of taking education or see a better marital prospect, or better utilization of spare time as the only objective of education (See Table 5).
Table 4. Distribution of Lower Educated, Married Women's Responses to the Question Whether Employment is the Goal of Education, According to District. Total Respondents 50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Respondents-25</th>
<th>Employment as the goal of education</th>
<th>Education for other purposes or undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
<td>18 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
<td>20 (80%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Distribution of Higher Educated, Married Women's Responses to the Question Whether Employment is the Goal of Education, According to District. Total Respondents 50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Respondents-25</th>
<th>Employment as the goal of education</th>
<th>Education for other purposes, or undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18 (72%)</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16 (64%)</td>
<td>9 (36%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This shows that higher education has a strong employment motivating power, irrespective of marital status, whereas in case of those with a lower level of education, marital status can be taken as an intervening variable impinging on women's career orientation which we take to be an indicator of modernity.

We may substantiate this point further by looking at our sample of unmarried women belonging to the categories of both higher and lower educated, residing in Calcutta or Burdwan. We take 100 respondents, 50 each from Burdwan and Calcutta who are unmarried. The sample in each district is equally divided into higher educated and lower educated. Out of 25 lower educated, unmarried respondents of Calcutta, as many as 20, or 80%, see employment as the goal of education. Of the higher educated respondents, 22 or 88% express similar views. In Burdwan, the percentage of similar responses for the category of lower educated is 80 and that for the category of higher educated is 84 (See Table 6).

We may infer from the responses of the lower educated married women that they have a false sense of enjoying a secure marital life, both financially and socially. They think that marriage elevates their economic status more than employment.
Table 6. Distribution of Responses of Unmarried Women to the Question Whether Employment is the Goal of Education, According to District and Level of Education. Total Respondents 100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Respondents-50</th>
<th>Higher educated-25</th>
<th>Employment as goal</th>
<th>Education for other purposes or undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22 (88%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21 (84%)</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Employment as goal</th>
<th>Education for other purposes or undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a result, they do not develop employment-motivation during the post-marital lives. However, higher education has, to a great extent, succeeded in making women conscious about their economic position.

In order to gain economic liberty, an overwhelming majority of higher educated respondents strongly emphasize vocational education for girls at par with boys. They are opposed to any discrimination between boys and girls in matters of vocational training and education. Lower educated respondents are not so enthusiastic about girls' participation in vocational training. Among the higher educated respondents, 94% (96% in Calcutta and 92% in Burdwan) favour girls' vocational training at par with boys. Of the lower educated, 64% (70% in Calcutta and 58% in Burdwan) express identical views (See Table 7).

So it appears that educated women, in general, have increasingly become conscious of the need for vocational education and training. The lower educated respondents are only relatively less enthusiastic about such training, probably because they are not well informed of the many opportunities which such education and training may open up for them.

We have also examined our respondents' use of newspapers for collecting information about job opportunities, so as to test
Table 7. Distribution of Responses to the Question of Girls' Vocational Training at par with Boys, According to District, and Level of Education. Total Respondents 200.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of respondents</th>
<th>Not favouring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48 (96%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46 (92%)</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35 (70%)</td>
<td>15 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29 (58%)</td>
<td>21 (42%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
our respondents' eagerness for getting jobs and also their acquaintance with mass media as a means of sensitizing them to the need for economic emancipation. We have chosen only newspapers because other media like radio and television are not readily available to most of the women at all points of time and also because radio and television do not give a wide coverage to employment news. 87% of the higher educated respondents (96% in Calcutta and 78% in Burdwan) take the help of newspapers for collecting information about job opportunities regularly, while the remaining 13% (4% in Calcutta and 22% in Burdwan) do not go through the columns of newspapers regularly, in order to collect such information. Among the lower educated respondents, only 23% of them (32% in Calcutta and 14% in Burdwan) have regular contacts with newspapers for a similar purpose. 77% of them (68% in Calcutta and 86% in Burdwan) are not interested in reading employment columns of newspapers regularly (See Table 8). From further queries we come to learn that although they are not interested in employment columns, most of them read newspapers casually.

On the whole, most of our respondents, irrespective of their levels of education, have developed the habit of reading newspapers regularly or casually. But unlike the higher educated
Table 8. Distribution of Responses to the Question of Using Newspapers for Collecting Information About Job Opportunities Regularly, According to District, and Level of Education. Total Respondents 200.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taking the help of newspapers for collecting information about job opportunities regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48 (96%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7 (14%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
respondents, the lower educated ones do not take special interest in employment news.

To the question, whether women's economic independence is an essential factor for their liberation, an overwhelming majority of the higher educated respondents have answered in the positive (For the purpose of this question, we have used economic independence and employment interchangeably and we have explained this to our respondents in order to avoid any confusion). 72% of them (74% in Calcutta and 70% in Burdwan) have expressed the view that educated women should enter into the job market for achieving economic independence and liberating them from various kinds of socio-economic and cultural bondages. But 28% (26% in Calcutta and 30% in Burdwan) are of the opinion that economic independence, which employment provides, cannot be the essential factor for the liberation of women (See Table 9). Some of them substantiate their views by stating that the employed women, engaged in low prestige jobs, cannot enjoy better status than those unemployed women who belong to the rich families. The wife of a person, employed in high status occupation, enjoys high status. She may be more independent economically, and have greater opportunities for liberation than a girl who works in a clerical post, cannot enjoy social esteem and feel herself free from social bondages.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Considering economic independence as an essential factor for the liberation of women</th>
<th>Disagreeing with this view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37 (74%)</td>
<td>13 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35 (70%)</td>
<td>15 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11 (22%)</td>
<td>39 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6 (12%)</td>
<td>44 (88%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is ironical that in Bengal, women's hard-earned economic independence is not looked upon with esteem by the members of the society. A working woman gets her due only if she can manage a high prestige job. A sales girl or a nurse is generally regarded as a poor, helpless being, evoking only sympathy but no sense of respect. What is more unfortunate is that such a woman often entertains similar opinion about herself and her occupations.

However, higher education has awakened a large number of women to the need for economic emancipation as an essential precondition for women's liberation. It is true that all the educated women of West Bengal are not in a position to get jobs. In many cases, they fail to come into the job market. But there is no doubt that education has made them conscious about their economic status, and about the need to change the same.

As far as lower educated women are concerned, only 17% of them (22% in Calcutta and 12% in Burdwan) respond to our question in the affirmative. 83% of them (78% in Calcutta and 88% in Burdwan) answer in the negative (See Table 9). Most of them conceive that a happy marriage, rather than employment, enables a girl to enjoy a sense of liberation in the society. Such lower educated respondents do not appear to be much conscious and
concerned about the need for women's economic independence. In this regard, the responses of the lower educated women mark a sharp contrast with the responses of higher educated ones.

In regard to the other question relating to their financial independence, some contradictory responses are noticed. Although, theoretically, a large majority of higher educated respondents support women's gainful participation in the economic process, they will be happier to evade it, if possible. 60% of them (56% in Calcutta and 64% in Burdwan) do not want to come into the employment market if the financial condition of the family is stable. They feel that they should work if the family suffers from poverty. Only 40% of them (44% in Calcutta and 36% in Burdwan) show their desire to work outside the home despite the economic well-being of the family. They want to come into job market because they want to acquire an independent status. Here, we find a clear demarcation between the attitude of higher educated and that of lower educated respondents. The percentage of lower educated respondents, willing to work outside the home, despite economic well-being of the family, is only 19 (26 in Calcutta, and 12 in Burdwan). (See Table 10).

It may be stated here that economic compulsion, rather than education, motivates women to work outside the home. Economic
Table 10. Distribution of Respondents' Attitude to Working Outside the Home Despite Comfortable Financial Condition of the Family, According to District, and Level of Education. Total Respondents 200.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of respondents</th>
<th>Not so willing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Willing to work outside the home</td>
<td>28 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>despite comfortable financial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>condition of the family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22 (44%)</td>
<td>32 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18 (36%)</td>
<td>37 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13 (26%)</td>
<td>44 (88%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
necessity compels a girl to earn some money for her and her relative's livelihood. Education makes a girl conscious about her need for independent earning, but cannot remove all the difficulties in the way of a woman's utilizing the opportunities of employment, imposed by the society's traditional values, norms, etc. We have already stated that the working condition of Bengali women is not very congenial with the exception of a few high prestige jobs. The working women, engaged in low prestige jobs, are not yet honourably accepted by the sociocultural system of West Bengal. Naturally, in order to avoid the unpleasant circumstances, the educated women want to remain outside the labour market, provided their family conditions are comfortable. Such a state of mind, hardly conducive to modernity, is in turn reinforced by the objective conditions of a society that lies halfway between tradition and modernity.

We also find a clear demarcation of attitudes between the higher and lower educated respondents in relation to another question with a pointed focus on their perceptions of economic status. The question we asked our respondents is "would you like to do a job instead of being a full-time housewife?". 75% of higher educated respondents (78% in Calcutta and 72% in Burdwan), show their interest in doing a job outside home instead of being a full-time housewife. (See Table 11). Some of them
Table 11. Distribution of Respondents' Preference for Jobs or for Being Full-Time Housewives, According to District, and Level of Education. Total Respondents: 200.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Preferring a Job to Devoting the Whole of Time to Housewifery</th>
<th>Preferring to Be a Full-Time Housewife</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39 (78%)</td>
<td>11 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36 (72%)</td>
<td>14 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
<td>41 (82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6 (12%)</td>
<td>44 (88%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
clearly express the view that the life of a full-time housewife is intolerable, in course of our interviews with them. A typical housewife suffers from boredom. Some of them are also of opinion that their role in life, apart from being housewives after marriage, is to take part in the gainful economic activities in partnership with men. But 25% of them (22% in Calcutta and 28% in Burdwan) state that it is difficult, in the society, to which they belong, to perform the dual roles of a home-maker and a bread winner. Particularly, after becoming a mother, women should not work outside the home. Because children of the working mothers are deprived of mother's company. Besides, a working mother cannot bestow enough care upon the children. This may affect the socialization of a child. In a word, they emphasize the role of women as home-maker and mother rather than as independent earner.

It is also worth noting that a majority of higher educated respondents acknowledge the difficulties of the children of working mothers. But, for this reason, they do not want to lose their economic independence, and remain confined to home. In order to satisfy their personal needs, they are prepared to bear the hardships and the tension arising out of their dual roles. They never prefer to rear their children at the cost of their economic emancipation. They think that child rearing
should be made equally a responsibility of the husband. So married women should utilize their spare time fruitfully by working outside the home. In a word, they do not support the traditional division of labour between the two sexes. Such views were expressed by our respondents as we made supplementary queries about their line of thinking on these points.

The percentage of lower educated respondents, agreeing with this view, is very low, i.e., 15 (18% in Calcutta and 12% in Burdwan). The remaining 85% (82% in Calcutta and 88% in Burdwan), are not in favour of married women's getting employed (See Table 11). They still believe in the traditional idea that the primary role of the womenfolk in our society is that of a home-maker. Hence the family gets neglected when a woman engages herself in employment outside the home.

They think that it is the duty of a wife to satisfy the needs of her husband as far as possible. She should spend her maximum time for her husband and children. Particularly, the mother should not go to work outside the home for her personal gratification. She should rather fulfil the demands of her children. Some of them express the view that it is the duty of the father to provide financial subsistence to the family. If a housewife gets spare time, she may spend her time in some leisure activities. Such views were expressed by the lower educated
respondents in course of a free and frank discussion with us.

It is clear that higher education has made significant contribution towards changing the orientation of a majority of respondents on this particular question, relating to their economic independence. Side by side, it should be referred to that higher education could not reorientate the thinking of some of the respondents regarding this particular issue. It cannot be denied that the condition of our society is not favourable to the married working women. As it is argued, unmarried women’s taking up new occupational roles does not involve any problem as they have relatively little responsibilities at home. But the married women are expected to play the traditional role in the family. The husband and the other non-working women members of the father-in-law’s family desire that the housewife performs all the domestic chores. They cannot realize the problem of working women. As a result, the working women have to labour both at home and in the working place. Combining these two roles is not an easy or a smooth task. As Promilla Kapur observes, it requires not only skill but also physical and psychological acceptance of and adjustment to the changes brought about by this combination. This consideration may

48 Kala Rani, Role Conflict in Working Women, Chetana Publications, New Delhi, 1976, pp.150-151.
influence the attitude of some of the higher educated respondents towards married women's employment.

We have seen that majority of lower educated respondents have a low opinion about housewife's employment outside the home. Because they lack career orientations and look upon marriage as self-fulfilment, they are not interested in bearing the additional hardship and responsibility of employed housewives.

82% of higher educated respondents (76% in Calcutta and 88% in Burdwan) are favourably disposed towards the view that a woman should have an independent source of income so as to enable her to spend money according to her free choice (See Table 12). In course of interview, they state that like a boy, a girl should help her parents and other relatives who are financially dependent. They point out that educated women have a great variety of needs, and in order to meet up these, they should participate in gainful employment. If they do not earn independently, they would not be able to maintain the desired standard of living. Only 18% of them (24% in Calcutta and 12% in Burdwan) are not in favour of this view (See Table 12). They point out that in many cases, an employed wife cannot exercise control over her earnings. She has to take permission of her husband to spend money. So they donot feel that women should work outside the home for enabling them to spend money according to their free choices.
Table 12. Distribution of Responses Supporting Women's Economic Self-sufficiency So as to Enable Them to Spend Money According to Their Own Choice, According to District and Level of Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Supporting women's economic self-sufficiency so as to enable them to spend money according to their own choice</th>
<th>Disapproving the view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38 (76%)</td>
<td>12 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44 (88%)</td>
<td>6 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16 (32%)</td>
<td>34 (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
<td>41 (82%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 200
75% of lower educated respondents, (68% in Calcutta and 82% in Burdwan) disapprove the view that the object of women's economic self-sufficiency should be to enable them to spend money according to their free choices. The remaining respondents in this category, i.e. 25% believe otherwise (See Table 12). Here also we find a marked difference of attitude between higher educated and lower educated groups.

In order to assess our respondents' perception about the impact of employment on women's status in the family and also in society, we have asked them whether employment is a status raiser for women in both family and society. An overwhelming majority of higher educated respondents, i.e., 72% (70% in Calcutta and 74% in Burdwan) agree with the view that a woman's employment raises her status subsequently both in the family and society. Only 28% of them (30% in Calcutta and 26% in Burdwan) disagree with this view. The number of lower educated respondents, disagreeing with this view, is high in proportion to higher educated respondents, i.e. 45% (42% in Calcutta and 48% in Burdwan). 55% of lower educated respondents (58% in Calcutta and 52% in Burdwan) answer in the affirmative (See Table 13). But in course of elaborating their views, most of them fail to relate employment with changes in the social status of women, although they have a clear perception that
Table 13. Distribution of Responses to the Question Whether Employment Subsequently Raises the Status of Women Both in the Family and Society, According to District, and Level of Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Number and percentage of respondents viewing employment as status raiser in both family and society</th>
<th>Not so viewing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35 (70%)</td>
<td>15 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37 (74%)</td>
<td>13 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29 (58%)</td>
<td>21 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower educated</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26 (52%)</td>
<td>24 (48%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 200
at least in the family, employment raises a woman's status. Only the employed respondents belonging to this category think that women's employment, especially in a high status occupation, is a status raiser both in family and society.

It may be noted that majority of employed respondents, both higher and lower educated, hold the view that the status of an educated and employed woman is superior to that of an educated, unemployed woman, both in the family and society. An employed wife can wield more authority in household affairs than an unemployed one. She can participate in the decision-making process of the family with the male decision makers. Because of her financial contribution to the family and control over the family budget, she can exercise an effective voice. They also think that an employed woman, by being exposed to the larger world of experience, acquires certain qualities which are appreciated in society. The male members of her working place cannot take her for granted.

It is also to be noted that the lower educated and unemployed respondents, answering in the affirmative to the present question, are uncertain as to whether employment equally raises the social stature of a woman. This may be explained by the fact that lower educated women are not much acquainted with women's changing status in the larger society. The
family is their immediate world of experience. Moreover, they feel that an employed woman can assert herself in family, but in a hostile socio-cultural milieu, an employed woman finds it difficult to claim recognition for her superior status.

The general picture that emerges from the analysis of responses we have collected through questionnaire and interview, is that higher educated women, in comparison to lower educated women, have transformed their mental make-ups/attitudes in respect of economic self-sufficiency, on a larger scale. It may be noted that the most important reason for changing their attitudes in this direction is their exposure to a wider range of educational institutions. Education, by providing job-orientation to women, is positively inducing them to become modern. In this respect, education, to a great extent, acts as a determinant of modernity. But, beside education, other factors such as the economic compulsion, also call for changes in the attitudes of Bengali women. Due to inflation and price-rise, most of the Bengali families face an economic crisis. At the same time, the expectations of people for a higher standard of living are also rising. As a result, middle class educated women are now being increasingly drawn towards the job market. Women, especially higher educated women, desiring comfortable and financially secure lives, do, therefore, naturally support women's employment.
We have seen in our survey that higher education has failed to instil new ideas and values only in a small segment of Bengali women, with regard to their financial independence. It seems that since the socio-cultural atmosphere of West Bengal, like that of the rest of India, is not yet fully modernized, the predominance of the traditional ideas and values is noticed in every aspect of social life. Hence, it is quite natural that all the educated women have not fully imbibed new ideas and values with regard to their sphere of activities. Some of the educated women prefer the traditional division of labour between the sexes. Some of them show a modern attitude in response to one question but at the same time show a negative attitude in response to some other questions.

On the whole, a majority of the higher educated Bengali women have become conscious about the need for economic emancipation of women. But, it is striking that a majority of them still consider that employment is necessary mainly for ensuring economic well-being, rather than for securing economic independence. In other words, higher educated women look forward to a comfortable, financially stable future, no matter whether the same is achieved through their hard-earned, independent income (emphasis added), or through the chance factors of marriage in a rich family or inheritance of parental property.
Women with lower level of education are far from being modern in their attitude to employment. Barring a few who are already employed, they still accept the traditional division of labour between the sexes, remain diffident about women's economic independence and adopt an unfavourable view of women's discarding the traditional image of an ideal housewife.

The pattern of responses is not uniform. It varies from question to question and also from group to group. Moreover, the structured responses we gather from replies to our questions and the informal, verbal responses we collect through our conversations with the respondents, often give rise to some ambiguity and confusion. Notwithstanding such limitations which usually go with survey research of this sort, we find that higher education contributes to subjective modernity of Bengali women, that with spread of education, more and more women are acquiring new values and attitudinal patterns. Women with lower level of education are not so much responsive to new values and attitudinal patterns, although, even among them, symptoms of a change of outlook are gradually appearing. We have also seen that lower educated women in rural areas are less exposed to such change than their urban counterparts. However, the rural-urban differential is not significant in so far as the attitudes of higher educated women are concerned.
IV

In the foregoing, we have tried to analyze both the objective conditions of educated women vis-a-vis the employment market and the women's subjective awareness about economic independence, as generated by the differential levels of their education. We have noticed a gap between the subjective perception of women, particularly the higher educated women, in regard to their self-sufficiency, and the objective condition of women's getting employment. Expansion of job opportunities for women has failed to keep pace with their job-expectations. The gap is wider in rural than in urban areas as shown by us in Table 2. The implication of such rural-urban differential has to be understood in the specific context of West Bengal. Despite the spread of education in rural areas of West Bengal, it has to be noted that due to lack of employment opportunities, absence of employment exchanges, and last but not the least, the prevailing socio-cultural conservatism, educated women confront various difficulties in participating in gainful economic activities.

However, as a consequence of the modernization of the attitudes of Bengali women with regard to economic self-sufficiency, brought about by education, especially higher education, both rural and urban women are making efforts to enter into
the employment market. For this purpose, they have enrolled and are enrolling their names in the employment exchange. But in India, the average duration of unemployment is higher for women than for men for all categories of educated workers, excepting medicine and nursing. The situation is no different in West Bengal.

In this context it may be pointed out that an economy whose capacity to absorb men of working age is limited, does not encourage the elimination of traditional forms of discrimination against economic activity by women. Still less attention has been given to providing the necessary infrastructure to remove women's disabilities in the job market.

Education can make a woman eligible for getting an honourable job but cannot remove all the disabilities in respect of her getting employed and continuing with her job. It alone cannot provide the proper atmosphere required for an employed woman both in the family and society.

This chapter may be concluded by suggesting that in order to achieve the economic emancipation of Bengali women, not only the development of education, but also, the development

of socio-economic condition is essential. An economy, which will have the capacity to provide full and productive employment, is needed. So enhancement of women's job opportunities may be accomplished only by a total overhauling of the economic structure of the country as a whole. Besides, some other measures relating to the special problems of women should be adopted. It is imperative that the society in general and the state in particular should provide the necessary conditions and support, to enable women to perform their various roles successfully, e.g., provision of child-care services for all working women, supportive measures to solve the problems of accommodation and security of working women, and improvement of service conditions, particularly in providing transport and avoiding unnecessary transfers etc. 52. It is also necessary to change the behaviour pattern and value-system of other members in the society, especially, the educated men-folk. An educated person should realize the problem of a working woman and give her some relief by assisting her in the homefront. The parents should also provide education to the daughters on a par with the sons mainly keeping an eye to the employment market rather than to the matrimonial market. Above all, the quality and content of education have to be improved, have to be made more and more vocation-oriented and devoid of any overt sex bias in its curricula.