Chapter 7

CONCLUSION AND MAIN FINDINGS
The study on female work participation has shown that though women's participation has been increasing over the years their position is much lower than their male counterparts. In spite of their growing literacy, education and awareness, women, are forced by societal and market norms to work under much subordinate position than their male counterparts and this trend is observed everywhere cutting across national and regional boundaries.

The study on Structure on women’s work participation rate in Barak Valley,' apart from looking at the economic aspect of women's work and their contribution, has also tried to look into various aspects of women's economic contribution from a gender lens within the domain of women's studies. This has become necessary considering
the fact that traditional market economy is characterised by wage employment but in most of the underdeveloped economies, the labour force is not completely integrated into the wage system nor are they fully adapted into policy reforms and changes of the government.

In our sample study of the villages of Barak Valley, it has been observed that women supplement their family income working in the fields or carrying out the traditional work like weaving, bamboo crafts etc, but most of their work remain lowly paid, or are often unremunerated and non-recognized. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to clarify the concepts of ‘workers’ and ‘work’ as feminist economists argue that such concepts cannot merely rely on the “oars of institutional neutrality”. With this view in mind we have incorporated the views of feminists economists, which explains the existence of the patriarchal walls within which women are chained. Feminists explain that through such denial process women are self convinced to work as marginal and independent workers. In Chapter 2, feminists approach to gender studies and several labour theories has been discussed so as to understand and examine the adequacy of these theories from a feminist’s standpoint. While in Chapter 1, we have given a broad outline of the existence of gender discrimination in the labour market and have also shown that in spite of rapid industrialization, structural reforms and globalisation it has not ensured women’s rightful claim in the wage market. Additionally such modernization process has led to feminization of jobs that has cornered women to traditional work set-up
and thereby restricting the vertical and horizontal mobility of women in the labour market.

Against this general background the picture of discrimination as is evident in India and Assam have been highlighted and in an attempt to evaluate the picture of Barak Valley, it has been shown that the productivity of women worker has not been harnessed in the true economic sense and the percentage of employment of women in secured and stable form of employment such as the organized sector is much less than men of this region. In the rural and semi-urban sector women have still retained the folk workmanship of crafts and art using old techniques of craftsmanship. However, advertising and marketing of their products has never been given a serious thought that could generate valuable commercial and monetary returns. In the tribal societies particularly the women folk are engaged in various work along with men in both agriculture and household farming but the nature of most of these works reveal that these works are small time works confined within the household and are yet to find sufficient exposure in the market. Secondary data analysis as well as primary finding dealt in Chapter 4 and 5 have explored the above facts.

The secondary data analysis has revealed that there exists significant variation in the participation of males and females. While the variation could partly be explained due to differences in the concepts of ‘work’ used in the various census but female work
participation is far behind that of males in the entire period of our
analysis.

While the female participation rate in Assam lags behind with
respect to the overall female participation in India, the participation
rate in Barak Valley and its constituent districts is extremely low and
stands to be much behind with respect to Assam and India. Absence of
urban development and growth of employment generating activities
could be assigned to be a contributory factor leading to low
participation in the valley.

Time series analysis of data has shown that a comparison of the
growth of female work participation over the years reveals that the
overall growth of FWPR has been better for the state of Assam and
Barak Valley as compared to India. This provides an optimistic
behaviour where it can indicate that though the general trend of FWPR
is low in Assam and Barak Valley, there is a gradual increase of
women's work force into the productive activities and hence being
recognized and counted.

A comparison of the structure of occupational distribution of
workers indicate that while in India, the dominance of primary sector is
gradually declining, but in Assam and Barak Valley, the primary sector
still employs a large section of female population. This indicates that
employment in organized sectors, other secured form and other
alternate sectors has not been able to absorb and utilize the vast
potential of the productive labour force in the region.** This reinforces
our second hypothesis of significant overcrowding in of women workers towards the bottom ends of the informal sector, which is associated with low status, low wages and weak bargaining power making the position of women more vulnerable.

Though the tribal women exhibit a high participation along with men but they too are concentrated in the unorganized sectors, where the economic returns are unstable. Our analysis of primary data has substantiated that gender discrimination in the labour market exists for the valley. FWPR is much lower than the overall MWPR and similar trend is observed for all the districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi of Barak Valley. Low participation is also observed for all religious, social as well as linguistic groups of the valley.

In the rural sector in Assam and Barak Valley, the WPR of both the sexes like the rest of India has shown an increasing trend than in the urban sector. Concentration of females in the rural sector implies that a larger proportion of women are employed in agriculture and allied activities, which does not provide a stable form of employment. Similarly marginal workers exist for both males and females, but are fairly high among females in the Valley, whereas the proportion of marginal workers have been declining for males in India as well as in the state and the valley as a whole.

Unemployment is fairly high in the valley, particularly among the females which signifies that there exists a large stock of usable manpower, which could be harnessed for uplifting the state's economy
We have next tried to examine the relationship between FWPR and the factor determining it. Though, literacy has a positive relationship with the growth of FWPR, women's participation is quite low in spite of an increasing literacy figure in the valley. The findings that emerge from our analysis of the primary data are that higher literacy rate has raised the social status in the valley but this has not made entry any easier in the labour market. On the other hand in the rural areas it has been observed that with increased level of education women tend to shrink away from the labour market, as their individual social status is being threatened in the process. This supports our first hypothesis that with increased educational level of the females there has not been a corresponding rise in the female participation rate.

Results of regression models tested with the help of regression analysis reveal that the best predictor of female literacy is (i) female literacy, (ii) freedom to work and iii a positive attitude of males towards female work in the labour market.

Female work participation showed a weak positive relationship with the economic necessity to work implying that other social and cultural factors are stronger to motivate a woman to work. This rejects our last hypothesis that women's participation is dependent on the economic necessity of the household.

On examining the casual factors determining the participation rate of women, we are forced to express serious doubt about the gender neutrality of the traditional employment theories. Determination
of female employment requires incorporation of various socio-economic factors, which have not been included so far in economic theory relating to employment. The various facets of female participation show that, the lower level of female participation in Barak valley is not only an outcome of definitional biases of work but also due to several social phenomenon dominating the social structure. Such findings may also be true for other regions or countries as well.

In the final analysis, the main findings of our study are:

- Female work participation is poorly represented in India.
- The Female work participation rate in India is much lower than the Male work participation rate, and the same trend follows for the state of Assam and Barak Valley as a whole.
- Though the growth of female work participation rate both in Assam and Barak Valley has shown an improving trend during 1971-1991, but both the State and the Valley lags behind India with respect to the overall female participation rate.
- The position of Barak Valley is much behind the female work participation of Assam as well as in India though the rate of growth of female work participation has widely varied within all the districts with the district of Cachar registering the maximum growth among the three districts of Barak Valley according to census reports.