

Contextualising Intergenerational Mobility of Women 'Techies' of Kolkata

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Abstract: *Women's education and employment provide the basal framework for their emancipation and scope for social mobility. The study discusses education and occupational status of mothers with those of their daughters to understand aspects of social mobility. The observations are recorded during face-to-face interview with the professionals working in software industry in Kolkata. Data were collected using a predesigned questionnaire. The objective and subjective indices of intergenerational mobility in terms of education and occupational status of mothers' with that of the respondents is highlighted here. The study concludes by showing positive trend of mobility among the professionals in terms access to educational and career opportunities unlike that of their mothers'. The change is well supported by shift in societal attitude that has outgrown from societal conservatism. In nutshell, the narratives introspect 'What they have gained and what they have lost out' compared to their mothers.*

Keywords: social mobility, intergenerational mobility, social change, IT industry, career, self development, techies, empowerment, globalization.

Introduction

Bengal's contact with the Western world was crucial during the 18th century. The wave of intellectual impact of the West was first felt by a few renowned Bengali leaders, who were attracted by the values and virtues of individual freedom. Swami Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, and many more were the pioneers and champions of supporting emancipation of women. The historical context justifies the 'Bengal Society' as the forerunner of the change as soon as the Western thought of renaissance seeded the Bengal soil. As we are celebrating the 150 years of birth centenary of these great reformers, it intrigues us to explore the extent of social mobility of women between two generations i.e. mothers and daughters today.

The study of social mobility encompasses a part of broader concept of 'social change'. It helps us in understanding the course and direction of mobility in our society through the study of intergenerational educational and occupational status. The emergence of newer professions and white collar occupations indicate perceptible trend towards vertical social mobility. These new professionals may be regarded as the 'reference group' which are the sources of motivation and aspiration of the rest of the middle class in India.

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The emergence of professional classes, largely from the middle class and from 'service groups', offers a measure of social mobility. The professionalism requires training to acquire skills for performing specific roles e.g. doctors and other professionals who need long specialized education and training hence, they hold high social prestige. A small businessman in the service and retail trade sector needs to meet fewer requirements having less education, social grace, technical skill and hence less social prestige (Sharma 1997). To understand social mobility among women one needs to understand the emergence of women professional groups, through professional education, as indicative of positive index for studying social change.

Review of Literature

Roy (1993) made a qualitative study of Bengali middle class women across generations. She observes that in earlier generations, Bengali women remained more or less secluded within the inner house, segregated from the men's world of the outer house. School and college education for the women were encouraged as a status symbol, which helped in marriage negotiations. Such education, however, was not expected to change the ideas and thoughts of a woman in disregarding the traditional values based on conservative Hinduism and ritualistic folk customs as part of everyday living. Over time the influence of Westernised and Americanised values of consumerism coupled with thoughts of equality and individualism propelled change in societal attitude in favour of working women among the middle class Bengali society. Boserup in 1970 observed that in the third world countries, especially in Asia and Africa, most women are involved in teaching profession but only a small portion of them were in professional and clerical jobs. The female dominated jobs excluded from male contact but not in the professional jobs, hence few women were concentrated. This confirms the rules of *seclusion*. If the prejudices against women get erased then only they can opt for jobs that require longer training and offer more opportunity for promotion.

With the onset of globalisation, in post 1990s, the social demand for professional education and applied courses in engineering/technology, medicine, including dental education and health sciences, management, computer and IT education etc. are on the rise. These professional courses are expensive and are beyond the reach of the poor, who lack role models and family support. Thus, the middle class and above can afford to pursue the professional education. General education, on the other hand, is inexpensive but does not assure a job. Consequently, in the context of obtaining a job, general education is nearly useless while the professional education remains largely unaffordable (Chanana 2007).

According to Upadhyay (2008) over the last two decades, fairly a large chunk of 'Information Technology' (IT) professionals constitute a new and socially significant segment of the 'New middle class' in India. Software professionals have a social and symbolic significance, as they earn higher salaries than other professional jobs, with high disposable income. They go abroad frequently and

need to communicate with foreign clients and, thus, considered to be global citizens. The economic standing of IT professionals set them sharply in contrast with that of the 'Old middle class', to which most of their parents belonged. Their parents had mostly secured jobs with relatively low and slowly rising income. This 'old middle class' was the product of the Nehruvian developmental regime of rapid expansion of higher educational system during post-independent period. It has created a contingent of professional, managerial and technical experts. This section of salaried employees of public and private enterprises constituted the bulk of the middle class in India and maintained austere lifestyles.

Theoretical framework

The societal context, in 1970, reveals a major factor in structured inequality, low women's participation in labour-force market, a deeply entrenched ideology for female domesticity, economic dependency on male kin with a male breadwinner ideology etc. Lack of employment was, obviously, a strong condition of powerlessness. Dependency was multi-faceted. It intervened with mental (ideologies of domesticity, emotional dependence) as well as material structures (economic, legal and denied property rights). Women's employment enhances their capacity of being autonomous (means self determination) in personal and professional sphere but may not be radical in nature. The parameters of identifying the concept of economic independence comprise choosing the marriage partner; deciding to work; taking up non-traditional form of employment and agreeing to be mobile without moving with family members (Standing 1991).

Empowering women, by increasing their agency, means calling in question the traditional practice of gender inequality of treating women as 'subordinate' while men as dominant. Men dominate the hierarchy of decision making etc. that supports Bourdieu's idea of '*doxa*'. The '*doxa*' refers to traditions and beliefs that exist beyond discourse or argumentation, which is applicable to the then prevailing culture and tradition which are so taken-for-granted that they became naturalised. Giddens coined the term 'Duality of Structure and Agency' that opens up the possibilities for the analysis of social change. It does not refer to just stressing on either 'structure' (internalised norms and values) or agency' (decision making of actor). Thus, it pertains to the seeds of social change that leads to the questioning of 'traditional practices' (Kabeer 2001). Kabeer, 1999, pointed out that woman's education and employment are the important determinants of women's autonomy. Autonomy implies ability to make choices amongst the alternatives, hence, increases their agency. Agency, in its turn, enhances decision making capacity, control on earnings, mobility etc. These indices are, therefore, looked upon as the basic necessity for emancipation of women. Traditionally, women with general education were mainly concentrated around the feminine, non-professional, and non-market segments.

The theoretical implications points out determining path towards women's emancipation are from dependency to autonomy by their access to professional education and employment. The social change or mobility is best captured by drawing intergenerational perspectives.

This study dwells on women software professionals in Information Technology sector as this sector recruits women software professionals substantially. The target group, undertaken professional education and has got professional jobs. Women software professionals equipped with professional qualification have ample scope for social mobility in Information Technology ('IT') sector. This sector demands high mobility of the workforce, be it for on-job mobility or career mobility, challenging traditional societal barriers on women's immobility. The purpose of the study is to target women software professionals. In the IT sector, women software professionals are mostly the young engineers, who have broken up many a feminine ceilings and impediments while competing with men on equal terms to become successful in their own rights. They have gained social recognition and status in the society by overcoming various challenges. The situation of 'New middle class' women are poles apart from that of their parents especially the mothers, belonging to the 'Old middle class'. This paper studies two immediate generational perspectives of societal shift in terms of mobility, from the mothers to their daughters. It also looks into 'dependency' of earlier generation, giving way to 'autonomy' justifying social change from generational perspective.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to explore the extent to which the women professionals are socially mobile from that of their mothers by accounting intergenerational perspective.

- i) To study the change in education between two generations.
- ii) To study the change in occupations between the generations.
- iii) To understand women's position of empowerment or disempowerment from that of earlier generation.

Methodology

In correspondence with the objective of the study a suitable methodology needs to be adopted. The feminist perspective has been used as a methodological tool to draw both the quantitative data and qualitative interpretation to analyse the above objectives. The semi-structured interview schedule, having both closed ended and open ended questions, has been administered. The open-ended questions attempt to elicit information regarding respondents' perception on inter-generational change between them and their mothers. The result of the present study is based on the parent's educational qualifications, occupational status vis-à-vis that of the respondents was enquired and the subjective experiences of the respondents on how they feel their generation is different from that of their mothers' in terms of education and careers are noted. It is, broadly, anthropological mode of enquiry or qualitative explorations based on the interview mode through which personal experiences of respondents are recorded by using interview method. The narratives are analysed from both emic and etic perspectives. The 'emic' perspective offers explanation through factors that are internal to the

system, that is, 'actor's perspective' while the 'etic' perspective lists explanatory factors that are observable from outside the system or researcher's perspective. Hereby, we adopt triangulation methods or mixed methodology to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data.

A total of 250 women software professionals were interviewed through face-to-face interaction technique in order to increase the response rate and also the reliability. These respondents represented different sizes of IT firms (large, medium and small sizes) drawn from the listings of IT firms maintained by Software Technology Parks (STP), Kolkata. The sample selection is made by using non-probabilistic 'quota sampling' method so as to reach sample professionals working in different levels of hierarchy within firms. The applicability of random probabilistic method of sample selection is difficult since, the IT industry does not share their details to the outsiders. The empirical study was carried out during March, 2011 to January, 2012 and the pseudo-names used for respondent to mask their identity. The findings of the study are discussed below.

The collected data is coded and analysed by using statistical software SPSS package to find out relationship among the variables. The level of significance between variables is established through chi-square test. To explore the intergenerational change, pattern analysis based on qualitative narration is set to explain, describe and explore the dynamics of change between the two generations using both emic and etic perspectives.

Empirical Findings situate Educational and Occupational Mobility

The primary field data in table 1 show the educational and professional backgrounds of the parents, husbands and respondents. The table indicates mobility aspects of the parents *vis-a-vis* their daughters in terms of educational and occupational status. The terminologies for educational classification in table 1 are as follows: a) Professional-Techno Education includes degree like BTech./BE., MTech./ME, C.A., LLB, MBA, MBBS, MD, MCA and Diplomas; b) General Post Graduate involves MA, MCOM, MSC and PhD; c) General Graduate degrees are BA, B.Sc. and B.Com.; d) School level education includes till class XII.

Similarly, the occupational classification is as follows: a) High salaried profession indicates high income group, include professions like doctors, engineers, legal professionals, professors and chartered accountants etc.; b) Administrative professionals consist of the personnel such as manager and officers involving in delivering administrative tasks; c) Low salaried professions embrace low income groups usually have secondary status in the society; and finally d) The self employed is the group of people in various forms of business work under self ownership.

Table1: Educational and occupational profile of the parents and husbands

| Family profile of respondent | Women professionals as respondent No. (%) |
|--|--|
| Father's educational profile | |
| Professional-techno education | 74 (29.6) |
| General post graduate | 54 (21.6) |
| General graduate degree | 113 (45.2) |
| School level education | 9 (3.6) |
| Total | 250 (100.0) |
| Mother's educational profile | |
| Professional-techno education | 5 (2.0) |
| General post graduate | 50 (20.0) |
| General graduate degree | 157 (62.8) |
| School level education | 38 (15.2) |
| Total | 250 (100.0) |
| Father's professional profile | |
| High salaried professional | 58 (23.2) |
| Administrative professional | 52 (20.8) |
| Low-salaried professional | 98 (39.2) |
| Self -employed professional | 42 (16.8) |
| Total | 250 (100.0) |
| Mother's professional profile | |
| High salaried professional | 6 (2.4) |
| Home maker | 185 (74.0) |
| Low-salaried professional | 50 (39.2) |
| Self- employed professional | 9 (3.6) |
| Total | 250 (100.0) |
| Husband's educational profile (excludes divorcee) | |
| BE/B.Tech | 66 (43.4) |
| ME/M.Tech | 20 (13.2) |
| MCA | 26 (17.1) |
| MBA/MBBS/MD/CA | 24 (15.8) |
| BA/BSc/B.Com | 5 (3.3) |
| MA/MSc/M.Com | 7 (4.6) |
| PhD | 4 (2.6) |
| Total ^a | 152 (100.0) |
| Husband's professional profile (excludes divorcee) | |
| IT and IT related services ^b | 111 (73.0) |

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Other engineering services | 17 (11.2) |
| Private services | 10 (6.5) |
| Government services | 1 (.7) |
| Academia | 5 (3.3) |
| Doctor | 5 (3.3) |
| Business | 3 (2.0) |
| Total ^a | 152 (100.0) |

^a Total includes the married excluding the divorcees.

^b IT/IT related services i.e. Information technology/ Information

The above Table 1 reveals heterogeneity in educational and professional profile of respondents' and their parents. While a small number of respondents' fathers (30 percent) are professionally educated, the majority of them i.e. 69 percent (approx.) were graduates and post graduates in the general stream. Similarly, 83 percent of their mothers are graduates and post graduates in the general stream while only 2 percent are professionally qualified. Though in minority, yet parental education up to school level were also observed. Profession wise, interestingly, 39 percent of the parents are in the low-salaried profession bracket. Around 17 percent of fathers belong to self employed group or business class. While the majority of the mothers i.e. 74 percent are housewives and confined to domesticity. The trend shows onset of occupational mobility among the women professionals most of whose mothers were home makers. They rose above the feminine seclusion to get professionally educated to grab professional technical jobs in contrast to that of their mothers. Many of the parents belong to modest class of low-salaried or small business class. Thus, the transition from old middle class (i.e. of their parent's generation) belonging to a heterogeneous group to that of their generation of new (new) middle class software professionals forming homogeneous group (shown in Table 2). It is also evident that during the earlier generation, there was less demand for professional-technical education compared to general stream of education and jobs. Interestingly, irrespective of parents' having general education mostly, their daughters opted for professional education. It suggests that it is the societal trend that neutralises the influence of parental education and infuses preference towards professional education.

We also observe that homogeneity in educational profile of respondent's husband figures 74 percent of the married respondents' husbands are technical professional graduates or post graduate degree holders (BE/B.Tech; ME/M.Tech; MCA). Table 2 below depicts comparative relation between respondents' fathers' and mothers' educational profile and with that them and their husband's.

Table 2: Educational profile of respondents, parents and husbands

| Father's educational profile | Mother's educational profile | | Total No. (%) |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| | Professional-techno stream No. (%) | General stream No. (%) | |
| Professional-techno education | 3 (4.1) | 71(95.9) | 74 (100.0) |
| General stream | 2 (1.1) | 174 (98.9) | 176 (100.0) |
| Total | 5 (2.0) | 245 (98.0) | 250 (100.0) |
| Chi square value: 2.263, df=1, p=.133, n.s.^a | | | |
| Husband's educational profile | Educational profile of respondent | | Total |
| | Professional-techno stream | General stream | |
| Professional-techno degrees | 120 (93.8) | 16 (66.7) | 136 (89.5) |
| General degrees | 8 (6.2) | 8 (33.3) | 16 (10.5) |
| Total ^c | 128 (100.0) | 24 (100.0) | 152 (100.0) |
| Chi square value: 15.740, df=1, p <.001 | | | |

^an.s. =Non significant.^c Includes married respondent and excludes divorcees

The result of Table 2 shows that the relation between the educational qualifications of respondent's father with that of the mother is non-significant while the relation between the respondents and their husbands holds significance. Again, as per Table 1, around 73 percent of respondents' husbands work in IT or IT related services. Thus, homogeneity in educational background and profession is observed among the respondents and their spouses.

In majority of cases, the spouse-selection happens while undertaking the professional education. Those who have not selected their spouses when they were pursuing their technical education have chosen their spouse from the workplace at a later stage. Those who are left out from either of the cases, opt for conventional marriage practice or the arranged marriage system.

The above fact corroborates Chanana (2007) findings that before 1980s, science and higher education for women were not preferred as that required longer time, more resources and investments. Young women's perceived marriage was priority to their parents. An undergraduate degree, of any kind, was considered helpful in the marriage market for raising the social status. In the post-1990s, on the other hand, parents impart the best education to their daughters and expect them to be independent and to follow careers. It can be said that parental expectations coupled with young women's aspirations have been the push factors in the shift of disciplinary choices in the mid-1990s but was limited to big cities. The increasing demand for specific skills in the fast expanding private sectors was a boost for professionally qualified persons for embarking on a ready job market.

Intergenerational Perspective from Mother to Daughter: *Emic* and *Etic* View

To understand the perceptible change, if any, in women's status in the society, an intergenerational perspective, is drawn from the respondents' revelation about their mothers and themselves. The seeds of change in women's societal status can best be perceived by comparing the social status between two present but immediate generations viz. that of the daughters from those of their mothers. Given their middle class background, inter-generational mobility remains a distinctive feature aimed at giving better lifestyles to the children.

We now attempt to analyse different directions of inter-generational changes drawn from the life of women software professionals – the way they perceive the changes as different from that of their mothers. The following Case studies highlight the rationale behind the discrepancy prevalent in education and career mobility between the previous generation and present generation.

a) Societal Change in terms of Women's Education and Employment:

Respondents articulated how their mothers had experienced gender-based segregation in pursuing educational career from the entry level. Indifference actualised from childhood and between the siblings by imparting separate educational curricula based on gender. Boys were encouraged to take technical education while the girls were taught in general educational stream viz. Arts and Home Science etc. irrespective of their capability. Neither the higher education nor the technical education was imparted to girls.

Non-availability of adequate number of 'all girls' educational institution, disapproval of attending co-educational institutes or non-approval of undertaking education from an academy distantly located from home, have stopped a large number of mothers of the present day IT professional daughters from accomplishing professional or technical qualifications. In the case of boys, they were given the best educational opportunity keeping in mind their anticipated role of being the future bread-earner. Consequently, male dominance in professional or engineering fields was observed.

At the same time their mothers, though only a few, could choose the job of school teachers. This is a fixed time job and relaxed or less hectic in nature. Their pursuance of job was conditional based on family situation and husbands' place of relocation. Their independent mobility was curbed, staying outside till late hours and mixing freely with the opposite sex were socially disapproved and for security reasons. The situation was worse in rural areas where preference was given for early marriage rather than women's education and career.

The situation has changed radically during the respondents' time in the late 20th to the early 21st centuries with the enhancement of women's scope to participate in the job market, with the expansion of diversified career paths and opportunities for job oriented professional courses. Women's

seriousness to undertake professional and technical courses is seeded in their childhood aspiration in building their careers. The siblings, irrespective of their sexes are, equally treated to pursue their education and careers. The sphere of women's mobility has increased and the taboo on interaction with the opposite sex has decreased. Liberal support from the family to pursue the girl child's own career decision is prioritised. Due to the change in societal attitude, women at large are now taking education and career seriously. For them, the inspirational icon is their mothers, who did not get parental support in their childhood to stand independently through education and career.

The spurt of jobs in the IT industry, having vagaries of long working hours, odd hour duties, night work schedules and wide mobility aspect including trips abroad on short notice, culminating in hectic nature of job etc., has broken the societal conservatism. IT jobs offer an option for flexi-time or flexi-place jobs and opportunity for relocation in their husbands' place to enable women workforce to maintain their work-life balance. It facilitates many of them not to relinquish the job unlike their mothers. However, compromise on promotional or locational aspects may have to be made. Women now enter work field in good positions, and often prove their capabilities by taking the career seriously. Interestingly, many of them have joined the IT sector even from rural areas.

The case mentioned below unmasks the orientation of parents for their daughter's career.

Case #1: Titli, a 28 year old lady from Orissa and due to be married shortly to a boy she has chosen. She remarks that in the earlier generation, a bulk of investment was kept reserved for a girl's marriage rather than spending some of it on their education. Whereas investment now is made for girls' education by their parents to enable them to get jobs which are more important. It is now thought that in the course of pursuing education and job the girls will get their grooms of choice and lesser dowry for marriage need to be paid.

Diagrammatically, the situational change for two generational perspectives:

Earlier: Education→Marriage.

Now: Education→Career→Self development→Marriage.

It is, thus, quite clear that a substantive investment previously made for daughter's marriage is now channelised for daughters' higher education and career building purposes. The course of investment purpose gets changed to a meaningful route towards a settled career first; nonetheless daughters' marriage still remains a basic major concern for their parents.

b) Change in Societal Attitude:

Previously societal attitude considered home at the core, and education and job as peripheral. Earlier a girl's marriage was prioritised and her economic dependence on her husband was ensured. Thus, a single model income was demonstrative. The women's position was, de facto, considered to be dependent either on their fathers or on their husbands. Their dependence pushed them to a status inferior to that of men. They were confined mostly indoors since they were non-workers having a smaller social circle. They lacked independence and could not raise their voice. As a result, their concerns remained unheard. Their decision was 'reverified' even if they were working. For them motherhood was not selective and the spouse support in household chores was hardly available. Decision of the patriarch or the male head of the household was taken as the final decision. On the whole, the outlook was conservative. The non-working status of mothers is validated from below.

Case #2: Kim, a 30 yr. old unmarried informant working in a small firm illustrates her mother's case. Her mother was a teacher. After marriage, she had to leave the job due to long distance from the affinal place. Apart from this, their neighbours perceived insufficient earning capability of the husband. According to them a working wife means an indication that wife's financial support is needed to sustain the family. She further adds that in her friend's case, her friend's mother had to leave the job to be mobile with her husband and with no job opportunities available in the place relocation.

On the other hand, in the respondents' generation, job and education are considered as the core while home is rated as the periphery. Moreover, societal prestige is attached to the working women. In some quarters, working status for a wife is mandatory and such working wives are much in demand. The double income model becomes demonstrative due to increase in the standard of living. The rationale is explained in the following excerpts.

Case #3: Mousumi, observes that career and high salary are intensively wanted to fulfill lifestyle choices and to fulfill their kid's desire. In the earlier generation, women lacked career aspiration as lifestyle choices were then limited.

Globalisation providing platters for various lifestyle choices gets deciphered below:

Case #4: Shampa, a 31 year old unmarried software professional working in a big MNC observes, 'Modernisation has touched every sphere of life which is distinctive of our generation – be it in designer dress, eating out fast food, possession of up-to-

date costly mobile technology or to navigate ourselves through social networking sites having a wide circle of global friends. Extensive use of credit cards has led to the rise in expenses to fulfill our spree of going out (travelling and shopping), eating out or to put ourselves in fitness regime (gym, beauty salon, stress release session). Hence, attitude is for outward looking not for inward ones'.

Case #5: Ankita, a 29 year old young married software professional of mid-small sized firms puts forth her view to the effect that globalisation have money driven orientation and tend to compete to achieve better lifestyles. We have now a new tendency to fulfill all our wants and we cannot afford to wait i.e. 'desiring everything at an early age'. In contrast, people of earlier days enjoyed a contended living, had less lifestyle option and did not have money driven orientation. They had to wait for years to get those wants fulfilled. 'Double income model' is now highly desired and important to accomplish the luxurious way of life and for better standard of living.

Above cases indicate how the goal determines the means:

Seeking consumerist lifestyle → job is important → need to be qualified for the job.

Thereby, respondents' career and job are well supported by supportive spouse and in-laws. Gadgets, appliances, support from extended family and availability of paid services have released them from the time-consuming burden of household chores to enable them to devote more time and effort to the workplace. But, efforts to balance the family and work have become a challenge for the working women.

c) Career in IT industry has Empowering Effect

Being associated with the IT industry, their spot decision skills get enhanced and have broadened their social circle. Their employability to this professional workplace effected financial independence giving rise to individual identity, personal independence and self confidence in women. Their independent standing has enabled them to raise their voice and to take their own decisions. It has empowered them to exercise their self-choice in choosing careers and the marriage partners. The extent motherhood has also become selective. In a nutshell, they have become more independent, more vocal in their thought and action.

Moreover, financial independence has given women employees' a greater respect in the society.

It may be represented like this:

Engineering education → IT job → raised voices in the family domain.

The following narration reflects the rationale behind the need for economic independence for a woman:

Case #6: Indu, illustrates that economic independence have given them an independent stand on decision making, which is desirable for two reasons: a) It saves them in facing the domestic violence and combating any eventuality for future risk or crisis within the family or with the husband and b) an opportunity for supporting their own parents.

d) *Backlash in the Lives of Working Women*

The two anecdotes below on intergenerational change reflect two different perceptions. The first one from a very senior level manager, who has observed two generations keenly, has made this poignant statement on generational difference as:

Case #7: Sohini observes that in the earlier generation, not everybody was a 'self-achiever' but everyone had the capability to achieve, and possessed high patience level. They prepared their next generation to be 'achievers'. The present generation has become generation of 'self achievers' out of toil and sacrifice of their earlier generation. The struggle in achiever's life comes with wear and tear. The achievement comes up but the tolerance level reduces considerably. They can hardly wait for anything. To them time stands for 'immediate action'. The present generation believes in quick reaction that leads to intolerance. '*Chalo kichu dekhi* ('Let us see something')....is the transit used earlier. Now this has changed to....'*Chalo kichu kori*' ('Let us do something').

The second anecdote comes from a young professional belonging to a small sized firm:

Case #8: Monika, a 23 year old software professional views that now- a- days the patience level happens to be too low because almost every want of a person used to get fulfilled immediately from his/her childhood itself. In the joint family system, existence of a number of siblings, led to prevalence of '*we centric*' idea but with emergence of nuclear family, the relationship turned into '*me-centric*'.

The above statements points out that intergenerational behavioural change is attributed to intensified work pressure coupled with their upbringing within the nuclear family system.

Interpretative Analysis: *Etic* View

The anecdotes of new genre software techies have amply demonstrated that they can bridge the private-public dichotomy with the help of their educational and professional attainments. They have empowered themselves in building private-public continuum, in which societal attitude has relaxed the patriarchal rigidity for confining women exclusively to private domain so that they are to depend on the patriarch, the ultimate decision-maker, elucidating their mothers' tales. The earlier genre of women had to be contended with cherished femininity imbibed in prioritising marriage over education and career, to be educated in the arts subjects in contrast to technical subjects meant to be reserved for men, immobility over mobility and restricted mixing with the opposite sex. But insurgent jobs, especially in IT industry, have challenged many of these patriarchal injunctions. Society's reflexivity, a product of globalisation, raised the taste for higher standard of living. To satisfy the aim, double-income model prevails over single male-bread earner proposition, resulting in women's exposure to the outside world. Furthermore, employment in the IT sector has redefined gender norms. The nature of work in this industry has pushed the empowering effect on women employees in respect of self identity, independence and capacity to raise their voice by neutralising the male dominance.

The concern over balancing work and life, however, remains. In tune with the traditional expectation of the married, family is prioritised. The traditional expectation for family remains primal responsibilities with them. It could be inferred that the relaxation of patriarchal bindings yielding to a place for new lifestyle demands, may not have liberated women in the real sense of the term.

Concluding Remarks

The concluding section comments on the objective with which we began our study, the possibility of intergenerational mobility among software professionals and their mothers' generation. This study highlights the changing face of women in Bengal. The findings show positive trend towards occupational and educational mobility among women professionals in relation to their mothers belonging to the previous generation. Factual figures reveal influence of the changed societal attitude for women seeking professional education for seeking jobs. For conclusive evidence, to understand intergenerational change both emic view supported by the case studies articulates the rationale behind the change in educational and occupational pattern in respondent's time with those of their mothers' generation. Both quantitative analysis and pattern analysis of qualitative statements are adapted to attain reliable knowledge of the field situation.

Respondents' narratives and personal histories reveal the existence of societal inequality structure that decided educational and professional course for the women in the preceding generation. The narratives further underline that, in the previous generation, there was a conscious process of segregation in place for imparting education between boys and girls in the family. Best professional education was meant for the boys only as they were the would-be bread-earner for the family. Girls'

education got lesser importance to that of boys. General education was considered sufficient for the girls. Marriage was prioritized for them. The education they received was intended to add status in searching for better grooms for them. . They were, as if, destined to domesticity. As a result, they became 'dependent' member of the family. Even, if, women were capable of taking up technical courses, they were often refused the opportunity as they were barred from following factors a) mobility to other cities, b) participation in male dominated arenas, c) apprehensions for security and above all, d) family reasons (i.e. relocation due to marriage, kids or husband). Consequently, women were rendered powerless. They were treated in subordinate status while men were in dominant position.

Of late, there is paradigm shift in societal attitude with growing preference for working wives in the family. The perspective of changed societal attitude offers financial independence to employed women. Armed with economic independence, earning women can support their own parents financially or can combat any eventuality of future risks. Employed women, can also contribute to maintenance of higher standard of living, a by-product of globalization in the post-1990s.

Against this backdrop, the paper highlights the ordeal of working women in IT industry. Long hours of work schedule and unscheduled mobility etc. destabilizes family life and bond between child and parents diminishes because of their toggling between family management and longer time at work. Prolonged stay at work gives rise to stress which tell upon their patience and adjustment levels. The study encompasses mainly urban middle class strata and an effect of change is related to such segments only. Many women from rural areas are now taking up jobs in IT sector. The effects of this change are limited to IT women software professionals only and these are not representative of large section women in Bengal.

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