

# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

One of the major consequences of the varied process of change in all the spheres operating in the country has been emancipation of women from their traditional ethos (Reddy, 1986). Women have entered the formal labour force in unprecedented numbers during the past three decades. The trend toward greater participation of women in the labour force is most advanced in the Western industrial States and the Communist countries in Eastern Europe and East Asia. In the Third World countries like India, the informal sector has come to rival or surpass formal employment as a source of jobs for both men and women. Although women's participation in formal employment has increased markedly, the range of employment opportunity has remained surprisingly narrow. In nonagricultural labour force women's work often follows the line of their traditional household occupation. In industrial sector they work in factories. In service sector, they are concentrated mainly in elementary school teaching, nursing, retail sales and clerical jobs.

Occupational segregation operates at the professional level also, limiting the number of women in high paying, prestigious, powerful jobs. Any profession - be it business management, politics or academic - the number of women

dwindles near the top hierarchy. Despite some improvements, particularly at professional level women workers remain concentrated in stereotyped jobs with low pay, low status and little opportunity for advancement. In this disadvantageous state of affair also, more and more women seek employment by a combination of negative and positive factors of compulsion and choice.

Women joining the labour force weaken the more traditional division of labour under which men have been primarily responsible of earning money, while women's labour is mainly devoted to producing goods and services for home consumption. In this context, Rath (1987) commented ;

Nowadays men and women do not live in two watertight compartments of bread winning and homekeeping. The woman helps in keeping the family, society and life together...She is no longer a mere housewife. She is an economist, nutrition expert, sociologist and educator.

(Rath 1987, p.6)

The findings of a number of studies suggest that the mother's participation in the world of work has brought about structural and functional alterations in the family and other social institution.

### 1.1 Importance and Significance of Employment of Women

Great changes indeed are taking place in many areas of life on a global scale. One of the most significant changes is the fact that for the first time in human history, more women than ever before are going out to work on a full time basis (Soon, 1989). Work by women is not a new phenomenon, because just as men, women have always worked. But the work of women was mainly restricted to the context of home only. They were homemakers. But in the last 20 years women have joined the workforce in growing numbers specially in the developed countries. Like many other developing countries, in India also women's education and status have been viewed as the key input to National Development. In order to promote equality of women and men, elimination of employment discrimination and creation of new opportunities in traditional, non-traditional and highly productive areas, are given utmost importance in India to-day.

It is a characteristic feature of labour markets all over the world that certain jobs are performed only by men while others are performed only by women. The general rule is that a particular operation is either a male or female task. This division of labour according to sex is often explained as natural result of physiological and psychological differences between men and women. But apart from the obvious case of child bearing, there are extremely few convincing examples of natural difference between men and

women. Quite different tasks are labelled as male and female work in different parts of the world and also from region to region. For example, a study (Reddy, 1988) reveals that the sowing and transplanting is performed by men in some parts of India, whereas, the same job is performed by women in other parts of the country. A general observation at familial level also reflect that the buying of vegetables and grains is considered to be a female's job in Gujarat, whereas, in Assam it is generally performed by the male members - the father or the husband. Hence, it can be concluded that if it is true that the specialisation was rooted in physiological and psychological differences between the sexes, we should expect to find the same tasks done by male or female, all over the world. Clearly, the key to understanding these patterns is in the field of culture rather than in human physiology or anatomy.

Women have tried to challenge men in various walks of life. Nowhere has this challenge been more visible than in the field of employment. The significance of the challenge lies in the fact, that as a tradition, women were not supposed to go in for white collar jobs at all, and in no case be employed along with men. The segregation between men and women practised by Indian society, did not permit that kind of intermingling of men and women. Nor would the ego of the Indian male permit him to accept a situation where women also became bread winners. However, women, at lower strata of society did work out side home, and earned money.

A significant change took place after India became politically free in 1947. The Constitution of independent India declared, that there should be no discrimination against the employment of women. This created further opportunity for employment of women and an increase in their employment rate was seen, more particularly among educated and uppercaste women. However, participation of women at global level in economic activity has been steadily falling over the last seven decades. The situation has worsened during the five year plan period. In 1951, out of every 100 women, 23 were engaged in economic activity. By 1971, this declined to 14, but rose to 20 in 1981. But the level of pre-plan period is yet to be reached. The reasons for falling Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR) could be various i.e., decline of traditional industries, urbanisation, industrialisation, mechanisation of production processes etc. Also with the coming of night shift in many factories women have been displaced. The increasing numbers and visibility of women in administration, professional and other white collared jobs has hidden the stark reality that women in the mass are being displaced from employment at an alarming rate, not only in agriculture, but also in the informal and formal industrial sectors in both rural and urban areas.

A certain percentage of educated women may be voluntarily unemployed as the demand on the household front may be greater and irresistible. Sometimes women keep

themselves out of the labour market because of their preoccupation with the bearing and rearing of children, generally in their mid twenties or early thirties. Some have to opt to be out of jobs because their husbands are posted to distant places and it may be difficult for them to find a new job every time and every where they go.

#### 1.1.1 REASONS FOR WOMEN JOINING THE WORKFORCE

Several factors such as economic, personal, social are responsible for the growth of the newly emerging middle class women in India. Women need to work in order to contribute to the family income. This is particularly true for the lower income families. The high cost of living due to soaring price rise as well as the desire for modern and better living, made it necessary for women to work in order to supplement the income of the family. The personal reason for women joining the workforce, stated by Soon (1989) is :

"Women feel the need to achieve self fulfilment through work and career."

(Soon, 1989, p.4)

He also explained that there is a pressure to work on more women as they see their peer working. Moreover, the educated women to-day want to utilise the formal education. Women gain a status' in the family by virtue of earning independent income by maintaining economic independence. In this context, Gore (1988) explains :

A Woman's identity need not be limited to being a housewife, to being a good cook and a good mother. She should have the opportunity to conquer new realms and find an identity of her own in the intellectual world.

(Gore, 1988, pp.4-5)

#### 1.1.2 EMERGENT GAINS AND PROBLEMS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Considerable evidences in the literature and researches of education, home science and sociology, indicated that the employed women have brought about certain changes in the family and society. On the other hand, employment to some extent also changes a woman from her submissive behaviour to assertive behaviour with broader perspective of life. The increase in family income, raises the standard of living from various angles like - food, clothing, education, entertainment, and having facilities of modern amenities at home. But at the same time, employment of women increases her physical labour as she has to manage two fronts- the home and the job. Her absence in home for major part of the day invites husband, children and other family members to co-operate by sharing home making activities. Failure in performing the new roles by other family members, women's work always ends up for her as an unmanageable load.

On the other hand, women, who are wives or mothers, although holding important jobs like men, are not professionally recognised at times by the employers, as well as the family members. This gives rise to frustration in the



women, leading to conflict at workplace as well as at home. Continuation of this situation affects women's own health - physical and mental, which finally prohibits their personal and professional development.

Discussing the critical issues on the status of women an Advisory Committee on Women's Studies, ICSSR (1977) commented that :

"Unless the economic and social utility of women is enhanced in the eyes of their families and the nation by opportunities to take part in socially and economically productive roles, the national neglect of women will continue."

(Ganguli et.al.1977, p.2)

It transpires that women must work in order to attain the status and economic independence that employment affords. Being unemployed, women can not seek equality. The equality which women are able to get through employment, cannot always lead to a simultaneous equality at homes.

## 1.2 Rationale of the Study

From the aforesaid discussions and the review of various literatures, it was clear that a number of researchers in social sciences dealt with this burning issue of women's equality and employment, which motivated the investigator to take up a research in this area in Jorhat city of Assam, so as to get a better insight of women's employment in the region. Assam is an important state in

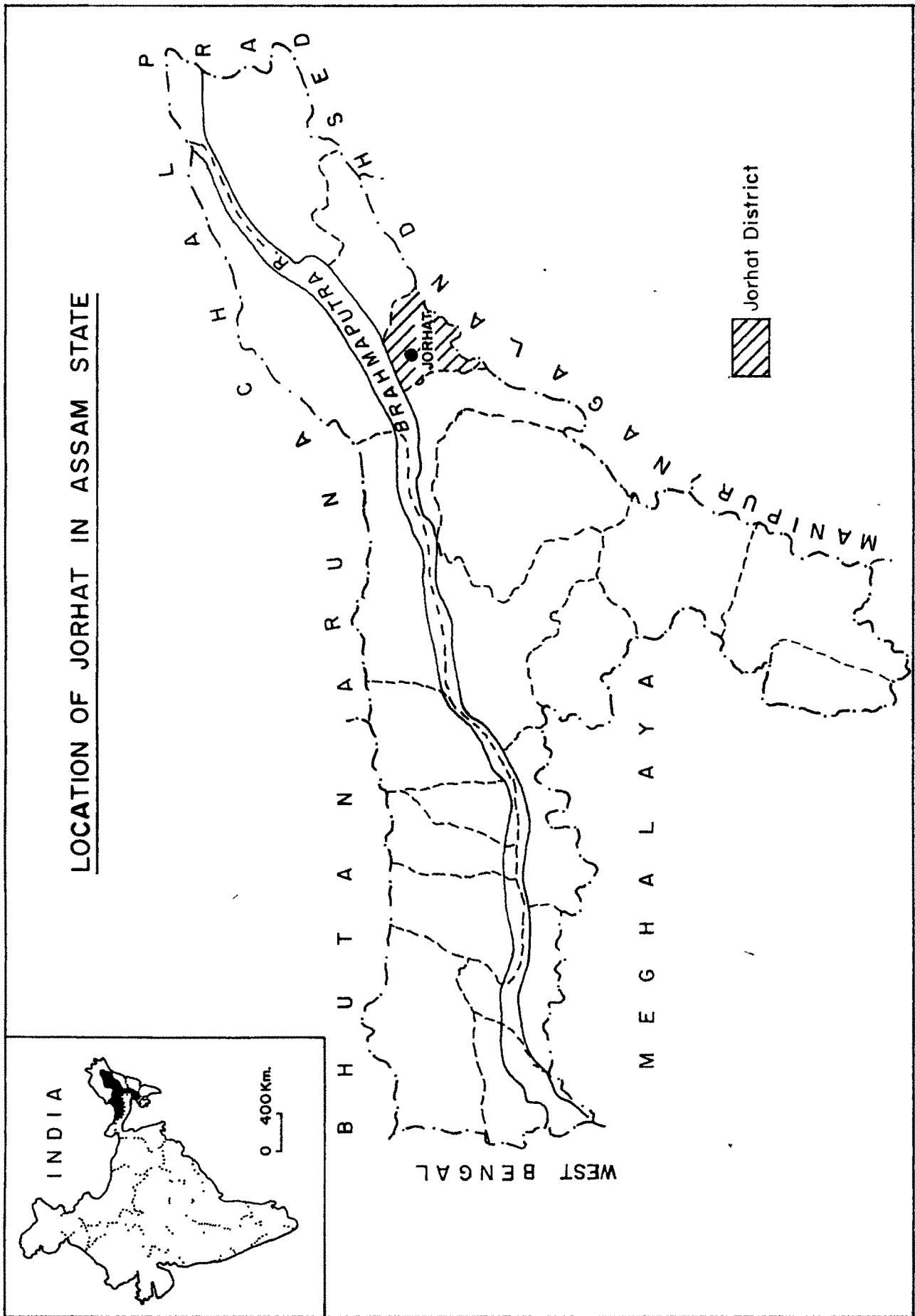


Fig. 1

North Eastern part of India for its richness in natural resouces (Fig. 1). The female work participation rate in Assam is 6.15 of which 6.31 is from rural areas and 4.25 is from urban areas (census of India 1971) . \*

The investigator was interested to explore the various existing physical conditions like use of equipment and appliances in homemaking tasks and the availability of various facilities at home for better homemaking in the four areas of homemaking namely, food, clothing, management of resources, and child development and family relations of employed women's families of Jornat. It was also felt necessary to study the attitude of these women towards their own employment, which will reflect their cost and benefits derived from their employment. The investigator was further interested to study the pattern of homemaking in terms of modernity based on division of labour, between husband and wife.

However, it was assumed that, new problems are faced by both men and women in homemaking, because women have accepted employment. The employment of women requires them to stay away from home for many hours a day, like their husbands, and hence, home responsibilities demand a number of facilities like division of labour between husband and wife, paid help community facilities, adjustability with the existing

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\* 1981 census was not carried out in Assam and 1991 census report has not yet been published.

conditions by the family members, and certain other conducive conditions and environmental facilities to lead a smooth life. It was assumed that absence of the aforesaid conditions stands as problems for the employed women. Therefore, the investigator was motivated to study the various problems of these women. This moved the investigator to research further the association between modernity in homemaking and the existing physical facilities, attitude and problems of the employed women.

The investigator, being a teacher in extension department of Home Science College of Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, imparts knowledges and skills in four major areas of homemaking to the members of the community to lead a better and happier life. This department puts a special emphasis on women to be self sufficient by taking a vocation or an entrepreneurship. Home Science is no longer a mere homemaking, which is evident in its modern philosophy given by Chandra (1978) as :

The philosophy of Home Science to-day underlines the development of the individual in family as well as in profession. The family and its satisfaction remained the goal of home science but the goal of vocational preparation has been added...The contemporary philosophy then, reaches the individuals with the message of personal and professional advancement through contemporary knowledge in home science.

(Chandra, 1978, p.9)

Over and above homemaking, women are taking up new responsibilities in family as well as in society. To-day women though few in number, have some power and position in the nation. They can actively participate in familial, regional, state and national decision making. The awareness of women for social, political, physical, biological, economical, technological and legal matters is due to their education and employment. Home Science also prepares women for job. Looking at the large number of women in the workforce and the problems of employed women who are contributing towards nation building, the investigator wanted to improve the conditions at home front, by developing better ways and techniques of homemaking through the curriculum of home science extension.

The young college students, after their education are expected to take up a vocation as well as settle in life by getting married. Marriages evolve, sometimes they dissolve. But if the young people have an idea of what type of problems are likely to arise and what types of solutions are available then this awareness will provide a measure of anticipatory socialization and will help in making mutual adjustment (Gore, 1988).

Therefore, through the curriculum, the students of Home Science College, Assam Agricultural University, can be counselled for their own development. They can also be made to participate in solving the problems of employed women in general and of Jorhat city in particular, through some

literature like pamphlet, booklet, and through mass media like radio talk, TV serial or documentary as well as conducting workshop and short term courses for solving problems of employed women. The introduction of these kind of media approaches through Home Science curriculum is not only to attract and help the female employees, but door will be opened thereby, to counsel the male members of the family also. Because the problems of employed women today are not their own problem only, but it is a problem for the whole family. Certain disadvantages in routine activities perceived by the family members is for the long absence of the wife or the mother from home. If the members of the family can accept women's employment, there should be certain amount of understanding and acceptance of the new role of the women. By doing so, the problems arised out of this new role of women can be reduced. It is to reorient the society by educating the parents for correct socialisation of their children, where sex role behaviour should not specially be confined to a particular sex. Co-operative home making task shared by brothers and sisters, husbands and wives is the need of the day.

Availing physical facilities in terms of equipment, home facilities, and community facilities and services of different kinds is as important as the broadening of mental out look of the members of the family. It is equally important for all the family members to avail such facilities, which facilitates the members to behave in a

better way. Coherence and integration of the family in its newer system of family structure, where the mother or the wife is employed, needs to be strengthened. Therefore, an attempt has been taken by the investigator to include certain innovative approaches through a guide line from a very different angle which will probably have a greater perspective of Home Science curriculum. Home Science extension work so far been viewed from women's and children point of view. Hence the investigator was interested to develop a guide line for Home Science curriculum, where there will be an ample scope for educating the males also, not the subject matters of Home Science but to develop a better attitude towards homemaking, towards employment of women and towards the development of women in general.

The aforesaid discussions motivated the investigator to conduct a research on employed women of Jorhat, Assam.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Employed women's traditional and modern homemaking responsibilities in association with their physical facilities, attitudes and problems, and inferences for Home Science curriculum.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

- 1.4.1 To find out the modernity and traditionality of homemaking in terms of division of labour between husband and wife of employed women's families.

- 1.4.2 To find out the various equipment and appliances used in selected areas and homemaking.
- 1.4.3 To find out the reasons for not using modern equipment and appliances in homemaking.
- 1.4.4 To find out the availability of facilities at home for better homemaking.
- 1.4.5 To determine the attitude of employed women towards working women.
- 1.4.6 To explore the various problems faced by the employed women.
- 1.4.7 To find out the association between modernity in homemaking and the following variables.
- (a) use of equipment and appliances in homemaking
  - (b) Availability of facilities at home for better homemaking
  - (c) Attitude of employed women towards working women
  - (d) Problems faced by the employed women
- 1.4.8 To determine the relationship between the selected personal and demographic variables of respondents and each of the following variables.
- (a) Modernity in homemaking.
  - (b) Use of equipment and appliances in homemaking
  - (c) Availability of facilities at home for better



homemaking.

(d) Attitude of employed women towards working women.

(e) Problems faced by the employed women.

1.4.9 To develop a guideline to deal with the concerns and problems of employed women through home science curriculum.

### 1.5 Assumptions

The basic assumptions underlying the present study were as follows.

1.5.1 There exists a pattern of homemaking in the families of employed women.

1.5.2 The employed women differ among themselves in the use of equipment and appliances, availability of facilities and attitudes towards working women.

1.5.3 The employed women under study have some or other kind of problems related to homemaking.

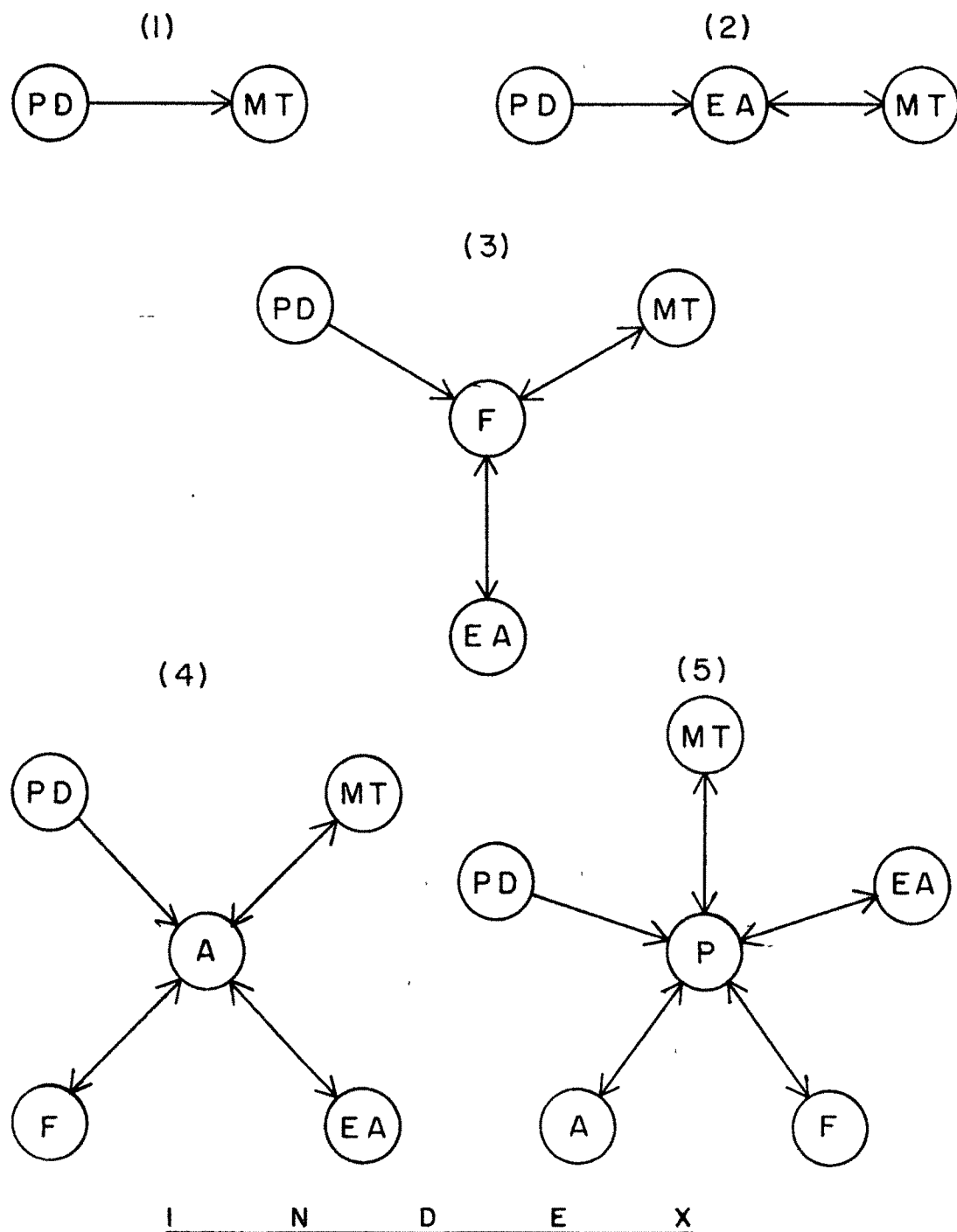
1.5.4 The employed women under study will be able to identify their problems.

### 1.6 Null hypotheses

1.6.1 There is no significant relationship between modernity in homemaking and personal and demographic characteristics of the respondents.

- 1.6.2        There is no significant association between use of equipment and appliances in homemaking and the following variables.
- a.    Modernity in homemaking
  - b.    Personal and demographic characteristics of the respondents.
- 1.6.3        There is no significant association between facilities available at home and the following variables.
- a.    Modernity in homemaking
  - b.    Use of equipment and appliances in homemaking
  - c.    Personal and demographic characteristics of the respondents.
- 1.6.4        There is no significant relationship between attitude of employed women towards working women and the following variables
- a.    Modernity in homemaking
  - b.    Use of equipment and appliances in home making.
  - c.    Facilities available at home for better home making.
  - d.    Personal and demographic characteristics of the respondents.
- 1.6.5        There is no significant relationship between problems of employed women and the following

# DIAGRAMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE HYPOTHESES



PD Personal and demographic variables  
 MT Modern and traditional homemaking  
 EA Use of equipment and appliances

F Availability of facilities  
 A Attitude of employed women towards working women  
 P Problems of employed women

Fig.2

variables.

- a. Modernity in homemaking
- b. Use of equipment and appliances in home making.
- c. Facilities available at home for better homemaking.
- d. Attitudes of employed women towards working women.
- e. Personal and demographic characteristics of the respondents.

A diagrammatic representation of the hypotheses showing the relationship between the variables are illustrated in Figure 2.

### 1.7 Limitations of the study

The present study was limited to :

- 1.7.1 Married employed women of Jorhat, Assam.
- 1.7.2 Married employed women who had a minimum of 2 to 3 years of job experience.