

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Socio-economic status is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. A study of socio-economic status often reveals inequalities in access to resources, plus issues related to privilege, power and control. Socio-economic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a Pearson's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others that is based on income, education and occupation. When analysing a family's socio-economic status, the household income, member's education, and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, verses with an individual, when their own attributes are stressed.

Definitions of socio-economic status vary across time and place. It is possible for the same nomenclature to be ascribed different meanings and to be measured differently across sectors like education, policy arenas, and state and national jurisdiction. SES is a complex and relative concept. It is reasonable to expect that it will mean different things in terms of different contexts. It can be defined broadly in terms of social, cultural, and economic resources, the extent to which individuals or groups have access to these resources and the relative value ascribed to the resources held by different individuals or groups.

Socio-economic status of women is something that explains different social and economic scenario of women. The socio economic status of women working in Handloom sector can be measured by finding educational qualification, Employment status, welfare facilities in handloom units, working conditions, housing and transportation facilities, indebtedness,

trade union and awareness, empowerment indicators, income and expenditure pattern. All these details will give an insight in to the scenario of socio economic status.

### **1.1.1 What is socio-economic status of women?**

Since the late 1980, the reduction of gender disparities has been of great concern for development policies, as highlighted in the third Millennium Development Goal, whose purpose is to promote gender equality and empower women. That has changed the concept of socio economic status of women around the world. Almost half of the population of the world are women but the proportion of women working to men working is low. Without involvement of women in economic, political and social activities the development of nation is not possible and such developments are meaningless. In the first phase of development of a country, women are seen just as wives, mothers, and sisters lacking an individuality and absence of rights and freedom. Worst problem happens is that; women themselves saw them as secondary to men in household and live their life not knowing their actual potential. They were intended to cook, clean, take care of children and all sorts of menial jobs. There were times in history and still now that women were not allowed to vote, and do a job that they like. But there were protest from the part of women to get voting right and freedom. Protest of British women for getting vote has given inspiration to women around the world. Like that there were many struggles in India for freedom of women. Nowadays the scenario is changing a bit. As urbanisation come to its peak women receive some kinds of recognition as individuals.

Women in developing countries always suffer with limited mobility and flexibility. In countries like India women are not allowed to go out without accompanying a male member. Because women are always seen as a property of husband or father, they are scared that women can be molested by someone else and that can hamper the prestige of

their family. The worst part is that if a girl or lady is raped, blame always goes to her. Even today there are people who think that women are getting raped because of the kind of dress they are wearing or they are going outside house in night. Nobody is thinking about the right of women to wear the dress she like, and work at night and go and explore the beauty of night life. A less travelled or mobile person will make a lesser individual with low experience occurred in life time. That makes her always dependent of men, when she is a child she is dependent on her father, when she became adult she is dependent on her husband, when she became old she is dependent on her son and that ends her life like a frog in the well.

### **1.1.2 Women in India**

India is a patriarchal society where women are deprived of low social, economic, and health status. Economic, social, political, religious and cultural institutions are controlled by men. That helps the patriarchy in such a manner that the choices, livelihood and sexuality of women are controlled to the extent that women have been degraded to second grade citizens despite having constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights of equality. The family, caste, religion, have reinforced and legalised the patriarchal values and ideas. The better status of women in the early Vedic period is incomparable to the present status of women in India. Besides economic dependence, early tutelage of husbands and in-laws, heavy domestic work- load which remained unpaid and unrecognised, absence of career and mobility, non-recognition of their economic contribution, poor work conditions and wages, and monotonous jobs which men generally refused to do was also responsible for their pitiable conditions. The issue is having another side that is socio-political side that is women are suffered from denial of freedom even in their homes, repression and unnatural indoctrination, unequal and inferior status, rigid caste hierarchy and untouchability.

Eventually in the course of history, cattle dumping and other menial jobs were given to women in the family and they are leading an inhuman beastly life.

### **1.1.3 Historical Perspective of status of women in India**

Indian society is one society where women are treated as inferior to men. They do not enjoy equal status to male counter parts. The status of Indian women can be better understood if the historical background of status of women is clear. There has been different kind of status of women in the course of history. It is an old saying, “Where women are honoured, gods resides there. And she was known as “Ardhangini” – one half of husband’s body.

**Ancient Period:** During early Vedic period, Indian women enjoyed a higher status compared to other time period. In later Vedic period, the position that the women folk enjoyed in the early Vedic society, was lost. The participation of wives was required in many rituals during this period. There was a thought that a widow has to perform a symbolic self-immolation at the death of her husband. The ritual was symbolic in the early period seems evident from the re-marriage of widow, generally to the husband’s brother. Women could select their husband in an assembly called ‘Sayambhar’, and they were appointed at important positions. Education was equally open for both boys and girls. Girls used to study Veda and fine arts. In the family they were provided with complete freedom and were treated as “Ardhanginis”. Husband used to consult his wife on financial decisions.

**Medieval Period:** The status of women was lost in the course of history in India. During medieval period women were seen as subordinate men. Her world was confounded in to four wall of the house. They were denied education, widow re-marriage, and experienced

compulsion of doing Sati. They become the property of males who even used to sell them for money. But by the 15<sup>th</sup> century social reform movements like Bhakti movement led by social reformers opposed all those social evils existed in the society and tried to emancipate women from all of these.

**British period:** British came in India in the latter half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Sati, infanticide, slavery, child marriage,, prohibition of widow remarriage and lack of women's rights were some of the social problem which come to the attention of British and social reformers. The British government had abolished sati in 1813, with the help of social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy. In 1779, infanticide was declared to be murder by the Bengal Regulation XXI. In 1804, this was spread to other part of India. The first legislation regarding child marriage was passed in 1860 under which the minimum age of marriage in the case of girls was raised to 10, later it has been increased. Even though, these laws have created a change in papers only but in a lawless land like British India the laws were only names.

**After Independence:** Revolutionary changes have taken place in the position of women in India after independence. The constitution of India provided many features to improve the condition of women using separate institutions. The Constitution of India guarantees certain fundamental rights and freedom such as protection of life and personal liberty. In the post-independent India many legislations has been passed for the upliftment of women such as The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956, The Hindu succession Act of 1956, The Hindu Women Right to Property Act of 1973, The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976, etc.

**Present Scenario:** It is true that after independence the status of women in India has been changed. But even now there are some states in India where child marriage is still prevailing. Status of women in different states of India is different. There are some states

in India like Kerala where literacy rate, female infanticide, child marriage are very low and sex ratio is very high. But some states in India are still lacking this kind of improvement. There are states in India having very low sex ratio and status of women. Sexual harassments, honour killing, dowry system, female foeticide, and other social evils are prevalent in different parts of India.

#### **1.1.4 Description of Kerala**

Kerala, a state in India is in between the Lakshadweep Sea and the Western Ghats, is a narrow, fertile part of land on the southwest coast of India. Thiruvananthapuram is the capital, and the state consists of 14 districts, Malayalam is the spoken and official language of the state. Kerala is known as ‘Gods Own Country as it’s the tagline of Kerala tourism.

**Geography of Kerala:** The state of Kerala is located between 8 degree 18’ north and 12 degree 48’ north and longitudes 74 degree east 52’ and 72 degree 22’ east and it is having 1.18 per cent of the country. The state is having borders with Tamil Nadu in east and Karnataka in north. As the state itself is diverse, it is divided in east cross-section into three district regions – hill and valleys midland plains and coastal region. 27 per cent of whole Kerala consists of forests. Kerala is also known for its Ayurveda heritage as its having abundant medical herbs in those forests.

**Districts of Kerala:** Kerala is divided into 14 districts. Due to geographical and historical reasons the districts are grouped into; North Kerala consists of Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode and Malappuram; Central Kerala consists of Palakkad, Thrissur, Eranakulam and Idukki; South Kerala consists of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta and Kottayam.

**Brief History of Kerala:** History of Kerala is not dark as the state was mentioned in many ancient Sanskrit works. The earliest Sanskrit work in which Kerala is mentioned is Aitareya Aranyaka. The Puranas show the geography of Kerala. The population of Kerala was combination of different groups of Dravidians in the ancient times. The ancient Dravidian kingdoms of south India were Chera kingdom, Chola kingdom and Pandya kingdom, and their people were held together because of intimate bonds of blood, language, literature, and that was the force which promoted a sort of cultural homogeneity in South India. Later Aryans came in Kerala and occurred radical changes in the way of life, habits, customs, and manners of the people, leading to the formation of Aryan culture in the state. Religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity have contributed their significant share in enriching the cultural wealth of Kerala. The state, Kerala was formed at the State Reorganisation Act of November 1, 1956.

### **1.1.5 Women in Kerala**

Kerala is one state which has higher socio-economic status of women. High sex ratio, high female literacy rate, high health status, high social and economic status is the peculiar characteristics of the state among other Indian states. The total population of Kerala as per Census 2011 is 3,34,06,061 with 1,60,27,412 males and 1,73,78,649 females. And the state is possessing first rank among Indian states with a sex ratio of 1084 per 1000 men according to Census 2011, it was 1058 in 2001. Another important feature of Kerala is its high literacy rate that is 94% according to 2011 Census. Male literacy rate in Kerala is 96.11% and that of female is 92.07%. The gap between male and female literacy is only 4.04% in 2011. The percentage of workers to total population (Workforce Participation Rate) in Kerala according to Census 2011 is 34.78%. Among males the Workforce Participation Rate is 52.73%. Among females the Workforce Participation Rate is 18.23%.

All these data shows the empowerment of women in Kerala compared to other states in India.

### **1.1.6 Description of Kozhikode**

Kozhikode district is located in the southwest coast of India and northern side of Kerala. This district has an immense importance historically. The city of Kozhikode is also known as Calicut. Kozhikode district is having borders with Kannur and Mahe in Pondichery state to the north, Wayanad to the east and Malappuram to the south. The so-called Arabian Sea lies to the west. There are 12 block panchayats in the districts such as Balusseri, Chelannur, Koduvally, Kozhikode, Kunnamangalam, Kunnummal, Melady, Panthalayani, Perambraa, Thodannur, Thuneri and Vatakara. The total area of Kozhikode is 23,444 sq. km. and it has a total population of 28,79,131, among that 13,99,358 are male and 14,79,773 are female.

**Brief History of Kozhikode:** The history of Kozhikode is mainly the history of Kozhikode city. Calicut is the anglicized form of *Kalikat*, the name used by Mappilas (the main traders of that time). According to historian K.V Krishnan Iyer, the word Kozhikode is derived from *koyil* (palace) and *kotai* (fortified), meaning 'Fortified Palace'. This has evolved in to Kozhikode. The ports of the Malabar Coast are well known in the trade of spices, silk, and other goods. And Kozhikode emerged as the centre of an independent kingdom in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, whose ruler was known as Zamorin. Kozhikode is famous for its trade relationship with Kingdoms of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East in the past. In 1498, Vasco da Gama landed at Kappad and he became the first European who finds a water way to India. There begins the European influence in Kerala and overall India. The present-day Kozhikode district was among the territories cede to the British East India Company by Tipu Sultan of Mysore in 1792, at the conclusion of the Third Anglo-Mysore



War. The newly acquired British possessions on the Malabar Coast were organized into Malabar District which included the present-day district of Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Palakkad and Wayanad. Kozhikode served as the administrative headquarters of the district.

**Climate of the district:** The district has a generally humid climate with a very hot season extending from March to May. The rainy season is during the South West Monsoon, which sets in the first week of June and extends up to September. The North East Monsoon extends from the second half of October through November. The average annual rainfall is 3266 mm. the highest temperature recorded was 39.4 degree C in March 1975 and lowest was 14 degree recorded on 26 December 1975.

**Religions in the district:** There are mainly 3 religions in Kozhikode such as Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Hindus constitute 56.2% of the total population of the district, Muslims are 39.2%, Christians are 4.3% and 0.06% of the total population are Jains (source: Census of India).

**Culture of the area:** Kozhikode has made significant contributions in the field of Malayalam language and literature. The district is known for its folk songs known as *Vadakkan Pattukal*. *Mappilapattu* and *Oppana* are the cultural heritages of the Muslims. The area is having a strong association with ghazals and football. Kozhikode has rich tradition of folk art. *Thirayattam* is a typical ritualistic performing art form of Kozhikode, and which is a combination of dance, music, theatre, satire, facial and body painting, masking, martial art and ritualistic function.

### **1.1.7 Women in Kozhikode**

Kozhikode is one of the district of Kerala where women are having higher socio-economic status like high sex ratio, high female literacy rate, high health status, high social and economic status. The district is having a sex ratio of 1097 per thousand men according to Census 2011. Kozhikode district is having a literacy rate of 95.24% in 2011; male literacy rate is 97.57% and that of female is 93.16. But Female Work Force Participation rate in the district is only 8.1%. That shows that only less number of women are working in Kozhikode district rather more women are there as housewives. Kozhikode is a place where women are having high demographic status but lacking the freedom factor or identity. Kerala have produced many notable women in areas of literature, politics and academics. But looking in to Kozhikode, one cannot see notable women persons from the district in field of literature, politics and academics. Kozhikode is also known for its moral policing incidents happened. Moral policing is an effort made by patriarchy to control women in the name of morality. Freedom of women is always an issue in many parts of India. In Kozhikode because of highly patriarchal mind-set the issue is very much concerning. Despite high demographic status in the papers, the real status of women such as freedom of women to work, to choose her own partner, to fly high in career are lacking in this district. So a primary study is necessary for understanding empowerment of women in Kozhikode district.

### **1.1.8 Women in Handloom Sector**

Handloom sector, which is one of the major traditional industries of Kerala, is seen losing its relevance in the industrial scenario of Kerala due to several reasons. The industry was very much relevant in the state once with most sought out items of cloth. Not only in Kerala but in all over India handloom sector is there. Within the wider network of handloom production in India, women were involved in production and marketing of the

products, as workers, as participants in commercialized domestic textile production, and as investor/master weavers. In many parts of India, textile manufacturing was and is the most profitable economic activity. Handloom sector is one in which Governments never recognised formally as a target group. Even the private initiatives of NGOs, or fashion boutiques, tend to ignore their contribution and role. The most radical to rightist political mobilization structures in handloom sector are devoid of any issues and participation of women. Women participation is completely absent.

Women constitute a major workforce in the handloom sector and most of the handloom products are meant for women. However, their socio-economic status such as working, living and income conditions need to be improved. They need to be empowered in various ways. Almost all the government schemes, projects and programs on handloom sector have been and continue to bypass this major workforce through various means. Women weavers have been subject to domestic violence, and victims of torture in workplaces in many places in India. Handloom sector and women are interlinking topics in a way that whenever handloom sector is in a crisis the burden of which goes to the women. Even though they are performing critical functions in production, their role in decision making is very poor. The concept of Globalisation came in India in 1990s that have made very big negative effect on the handloom sector and the women bears the burden of it and handloom sector is becoming a vulnerable sector of production in India. There is no recognition to women's work as weavers, even though women play a major role in all pre-loom operations and take on labour-intensive activities.

## **1.2 Rationale of the Study**

Socio-economic status of women is one of the most important aspects of development process. Without the existence of gender equality the so called development process is

meaningless. The topic of the study is socio-economic status of women working in handloom sector in Kozhikode district. Handloom sector was one sector that has provided a major source of income to most of the Keralite. Now the condition of the sector is decaying after every year. Nowadays handloom sector is seen as one casual sector which provides a minimum or low amount of wages to workers. According to third handloom census (2009-10), in all India level, 3,846,835 is the total population of weavers; 848,473 are males and 2,998,362 are females. And in Kerala 14,518 is the total population of handloom weavers; out of which 3,732 are males, 10,786 are females. This shows that handloom sector is one sector in India where the number of female workers is greater than men workers. In light of the decaying conditions of handloom sector in India, one can say that in the future more women are going to lose job and unemployment will occur. So the betterment in the condition of handloom sector will lead to two important outcomes; one is creation of more employment and the other is women empowerment.

### **1.3 Scope of the Study**

The study is very useful for the students of social sciences especially economics and sociology and institutions interested in the topic of gender. This can also be useful for policy maker and planners to both national and regional level. This study may also be helpful for all the researchers, NGOs/INGOs to formulate, implement and appropriate policies focusing the issue of socio-economic status of women. This study is also useful for the handloom units all over India to look in to the welfare, wages, and facilities provided.

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

- a) To find the trend of number of weavers on the basis of gender in Kozhikode.

- b) To analyse the socio-economic status of women working in handloom industries in Kozhikode district.