

# Basic Features and Strategies of Women’s Empowerment of a Developing Urban Area – A Case Study of Memari Municipality, Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, India

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## ABSTRACT

Women’s Empowerment is a holistic and sustainable goal for development of a society. They are the resources of family, society, community and nation. They are the greatest asset of an economy. Urbanization processes are not properly guided their roles in this society. Transformation of gender roles in urban contexts will require wider community involvement as well as administration. They are disadvantaged in income poverty, asset poverty, time and power. This paper is properly focused on features of empowerment of women in this society, their educational status, employment opportunities, social and economic status, as well as future strategies.

**KEYWORDS:** Empowerment, Employment, Equality, Correlation, Census, Education, Workers

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## I. INTRODUCTION:

In a particular situation, offering power or authority to powerless is called empowerment. According to Kebber (2001), Empowerment is “the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. She explained that it is the process through which people’s awareness, confidence, ability to solve problems, gaining access to resource and public facilities are increased. **The World Bank** defines empowerment as “the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choice and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process is actions which both build individual and collective assets and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organization and individual context which govern the use of these assets”.

Generally, empowering of women is called women’s empowerment. Women’s empowerment is the process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their self reliance, to assert their independent rights to make choices and control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination. (Keller and Mbwewe, 1991 cited in Rowlands, 1995).The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health

status is highly important end in itself. In addition, it is essential for the achievement of sustainable development [United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Power of Attorney (POA), Communications Audio Interface for Remote Operations (CAIRO), 1994]. . In UNDP Human Development Report, 1995, women’s empowerment is the expansion of choices for women and an increase in the women’s ability to exercise choices. Women must be considered as the agent of development rather than target of development agencies (R. India and Deepak Kumar Behra, 1999). According to Swami Vivekananda, “...there is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of the women is improved. It is not possible for the bird to fly on one wing”(Yojana, August, 2001).Empowerment of women develops them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent decision in matters that affect them and their nations. (Lillikutty, 2003).

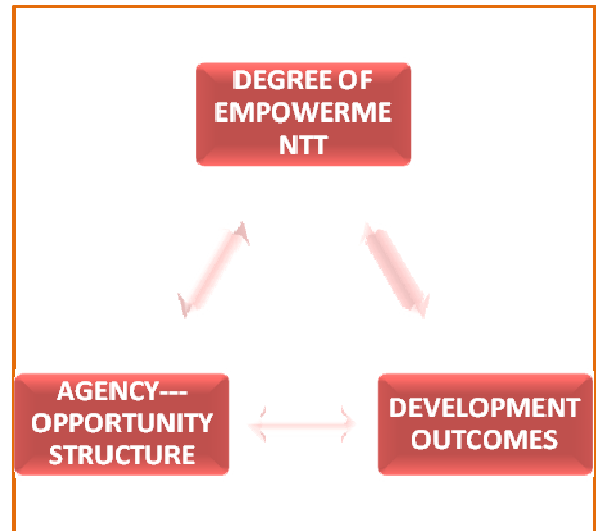
## II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

According to working paper of **World Bank**, Alsop, et al (2005), empowerment is the enhancing of the individual’s or group’s capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desire actions and outcomes. In **Millennium**

**Development Goals(MIDGs) Summit,2010**, gender equality and women’s empowerment are considered as the major development goals in their own rights (MDG 3and 5).

In Indian constitution, some laws are laid down which are related to gender- equality and women’s empowerment.

- The equality is guaranteed to all without regard to sex, race, colour or nationality (Article 14).
- According to Article 15 (3), ‘Women’s physical structure and performance and maternal functions place her at a disadvantage at the struggle for subsistence and her physical wellbeing becomes an objectives.’
- No citizen can be discriminated for any employment under the state on ground of religion, race, caste or sex. (Article 15/3).
- 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, 1992, Article 243D stated that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> seats in Municipal Corporation shall be reserved for women.



Source: Alsop, et al. (2005)

Figure: 2- Dynamics of Women’s Empowerment

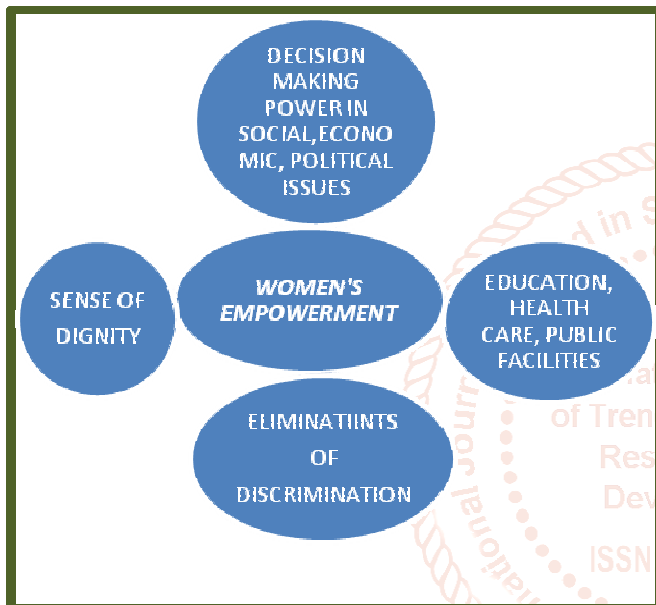


Figure: 1- Factors of Women’s Empowerment  
Source: Compiled by Authors

There are two types of measurement of women Empowerment.1. Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), 2. Gender Related Development Index (GDI).

**#Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM):** GEM is the index to measure gender equality. It was designed to measure “weather women and men are able to actively participation in economic and political life and take part in decision-making”(UNDP,1995, P.73)(Klasen,257).Three indicators of GEM are proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, percentage of women in economic decision making positions and female share in income.

**#Gender Related Development Index(GDI):** GDI is a “distribution sensitive measure that accounts for the human development impact of existing gender gaps in the three components of HDI”(KLASEN 243). GDI cannot be used without Human Development Index score. It measures gender gaps in life expectancy, education and income with the help of Human Development Index.

Mainly two forms of women empowerment are identified. Those are -

1. Political Empowerment, 2. Economic Empowerment.

**1. POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT:**

It is related position and decision making power of women in political issues. Political empowerment enhances creating policies which supports gender equality. In first post-independence Lok Sabha in India, there was only 4.4% women participation. Reservation of women was recognized as 33.3% at the Panchayat level in 1988. This percentage of reservation for women at all levels of Indian politics was passed by Rajya Sabha as The Women’s Bill in April 2010. According to that Bill, 181 out of 543 seats at the parliament level and 1370 out of the 4109 seats at the State Assembly level would be reserved for women.

**2. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:**

Women’s engagement in income generating activities through employment is not only to enhance their economic status but also it gives positive impact in decision making power and social status. Economic employment of women also helps to reduce poverty of their family. Economically self-dependent women play major role in gender equality. According to The Global Gap Report by the World Economic Forum in 2009, the position of India is 114 out of 134 countries for inequality between men and women in the economy. Self-help groups (SHGs) also help women to get economically independent.

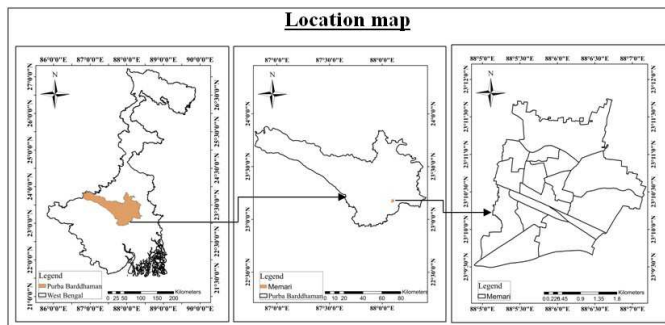
Women’s empowerment can be discussed in relation to economic, political and social empowerment. Women Employment is a basic tool of economic empowerment which is also related to education. Besides, women’s education is the indicator of gender equality. Women’s education and women’s employment are closely dependent to each other and they use to influence women’s empowerment. On the basis of location, there is a vast difference of women’s employment in rural and urban area. In urban area, women’s engagement in different economic sectors can express status of women’s economic empowerment in that area.

According to census 2011, there are 51.54% male and 48.46% female in India. Sex ratio increased from 933:1000 in 2001 to 940:1000 in 2011. The ratio of child (less than six years) is 927:1000 in 2011. Female literacy rate 65.46% in 2011 comparing to male literacy rate of 82.14%.

The study of West Bengal shows, the sex ratio has increased from 934:1000 in 2001 to 947:1000 in 2011. Child sex ratio has reduced from 960 to 950 during 2001-2011. Literacy rate for male is 82.67% and for female is 71.34% in census 2011.

**III. STUDY AREA**

Memari Municipality is located in Purba Bardhaman district, state of West Bengal in India. In 1992, Memari Gram Panchayat area with the Panchayat area of Bagila and Amadpur was formed Memari Notified Area Authority. It was recognized as Municipality in 1995. As an urban area, first census conducted in 2001 and after that in 2011. Monteswar Block is in Northern part and Jamalpur in the Southern part of this Municipality. The co-ordinate point of Memari Municipality 23.1547° North and 88.1034° East. Kalna and Saktigarh blocks are situated in the Eastern and Western part of Memari Municipality respectively. This Municipality is comparatively a new urban area which is divided into Sixteen Wards.



**Figure: 3 Location of Study Area**

Memari Municipality is under Lower Damodar Plain area with Alluvial soil. Average temperature of this municipality is 25-30 degree Celsius and average rainfall is 1100 to 4500 millimeter/ year.

In census data 2011, total no of population in Memari Municipality is 41451 of which 20957(51%) are males and 20494(49%) are females. Population density of this municipality is 2800/square km. Total area is 14.68 square km. Population below 6 years is 3809. Sex ratio is 978/1000 male population.

**IV. OBJECTIVES**

1. To find out status of women’s economic empowerment of the study area.
2. To identify relationship between women education and women’s employment of Memari Municipality.
3. To bring out the position of women engagement in different types of economic sector in the study area.
4. To comprehend how women’s economic empowerment influences the social status of women in Memari Municipality.

**V. METHODOLOGY:**

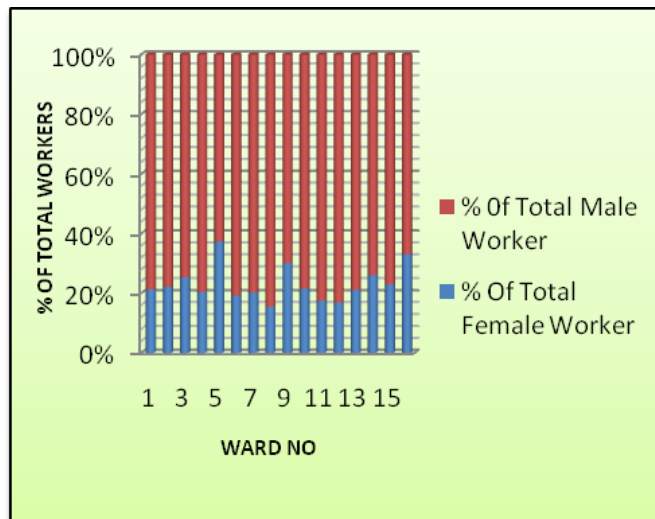
Based on secondary data using census as well as primary survey through field investigation, GIS mapping method, cartographic techniques are normally used to complete this paper.

**VI. VIRESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

Observing in study as well as information of secondary sources and also structural view point the following results and discussion are mention below



**Photos: Memari Municipality office, Source: captured by Authors**



**Figure: 4-Percentage of Total Male and Female Workers**

In Memari Municipality, percentage of male working population is higher than working female population in different wards. Highest working male population is shown in Ward No. 8 (84.40%) and also lowest working female population (15.60%) within the same Ward. Highest percentage of female workers (37.34%) and also lowest percentage of male workers (62.66%) noticed in Ward No. 5.

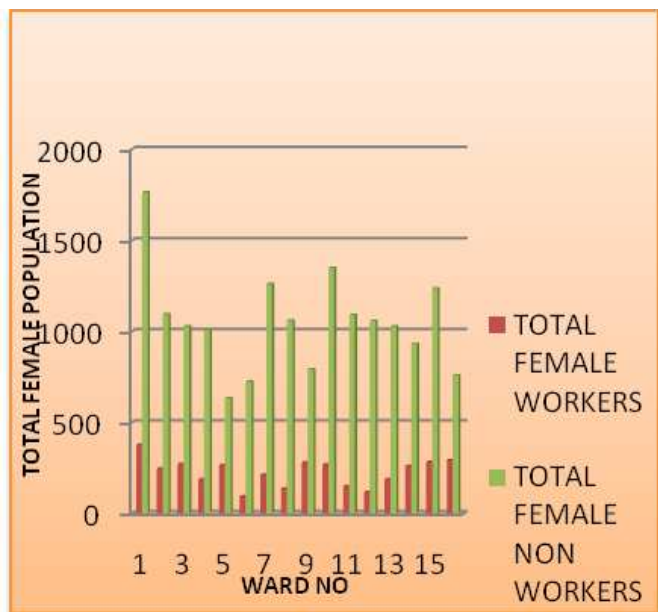


Figure: 5 Female Workers and Non Workers

Form figure 5, we can be said that, distribution of female workers and non-workers of different Wards in Memari Municipality are varies in every Ward, difference between female workers and non- workers is very high and female non-workers are always more than female workers. According to census 2011, highest number of female workers (379) live in Ward No. 1 and also most of non-workers are seen in this Ward. Lowest female workers are observed in Ward No. 6 (97 persons) and lowest female non-workers live in Ward No. 5(634).

TABLE 1- TOTAL FEMALE WORKERS AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FEMALE WORKERS

Ward No.	Female Population	Total Female Workers	Percentage of Total Female Workers
1	2145	379	17.66899767
2	1343	247	18.39166046
3	1302	272	20.89093702
4	1198	189	15.77629382
5	901	267	29.63374029
6	821	96	11.69305725
7	1477	215	14.55653351
8	1199	138	11.50959133
9	1074	281	26.16387337
10	1620	270	16.66666667
11	1242	151	12.15780998
12	1177	119	10.1104503
13	1220	190	15.57377049
14	1195	263	22.0083682
15	1522	285	18.72536137
16	1054	294	27.89373814
TOTAL	20494	3656	17.83936762

Source: Census 2011

In Memari Municipality, total number of female population is 20494 where only 3056 female persons engaged in working space (17.84%). Highest percentage of total female workers is 29.63 which is seen in Ward No. 5 and lowest percentage can notice in Ward No. 12 (10.11%). Among all 16 wards, most percentage of female workers varies from 10 to 20. It means most of female persons are not economically self depend. They also are not conscious about self empowerment.

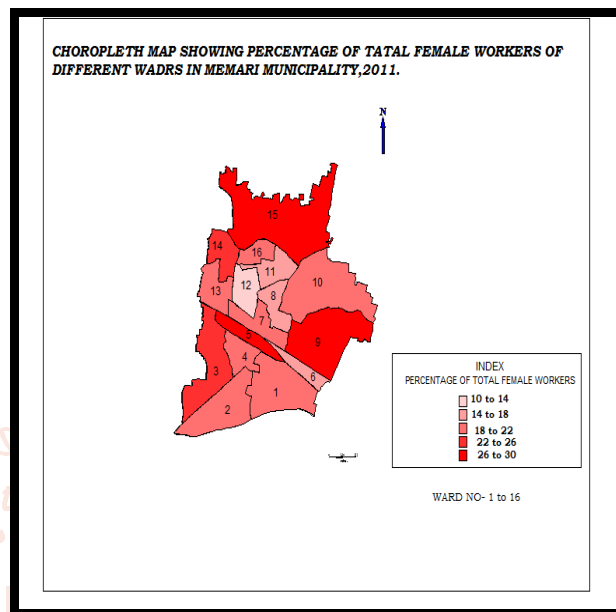


Figure: 6 -Choropleth Map of Percentage of Total Female Workers. Source: Census, 2011

On the basis of percentage of total female workers, Choropleth Map shows 5 classes in Memari Municipality. Value of all 5 classes - 10 to 14% (Lowest), 14 to 18%, 18 to 22%, 22 to 26 %, 26 to 30% (Highest) of total female workers. In lowest class there is only one Ward (No. 12). Under 14-18%, 18-22%, 22-26% classes, the total number of Wards are three, seven and two, respectively. Three Wards are in highest class (26-30%).

Mainly agriculture-based land use pattern is dominated the landscape. Nucleated type of settlement was developed. Commercial spaces are significant in this area. Larger amount of water bodies, scattered vegetation. Larger number of vacant land are important land use features.

From table 2, through Rank Correlation, we can find out the relationship between percentage of literate female population and percentage of total female workers in Memari Municipality. Here value of  $R = -0.297058824$  between female literacy rate and percentage of total female workers, that means Low Negative Correlation. We know, education is the key factor for employment. In Memari Municipality, the percentage of female literacy rate in different wards is moderate to high. But the percentage of female workers becomes low to very low. We can be noticed that percentage of female literacy rate shown highest in Ward No.11 which is more than 84 but the percentage of female workers is only 10.11 (lowest). Besides, in Ward No. 5, highest percentage of female workers (29.63%) takes place but percentage of female literacy rate is 66.04. So, in this Municipality area, education does not influence on women’s economic employment.

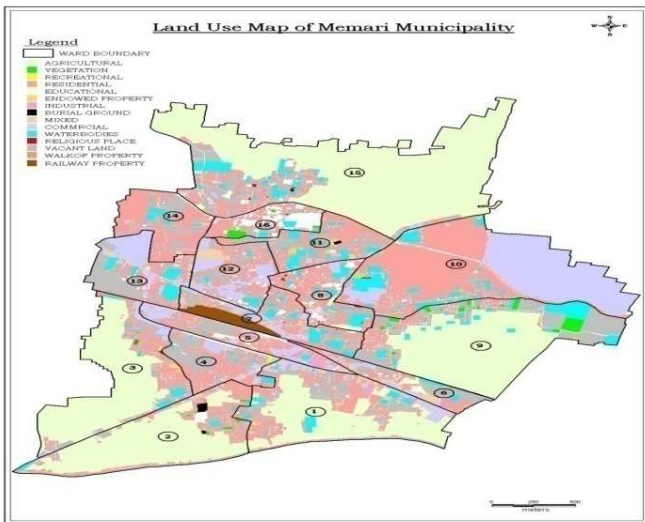


Figure: 7- Land Use Map

Ward No	% of Literate Female Population	% of Total Female Workers	R1	R2	d(R1-R2)	d2
1	70.86347086	17.66899766	8	8	0	0
2	78.48101266	18.39166046	13	10	3	9
3	64.97695853	20.89093702	3	12	-9	81
4	80.88480801	15.77629382	15	6	9	81
5	66.03774585	29.63374029	5	16	-11	121
6	62.72838002	11.69305725	2	2	0	0
7	79.95937712	14.55653351	14	4	10	100
8	73.9292365	26.16387337	11	14	-3	9
9	77.7777778	16.66666667	12	7	5	25
10	66.02254428	12.15780998	4	3	1	1
11	84.28207307	10.1104503	16	1	15	225
12	66.47540984	15.57377049	6	5	1	1
13	72.05020921	22.0083682	9	13	-4	16
14	67.21419185	18.72536137	7	11	-4	16
15	60.72106262	27.89373814	1	15	-14	196
16	72.75300088	17.83936762	10	9	1	1
Total						882

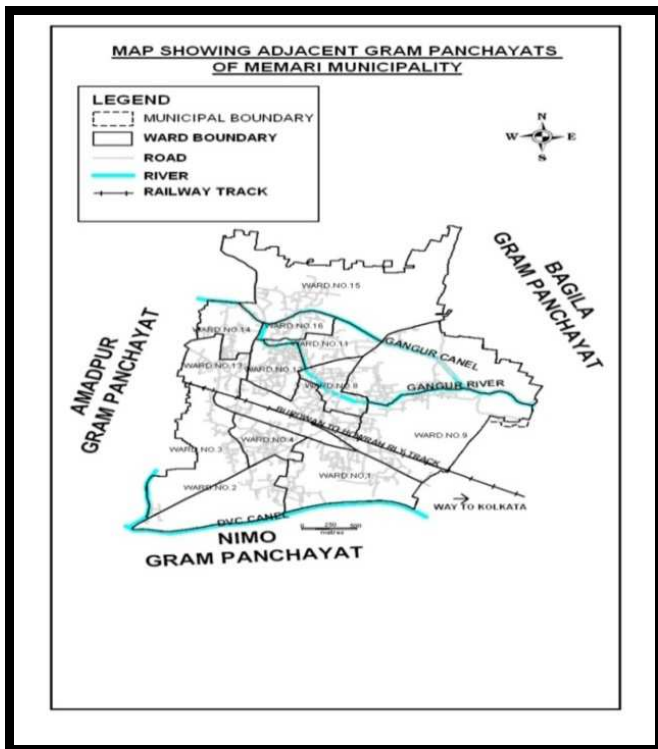


Figure: 8 Adjacent Gram Panchayats of Memari Municipality

Source: Memari Municipality Office (Figure 7 and 8)

In Memari Municipality, women are involved as main workers in primary, secondary and tertiary economic activity. We notice that since it is a newly formed urban area, very small percentage of female persons (0.83) are engaged in cultivation of land and 18.24% working females work as agricultural labourers. Some household industries like stitching over clothes, making of rakhies, small bedding industries, beedi industries etc. are organized in this Municipality. 8.24% women workers are engaged in those industries. Most of the female workers (72.68%) are involved in other sectors like cooking in other’s houses, working in cold storage, working as maid-servants, nursing in health centres, working in I.C.D.S. centres, teaching in private schools etc which are most significant professions of women like other sectors in Memari Municipality (figure-10).

TABLE 2- RANK CORRELATION BETWEEN FEMALE LITERACY (%) AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FEMALE WORKERS

Generally, main workers are engaged in working sectors for more than 6 months in a year. On the other hand, marginal workers are engaged in working sectors for less than 6 months in every year. According to census 2011, most of the working female population is engaged as main workers and only 24% of female workers are working for less than 6 months in a year (Figure 9). So, job security of female workers is much better in Memari Municipality.

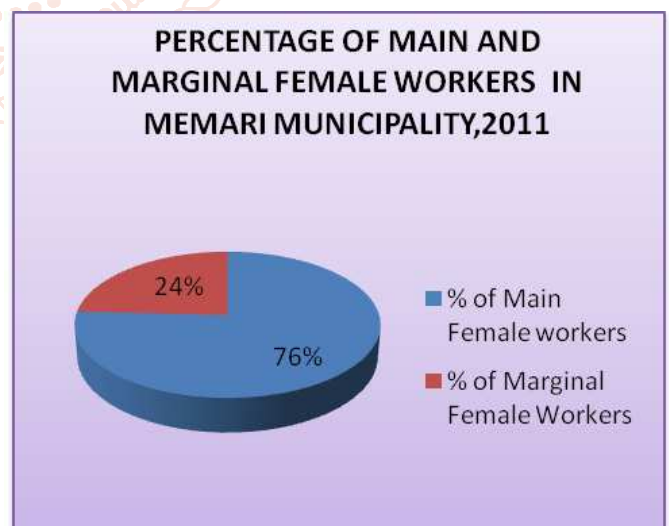


Figure: 9 Main and Marginal Female

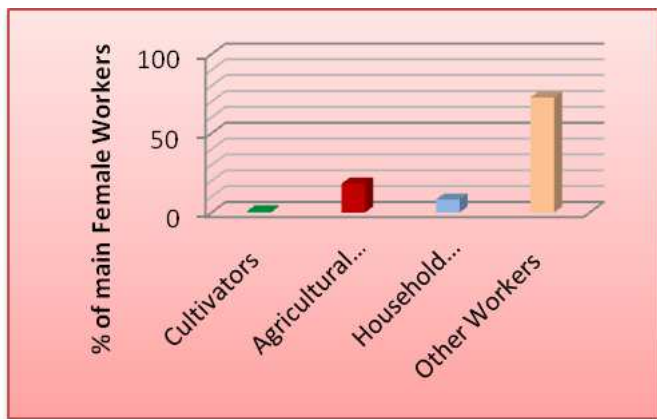


Figure: 10 Different Types of Main Female Workers (%). Workers (%)

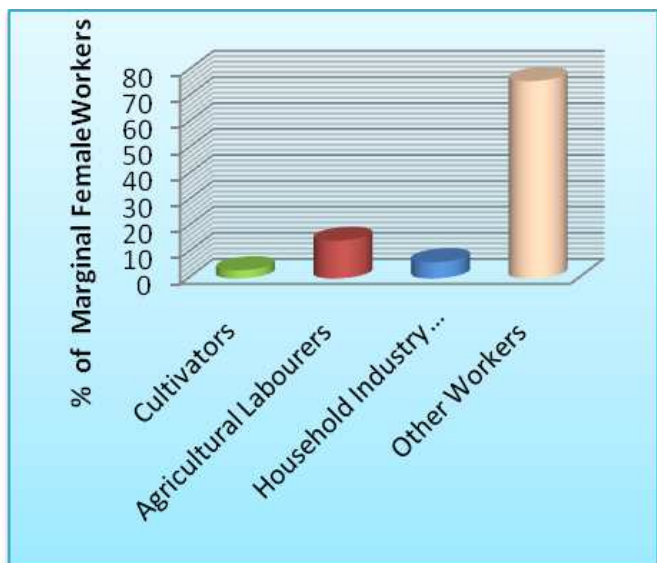


Figure: 11 Different Types of Marginal Female Workers.

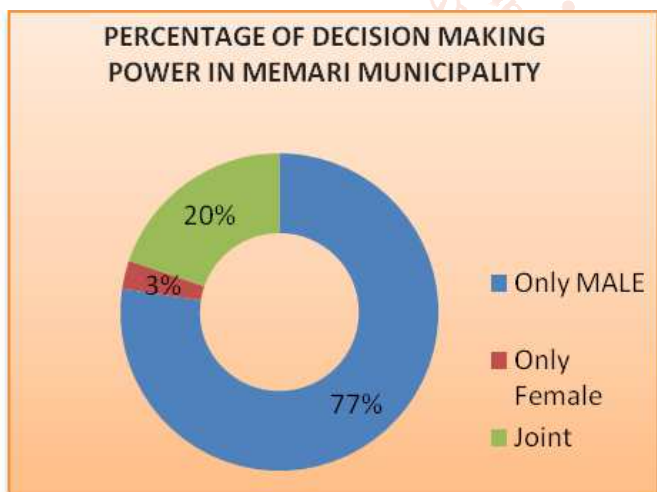


Figure: 12 Percentage of decision making power,

Among the marginal female workers, 3.13% are engaged in seasonal cultivation and 14.51% work as agricultural labourers. Most of the marginal female workers (76.08%) are involved in other sectors. Only 6.27% female workers work in household industries (figure-10).

From above diagram (12), we can know about social status of women in Memari Municipality. Decision-making power in a family is the vital factor of women's empowerment and also social status of women. Through Primary Survey, it has

observed that in 77% of total families, male person plays the role of supreme authority to take decisions in every situation. Generally, women have no right to that. Both male and female jointly take decisions in only 20% families. Most of those families, women are involved in other than primary and secondary activities. Females play major role for decision-making in only 3% families, where male persons are inactive in economic activities.

### VII. FINDINGS

1. From field survey, it is observed that most of the female persons are involved in domestic works and some girls are attached with education. It is as reason of low level of women's economic employment in Memari Municipality.
2. Social norms also affect the scope of women's employment. Head of the family is not aware about the concept of women's economic employment.
3. According to primary field survey, it is noted that some women cannot get opportunities of employment as they want, due to lack of proper skill.
4. As it is an urban area, most of women workers are involved in secondary and tertiary activities.
5. From primary survey, it can be said that the negative relationship between the percentage of female literacy rate and the percentage of total female workers is because of early marriage of most of the women after a certain education. Sometimes, marriage takes place by force of their family members without free consent of the girl.
6. As main female workers are higher than marginal female workers, economic status of working female families is comparatively good.
7. In the situation of decision-making, male persons take a role in this Municipality. Accordingly, social status of women is not there in a favourable position.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

On the above discussion, it can be stated that since Memari Municipality is very emerging urban landscape, most of the women are far from the knowledge of actual importance of their economic empowerment. Based on observation, it is stated that standard of living of women in this Municipality is not satisfactory. A negative relation between female literacy and women's economic empowerment reflects the lack of family members, poor decision making process, old social norms, insensibility of family guardians are barriers of women status and empowerment. In this situation, State Government and Local Administration can play a major role and policy to develop women's empowerment. Emerging SHGs have grater potentiality to develop their position in society through proper guidance and counseling.

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