Chapter 7

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study titled "Gender Access to Information and Communication Technologies in Silchar Town with Special Reference to Internet and Mobile Technologies" attempts to analyze the gender access to, gender uses of, attitude towards and impacts of ICTs in social life. The study formulates the research problem on the basis of survey of literature and analyses the field data collected by administering structured interview schedule to the sampled 124 households comprising 2847 individuals in 725 families residing in 28 wards of Silchar town. The study is based on primary data collected from households in Silchar town. Silchar town is the universe and households are units of data collection. However, for analysis of data, household family and individuals have been used as units as per requirement. To select a sample of units for data collection, the municipal ward wise electoral roll lists for Silchar town, prepared for the Lok Sabha Elections 2010 were procured. From the electoral lists, lists of wardwise households were prepared with the help of the well informed persons from the respective ward. In each of the wardwise household list the households were listed by giving household number and mentioning name of the head of the household. The Silchar town has 28 wards in all. By using lottery technique of random sampling method, a sample of 5% households was drawn out of the total households in each of the 28 municipal wards of the town. The collected data were organized and analysed through bi-variate and multivariate tables. The analyses were placed in the context of socio-economic and academic background of the individuals from the households as well as socio-historical scenario of the Silchar town. Most of the males and females belong to general caste category and the age group from 13-17 years up to middle age. They have come from the urban settings of the North-Eastern region and majority of them know languages like Hindi, English including their mother tongues.

I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

ICT encompasses a dual concept; namely, old technology and new technology. Old technology consists of old ICTs in terms of mass media. Mass media is a collection of medium

of interpretation of people's attitude, predicament etc. Mass media are creating new channels for social awareness and mobilizing resources. Mass media can be considered as communication and information media in terms of old Information and Communication Technologies as old ICTs like newspaper, magazine, radio and television. ICTs refer to a set of diverse technological tools and resources to create, disseminate, store, evaluate, circulate and manage information. With the advent of ICTs, gender has acquired new dimensions such as ICT access, ICT capacity-building, ICT facilities, ICT employability and ICT potential for gender empowerment and promotion of gender equality, on one hand and that of technological threats, vulnerability and attacks in terms of gender perceptions, identities and differences, creating new gender inequalities, on the other hand. There is a remarkable challenge faced by all societies in today's world, especially developing countries. No countries and new communities are being left untouched by the 'information society' and given the state of recent inter-government and multi-stakeholder policy. Around the world, new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have changed the levels of individual organizations and entire nations. ICTs are creating new channels for social awareness and mobilizing resources. These bring profound implications for women and men in terms of employment, education, health, environment, environmental sustainability and community development.

The present study titled "Gender Access to Information and Communication Technologies in Silchar Town with Special Reference to Internet and Mobile Technologies" attempts to analyze Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a force that has changed all aspects of life (Ron Oliver 2002). Amidst various dimensions of ICT applications, the emergence of education acquires importance for promotion of gender equality as well as empowering women. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are rapidly changing to deliver on promises of universal education around the world. In all societies of the world gender is one of the structural bases of social differences and inequalities. The world people live in is always ordered by gender. Yet, it is also produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of everyday interactions. Hence, it is embodied as well as lived by men and women. It encompasses both social divisions and cultural distinctions between men and women, through the characteristics commonly associated with femininity and masculinity. Gender is lived and experienced differently, depending on one's class, ethnicity, nationality and sexuality. Cultural perspectives tend to conceptualize differences between women and men simply in terms of culture or identity

while sociologists are more concerned with patterned inequalities. Gender inequalities influence not only the distribution of status, class and power but also the access to means of capacity-building of people in society. ICTs are no doubt bridging the gaps of territories, cultures and times but like other technologies these new technologies are also vulnerable to gender perceptions, identities and differences. Surveyed literature available on ICTs revealed that most of males, who were better educated, had computers whereas no or less woman had used computers. It revealed high social inequality. There is an obvious disparity in the percentage of women working in the professional field of science in a state like Kerala, pointing to male domination prevailing in the occupational structure of society. In the information network, marginalized women who are illiterate and indigenous women are facing difficulties in accessing to ICTs. ICTs are intermediated by gender perceptions in societies. Policies, programs and projects need to ensure that gender differences and inequalities in the access to and use of ICTs are identified and fully addressed so that such technologies actively promote gender equality and eliminate gender-based disadvantages. However, studies on gender and ICT inform that ICTs are also socially neutral and that ICTs are tools that are useful and being used regardless of the social, economic or political contexts. By extension, they have also been considered to be gender neutral in that it is expected that women will naturally and automatically benefit equally from them (Sophia Huyer and Tatjana Sikoska 2003). Girls tend to under-represent their abilities in mathematics even when they take the same advanced course as boys and even when they get marks that match or exceed their male counterparts. This is what Looker termed as Gender Modesty where males overestimate and females underestimate their abilities in male dominance spheres (Looker 2008) of studies on gender education and ICT potential, a study of trainee teachers in faculties of Athens University in 2005-06, conducted by Anastasia et al. (2008) in Europe asked the teachers were asked to make a self-reflection on their ability to incorporate ICT in teaching history and foreign languages. The study revealed that male teachers scored significantly higher (47%) than female teachers (41.5%). Trainee teachers who had several years' experience in ICT also scored higher than those who did not have. They concluded that teachers were sufficiently confident with their ability to integrate ICT in teaching and male trainee teachers were more confident than female teachers with the ability to integrate ICT in teaching (Anastasia et. al 2008). Studies on ICT and gender empowerment reveal on global scale (Susane Maass et. al. 2007). Global scale refers to different countries of the world. In South and

North zone of the world women's access to internet is generally lower than men. In January 2002, men in France, Germany, United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark and Sweden were about 40-45% internet users whereas women in Italy and Spain were below 40% accessing to internet. In 2006, men internet users in Germany were 65.4% and women were 51.5%. They studied in several European countries like Germany, United Kingdom, Netherland, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and France the numbers of women researchers in engineering and technology were below 20% and men were above 35%. Thus, women's uses of internet are less than men. Studies on gender and digital divide analyses in two South Indian states like Kerala and Andhra Pradesh (Antony Palacal, A. and Shrum, W. 2007) inform that social disparities were less in Malapuram in Kerala than Kuppam, Andhra Pradesh. Here, social divide and digital divide reinforce each other. In Kuppam, persons who had computers were better educated. It is observed that no women in Kuppam used computer. In Malapuram, there were two Muslim women of 22-23 age studying PG courses. Both were using computers and looking for jobs through the Internet. From their study it revealed a high social inequality in Andhra Pradesh as compared to Kerala. Usage of ICT gives a long way in empowering men and women (Chandra Gowda 2011). The Self-Help Group (SHG) Movement is primarily addressing the requirement of rural women by organizing a homogeneous group. Women bring their resources to engage in micro-entrepreneurship activities and share income is generated. It is found that SHG model for women's empowerment is more sustainable than individual based model, in India (Farida Khan 2010). There were 185 young Muslim women and men studying in the computer training centres in Mumbai. The training centres and Cyber cafes are necessary places for access of male and female to computers. Khan observed that young women/girls are higher than men from the computer literacy and ICT use point of view (Farida Khan 2010). ICTs may well and will create inequalities; ICTs are usually not invented primarily to bridge social divides. Technology usually is to the benefit of the technology sense of the skilled users which will most probably not keep pace in terms of life opportunities and jobs. The question "How can ICTs bridge social divides?" involves the whole agenda of socio-economic aspects of ICT research in e-Government, e-Work, e-Health and e-Education. Answer to this question is related to the issue of access to ICTs and gender access to ICTs is the prominent one among the discourses on the social divides created under the impact of ICTs. Gender access to ICTs is variable in the context of place, culture and economy. Obviously, it is different in a peripheral region like North-East India. Therefore, a

question is posed: What patterns of gender access are perceived in North-East India, specially Silchar town?

II

METHODOLOGY

The study has used descriptive research design. It is based on primary data collected from households in Silchar town. Silchar town is the universe and households are units of data collection. However, for analysis of data, households/families and individuals, both, have been used as units as per requirement. To select a sample of units for data collection, the municipal ward wise electoral roll lists for Silchar town, prepared for the Lok Sabha elections, 2010, were procured. A list of households in each ward was prepared in terms of serial No., household no. and name of the head of the household. By using lottery technique of random sampling method, a sample of 5% was drawn out of the total households (2287) from each of 28 wards of the town, obtaining a main sample of 124 households, out of the total 2287 households of the town as a whole. During the time of listing of the households in the municipal wards it was observed that the wards' populations were more or less homogeneous in terms of religion or language and a few households were found from other types of groups, giving proportionate representation to the households of all groups in the wards of their preponderance as well as an equal chance of being drawn in a random sample of households in the ward where some group might have a few households. The field data were collected by administering an interview schedule to the sampled 124 households during 5th September 2011 to 7th March 2012 by using bi-variate and multi-variate table. From the households information was collected about each and every member, making a total of 2847 individuals whose socio-economic and ICT- related characteristics have been collected in terms of gender. However, among 2847 individuals, there are both user and non-users of both old and new ICTs from 28 wards of the town. The number of users and non-users varies from one variable to another in the chapters.

III

FIELD OF THE STUDY

Silchar is the district headquarters town of Cachar district. Silchar has emerged as a major urban centre in the South Assam over a period of more than two centuries. The urbanization process of Silchar started with the administration of Captain Fisher in 1832. The Silchar

Municipal Board was constituted with 30 members, out of which 28 ward members were elected from the 28 wards of the Municipality and 2 were nominated by the Government of Assam. The town is a processing centre for tea in the country. The availability of transport and communication facilities includes one of the most significant assets of Silchar town. The road transport facilities are provided by the Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) and private operators. The existing road transport network mentioning private Line bus, State Government bus, city bus, tourist maxi cab, private Line vehicle like Sumo/Cruiser/Winger etc. are the important means of communication regularly providing services outside the town. The railway station located at Tarapur was established in 1902. The airport is located at Kumbirgram about 22 kms from Silchar. Besides, there are 10 ferries in Silchar town which have played a significant role in communicating to the distant rural areas from Silchar. The Assam-Bengal Railways brought Silchar on the Indian Railway map in 1899. Many Govt. and private hospitals and Nursing Homes are available in Silchar town which provide health care facilities to the people of Barak Valley and outside. The State Government started the third Medical College and Hospital of Assam at Ghungoor, the southern part of Silchar town. There are many educational institutions in and around Silchar town. The Government recognized reputed and private institutions are like Guru Charan College, Cachar College, Women's College, Radhamadhav College, Silchar Polytechnic College, NIT- Silchar, Arun Kumar Chanda Law College, Teachers Trainning College, Centre for Sikkim Manipal University (SMU), Assam University, Silchar, Junior Colleges, Higher Secondary Schools and other various High, Middle and Primary Schools. The law and order in the town is regulated by the Civil Court, police service and military services. There is a traffic branch of police for controlling the vehicular traffic in the town.

IV

SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE SAMPLED HOUSEHOLD POPULATION

1. Among the sampled households/families and individuals Hindu is the largest religious group, comprising 93.95% of males and 90.56% of females. Muslim comprises 6.05% of male and 9.44s% of female who represent from the family. Thus, it is found that the Hindu is more because in the town's population Hindus preponderate about 65.3% and the Muslim constitutes27.5% of the town's population.

2. Over three fourths (75.65%) of Hindu households belong to general castes followed by one tenth which belong to OBCs. The rest insignificant no. of the household belong to SC. Over three fourths (77.78%) of Muslim household are general categories followed by over one fifths belongs to MOBC. Thus, it is found that General category of Hindu are more than Muslim because the Silchar town is densely populated by Hindu religious group.
3. Nuclear family constitutes 65.32% of the total families. This type comprises 81.25% of the medium families, 53.49% of the small families and 35.29% of the large families. The rest are joint families (34.68%) comprising 64.71% of the large families, 46.51% of the small families and 18.75% of the medium families.
4. Kayastha is the largest caste group, constituting 59.13% of male and 11.16% of female members of the family. Patni is the smallest group, constituting 5.22% of male and 6.69% of female members of the family. The Brahmin constitutes 18.26% of male and 63.39% of female members of the family. The Vaishya constitutes 6.24% of male and 5.85% of female members of the family. The Sudra constitutes 6.31% of male and 5.85% of female members of the family. The rest of the caste groups, all constitute less than 6% of the family.
5. Nearly one fourth (24.17%) of the members of the families have education up to HSLC, where males are of 26.88% and female are of 19.36%.Nearly one fifths have education upto Higher Secondary (17.35%), where male are of 16.77% and female are of 18.39%. Over one tenth (15.74%) of the members of the families have education upto Upper Primary/Middle School, where males are of 18.03% and females are of 11.67%. The rest is each small fraction.
6. Nearly one fourth (24.17%) of the members of the sampled families have education up to HSLC, where males are of 26.88% and female are of 19.36%.Nearly one fifths have education up to Higher Secondary (17.35%), where male are of 16.77% and female are of 18.39%. Over one tenth (15.74%) of the members of the families have education upto Upper Primary/Middle School, where males are of 18.03% and females are of 11.67%. The rest is each small fraction.
7. Over half of male members who belong to Rs. 86004-106004 income group are Govt. employees followed by one fifth who belong to Rs. 46002-66002 income group. One tenth belong to Rs. 206010-226010 income group and the rest belong to Rs. 6000-26000 and Rs. 26001-46001 income groups. Over three fifths of female members who belong to Rs. 86004-

106004 income group are Govt. employees followed by over one tenth who belong to Rs. 46002-66002 income group and the rest (insignificant number) belong to Rs. 6000-26000, Rs. 26001-46001 and Rs. 206010-226010 income groups. One third of male members who belong to Rs. 26001-46001 income group are Corporate employee, followed by one fifth who belong to Rs. 86004-106004, near about one fifth belong to Rs. 186009-206009 income group, over one tenth (12.37%) belong to Rs. 46002-66002 and Rs. 66003-86003 income groups. Over than one fourth of female members who belong to Rs. 26001-46001 income group are Corporate employees followed by near about one fifth who belong to Rs. 86004-106004 income group, over one tenth belong to Rs. 6000-26000 and Rs. 66003-86003 income groups.

8. Over one third (37.34%) of male members from old age are teachers, near about one third (32.53%) from middle age and near about one third (30.12%) from youth age groups. Over two fifth of female members are youth, near about one third belong to old age and one fourth belong to middle age. Two fifths of male members are Govt. officials who belong to youth, over one third belong to middle age and near about one third belong to old age. more than half (57.89%) of male members of the family of the households belong to middle age are teacher, near about one fourth (23.31%) belong to old age and near about one fifth (18.8%) belong to youth. More than two fifths of female members of the family of the households are middle, near about one third belong to old age and one fourth belong to middle age. Two fifth of male members of the household are Govt. official who belong to middle, more than one third belong to youth age and near about one third belong to old age.
9. Nearly two fifths of male members of the households are having the knowledge of Bengali followed by nearly one third know Hindi and the rest know Hindi, Bishnupriya Manipuri, Meitei Manipuri, Assamese, English, Sanskrit, Nepali . Over two fifths of female members of the household have the knowledge of Hindi followed by nearly one third know Bengali and the rest know Assamese, Bishnupriya Manipuri, Meitei Manipuri, English, Nepali, Sanskrit etc. Thus, it shows that both majority of male have the knowledge of Bengali and Hindi because, in the town Bengali is a common language with more Bengali population followed by the Hindi.

10. Over four fifths of the male members own (7-10) Kathas of plot. Over one tenth of female members are owners of (3- 6) Kathas of plot followed by (7-10) Kathas and (11-14) Kathas.
11. Three fourths of male members of the households from early youth age are participating in vote casting. One fourth of female members of the households from early youth age are participating in vote casting. Three fifths of male members of the households from late youth age are participating in vote casting, nearly three fifths in electioneering (sloganing, campaigning, posturing), half in contesting election and two fifths of female members of the households are participating in vote casting. More than two fifths of male members of the households from middle age are participating in vote casting, more than half are participating in electioneering and rest half are participating in contesting election. Over a half of male members of the households from old age are participating in vote casting. Nearly half of female members of the households from old age are participating in vote casting. Thus, it indicates that males are more in vote casting, campaigning and posturing. On the other hand, both males and females are also almost equally educated. Three fourths of male members of the households from early youth age are participating in vote casting. One fourth of female members of the households from early youth age are participating in vote casting. Three fifths of male members of the households from late youth age are participating in vote casting, nearly three fifths in electioneering (sloganing, campaigning, posturing), half in contesting election and two fifths of female members of the households are participating in vote casting. More than two fifths of male members of the households from middle age are participating in vote casting, more than half are participating in electioneering and rest half are participating in contesting election. Over a half of male members of the households from old age are participating in vote casting. Nearly half of female members of the households from old age are participating in vote casting. Thus, it indicates that males are more in vote casting, campaigning and posturing. On the other hand, both males and females are also almost equally educated.
12. Over one third of female members of the households from middle age are participating in decision making for purchasing clothes, household items, choosing school of children and deciding daily food items followed by nearly one third from middle age. Nearly half of male members in the households/families participate in Subhashnagar Mela as viewers, sellers& buyers, over one fifth in Book fair, the rest one tenth in trade fair (13.87%) and Art

Exhibition (11.48%). Over two fifths of female members as viewers, sellers& buyers participate in Subhashnagar mela, followed by the rest one fifth who participate in Art Exhibition, near about one fifth in Book fair and Trade Fair. One third of male members of the households from members of the mela committee participate in Trade fair, followed by over one fourth (28.57%) in Art Exhibition, nearly one fifth in Subhashnagar mela and the rest in Gandhi mela. One third of female members of the households participate in Subhashnagar mela and Trade Fair, followed by nearly one fifth (16.67%) in Gandhi mela and Art Exihibition. Thus, it signifies that majority of males participate in fairs because the patriarchal society allows freedom of mobility more to males.

13. More than one fourth of male members are not participating in Subhashnagar mela followed by trade fair. Nearly one fourth of female members are not participating in Subhashnagar mela and Art Exihibition followed by trade fair.
14. One fifth of male members of the households are celebrating Manasha puja and Holi followed by more than one tenth celebrating Durga Puja by offering fruits and bhoog to God/Goddess, having eternal peace in the Heart. Over one fourth of female members of the households are celebrating Manasha Puja (21.39%) and Holi (26%) followed by over one tenth celebrating Durga Puja and the rest celebrating Ganesh Chaturdashi, Dewali etc. Nearly half of male members of the households are celebrating Durga Puja followed by nearly two fifths celebrating Dewali and the rest of near about one fifth celebrating Shree Shree Bhubaneswar Sadhu Thakur being members of the Puja committee. More than one third of female members of the households are celebrating Durga Puja being members of the Puja Committee. Thus, it shows that both males and females are equal in festival participation because in the town having dense population of Bengali community where a popular proverb is applied, “Baro Mase Tero Paarvan” , meaning in twelve months of a year, there are celebrated thirteen festivals.
15. Nearly one fourth of male members of the households are not participating in Bhubaneshwar Sadhu Thakur Birthday festival followed by Ganesh Chaturdashi and Idd festival. More than one fourth of female members of the households are not participating in Bhubaneshwar Sadhu Thakur Birthday festival and Idd festival followed by Ganesh Chaturdashi. Thus, it signifies that majority of females are not participating in Bhubaneshwar Sadhu Thakur Birthday and Idd festival.This is because of religious proscriptions.

16. Of the households one fourth of male members are celebrating Sankranti and Poyla Baishakh by preparing different food items and offering to God and distributing to neighbours, by bringing idol, by reading Pachali, by singing Arati Song, followed by more than one tenth celebrating Laksmi Puja (14.83%) and Raasleela (11.62%). Over one tenth of female members of the households are celebrating Sankranti and Poyla Baishakh by preparing different food items and offering to God and distributing to neighbours/ by bringing Idol/ by reading Pachali/ by singing Aratisong, followed by one fifth celebrating Lakhsmi puja, the rest celebrating Swaraswati Puja and Raasleela etc. Over half (57.15%) of male members of the households are celebrating Sankranti by inviting relatives and friends for lunch and dinner, followed by over two fifths celebrating Poyla Baisakh. Over half (52.41%) of female members of the households are celebrating Sankranti by inviting relatives and friends for lunch and dinner, followed by over two fifths celebrating Poyla Baishakh. Thus, it signifies that male participation is more because male is the organizer for starting any ritual at home in the given patriarchal society.
17. Nearly one fourth of male members of the households are not participating in Swaraswati puja, Lakshmi puja(23.11%), Raasleela (22.77%) followed by Poyla Baishakh. Again, two fourths of female members of the households are not participating in Raasleela followed by Swaraswati puja, Lakhsmipuja.
18. Of the individuals in the households over four fifth (81.82%) males are children, followed by over three fifths (78.57%) from adolescent, over three fifths from youth and middle age, more than four fifths from old age (87.82%) from vernacular newspaper-reading category. More than half (56.67%) of males of the households are children and over one third from adolescent who are accessing English newspaper. Over four fifths (83.33%) females of the households are children who are subscribing vernacular newspapers. Nearly four fifths of females of the households are children who are subscribing English newspaper.
19. Most (90%) of males of the households from adolescent age-group are subscribing Bengali magazine followed by over three fifth reading English magazines. Over three fifths of males of the households from youth age can read magazine followed by near about half reading English magazine and the rest over one third read Hindi magazine. Nearly three fifths of males of the households from middle age are reading Bengali magazine followed by over two fifths reading Bengali magazine and the rest over one third can read Hindi magazine. Over

three fifths of males of the households from old age are reading English newspaper followed by over half reading Bengali newspaper. Nearly four fifths of females of the households from children can read Bengali magazine and English magazine. Over half of females of the household from youth age can read Bengali magazine followed by nearly half reading English magazine and the rest over one fifth can read Hindi magazine. Nearly three fifths of females of the households from middle age are reading Bengali magazine followed by half subscribing English magazine and the rest over one tenth can read Hindi magazine. Over four fifths of females of the households from old age are accessing Bengali magazine followed by half reading English magazine.

20. More than three fifths of males from the youth age-group are listening local songs. Over three fifths of females in the youth age are listening local songs.
21. Over three fifths of male youth are listening sports and over half of female youth are listening sports items on Radio. Half of males who belong to Govt. employees are subscribing FM Radio for listening phoning programs. Near about three fifths of females who belong to Govt. sector are owning FM Radio programs and listening film songs. Over one third of male youth are watching sports on TV ESPN channel.
22. Over one fourth of female youth are watching sports on ESPN channel. Near about half of males and three fifths of females who belong to Hindu are using Desktop at home.
23. Over one fourth of males two fifths of females who belong to Hindu are subscribing internet at home.
24. Mobile phone is found as the most effective ICT that accessed by the gender among nearly one third of males at outside home and two fifths of female adolescents are at home.

V

THE FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are follows:

a) ICT Exposure of the Members of the Households

1. Old ICTs are a significant mass media for each family members of urban society in Silchar town. Persons from each family have wide access to old ICTs. Old ICT deals with print media and audio visual media. Print media constitutes two components; namely, newspapers and magazines. Audio Visual media constitute three components; viz., Radio, FM Radio and TV. There are 2847 persons from the sampled 124 households in Silchar

town. Out of 2847, the newspaper users are of 1067, 298 persons are magazine users, 134 are radio users, 158 are FM Radio users and 591 are TV users. There are 599persons are non-user. Persons are subscribing these media irrespective of different age-groups like infants (0-5 years), children (6-12 years), adolescents (13-17 years), Early youth (18-25 years), Late youth (26-31 years), Early middle age (32-39 years), Late middle age (40-45), Early old age (46-59) and Late old age (60 years and above).

2. New ICT is a noteworthy communication technology for each family members of urban society in Silchar town. A huge number of persons from the family members of the sampled household have extensive access to new ICT. New ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) constitute three components; namely, computer, internet and mobile. There are 2847 persons from the sampled 124 households in Silchar town. Out of 2847, the computer users are of 664, 567 persons from having computer knowledge and 577 persons from internet users. Out of 577, there are 567 persons having Persons are subscribing these technologies of communication irrespective of age groups, children (6-12 years), adolescent (13-17 years), early youth (18-25 years), late youth (26-31 years), early middle age (32-39 years), late middle age (40-45, early old age (46-50) and late old age (60 and above years).
3. There are mainly two types of network, viz., portable and non-portable. Portable connectivity belongs to cellular phone and non-portable connectivity belongs to telecommunication or landline services. The cellular phone is assimilated with mobile phone. Mobile phone is a striking communication technology for each family members of urban society in Silchar town. A huge number of persons from the family members of the sampled households have extensive access to mobile phone technology of communication. There are 2847 persons from the sampled 124 households in Silchar town, out of which 1776 are mobile phone users and 503 are landline users or are using a combination of both. Individuals are subscribing this technology of communication irrespective of age-group: children (6-12 years), adolescents (13-17 years), early youth (18-25 years), late youth (26-31 years), early middle age (32-39 years), late middle age (40-45 years), early old age (46-50 years) and late old age (60 years and above). It is observed that mobile communication technology and landline have both users and non-users, consisting of both male and female users. 568 persons belong to non-users include

both males and females. Individuals are subscribing this technology of communication irrespective of various age-groups, viz., children (6-12 years), adolescent (13-17 years), early youth (18-25 years), late youth (26-31 years), early middle age (32-39 years), late middle age (40-45), early old age (46-50) and late old age (60 and above year).

4. Mobile communication technology and landline have both users and non-users, consisting of males and females. Out of 568 non-users, there are 250 non-users of Landline phones including males and females.

b) Gender Access Patterns on Internet

1. More males from Hindu or Muslim religious group are accessing to Laptop at office while more females from Hindu or Muslim religious group are accessing to Laptop at home**.** Near about half of males of the households from Hindu religious group are using desktop computer at home followed by over half using laptop at office. Nearly three fifths of females from Hindu religious group are using desktop computer at home. Nearly three fifths of males from Muslim religious group are accessing to desktop computer in office/ at home followed by two fifths accessing to it at home. Over half of females from Muslim religious group are accessing to Laptop at home followed by more than two fifths accessing at home/office. So, it is found that there is more domestic engagement and less awareness among females to access to computer outside home.
2. Various age groups of males and females have equal access to Computer and Internet. Over one fourth (22.09%) of males of the households from Hindu religious group are using computer for educational purpose followed by over one fourth using computer for entertainment, over one tenth access to it for office work, E-business (11.24%) and the rest (insignificant number) access to e-mail and internet, downloading and chatting. One fifth of females from Hindu religious group are accessing to computer for accessing entertainment items followed by near about one tenth accessing to computer for education and e-business purpose and the rest (insignificant number) use computer for downloading and chatting. One fifth of males from Muslim religious group are accessing to computer for education purpose followed by near about one fifth accessing to computer for entertainment and office work (17.33%). Near about one tenth accessing to computer for e-mail and internet purpose, e-business (12%) and downloading (11.33%), and the rest access to computer for chatting purpose. Over one fourth of females from

Muslim religious group are accessing to computer for education purpose followed by over one fifth (21.33%) accessing to computer for office work, one fifth access computer for entertainment, e-mail and internet and the rest access to computer for downloading. Thus, majority of males from Hindu religious group are using computer for various purposes while majority of females from Muslim religious group are using computer for various purposes. So, it is found that both male and female of various age-groups are equally accessing computer.

3. Gender acquired computer knowledge by training or by practice. Nearly two fifths of males from the Hindu religious group are have acquired computer skills by practice followed by over one fourth having basic knowledge by course work and the rest (one fifth) have basic knowledge by training. Over one third of females from Hindu religious group have basic knowledge followed by near about one fourth having skills by practice, one fifth have basic knowledge by training or by practice. Nearly one third of males from Muslim religious group are having computer knowledge by practice followed by over one fourth having computer's basic knowledge and the rest (one fifth) have basic knowledge by training. Over one fourth of females of the households from Muslim religious group have computer knowledge by practice followed by more than one fifth having computer basic knowledge by training or by practice. Thus, majority of females are having computer basic knowledge and basic knowledge by training from Hindu religious group because of absence of male dominance over female and motivation of learning computer.
4. Internet access appears to be gender neutral. Over half of males from Hindu religious group are accessing to computer for about 30m-2hr. followed by over two fifths accessing to computer from Muslim religious group. Over three fifths of females from Hindu religious group are accessing to computer for about 30m.-2hr. followed by over one third (34.68%) of females accessing to computer from Muslim religious group. Over three fifths of males and one fourth of males from Hindu religious group are subscribing internet at home followed by one fourth them subscribing internet at cyber café and office and the rest one fifth access to internet at shop. Two fifths of females from Hindu religious group are accessing to internet at home followed by one fourth accessing to internet at office, near about one fifths accessing to internet at cyber café and the rest access to internet at shop. Near about one third of females from Hindu religious group are

accessing to internet at home and office followed by nearly one fifth accessing to it at cyber café and office. Over one third of individuals from Muslim religious group access to internet at home followed by nearly one fourth accessing to internet at cyber café and shop. Thus, females from Muslim religious group are more in accessing to internet due to lack of social constraint in their class.

5. In adolescent age group gender gap is disappearing. Over three fifths of male from adolescents are accessing to internet for entertainment purpose followed by over (21.57%) using internet for e-mail and the rest (insignificant number) access to internet for education. Two fifths of females from adolescent age are accessing to internet for entertainment followed by over one fifth using internet for e-mail and over one third (37.84%) accessing to internet for education. Over one fourth of males from youth age are accessing to internet for business and entertainment purposes followed by over one fifth accessing to internet for education and the rest (near about one fifth) access to internet for sending and receiving attachments and e-mails. Over one third of females use it for entertainment followed by over one fourth accessing to internet for education purpose. Over one fourth of males from middle age are accessing to internet for business purpose followed by one fourth accessing to internet for e-mail and education while over one fifth access internet for entertainment. Two fifth of females from middle age are accessing to internet for e-mail followed by over one fourth accessing to internet for education, nearly one fifth access for business and more than one tenth access internet for entertainment. Nearly half of females from old age are accessing to internet for business purpose followed by over than two fifths accessing to internet for e-mail and the rest (insignificant number) access to internet for entertainment. Thus, both males and females are equally using internet as accessing it for e-mail purpose , indicating no gender gap. But females from youth age-group are more in accessing online to study material due to a tendency of increasing female literacy in Silchar town.
6. Gender attitude of access to computer shows no difference. Over half (56.7%) males from adolescent age like internet much followed by over two fifths who like internet very much. Over half (52.24%) females from adolescent age like internet much followed by nearly half who like internet very much. Near about three fifths of males from youth age like internet much followed by two fifths (41.89%) liking internet very much. Over three

fifths of females from youth are like internet much followed by more than two fifths (41.23%) liking internet very much. Over one fourth of males from middle age like internet a little, followed by more than two fifths (41.89%) liking internet much and the rest (one tenth) like internet very much. Over two fifths of females from middle age like internet much followed by over two fifths liking internet a little, over one tenth (16.22%) like internet very much and over one tenth don't like internet. Nearly three fifths of males from old age don't like internet followed by over two fifths liking internet a little. Over three fifths of females from old age don't like internet followed by over one third liking internet a little. Thus, both male and female are equal in their attitude in accessing internet.

7. Both genders use Internet for entertainment and downloading of study material. Over one third (37.5%) males from adolescent age are establishing gender relation through e-mail, online discussion, etc. which reduced digital divide followed by educational impact (31.25%) and quick connectivity (31.25%). Nearly half of females from adolescent age are establishing gender relation through e-mail, online discussion, etc. which reduced digital divide followed by one fourth having quick connectivity and educational impact. Over two fifths of males from youth age are getting study material and downloading study material through internet followed by establishing gender relations through e-mail, online discussion, etc. which reduced digital divide (22.95%). Over one third of females from youth age are getting and downloading study material through internet followed by more than one fourth establishing gender relations through e-mail, online discussions, etc. which reduced digital divide, nearly one fifth are doing business activities and the rest are getting quick online connection. Over one third of males from middle age are getting study material and downloading them followed by nearly one third establishing gender relations through e-mail, online discussion, etc. which reduced digital divide while nearly one fifth are doing e- business activities. Over two fifths of females from middle age are getting study material followed by nearly one fourth establishing gender relations which reduced digital divide. Three fifths of males from old age are getting study material and downloading material followed by getting quick connection. Over three fifths of female from old age-group are establishing gender relations through online discussion followed

by getting suitable online connection. Thus, majority of female from middle age-group are getting study material because of easy access to internet.

8. Young people are getting addicted to Internet and old aged get health problems from Internet use**.** Over two fifths of males from youth age are addicted by internet adoption followed by less privacy (35.29%) and health hazard (20.59%). Near about half of females from youth age are facing less privacy followed by addition (41.91%). Over one third of males from middle age are addicted by internet adoption followed by less privacy (22.64%), health hazard (20.75%), mail hacking (18.8%). One third of females from middle age are addicted by internet access followed by less privacy (22.53%), mail hacking (22.64%) and health hazard (18.87%). Over one fourth of males are facing less privacy followed by mail hacking. Over one third of the individuals are getting health problem followed by less privacy (25.58%). Thus, majority of females from old age-group are getting health problem due to regular use of internet affecting eyes and spinal cord.

c) Gender Access Patterns of Mobile Phone

1. Both males and females access to mobile anytime and anywhere. Nearly three fifths of the males in the sampled children are accessing to mobile phone at home followed by over two fifths accessing to mobile phone from outside home. Over half of the female children are accessing to mobile phone at home followed by nearly half accessing to mobile phone from outside home. Over one fourth of male youths are accessing to mobile phone at outside home followed by business place (24.58%), driving place (23.92%), home (23.26%). Over two fifths of female youths are accessing to mobile phone from outside home followed by nearly one third accessing at home, over one tenth accessing to mobile phone at business place and the rest (insignificant No.) accessing to mobile phone at driving place.
2. Males use mobile phones for business purpose while females use it to strengthen social relations. Nearly half of male adolescents, followed by over one fourth are accessing to mobile phone for collecting information while nearly one fourth are accessing for business. Over one fourth of female adolescents are accessing to mobile phone for doing mathematical calculation followed by one fourth are using for collecting information. Over two fifths of male youth are accessing to mobile phone for business purpose

followed by over one third are using for collecting information. Half of female youth are accessing to mobile phone for collecting information followed by one fourth who are using for doing mathematical calculation. Thus, majority of males accessing to mobile phone in business sector for getting up-to-date market report and for rapid sending and receiving of calls. On the contrary, majority of females use mobile phone for collecting information about relatives, friends and sons or daughters who reside in or out of the nation that bears upon strengthening of the social connectivity.

3. Males and females use mobile phone daily. All the male and female adolescents, youth, middle age and old age are accessing to mobile phone daily. Thus, males and females from different age-groups are almost equally accessing to mobile phone daily.
4. There is no gender difference in likeness for mobile. All male and female children like mobile phone very much. Over two fifths (43.65%) of males from adolescent age-group like mobile phone much followed by over one fourth each liking mobile phone a little (29.37%) and like mobile phone very much (26.98%). Nearly two fifths of females from adolescent age-group like mobile phone a little followed by nearly one third (32.18%) like mobile phone much and (31.03%) like mobile phone very much. Nearly half of males from youth age like mobile phone much followed by over half (51.5%) like mobile phone very much. Over half of female youth like mobile phone very much followed by nearly half (48.5%) like mobile phone much. Thus, it indicates that both males and females equally like mobile phone very much where it signifies no digital discrimination and no gender gap in access.
5. Low cost of mobile communication is equalising genders. Nearly two fifths of male adolescents find that mobile phone is less expensive (Less expensive consists of one can recharge bill starting from Rs. 10 to Rs.100 and above) in nature followed by 37.31% feel that mobile phone is helpful and the rest 23.88% support that mobile phone is a quick connecting device. Nearly two fifths of female adolescents feel that mobile phone is helpful by its use followed by one third find that mobile phone is quick connectivity in nature. Near about half of males from middle age find that mobile phone is less expensive followed by over two fifths feel that mobile phone is helpful. Near about two fifths of females from middle age find that mobile phone is less expensive followed by the insignificant number feel that mobile phone is quick connecting device. Thus, most of

males from middle age-group feel that mobile phone is less expensive where they can make pre-paid bill. On the other hand, majority of females find that mobile phone is a quick connecting device where it can reduce the distance within a short time and as a result they get digital empowerment.

6. Males and females are equally using mobile phone all the times. Over two fifths of male adolescents use mobile phone in "On Mode" always followed by over one tenth from middle age use mobile phone. Over two fifths of female youth use mobile phone in "On Mode" always followed by over one tenth from middle age use mobile phone. Near about half of male youth use mobile phone in "Off Mode" at night followed by one third from old age use it and the rest (over one fifth) use mobile phone. One third of female youth use mobile phone in "Off Mode" at night followed by nearly one third adolescents and the rest (over one fifth) from old age use mobile phone. In "Off Mode" at meeting, nearly three fifths of male youth use mobile phone followed by one fourth from middle age. In "Off Mode" at meeting, more than three fifths of female youth use mobile phone. In "Off Mode" at busy schedule, two fifths of male are youth who use mobile phone followed by over one third adolescents use mobile phone. In "Of Mode" at busy schedule, more than two fifths of female youth followed by nearly two fifths adolescents use mobile phone. In "Roaming Mode" while on travelling, over two fifths of male adolescents uses mobile phone followed by over from middle age. In "Roaming mode" while on travelling, near about half of female adolescent uses mobile phone followed by nearly one fourth from middle age use mobile phone. Thus, both male and female are equally using the device always. While at night, male belong to youth, are more than female users. While at meeting, female users belong to youth are more in "Off Mode" than male youth due to getting disturbance from stranger.
7. Adolescents and youth prefer pre-paid mobile phone bill. Nearly two fifths of male adolescents pay pre-paid bill followed by one fifth youth and middle age pay pre-paid bill. Nearly one third of female adolescents pay pre-paid bill followed by near about one third youth and middle age that pay pre-paid bill. Half of male youth pay post-paid bill followed by nearly half of female pay post paid bill. Briefly, majority of male are using pre-paid bill that showing maximum use pre-paid bill than female. On the contrary, both male and female become equal in accessing pre-paid bill that shows equal digital access.

Over one third of male children play game through mobile phone followed by one third of them listen songs. Nearly half of female children listen songs followed by over one third of them use camera. Over one third of male from middle age listen songs through mobile phone followed by nearly one fourth of them sending and receiving e-mails, over one fifth of them use bluetooth and the rest (one tenth) of them use camera through mobile phone. One third of female from middle age listen songs through mobile phone followed by over one fourth of them sending and receiving e-mail, one fifth of them use bluetooth. Thus, majority of male are using bluetooth facility of mobile phone which is the sole means of establishing network connectivity within a specific geographical domain.

8. Female youth consider mobile phone a means for safety. One fourth (28.18%) of male adolescents find that mobile phone is portable in nature followed by make distance to near (27.27%), nearly one fourth of them feel that mobile phone strengthens social network and the rest (one fifth) agree that mobile phone is safe guard of life. Over one third of female adolescents agree that mobile phone is a safe guard communication device followed by nearly one fifth of them feel that mobile phone is portable and strengthen social network and the rest (nearly one fifth) find that mobile phone makes distance to near. Over one third of male youth feel that mobile phone can easily carry from one place to another followed by over one fourth agree that mobile phone is a safe guard communication device, over one fifth of them agree that mobile phone strengthens social relations like peer to peer relations, gender relations and teacher-student relations etc. In brief, more number of female youth use mobile phone where they consider mobile phone as a safety device.

9. All male and female adolescents use broadband connection. One third of males from middle age feel that landline has anytime network connectivity followed by over three fifths use internet through landline phone. Over two fifths of females from middle age getting anytime network through landline phone followed by over half of them using internet through landline phone. Thus, majority of males use internet in Silchar town.

10. Males and females both find mobile phone cheaper than landline phone. Over half (52.17%) male adolescents feel that the use of mobile phone causes health problem due to its radioactive power followed by nearly half agree that mobile phone hampers social

cohesion. Over half of female adolescents feel that mobile phone creates health problem followed by nearly half of them decaying social cohesion. Briefly, both male and female are equal that showing the limitations of using mobile phone due to decaying social cohesion as a result social cohesion causes unwanted calls, missed calls and unwanted SMS. Over one third of male from middle age agree that in comparison to mobile phone, land line phone is not portable followed by over three fifths support that landline phone has maximum bill in comparison to mobile phone. Over two fifths of female from middle age feel that landline phone is not portable followed by over half agree that landline phone has maximum bill. Thus, majority of female found the limitations of landline phone that is maximum bill due to its high rental price.

11. Mobile phone strengthens social harmony. Over one third of male from middle age agree that mobile phone strengthen social harmony followed by nearly one third support that mobile has instant network connection, one fifth of them agree that mobile phone is providing gender relations and the rest over of them are getting educational information through mobile phone. Nearly one third of female from middle age feel that mobile phone strengthen social harmony followed by over one third agree that mobile phone has instant network connection, nearly one fifth agree that mobile phone improves gender relations and the rest over one tenth (14.54%) get educational information through mobile phone. Thus, majority of males agree that mobile phone strengthens social harmony due to the reason that mobile phone is the absolute means of communication.

VI

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings in the chapters, a few suggestions and recommendations are put forward for empowering and reducing gender gap through internet and mobile phone utilization, facilities and access to the availability online resources. In this regard, some suggestions are given below:

1. Access to internet should be facilitated in school/college, university/academic institutions; home or private place irrespective any gender. On the other hand, mobile phone should not be allowed in On Mode in the class whenever teaching-learning situation is going on.

2. More privileges should be provided to female so access to internet and mobile phone whenever they need so that no social constrain will be pre-occupied.
3. Government and other authority should be implemented safety or restricted protocol for controlling maximum frequency of access which is harmful for adolescents and youth including both male and female in the context of internet and mobile phone.
4. Informing parents about the learning purposes of mobile phone and internet so that the moral and ethical values are enhanced in use of mobile phone and internet in education.

V

CONCLUSION

ICTs intermediated by gender perception like gender inequality, women's empowerment, employability and job prospect of both genders is increasing fast. Now-a-days, the urban sector becomes globalized and widely marketized. Internet technology occupies a significant role which is embracing gender empowerment. The females are also gradually progressing towards accessing to and using internet. The males are ahead in accessing to and using internet. On the other hand, gender is balancing social hierarchy by maintaining equal status in accessing to internet that turns another angle of developing urban periphery. Mobile and internet technology has enhanced gender empowerment including social, economic and political development. In short, mobile technology provides extensive help in terms of access to information, overcoming geographic limitations and market access. This communication device enables female and other individuals for accessing to social media platforms where people can extend their reach and use resources in meaningful ways.