7.1 Conclusion

Now, we have reached the stage, where we can draw some conclusions and make certain suggestions. Here in this chapter we shall make an attempt to restate in brief our specific assessment of the decision-making power of women in rural Haryana. As indicated at the outset of this study, the main objectives of this study were:

(i) To give a brief account of the measures taken by the Government for the upliftment of women;
(ii) to throw light on socio-economic characteristics of women in rural Haryana;
(iii) to see the relationship between women's education and marriage age, negative female gender stereotypes, lack of female choice in marriage partner and marriage at greater distance from the women’s home and the relative confinement of women's work time to domestic and subsistence production;
(iv) to establish the relationship between households' economic status and the extent and structure of female economic participation; and
(v) to examine the relationship between the presence of children, number of days spent outside the village per adult male and age of the women and the participation of women in subsistence production and market activities.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this study, legislations, laws and government policies have taken long strides in India. The history of the enactment of laws and legislations for the equality of women goes back to the year of independence, when National Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru made a number of sub-committees to deal with different aspects of national life. The preamble of Directive principles of State Policy embodies the major policy goals of the welfare state in which right to an adequate means of livelihood goes back to the year of independence, when National Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru made a number of sub-committees to deal with different aspects of national life. The preamble of Directive principles of State Policy embodies the major policy goals of the welfare state in which right to an adequate means of livelihood for man and woman equally, equal pay for equal work and maternity relief are some of the woman specific directive principles. Indian women are the beneficiaries of fundamental rights in the same manner as Indian man. Besides, providing a formal structure of equality, our government used laws as a
major instrument to change our society. The enactment
of Hindu Marriage Act 1955, which prohibits bigamy and
gives women the right to divorce and remarry, the
Hindu Succession Act of 1956, by which the son, daughter
and wife inherit equally and become absolute owners of the
property. Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, Equal Remuneration
Act of 1976, the Termination of Pregnancy Act, the
criminal law (Second Amendment) Act 1983, which defines
a new offence of cruelty by husband or relations of the
husband to women for the intention of meeting unlawful
property etc. are some of the measures of relief for all
women irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Besides,
the Planning Commission, until the Fourth Plan, identified
three broad areas of development in the case of women,
viz. education, social welfare and health. In the Fifth
Plan same attention was paid to generation of employment
for women. In the Sixth Plan, there has been a separate
section on women's employment situation and outlook.
Thus, the government articulated the norms of equality
through the constitution and using law as an important
agent for social change and for formal equality. But
true parity is possible only when the implication of
the constitutional are accepted by people's mind.
But the prevailing conditions of Indian women are contrary
to the expectations. As the present study depicts, a majority of the women are unaware of these social legislations. The women of the poorer sections of the society are extremely overworked. Among the middle class, women have to cope with both the housework and the employment outside their homes. Rural women do work the whole day. They are engaged in farm and household activities and make an important contribution to the rural economy. Though women contribute substantially to the economic resources of the family by way of services rendered as well as the wages earned, yet their potential is not duly recognised and very little attention is paid to involve them directly with developmental activities and enable them to become more effective and productive.

In the second chapter, methodology used for the present study has been discussed. In brief, of the various interest groups that make-up our society, we have chosen particularly to concentrate on that part of the population numbering some hundred of millions, that is designated as the 'rural'. The study is based on primary data collected through the survey method with the help of a questionnaire specifically designed to collect the required comprehensive information. A three stage stratified random sampling technique has been adopted for the selection
of districts, villages, and ultimate sample of rural households. Three Hundred sixty households (farm, non-farm and labour households) from nine villages spread over nine districts were interviewed. The data collected by interviewing the sample households was transferred to simple code-cards, decoding and tabulation was done. Classification, reclassification of data proportional and averages are the statistical methods used in the present study. The stratification of the households into five groups (agriculturists, wage-labourers, self-income households, pensioners and salaried households) ensured representation over the whole range of income earners in the respective selected villages. Questions included into the schedule have been divided into certain categories. The first category includes questions on labour allocation, crop choice, fertilisers' use, etc. In the second category, questions on decisions on the purchase of small food items and household necessities, clothing, education, health care expenditure, expenditure on small gifts and loans, religion and social obligation and travel, as well as information on who keeps the household money etc. have been included. The final category termed as resource allocation includes decision on major capital transactions and disposal of household production. That is to say, all possible aspects to judge the extent and structure of women's economic participation and household decision-making has been leveled.
The study depicts that majority of the sample households (76%) belonged to standard castes followed by Scheduled castes (13%) and backward classes (11%).

The social status of rural women was rather low, as majority of them were illiterate. Due to illiteracy and poverty, these rural folks were found having big families further aggravating the problem of illiteracy and poverty.

In the third chapter, an attempt has been made to establish the fact that cultural pattern of any society determines the structure of female economic participation. Our cultural pattern is like that women has to work in farm, non-farm and market activities. Review of literature shows that women's work in the household is universal in each society. It is shaped by cultural tradition. Women's role in Indian culture vary across caste, religion and region. Indian culture has often been described as hierarchical world view, which is grounded in the caste system of Hinduism. The term 'Pativaratas' used in Hindu Texts explicitly prescribes male domination and female subordination. The role and status of women from an integral part of the prevailing socio-economic structure of any community and the cultural norms and traditions and value system determine women's status in the society. It is well known that throughout the country with the increasing improvement in the economic conditions of the family, farmers withdraw their
women from the fields. A change in the organisational terms and the value system does not take place simultaneously and this explains the fact that there is a wide gap between the theoretical possibilities and actual realisation. Inspite of the economic development, in rural Haryana, she does every kind of field work except driving the plough. In fact, she bears the burden of unpaid domestic labour. To know the structure of female economic participation, a list of different household chores was prepared. Total time in a day was calculated by summing up the time devoted to all those activities, i.e., animal husbandry, agriculture, fetching water, manufacturing, bringing fuel, pre-cooking activities, food-processing, construction of houses, domestic activities, child care, education and social activities. While analysing the data it was found that 80.5% of total sample households were involved in animal husbandry, spending 2-3 hours daily; 77.7% were involved in agriculture spending 6-7 hours daily, while in fetching water and in bringing fuel 83.3% and 86.1% were involved, respectively. Cooking was the single household chores in which all the women were involved with the exceptions of those women who were too old to cook. Thus, in our present cultural pattern, every woman is supposed to do not only household chores but also to engage themselves in agricultural activities.

Another aspect of the cultural pattern, i.e., at what age a woman gets married and whether she is consulted in
choosing her life partner, has also been touched. This aspect has again been associated with the relative confinement of women's work time to domestic and subsistence production. It was observed that in the study area, people continued to follow traditional customs and married off their daughters before or soon after puberty. Majority of the women of sample households (53%) got married before attaining the age of 15 years. Our 24% of women were found literate out of which only 10% studied up to matriculate or above. The reason behind the marriage at early age seems to be illiteracy of women. The generally hold view that 'girl does not have any control, either over the choice of her partner or on the timing of her marriage', was found correct. In 98% of the cases, in our study area, parents decided the age at which and to whom to marry their daughters and the girl to be married was not consulted. Thus, the women of the sample households who culturally got married at early age to the persons who were chosen by their parents, were spending more time to domestic subsistence and production sectors.

Another important finding of the present study is that women's total work burden is slightly affected by economic status of the households. Economic status includes the level of property and income of the households. Majority of the sample households owned property more than Rs. 50,000 while some of them owned less than Rs. 20,000. Women spent
their time in household chores like cooking, fetching water, child care, animal husbandry etc. It was found that time spent in different activities up to 7 hours increased with increasing level of property. But in case of working hours from eight to eleven, we found the reverse trend, but as a whole work burden is found to be positively related with the level of property.

An attempt was also made to examine the relationship between women's participation in subsistence, labour and market sectors and level of economic status. The foregoing analysis of the present study verified the fact that there lies the inverse relationship between these two variables since an increase in the economic status has directly effected the work participation in subsistence and market sectors. With the increase in economic status, there is a fall in women-participation. That is say, the traditional role of a woman as a home maker remains unaltered. Their activities like animal husbandry, agriculture, fetching water, manufacturing, bringing fuel, food processing and construction repair house have been grouped in subsistence sector', while market sector denotes labour-market, services and in-out village activities.

Thus, our hypothesis that women's total work burden is marginally affected by the economic status of the household' and participation in the subsistence and market sectors', has been found correct. It is due to the fact that households with higher level of property engage more domestic labour, as their economic status can withhold this expenditure.
As far as the role of women in home and farm operations is concerned, it can be inferred from the data collected that vast majority of respondents were involved in animal husbandry (80%), agriculture (78%), fetching water (83%), manufacturing (90%), fetching fuel (86%), food-processing (100%), domestic activities (84%) and social activities (73%). In these activities, while the rural development was negatively related to time spent in these activities, age was positively related factor. Thus, our study reveals the fact that the participation of women in household-chores and time spent was found affected by a number of factors like rural development. Increased per capita income also led to more time spent in household chores. As with rise in economic status women become more aware of the well-being of the family, specially of children, and try to meet the requirements of the family members in the best possible way. In brief, level of rural development, occupation of family, per capita income, caste, socio-economic status and level of household technology were affecting the time devoted in household chores and the relationship was found positive in nature.

Besides cultural pattern, demographic factors also affect the structure of female economic participation. Among demographic factors migration of male-counterpart,
size of family, and age structure of family members are the important ones which directly affect women's economic participation. Migration data, in general, shows that men are the first to leave an over crowded village, leaving their women folks behind to look after the children and to keep the family going. In the absence of their male counterparts, they have to take over managerial responsibilities. Such women now move between two spheres, namely, the traditional female domestic cycle and the male arena which lies outside or in the public spheres. Likewise, children do not participate much in production-work, although elder girls in age group of 12-14 years, do help in domestic tasks. Presence of children aged nine and below has a negative influence on women's participation in subsistence activity and in-village and out-village market participation. Further, joint family reduces women's work-burden.

We have found in our present study that some of these demographic factors have positive while others negative relationship with women's participation in subsistence and market sector. Women's participation in subsistence and market production increased with the number of days spent outside the village per adult male in the family. Presence of children in a family in the age group of 10 to 14 years reduced women's work-burden in household sector, while presence of children aged nine and below reduced the women's
work-participation in subsistence and market activity. Only 2.24%, 1.11% and 0.83% households having children aged one to three years participate in subsistence sector, in-village activities and out-village market activities, respectively. With the increase in the age of children, participation of women in subsistence sector decreased and in in-village and out-village activities increased. It has also been observed that age factor and work burden of rural women are inversely related. While 75% of the women in the age-group of 25-35 years were found working more than 6 hours, there were only 12% of women from the age group of 55-65 years who were working. Like the age factor, size of family and work-burden were also found inversely related. In those households which had up to three members almost 55% members worked for more than six hours daily. On the other hand, in the households having more than five members almost 10% worked more than six hours.

The household’s property and economic status were found inversely related with female input into household-decision-making. As in households owning property worth Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 30,000, 78% women were taking decisions while in upper-class property group, i.e., Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 60,000 only 19% women were found taking decisions. Another finding of our study is the positive relationship between women’s independent wage or salary income, women’s age, participation in domestic and subsistence production activities and women’s decision making power. Our findings show that a high percentage
of rural women which indicated their involvement in some occupation were participating in decision-making. In the households having 1-3 family members, 85% female were participating in decision-making, while only 19% female participated in decision-making having family members 10-11. With the increase in the age of women, involvement of them in decision making increased.

Increase in the work-burden also affected the decision-making power of women. Almost eighty percent women who worked daily from 3 to 5 hours participated in decision-making, while 100% of women who worked for more than 7 hours daily were found participating in decision-making.

As far as the resource allocation decisions are concerned, working hours of respondents affected their decision-making power the least. The respondents do more or less work, their participation in resource allocation remains the same. In out-village market activity 89% were found participating, in service sector activities, everyone was found participating, while in labour market activities 98% were participating in decision-making. That is to say, our data verified the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between participation in the local market-economy and the disposal of household production and management of household assets.
The policy implications of this study for India are varied. Here we will discuss only those which follow directly from the foregoing analysis. These conclusions are important both for increasing the effectiveness of development programs and attaining the objectives of equity.

1. Women's Role in the Village Economy and the Design of Rural Development Programs

We have seen that India's rural economy is predominantly subsistence oriented and that women are responsible for more than 50% of the adult time input into subsistence activities. It is, therefore, not surprising that when total household production, rather than just outside earnings, is considered women are found to contribute 50 percent of the family income.

Within the subsistence sector female labour constitutes almost 50 percent of the total time input by adult household members in agriculture and that devoted to animal husbandry. Food processing is overwhelmingly dominated by women. Women's overall input into the subsistence sector is higher than men's—both in terms of the number of hours per day spent by the individual woman and in terms of the number of women concentrated in this sector.
As we have seen, women play an equally important role in decisions about the management of the agricultural production process within the subsistence sector. Higher family income status does reduce the involvement of women in farm-management decisions.

The extent and depth of women's participation in the rural subsistence economy has several implications for the design of the rural development plans and programs. Among the most important are those relating to training, extension and functional adult education. The high degree of women's involvement in family farm management has generally been ignored and no specific efforts have been made to integrate women in agricultural or other rural training programs.

Women's adult education should be strengthened and focused around the reading, writing and accounting skills which are required to fill out loan applications, road extension materials and conduct small scale businesses. The most productive approach would be to integrate literacy and numeracy training with practical on-the-job training in income generation activities.

The need to use income generation as an entry point can hardly be overemphasized. For most rural women, participation
in traditional programs in health and family planning education, nutrition and child care, etc., is a luxury they cannot afford. Unless the time women spend away from household and agricultural chores can bring in some visible contribution to the family income, neither they nor their households will feel that the time is justified.

2. **Market Activities and Employment Generation**

On the whole women's participation in the "outside" or market economy is substantially lower than that of men. Whether the concern is to accelerate growth or to achieve equity within the household, it is important to support the tradition of female entrepreneurship where it exists and encourage its development where women have in the past been discouraged from market participation. It is clear that in addition to its importance in enabling us to understand the dynamics of the rural economy, the implications of the inside/outside dichotomy are not limited to the economic dimension. For women, the legal system, the local panchayat government, credit institutions, health services and agricultural extension—all of the increasingly important bureaucratic structures of development—are part of the "outside". Hence for many rural women, these systems and services are both socially and conceptually inaccessible.
In the foregoing analysis, we have seen that women's involvement in market activities gives them much greater power within the household in terms of their input in all aspects of household decision-making. At the same time, limiting women's involvement to the domestic and subsistence sectors reduces their power vis-à-vis men in the household. This may in part be due to the fact that unlike family subsistence farming where the production process is a joint effort and the product is more or less communal, money earned or crafts produced are highly individualized. They allow women to make a measurable contribution to the household income and thus enhance the perception of women as equal partners.

There is, however, another possible explanation for the connection between women's market participation and their increased decision-making power, an explanation which has important implications both in terms of equity and growth. Women confined to subsistence production for the family farm enterprise are working on production assets which, due to the prevalent patrilineal system of land inheritance, are predominantly owned and controlled by men. Female entrepreneurship, however, is as we have seen, not dependent on land ownership. Bringing women out into the market gives them an opportunity to generate their own production assets, thus providing a means of reducing the dependency on our finite land resources and at the same time a more feasible and culturally acceptable
way to bring about greater equity in the distribution of economic resources between men and women than any attempt to change the traditional land inheritance system in the near future.

Bringing women into the market economy, then, is both an effective step towards more efficient use of local resources and a means of improving women's status and economic security. However, in recommending employment generation for rural women, there are several issues that need to be taken into account.

First, we know from the time allocation data that women's overall work burden in all communities is very high. In line with this, the seasonality aspect shows that although there are slack periods when surplus labor is available, there is generally more surplus of male labor (at least in the sense of more leisure time) than of female labor throughout the year.

In regard to the generation of female employment, two relevant points emerge from these findings. Firstly, in terms of time spent in home production women are already over-employed and have little or not extra time available. Therefore, employment policies should place emphasis on increasing the efficiency and economic productivity of work time, rather than on filling in unemployed time with additional low productivity domestic or
public works activities. The second point is that the primacy of the agricultural labour demands must be recognized and employment schemes designed with enough flexibility to allow for considerable seasonal fluctuation in the labour poor.

Unless women's current work burden is reduced through increasing their efficiency and productivity, women will have little or no time to participate in the extension, training and income-generating programs suggested above. On this basis high priority should be given to the development, adaptation and delivery of appropriate technology. In addition, however, improved technologies will often be necessary as a basis from which to expand traditional female domestic tasks such as grain processing, oil pressing or weaving into viable local commercial ventures. Programs introducing new technology should try to involve women directly in its diffusion and make sure that female labour is not displaced by male labour in the process of technological change. The rural areas are extremely interested in new technologies, and if the bestower of these technologies requires that they be women-managed, the communities will still accept them. With more sophisticated technologies requiring credit, a loan guarantee program could be set up to support women's
involvement. Such measures are critical if the displacement of women from their traditional spheres of productive activity and authority is not to continue.

3. Targeted Integration

To fully mobilize women in the development process and provide them increasing opportunity to lead secure productive lives, women should be specifically targeted within each development sector. Concern with equal participation for the disadvantaged sectors of society can not stop short at the household level. The current study of the household decision-making process shows very clearly that there are often marked disparities between men's and women's control over how common family resources are used. This disparity becomes even sharper when access to outside resources and opportunities is considered. While there is an important need for specialized women's agencies and programs, it is more important that women be integrated into all the regular sectoral programs. Given the fundamental re-orientation this will require in many sectors, it is unlikely that such integration will occur at any meaningful level unless specific targets for employment, extension, delivery of inputs, recruitment for training and public participation are explicitly formulated for all sectors.
As part of the target group approach sectoral investment targets should state explicitly how much employment each sector will generate for men and women. Such targets could provide a broad framework within which the detailed employment patterns implied by particular development projects and programs could be assessed and adjusted. One would not contend that every program and project should generate an equal number of jobs for men and women, but rather that an overall balance at the sectoral and national levels should be sought. At present women are involved in all traditional sectors of the economy and care must be taken that improved technologies and structural reorganization do not displace them from these sectors. This again entails specific efforts to direct both training and credit to women as well as men. Only such efforts could enable women to become more productive and keep pace with the modernization process.

Providing credit to women is more difficult than it looks at first glance. Women generally do not own pledgable assets and this often cuts them off from institutional credit. Providing credit to poor women inevitably involves intensive supervision and provision of other supporting services. Since most of the potential women borrowers are illiterate, they also need careful training in accounting
and developing skills for dealing with the various institutions such as commercial banks which are part of the "outside" modern world.

4. Long Run Implications

The policies recommended above aimed at involving women in the development process and expanding their acceptable roles beyond those of mother, housekeeper and subsistence agricultural worker can be expected to have important long range effects in terms of reduced fertility rates and changed social attitudes towards children's education.

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