CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION
1.0 Introduction:

Women form about half of the population of the country, but their situation has been grim. For centuries, they have been deliberately denied opportunities of growth in the name of religion and socio-cultural practices. Before independence, women were prey to many abhorrent customs, traditional rigidities and vices due to which their status in the society touched its nadir and their situation was all round bleak. They were victims of widespread illiteracy, segregation in the dark and dingy rooms in the name of Purdah, forced child marriage, indeterminable widowhood, rigidity of fidelity and opposition to remarriage of widows turning many of them into prostitutes, polygamy, female infanticide, violence and force to follow Sati, and the complete denial of individuality. Besides, the economic dependence, early tutelage of husbands and in-laws, heavy domestic work-load which remained unpaid and unrecognized, absence of career and mobility, non-recognition of their economic contribution, poor work conditions and wages, and monotonous jobs which men generally refused to do was also responsible for their pitiable conditions. At the socio-political plain, women suffered from the denial of freedom even in their homes, repression and unnatural indoctrination, unequal and inferior status, rigid caste hierarchy and untouchability. Consequently, most women were reduced to dumb cattle and had lead to inhuman beastly life.

The religious traditions and social institutions have a deep bearing on the role and status of women. A multitude of derogatory attributes have been ascribed to Hindu women by the writers of the Smiritis. Like the Shudras, she is forbidden to study the Vedas or perform any sacrifices. According to Manu, “In childhood a woman must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband and when her lord is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be independent.” (Jain et al, 1997: 39). She is viewed solely as mother and wife and never as a woman or a person, and these roles were idealized. Practices like giving away of daughters in marriage and the importance attached to sons for maintaining the continuity of the line have strengthened the matrilineal social structure of Hinduism. A widow is regarded as inauspicious. She cannot participate in social-religious ceremonies. Re-marriage was not permitted for high caste widows. But the Hindu male is not subject to such restrictions.
Protest movements within the Hindu fold, like Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishvanism, Veera Shaivism and Sikhism contributed to some improvement in the status of women, particularly in regard to religious activities. However, they continued to regard women primarily as mothers and wives, and inferior to men in society. The advent of Islam brought further deterioration in the status of women. Even in the early British period her condition remained as before. From the middle of the nineteenth century reform movements like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, etc., championed the cause of women, but nothing concrete could be achieved. It is significant to note that upliftment of women was an important item in the agenda of Mahatma Gandhi. Pyarelal, his secretary, tells that Gandhi often used to say that he would like to be reborn either as an untouchable or a woman. These two symbolized for him the oppressed and the suppressed sections of humanity.

1.1 Exploitation of Women:

A woman in Indian society has been victim of humiliation, torture and exploitation. There are many episodes like rape, murder, dowry, burning, wife beating and discrimination in the socio-economic and educational fields. Indian society is predominated by men, hence women are a victim of male domination in the respective sphere of life; especially in economic life, for instance, over decision making on resources, on utilization of her earnings and on her body. Hence a woman’s life lies between pleasures at one end and danger at other end. In daily life women are routinely defined by sex and they are potential victims of kidnapping and rape.

The human species has made significant progress in several spheres of life. But man has not grown enough to overcome the self-made mental slavery to the laws of the jungle. Since time immemorial the laws of physical strength thrives at the expense of the weak and has made women the primary under-dogs of an exploitative society. In the lower socio-economic level of society, women do more hazardous manual labour than men. Women do more than half the agricultural works in India. Still men are considered to be the bread winners. This sense of women being inferior is passed on from one generation through psychological conditionings.

The most widespread and de-humanizing discriminations and assault against women are on the psychological level. The female psyche is being crushed at the very childhood. The female psyche is brutalized long before bodily violence is inflicted on her. They are conditioned to accept inferior positions in society. Women from
childhood undergo a slow unconscious process of destructive or denial of their self worth. Society, through a process of conditioning, creates in girls at home and in school certain thinking patterns, which ascribed to the female sex an inferior status. Besides, society gradually trains them to make this value system their own. Usually baby girls are given bangles, anklets etc. thus communicating a sense of fragility.

Another result of the social conditioning is that man either as father; brother or husband considers women as socio-economic gift of his household. A woman’s value judged, not so much in terms of her worth as a person with rights and dignity as in terms of her utility to man. Expression of this mentality is found in different language and society. For example, in national language Hindi, girl is called ‘paraya dhan’ and boy ‘apana dhan’.

Any assessment of the status of women has to start from the social framework, social structures, cultural norms and value systems that influence social expectations regarding the behavior of both men and women and determine women’s roles and their position in society. A society is composed of many institutions and most important of them are the system of decent, family and kinship, marriage and religious traditions. They provide the ideology and moral basis for men and women about their rights and duties and their status and role.

Women were exploited to a greater degree as they were paid less compared to men for similar nature of work and hours spent on work. The conditions of the work in the unorganized sector were unsatisfactory and the problems confronted by them were acute, and that their illiteracy, poverty and indebtedness forced them to work for lower wages and under unjust conditions.

The conditions of women agriculture labour in rural areas are no better. Most of them do not have year round employment. They suffer vital disadvantages compare to men in their search for employment opportunity, lower real wages, increased uncertainties and irregularities of employment. There are legal provisions to protect their rights. Such working conditions are hurdle in their overall development leading to under performance and not allowing them to raise their productive capacity in that very profession also. Hence, there is every need to analyze the exiting lacunas in this area and it is felt to study the status of women in the agricultural sector in India which falls under the class of “unorganized sector”.
1.2 Specific Problems of Rural Women:

The condition of women is more miserable in the rural India with respect to various socio-economic aspects.

a) Poverty

Rural poverty is one of the important characteristics of India and nearly 45 percent of rural people are below poverty line. Most of them are just surviving with day-to-day earnings. If we take International poverty line (1994) into consideration in India there were 47 percent of the population at below $ 1 a day category and 87.5 percent at below $ 2 a day category. Under such circumstances, within the family, the worst sufferers are needless to say women and girl children. For this category of women, neither credit nor skill training is accessible. Better health care and higher educational opportunities are far reaching dreams for their children and there is no need to say about the status of girl child in such families. She (girl child) is treated as a “silent lamb” born to suffer all evils in the male dominated society. So far much has not been done for this vulnerable sub-culture of the society.

b) Violence

Indian society has been bound by culture and tradition since ancient times. The patriarchal system and the gender stereotypes in the family and society have always showed a preference for the male child. Sons were regarded as a means of social security and women remained under male domination. Due to her subordinated position, she has suffered years of discrimination, exploitation and subjugation. She became the victim of several evils like child marriage, sati, polygamy, Purdah system, female infanticide, forced pregnancy, rape etc. In such incidents/recorded cases surprisingly mother-in-law are also taking active part (forgetting the fact that they are also women and some time back they also played daughter-in-law role).

c) Economic Exploitation

On the world level, women and girls together carry two-third of the burden of the world’s work yet receive only a tenth of the world’s income. They form 40 percent of the paid labour force. Though women constitute half of the world’s population yet they own less than one percentage of the world’s property (UNDP Human Development Report 1995). According to UN Report (2005): women constitute half the world’s population, perform nearly two-third of its work hours,
receive one-tenths of the world’s income and own less than one-hundredth of the world’s property”.

The condition of women in India is more miserable in every field of social life. They are paid half of three-quarters of the money while their male counterparts earn for the same job. In India a predominantly agricultural country, women do more than half of the total agricultural work. But their work is not valued. On an average, a woman works 15 to 16 hours a day unpaid at home and underpaid outside.

According to National Committee of Women, the growth in the percentage of women labour force in the organized sector is minimal in the last sixty years i.e. 3.44 percent in 1911 to 17.35 percent in 1971; besides, the work load either in the field or in the factories or offices, the women have to do the household such as cooking, washing, cleaning up the house etc. The younger women, besides all these, have to carry the burden of early pregnancy, childbirth and breast-feeding. In terms of help offered to people for their various functions women seem to receive the least attention from the society.

The status of women is intimately connected with their economic status, which in turn, depends upon rights, roles and opportunity for the participation in economic activities. The economic status of women is now accepted as an indicator of a society’s stage of development. However, all development does not result in improving women’s economic activities. Pattern of women’s activities are affected by prevailing social ideology and are also linked with the stage of economic development.

d) Educational Deprivation

In India the literacy rate of women is much lower than men because boys receive more schooling than girls. T.P. Sechan says that there are parts of India where the literacy rate of women today is as low as 3 percent. So stark is the gender inequality in India that it is one of the 43 countries in the world where male literacy rate are at least 15 percent higher than female rates. Educational deprivation is intimately associated with poverty. The UNICEF Executive Director Mr. Carol Bellamy says; “No country has ever emerged from poverty without giving priority to education.”(Indian Currents, 13 June 2004).
However, modest improvement is gradually coming up in educational level of women. After independence many steps have been taken to improve the lot of women. Many laws have also been passed. A National Commission on Women was setup to act as a watchdog on the matters concerning women in 1992. Many programmes in the areas of education, health and employment have been initiated for development of women, rural as well as urban. As a result, literacy rates are going up and fertility rates coming down. Universalisation of education, elimination of drop-out from schools, promotion of Balwadi’s and Crèches, Girls Hostels, Technical Institutions for women and distinct emphasis on health, nutrition and family welfare programmes etc. are some such initiatives.

Agriculture is the largest sector of the rural economy and is a family enterprise, since 56 percent of its population is dependent on it in India. India’s economic security is heavily dependent on agriculture. In terms of employment, it is the most important sector. Women in India are the back bone of the society and important human resource. They play a significant and crucial role in agriculture and allied operations and house hold activities. Traditionally, women have always played an important role in agriculture as farmers, co-farmers, family labour, wage labours and managers of farms. The selection, preservation and maintenance, the development and sharing of seed stock has long been preserve of women. They have been active not just in crop cultivation but also in allied areas such as Horticulture, livestock and fisheries. The fact is that women’s contribution in these sectors have either been largely ignored or inadequately acknowledged. Women constitute nearly half the population in any country either it is developed or developing country.

According to U.N. reports, Women are almost half of the adult population. They constitute one – third of labour force but consume 2/3\textsuperscript{rd} of the world’s working hours and yet earn only 1/10\textsuperscript{th} of the income and own only 1% of world property (Varma 1992). Women constitute in innumerable way to the development process. In economic terms (Chauhan 2003), women: Quantitatively, supply labour force through her reproductive function. Qualitatively, improve productivity of workers through her proper care, at home and supplement income of the family and thus helps in improving the standard of living also, helps by contribution to savings.

Women constitute 90% of the total marginal workers of the county. Rural women engaged in agricultural form 78% of all women in regular work. They are a 3rd of all workers on the land the traditional gender division of labour ensures that
these women get on average of 30% lower wages than men. The total employment of women in organized sector is only 4%. A recent study conducted by women and population division FAO revealed that in developing countries women provide 70% of agricultural labour, 60 – 80 percent labour for household food production, 100% labour for processing the basic foodstuffs, 80% per food storage and transport from farm to village, 90 percent, for water and fuel wood collection for households.

1.3 Role of Women in Agriculture:

Agriculture in India is the vertical backbone of the country and is regarded as the large cell of the country’s economic activity. About 80 percent of the Indian population either directly or indirectly depends on agriculture. Most of women perform various works for their livelihood and agriculture is considered as the biggest unorganized sector, where the large number of rural women takes part actively. The role of rural women is crucial in rural India as they participate in wide range of farm activities by slogging alongside with men in the field as well as taking care of the home and children, thereby performing a dual role that of a home maker and of a pattern in the farming activities outside the home.

Indian agriculture continues to be gamble in the hands of monsoons in the spite of the green revolution and other advancements in Agriculture technology. In India, nearly half of the national income is derived from agriculture thus constituting the very foundation for the national economy. The achievement in Indian Agriculture has won national and international appreciation. It is depicted as one of the major bread baskets of the world. Agriculture has been termed as “The mother of all industries and the maintainer of human life standing at the need of the all sciences and arts, indeed, at the head of civilization and progress”. Besides, agriculture is also the mainstay of a majority of Indian population in the unorganized sector particularly of women.

Agriculture constitutes the main source of livelihood and the main area of work for most people in the developing countries. Most of these countries are at the early stage of development where the majority of women is employed in agriculture. Even in most of the South-East Asian countries, where convention prevents women from working outside the home, care of livestock, processing of the harvested crops, pursuit of craft and other work still provide them with the status of contributing materially to the family income. In most parts of the country, the jobs done
traditionally by women are generally those of transplanting, sowing, weeding, harvesting, winnowing and threshing.

Women participate in decision making related to farming and household service, despite their access to production resources and extension services which had so far been very limited. Though, there are rural women, who have been largely neglected, it is being increasingly felt that the technical knowledge acquired. However, during the recent years, farm women are being viewed as an important source of diffusion of technology and thereby strengthening the process of decision making in agriculture. Though decision making is a complex process, nevertheless, farm women knowingly or unknowingly participate in the decision making process regarding the farming enterprise which is based on their long standing field experience.

Indian women constituting nearly half of the total population of the country play a crucial role both in domestic sphere and agricultural sector. Yet our traditional attitude treats women as second-class citizens in spite of the fact that women have proved their settle in every walk of life. Their contribution is not given due credit. According to an international Labour Organization estimation, the value of unpaid house hold work constitutes 25 to 39 percent of the Gross National product.

The employment profile of women, as per the census of 2001, indicates that 79.40 percent of all economically active women were engaged in agriculture as compared to 63.30 percent of men. A significant trend observed is that over the years there has been an increase in the proportion of agricultural wage labour top total agricultural workers at the all-India level. The fact is that the proportion of women wage labourers is much higher than that of men. At all-India level, the proportion of female workers engaged as agricultural labourers in 1961, 55.32 percent of the rural female workers were cultivators but their proportion declined to 33.03 percent in 2001. Even in the case of male cultivators, the proportion decreased, though not to that extent as it was in the case of women.

Agriculture, the single largest production Endeavour in India, contributing 25 percent to the GDP, is increasingly becoming a female activity. Agriculture sector employs 80% of all economically active women in the country as compared to 63% of men. It is estimated that there are 75 million women in dairying as against 15 million men and 20 million in other livestock activities as compared to 1.5 million men.
The invisibility of women’s work and its undervaluation in the development discourses has been discussed widely. The low value and the social status given to women’s manifold activities such as domestic labour, child care and other remunerated employment including agriculture, reflects the reinforcement of gender inequities at ideological and practical levels as well. The debate on role of women’s domestic labour and its value has initiated serious discussions in the and outside feminist and academic circles. It has been estimated that the house work is equivalent in value about a third of total production per year in modern economy.

Rural Indian women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. However, the nature and extent of their involvement differs from the variations in agro-production systems. The mode of female participation in agricultural production varies from managers to landless labourers. In over all farm production, women’s average contribution is estimated at 55 percent to 66 percent of the total labour with percent of the total labour with percentages, is higher in certain regions. In the Indian Himalaya, a pair of bullocks works 1064 hours, a man1212 hours and a women 3485 hours in a year on one hectare farm, a figure that illustrates women’s significant contribution to agricultural production.

The recent NSS and census data shows a marginal increase in women’s employment participation when compared to previous decades. The important feature of this trend is the increasing casualisation and informalisation of women’s work. The introduction of capital-intensive technologies in the agriculture sector has had differential impact on different sections of people. The women are negatively affected due to women’s lack of access to technology. According to various scholars, the green revolution technologies have enhanced class polarization and deepened gender inequities in many ways. Agarwal points out that following the introduction of new technologies in agriculture, casualisation of work is increased for both men and women. While it is more enhanced in the operations such as transplanting, weeding and harvesting where female labour is primarily employed.

The Women Agricultural Labours belong to the disadvantaged sections of Indian rural society, constituting about 25 percent of the total labour force Indeed; they should be paid special attention to lessen their aggravating employment situation and provided with other social security fields. We find a declining proportion of cultivators and an increasing proportion of agricultural labourers. However, the occupational structure has remained more or less stagnant over the last three decades.
The percentage of agricultural work force was 69.51 percent between 1961 and 2001 with slight increase at percent, i.e., 68.79 percent.

The process of land transfer has ousted an increasing proportion of rural households from the land with the passage of time. Thus, land transfer has been cited as the principal reason for landless. The factors responsible for landlessness are usually the law of inheritance, the forceful occupation of land and the sale of land.

According to Swami Nathan, the famous agricultural scientist “Some historians believe that it was women who first domesticated crop plants and there by initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fiber and fuel”.

Women have played and continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through the maintenance of varietals diversity and genetic resistance. Therefore, without the total intellectual and participation of women, it will not be possible to popularize alternative systems of land management to shift cultivation, arrest gene and soil erosion and promote the care of the soil and health of economic plants and farm animals.

Despite their importance to agricultural production, women face severs handicaps. They in fact, the largest group of landless labourers with little real security in case of break up of the family owing to death or divorce, inheritance laws and customs which discriminate against women. Land reforms and settlement acts of land usually give opportunity to men to own transfer or inherit land from their parents in this male dominated society.

Agricultural development programmes are usually planned by men and aimed at men. Mechanization, for example alleviates the burden of tasks that are traditionally men’s responsibility, leaving women’s burdens unrelieved or even increased. The excess burden of work on women (i.e. the farm work plus house work), also acts as a stimulus to have many children so that they can help out with chores from an early age. Extension workers almost exclusively aim their advice at men’s activities and crops. In some regions, this bias may depress production of subsistence food crops (often women’s crops) in favour of increased production of cash crops (often men crops) in favour of increased production of cash crops (often men’s crops) so that family nutrition suffers.
It may not be out of place to mention here that considering their dual responsibilities within and outside the home it would be in the fitness of things that more and more in the village training is organized for rural farm women to suit their convenience with due realization that institutional training is important in its own place.

In order that farm women get a fair deal at the hands of change agents, one of the remedial measures that needs to be undertaken is to induct a sizable number of well trained women personnel in training and extension programmes of agricultural development agencies at all levels and more so at the grassroots level.

The development experience in India reveal that, agricultural modernization through HYV technology and mechanical technology have displaced women from several newly mechanical technology have displaced women from several newly mechanized operations and at the same time increased their involvement in labour intensive activities. Men took over from women, those activities in which technology has substituted machinery from manual labour both in the harvesting and post-harvesting operations. Thus the introduction of tractors, harvesters, insecticides, weedicides, HYV, seeds and mechanical cotton pickers have appropriated women’s traditional means of livelihood. Women were hired increasingly in those areas were mechanization was low, crop intensity was high and area irrigated was high.

Modernization and advancement of technology have not benefited women. In fact, in many areas women have been displaced from their traditional jobs as the technology necessitates training, up gradation of knowledge and skill which are put out of their reach. Improved agricultural technology accompanied by partial mechanization had affected women from all social-strata and it had negatively affected the women from lower caste and lowest income groups by reducing the demand for employment in peak season.

Farm women in Japan account for just over 60 percent of total agricultural labour force and provide about 40 percent of labour in rice cultivation. They operate and maintain farm machinery and play an important role in farm decision-making. Fifty percent of women have access to machinery, which implies that women are no longer at mercy of men labourers, sub-ordinate to patriarch but are independent workers capable of using machineries on their own judgment. In China too, women farmers perform all type of operations, which are done by their male counterparts.
Women’s role in agricultural operations, animal husbandry and other economically productive activities is very significant. They contribute about 60-70 percent of the labour required for these activities thus playing a pivotal role in sustaining economy. The decision making process is an important segment of every household because it makes implementation of a plan or programme quite easy.

In rural areas of the country, both husband and wife are jointly responsible for making decisions on matters like family obligations, specific housing charges and purchase of household articles. However, women’s suggestions are not given due consideration in the decisions pertaining to agricultural sector and important family matters. It is due to majority of women’s illiteracy and their little time to know about the latest techniques of farming and restricted mobility because of several cultural taboos.

Generally, women have less access to information about technology by virtue of their inferior educational status and relative isolation from public life Thus, there is a hesitation to come out and interact. At times, even the suggestions of knowledgeable rural women are ignored or are not taken seriously because men consider it disgraceful to accept the decision of women. This is because traditionally men have been major lawmakers of society. Many policies and decisions neglect women and undermine their abilities and roles. The extent of participation in the decision-making activities in household and agriculture, related and other socio-culture affairs reflect the status of women in the family as well as society.

A woman play a significant and crucial role in agriculture and allied fields, is a fact long taken for granted and also ignored. By and large they have remained “invisible workers”. Because of low “visibility” of their contributions, they are not regarded as equal partners in the developmental process.

After independence, and more so after the green revolution, the agriculture sector has become a thrust area for our planning processes. Because of the hare work of our brilliant scientists, agricultural practitioners and the toiling farming community, India has achieved rapid and commendable progress in agriculture. India still faces a big challenge in job creation and maintenance of food security and women’s role in farming is still inadequately acknowledged. They continue to suffer from pangs of poverty, exploitation and drudgery of life.

The issue of women empowerment is very complex and multidimensional. Besides, providing rights and creating awareness does not solve the problem of
women. The development programmes and policies, which aim at women empowerment, should categorize women based on their age, cast, class, region, education, etc as they are not homogeneous group which aims at empowerment.

Any intervention for improving the condition of women involved in agricultural activities should begin with an understanding of their role profile in terms of various agriculture and related activities. Analysis of their role, both traditional and current will enable one to identify the areas of intervention. This becomes the input for designing programmes of development by way of opening of new avenues of income generation and matching technologies to the specific tasks. However, in carrying out the programmes, appropriate research and extension, input supply and policy backup is of supreme importance. Once the programme of women’s development in agriculture is launched fulfilling all these necessary conditions, it facilitates better performance of the role of the women, thereby enabling them to increase income, reduce drudgery and enhance their status in the society enabling them to increase income.

In order to improve upon socio-economic status of women, areas of possible interventions are, through providing more assured wage labour market, Identification of land based employment avenues and non-farm employment. Education is hypothesized to affect the agricultural productivity in two ways, firstly, via a choice of better inputs and output (allocative effect) and secondly, through a better utilization of existing inputs technical efficiency aspect. It was though that educational level of both husband and wife have been taken separately to assess the influence on the decision making process of farm. Some of the major causes of women’s unequal participation in Agriculture education are:

- Lack of Time: - Girls begin helping out at an early age with the household chores that burden women (fetching fuel, water, preparing food, childcare and working in the fields) and these responsibilities increase as they grow older, resulting in a decline in participation in education with increasing age.
- Customs, traditions and attitudes: - A combination of mutually reinforcing customs and attitudes place greater value on males than females in many societies. Preferences within families are often for boys to advance their education since social and cultural perceptions confine girls to roles that are thought to require little if any education.
Cycle of poverty: - The poorer a family is, the less likely it is that girls are sent to school because their labour is required at home and in the fields. Extreme poverty in many countries tends to lock illiterate women into a cycle of early marriages and illiterate children.

Women work longer hours and their work is more arduous than men’s. Women’s contribution to agriculture – whether it be subsistence farming or commercial agriculture – when measured in terms of the number of tasks performed and time spent, is great than men. “The extent of women’s contribution is aptly highlighted by a micro study conducted in the Indian Himalayas which found that on a one-hectare farm, a pair of bullocks’ works 1,064 hours, a man 1,212 hours and women 3,845 hours in a year”.

Not only do women perform more tasks, their work is also more arduous than that undertaken by men. Both transplanting and weeding require women to spend the whole day and work in muddy soil with their hands. Moreover, they work, such as ploughing and watering the fields is invariably carried out early in the morning before the sun gets too hot. Women’s work, unlike men’s, does not involve implements and is based largely on human energy. It is considered unskilled and hence less productive, on this basis, women are invariably paid lower wages, despite the fact that they work harder and for longer time than men.

Women’s employment in family farms or business is rarely recognized as economically productive, either by men or women and any income generated from this work is generally controlled by the men. The farm income is solely counted as the hard earned income of the male head of the farm family and he alone is counted as “food winner” or “food provider”.

Access to assets is the single most urgent need for the upliftment of women in general and farm women in particular. Though the Indian Constitution permits equal right for both men and women for property, yet the condition in practice is not so. Rural women still do not have ownership on land. Due to this they cannot take independent decision on various agricultural aspects. Though women make substantial contributions to agricultural development, their access to the most crucial input “credit” is limited. Since they are not land owners, the credit flow generally goes in the name of male members. This problem restricts their access to technology. Though women are involved in almost all agricultural operations, yet they have inadequate technical competency due to their limited exposure to outside world. This
has compelled them to follow the age old practices which in turn result in poor work efficiency and drudgery.

Though several technological breakthroughs have been observed in the recent past, the technologies by the researchers are not tailored to the specific needs of the farm women. As a result, most of the agricultural operations are performed manually and in an unskilled manner, which result into greater drudgery on the part of the farm women. Women specific farm operations are still rated as light and unskilled work and are undervalued. Female labour wages remain just half of those of those of the male wages for the same work in similar conditions. The discriminating stand followed by minimum, wages Act is questionable in this context.

The increased hardships and scarcity of food among the low income households dependent on female members for food production and labour wages largely lead to malnutrition of the female. Poverty has feminine face; whose family food security in adverse, the females are the first to be affected. Women have many inherent capabilities like high determination, sense of responsibility, better managerial ability, yet their potential has not been identified by the extension personnel. This potential could be explored by the extension scientists and be communicated to the researchers for proper moulding of traditional technologies with modern ones. This could certainly help in agricultural production on sustainable basis.

1.4 Prevalence of Wage-Differentials:

Stark evidence of gender inequality can be found in the ‘Wage Report in Rural India’ for the agricultural year 2004-05(July to June) released by the government recently. The Statements from the Labour Bureau in the Ministry of Labour reveals that in the agriculture sector the prevailing wage differential between male and female workers, taken as a proportion of male workers wages, stood at the grim level of 27.6 percent. It should be kept in mind that agriculture is a leading employer of women in the economy. Even in the non-agriculture sector, many high-paying jobs like masonry, carpentry etc. came solely under the male domain. The picture is the same for almost all occupations, like ploughing, sowing, transplanting etc. and certain supportive supplementary activities like well digging, cane crushing etc. The report says well digging is the highest paid occupation, at Rs. 84.17 per labourer per day.

However, there is a wide chasm in the wages paid to women workers in comparison with male workers in the agriculture sector. The average daily wages
received by women for the period under consideration was only Rs. 44.43. Male workers were paid a much higher amount of Rs. 61.37. Women dominate low-paying jobs like sweeping and in providing unskilled labour. Among the non-agricultural jobs masonry, paying Rs. 122.11 is the most lucrative job. The next high-paying job was carpentry (Rs. 111.97) followed by blacksmith (Rs. 86.81) But none of the benefits of high wages are reaped by female workers since the data shows women are not engaged in either of the three highest paying occupations.

Unfortunately, even for sweeping and unskilled labour, there are wage differences between men and women. While a minor difference in wages was noted for sweeping (3.77 percent) there was a yawning gap witnessed in the case of wages for unskilled labourers (25087 percent).

1.5 Globalization and Women in Agriculture Sector:

In spite of being an agrarian country, India ranks at an abysmal 93 out of 119 developing countries on the latest Global hunger Index (GHI), 2006. According to a UN Report (2006) on the state of food security in India, ‘has the second worst levels of hunger in South Asia (Bangladesh having the worst); and Although India has enough food to feed its population of (more than) a billion, hunger and food insecurity have increased since the mid 1990’s … relating large scale of food insecurity in India’s villages, This is a clear pointer to the fact that the country’s economic growth resulting from the process of globalization and liberalization of trade has not benefited the vast majority of its people who are dominantly from farm communities.

Globalization implied opening of economics to various nations, which facilitated Multi National Company’s (MNC) to have unhampered access to the domestic food (and non-food) market of the countries all over the globe. Agreement on Agriculture by World Trade Organization (WTO-AoA) completed the process of agricultural liberalization by opening the agriculture sector to free global markets. FAP (1996) emphasized that the goal of WTO-AoA was to establish universal food security by the year 2010. In Indian context, globalization implied opening up of the domestic economy to unequal players globally. It has engendered the very livelihoods of the local farmers by robbing them of their local markets. Loss of control over the production has drastically affected women in agriculture, disturbing their work patterns, employment opportunities, incomes, and ultimately the complete household food security system. This has also triggered other social processes like increase in
migration, female headed households, increased dependence on casual wage labour, exploitation and increased health risks.

The Impact of WTO rules and policies of trade liberalization in the agriculture sector on women is distinctive for four reasons.

Firstly, women have been the primary seed keepers, processors. They have been the both experts and producers to food, from seed to the kitchen. WTO impacts women’s expertise and productive functions throughout the food chain. The Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement impacts women’s knowledge and control over seed. The Agreement on Agriculture impacts women’s livelihood and income security, and also has secondary impacts in terms of increased violence against women. The Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary agreement has a direct impact on women’s expertise and economic role in agro processing.

Secondly, as globalization shifts agriculture to capital intensive, chemical intensive system, women bear disproportionate costs of both displacement and health hazards. Thirdly, women carry the heavier work burden in food production, and because of gender discrimination get lower returns for their work. When WTO destroys rural livelihood, it is women who lose the most. When WTO rules allow dumping which leads to decline in prices of form products, it is women who already are in low incomes go down further.

Fourthly, their position vis-a-vis WTO is also more vulnerable because as the livelihood and incomes of farmers in general, and women agriculturists in particular are eroded. They are displaced from productive roles, and their status is further devalued, while the patriarchal power of those who control assets and benefit from asset transfer is increased due to globalization. Other social processes are triggered which result in increased violence against women. The violence associated with displacement, devaluation and disempowerment takes the form of intensive violence, increasing incidences of rape, the epidemic of female feticide, and growth in trafficking of women. Women also bear the ultimate burden of farm suicides, since they are left to look after their households without assets but with the burden of indebtedness.

Over the period 1994-2004, the drive for market liberalization and globalization has severely impinged on the rural household economies. The traditional mode of agricultural practices has been obliterated The Green Revolution had set in the process of replacing of traditional farming knowledge and practices of seed
saving. The recent economic system giving a free hand to MNCs in agriculture sector has further caused a rapid shrinkage of the traditional practices and replacement of folk crop varieties by high yielding and hybrid varieties, which escalated the cost of agriculture production while stagnating productivity.

In the past few years ever since the globalization became the mantra, plantation sector too has been at the receiving end. The unrestricted import and the sharp fall in the international price, whether it is tea, coffee, rubber or palm oil has been negatively impacted.

1.6 Relevance of the present Study:

The research gaps identified from earlier studies reveal that the development strategies and poverty eradication programmes required an entirely new way of thinking in which the stereotyping of women and men no longer limits their choices, but given way to a new philosophy that regards all people as an essential agents of change, and that views development as a processing enlarging choices of both not just one. Providing equal rights and equal access to resources and opportunities to women, general equality becomes an essential aspect of human development. Especially women have not been treated on par with men in every aspects of life, though their role is crucial for the sustenance of family as well as of society and also for development of economy as a whole. The gender roles can differentiate the position of women inferior as seen in all the countries. But the degree of subordination very according to the development, on the one hand and the ownership of means of productivity, on the other, the dissemination against women is more pronounced in the third world countries in view of the prevalence of poverty.

Some of the earlier studies on agriculture women workers confined themselves to selected issues connected with the status of rural women, employment of rural women, agricultural women workers, rural development programmes for women, anti poverty alleviation programmes for rural women and rural women illiteracy. But these studies could not give either full information regarding the roots of poverty of agriculture women workers or the strategies, which help to promote the socio-economic status of the agriculture women workers. The present study attempts to analyze new approaches to improve the socio-economic status of agriculture women workers. Some of the research studies confined themselves to an evolution study of rural development programmes or poverty elimination programmes as a whole. No attempt has been made to study separately the experiences or strategies involved
in capacity building or promoting socio-economic status of agriculture women workers in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

The present study, an attempt is made to examine the factors influencing the socio-economic status of the agriculture women workers in Prakasam district. The existing literature on status of women are biased towards economic rather than social upliftment of women, who are weak in capabilities in the existing rural scenario. Enhancement of Capabilities of agriculture women workers is possible only if they are less burdened with child bearing and rearing, better health, less domestic burdens for acquiring water and fuel improving the educational status. The research gap is expected to be filled by the present study which attempts to identify the factors influencing socio-economic status of agriculture women workers households. The present study aims at understanding the factors determine the socio-economic status of selected 220 agriculture women worker households from relatively advanced Inkollu mandal and another 220 selected agriculture women worker households from the relatively interior Pamuru mandals of Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh.

1.7 Objectives and Hypothesis:

The main focus of the study is laid on analyzing the different issues relating to the socio-economic status of the agriculture women workers and to examine the inter mandal variations in the socio-economic status of the selected agriculture women worker households women workers in the relatively advanced Inkollu mandal and relatively interior Pamuru mandals in the Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh. Towards this end, the specific objectives outlined are:

- To study the role of women in the development of Agriculture sector in India under the context of unorganized sector.
- To analyze the resource base and other features of rural areas of Prakasam district in general and selected rural mandals in specific.
- To examine the socio-demographic, economic status and living standards of the selected agriculture women worker households.
- To examine the determinants of the relative socio-economic status of the selected agriculture women workers households in the study area.
- To suggest various measures in order to improve the status of women in Indian agricultural sector.

On the basis of the above objectives and the inferences drawn from the review of earlier studies the following hypothesis are proposed.
Inter mandal differences are prevalent in relation with the socio, demographic and economic indicators of the selected agriculture women households in the study area.

The agriculture women worker households living in the relatively interior Pamuru mandal need much intensive development policy packages to improve their levels socio-economic status.

1.8 Methodology:

The discussion on the methodology indicates sampling method used how the data is ascertained and statistical tools used for analysis. Multi stage stratified random sampling method is used in the present study. The selection process is carried out in four stages, they are relating to district, mandal, villages and households. The Prakasam district is selected for the study due to the fact that the district has higher proportion of rural population. The relatively advanced Inkollu mandal and relatively interior Pamuru mandals are selected from the Prakasam district purposively to examine the inter mandal variations. Also these two mandals are selected for the study because they are the rural mandals that are having a high proportion of rural population.

Two villages are randomly selected from each selected mandal depending upon the higher concentration of rural population. From the relatively interior Pamuru mandal 110 agriculture women workers households are selected from Chintalaplem village and another 110 households selected from Mopadu villages. Both the villages are selected from the very interior areas of the Pamuru mandal. From the relatively advanced Inkollu mandal another 220 agriculture women worker households are selected. Among them 110 households are selected from Nagandla village and another 110 households are selected from Pusapadu villages. They are selected from villages located in the semi-urban areas of Inkollu mandal. The total of 440 selected agriculture women worker households from the two selected mandals are equally proportioned in the selected mandals. To examine the inter mandal variations in the socio economic conditions of women households are selected from the villages based on the random sampling procedure.

Regarding data collection and techniques used in the analysis are concerned, information relating to the socio economic status of the selected agriculture women households is collected while canvassing a pre designed and structured household
schedule in the selected villages during January 2013 to October 2014 in different visits. The secondary data has been obtained from Annual Reports of the district authorities, District handbook of statistics of different years published by the Chief Planning Officer, Prakasam, MRO and MDO offices of Inkollu and Pamuru Mandals. Census data are used to collect population data. In analyzing the data apart from tabular analysis with averages and percentages, different statistical techniques are used at appropriate places. Tabular analysis with averages and percentages are used to explain the general profile and their different economics patterns. Probit model is used to identify the socio economic variables determining the relative socio economic status of the selected agriculture women worker households from the selected four villages in the Inkollu and Pamuru mandals.

The limitations underlying the study are concerned, the rural community is to be specified having in view of the problems of availability of consistent and valid data. Reporting is another problem; accessibility adds to the multiplicity of problems. Also there are no specific economic indicators to measure their economic and living conditions. Hence the indicators specified for rural areas are considered in the present study to assess the socio economic status of the agriculture women workers households. In spite of these difficulties, rural economy is sought to be studied by adopting operational definitions for concepts consistent with the area of the study.

1.9 Design of the study:

The thesis is presented broadly in seven chapters. The introductory chapter presents the background for the study, the objectives and methodology used in the study. A brief review on the earlier studies relating to socio-economic status of agriculture women workers and other relating studies are presented in the second chapter. The issues relating to socio-economic status of agriculture women workers in India at the macro level are presented in chapter three. The socio-economic profile of the study area is discussed in the fourth chapter. The dimensions relating to the socio, demographic, economic and living standards of the selected agriculture women worker households are presented in chapter five. The factors influencing relative socio economic status of the selected agriculture women workers households are analyzed in the chapter six. The major findings, inferences of the study and some policy suggestions are given in the concluding chapter seven.