CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Agriculture which is the backbone of the Indian Economy has always been a way of life rather than a commercial vocation. Agriculture which is the largest and the most dynamic sector provides a life-line to three-fourth of the rural population of India. In our country agriculture is the main source of livelihood and contributes 24 percent (2001 census) of national income. So the progress and prosperity of the country mainly depends on agricultural development in which both men and women participate equally. According to the National Census of 2001,\(^1\) about 59 per cent of the country's population depends on agriculture and thus agriculture still constitutes the main source of livelihood and the main area of work for most of the people in India. But what is not widely known is the fact that a very large proportion of this work is done by women. A woman is like a pivot around whom the family, the society and the community is centred.

The late Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi (1988) emphasizing the importance of women said, “we can't neglect the talent and capability of women who comprise half of our population in nation building. Women the upholder of tradition, must also be ushered for modernity. We should look to science for greater social justice and equality of opportunity.”\(^2\)
Since ancient times women have played a pivotal role in agriculture. Mumford (1961) stated that, it was she (woman) who primarily involved in "gentling, nurturing and breeding": it was her capacity for tenderness and love which gave the earliest agricultural settlements of man, their touch of security, receptivity, enclosure, nurture and it was she who made fully possible the growth of civilization.³

Agriculture is the largest industry in Indian economy which is basically a family enterprise in which women are active participants. Woman is a cultivator, co-operator, labourer and contributor to farm development and family income. According to National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988, "It is imperative to recognise women's role as major earners of the family and not as marginal and supplementary contributors. At least one-third of the households are solely supported and another one-third receive at least 50 percent contribution from women".⁴ The farm woman is the key person on whom depends the success of agriculture. According to the National Census 2001, the number of rural females is 361 million while that of urban females is 135 million. The women population of our country consists mostly of rural women in majority. These are born and bread to the tradition of work and are a real symbol of dedication, patience and sacrifice. The life for majority of them is not smooth, calm, quiet or peaceful but full of problems, unequal treatment, deprivation and drudgery.

That women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields, including the main crop production,
livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro/social forestry, fisheries etc is a fact long taken for granted but also long ignored. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture, no doubt varies greatly from region to region, even within a region their involvement varies widely among different ecological sub zones, farming systems, castes, classes and stages in the family cycle. But regardless of these variations, there is hardly any activity in agricultural production except ploughing in which women are not actively involved. Studies on women in agriculture conducted in India and other developing and developed countries all point to the fact that women contribute far more to agricultural production than has generally been acknowledged. By and large farm women have remained as invisible workers.

In a village setting woman works as a housewife, economic producer, food producer and dynamic community leader. She contributes to agriculture, animal husbandry, other rural based occupations and also to family's welfare. So women have a double work burden. Though they are taking on work outside the home, they continue to perform almost all domestic work.

Women constitute 48.20 percent of the total population in India with a literacy rate of 54.16 percent (2001 census). But the women working on farm were 92.2 million as against 145.6 million males (1999-2000). In India 81 percent of women workers are engaged in unorganised sector of the economy and constitute about 75 percent of the total rural workforce. The primary sector consisting of farming, livestock, forestry,
fishery, orchards and plantation etc provides employment for about 75 percent of women. This section of the women forms the most precious resource of any nation and determine the foundation of a meaningful, social and economic development.

In India the proportion of total number of female workers in agriculture have remained more or less same from 1911 (73%) to 2001 (72%). Out of 127 million women workforce in India 111 (2001) million live in rural areas. Their contribution to the economic growth has been quite substantial. Indian women in particular play more socio economic roles, inside as well as outside the home. But women's contribution to the farm sector has largely been ignored and inadequately understood.

According to the UN food and agricultural organisation, women are responsible for 50 percent of all food production of the world. They contribute to family either as cultivators of their own land or as hired agricultural labourers and actively participate in most of the agricultural operations like sowing of seeds, transplanting of seedlings, weeding, application of fertilisers, harvesting, threshing, winnowing and storage of seeds and food grains. The majority of the women may not be solely responsible for farm management but, they take an active part in decision on what crops to be grown, in the sale of the product, farm investment and hiring of labour. But most of the farm decisions are male dominated. According to the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) “on sharing of household duties and participation in family
decision-making indicates that while the major share of duties is with the female members of the family, they have very little power with regard to decision making". So when we take a look at the picture of women in agriculture, perhaps most of the manual and back-breaking jobs are done by women. In addition to these wide variety of activities, they are engaged in their routine domestic work. Despite technological and other changes affecting the pattern of allocation of household time to a wide range of non-household activities, most women continue to be primarily concerned with their traditional home and family responsibilities as wives, mothers and home makers. Rearing children, training and developing the young during their formative years, preparing and serving food, making, repairing and cleaning clothes, caring the sick and the like are still the major responsibilities of women, whether they are carried out by wage earners or by family members within the home. Even today as in the past, the household activities of Indian women in general and farm women in particular absorb a very large part of their time and energy. As a wife or mother she takes the burden of housework in addition to agricultural activities often carrying them out simultaneously. So the work load of women is much heavier than that of men and their other male counterparts at home.

Apart from within the home activities which are performed almost exclusively by women, there are many other household activities like domestic animal husbandry, maintaining kitchen gardens, collecting
manure and fodder, and fetching fuel and water with which farm women are typically associated. Indispensable but unpaid home based activities pursued by women are not reflected in the statistics.

The ILO Report (1979) had observed that almost all farm women irrespective of the size of land holdings and economic status in developing countries performed the functions of preparation of food, cleaning of houses, childcare, guest care etc. The value of such unpaid household work constitutes 25 to 39 percent of the total Gross National Product (GNP) in developing countries.6

Farm women in general spend on an average 30 percent of their time in unpaid work like child care, house keeping, sanitation etc, without any assistance from men folk. Their working hours average not less than thirteen to fourteen hours per day. According to UNDP Report (1995), “Women work longer hours than men in nearly every country. Of the total burden of work women carry on average 53 percent in developing countries and 51 percent in industrial countries”.7 Rural Indian women have always worked with men in the fields, helped their husbands in handicrafts and small cottage industries. One must consider the task performed by women in an agricultural setting where the distinction between farm work and housework gets blurred. In spite of this, their work and efforts are usually economically invisible not only to their husbands and family members but also to many development agencies. The increasing migration of male members from rural to urban areas for
short term employment is further causing additional responsibility on farm women regarding the management of their farm.

The farm women who work 'the double day'; the farm work plus house work are faced with an excess burden of work. They are faced with a wide range of problems which, often hinder their work participation. Poverty, lack of access to education, lack of health facilities, inadequate sanitation and credit facilities, lack of training and suitable implements with respect to farm and home, low wage rates, lack of recognition for the work done are some among the unending list. Apart from those the customs and traditions, blind beliefs all add to the drudgery of farm women. For a vast majority of women the question is not of rights but of basic decencies and basic requirements.

Women as agriculturists tend to look at agriculture in its totality from the sowing of the crop to its ultimate utilization either as food or as raw material in industry. They generally possess a clear understanding of market preference for agricultural produce.

Therefore for economically and ecologically sustainable and viable agriculture, the total intellectual and physical participation of farm women in the process of modernization of farming is absolutely essential. Women across the world, so also in India are striving for gender equality. Women in general and belonging to rural areas in particular are subject to general oppression and gender discrimination. From the dawn of independence poverty, illiteracy, ill health and unemployment are the
important factors impeding socio economic development of the nation. Women constitute the major proportion of these social and economic indicators and illiteracy, ill health, and unemployment rate are higher among women as compared to men.

In no society today do women enjoy the same opportunities as men. Despite the little progress, a widespread pattern of inequality between women and men persists in their access to education, health and nutrition, and even more in their participation in the economic and political spheres. According to Shramashakti Report (1988), “Women's access to land ownership is extremely limited. Land reforms have adversely affected the ownership of land by women even in those areas where traditionally women own some land”. Among the world’s 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men by two to one. And girls constitute the majority of 130 million children who do not have access to primary education. The widespread perception is that infant boys are fed more adequately than infant girls in poor areas, suggesting a gender bias in focus of male children.

Gender disparities in income -earning and decision-making opportunities are much higher. Of the estimated 1.3 billion people living in poverty, more than 70 percent are female. This feminization of poverty is the tragic consequence of women’s unequal access to economic opportunities. The National Planning Committee on women's role (1990), in planned economy categorically remarked that “ so long however the
very foundation of society is based on a system of private property, women cannot claim equality with men unless, she has the same right as men to hold, acquire, inherit and dispose of property*. Women's wages on an average, are considerably lower than men's particularly in unorganized sectors. Women's work participation in income-earning activities and in organized sector is outstandingly low. Only a meagre 15 percent of women are working in the organized sectors. In the unorganized sector women's employment opportunities are characterized with seasonality, unskilled assignments, discrimination in salary/wages, etc. The financial empowerment of women, that is their accessibility to savings and credit, facilities would improve gender economic status. In comparison with men, rural women have limited access to all kinds of measures, women need to be viewed not as beneficiaries, but as active participants in the process of development.

Since independence and more particularly after the 1970s the Government of India has been laying considerable emphasis on economic empowerment of women. The sole motive behind these endeavours is to bring women into the main stream of development. The constitutional obligations as well as different plans, programmes and polices have laid emphasis on raising the economic status of women.

The various schemes launched at different point of time for the economic empowerment and development of women are Indira Mahila Yojane (IMY); Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
(DWCRA); Support for Training and Employment (STEP); Training cum Employment cum Production Centres (TEPC), Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY), etc, Moreover in 1993, a Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) has been established to meet the credit needs of poor and asset less women.

The Self Help Groups (SHGs) formulated under the DWCRA scheme is a rudimentary stepping stone for the economic empowerment of women at the gross roots. Hence the Commission (1988) recommends that “women’s contribution to agriculture should be recognized by the policy makers and this should be reflected in the country’s Agricultural Policy and Programmes”.

In order to increase the productivity, farm women should be helped to acquire latest scientific technologies and skills to change their behaviour and practice. There is an absolute necessity to effect major transformation in socio-economic status of women in India.

There is an urgent need to re-examine, re-assess, reanalyse and re-calculate women’s work on the basis of new notions. Women by all means can be very effective agents of change for a better home, a better farm, for a better society and for a better economy. In order to involve farm women in the main stream of agricultural development it is inevitable to develop and put to proper use their potentiality by improving their health status,
their literacy levels, their working environment and above all their social status.

Women should be given gender access to institutional support in terms of credit, technical assistance and land adjudications. For integrating rural women in development process it is necessary to know how women are placed under rural setting and also their contribution and potentials in economic development process. In this background, the present research is undertaken to study the socio economic dimensions of farm women in home and farm activities, their role in decision making, participation in social, economic and religious activities, their problems, and their role in getting and sharing facilities with men in the family. The study was designed with the following objectives.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

1. To study the significance of women’s role in agricultural development

2. To analyse the working conditions of farm women vis-à-vis men

3. To assess the contribution of farm women to farm development and well being of the family

4. To examine measures initiated or undertaken by the government to improve the status and conditions of farm women

5. To suggest policy measures to improve gender equality
1.3 HYPOTHESES

1. Women have contributed more to the development agriculture than men.

2. Gender inequality has resulted in women’s inadequate access to and control over material and non-material resources.

1.4 RESEARCH PLAN

The research is basically undertaken to examine the role and involvement of women in agriculture. For this purpose the following research plan was employed.

i. Karnatak state which has been in the forefront in respect of agricultural production is blessed with an ideal agro climatic conditions and enterprising farming community. Dharwad district (shown in Map 1.1) has one of the highest rural female population districts in Karnataka state and was selected for research study.

ii. Two taluks in the district which were agrarian in character viz, Navalgund and Kundagol were selected for the investigation. (shown in Map 1.2) To cover both the irrigated and rainfed aspects of agriculture in the investigation, Navalgund taluk was selected since it had irrigation facility while Kundagol taluk was selected as it was rainfed or non-irrigated.
Map 1.1. Karnataka state showing study district
Map 1.2. Dharwad district showing the study taluks
iii. Two villages were selected in each of these taluks discriminating upon the educational status. Thus Navalli and Ballur were selected in Navalgun taluk and Hirebudihal and Vithalpur were selected in Kundgol taluks (Maps 1.3 and 1.4). These villages were selected on the basis of the extent of women literacy. Thus Navalli and Hirebudihal were selected in their respective taluks for their high women literacy while Ballur and Vithalapur were selected for their low women literacy.

iv. A sample of 480 respondents was selected at the rate of 120 respondents from each village drawn equally and randomly from the four selected categories of landless agricultural labourers, small farmers, medium farmers and large farmers.

v. Data was solicited using pre-tested questionnaires from a total of 480 respondents. The data solicited from the members of the farm family, particularly the farm women pertained to their habitual farming, home and dairy activities, their control over material and non-material resources, the problems faced etc.

1.5 SAMPLE DESIGN

The total sample size for the study was 480 respondents comprising of 240 farm women and 240 farm men drawn from 240 families, at the rate of one man and one woman per family. After obtaining the list of families of the concerned village from the taluk panchayath, sixty families
Map 1.3 Navalgund taluk showing the study villages
Map 1.4. Kundagol taluk showing the study villages
were selected at random from each of the four selected villages at the rate of fifteen families from each respondent category, namely agricultural labourers (landless), small farmers (holdings less than five acres), medium farmers (holdings greater than five acres but less than 10 acres) and large farmers (holdings more than 10 acres).

Care was exercised to see that the woman and man interviewee from each selected family was a person very much involved in farm and home affairs of the family.

The village-wise selection of the respondents is presented in the following table

**h. Selection of the respondents**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Family category</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
<th>No. of respondents per family - male</th>
<th>No. of respondents per family - female</th>
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<td>Navalli</td>
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<td>Irrigated farm</td>
<td>Ballur</td>
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<td>Low female literacy</td>
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<td>240 men</td>
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1.6 NATURE OF DATA

The research study is based on both the primary data and secondary data. The primary data relating to the farm, home and dairy activities, decision making pattern, social involvements, control over material and non-material resources, gender related issues, etc were collected from the respondents through pre-designed schedules and personal interview method. A well structured schedule was formulated to collect the required information as per the objectives of the study. The interview schedule was pre-tested in the sample area and suitable modifications were made. The pre-tested schedule was used to collect the data from the respondents by personal interview method with the pre-consent of the respondents. The data enumerated relates to the years 1998-2001. The two years of the study i.e. 1998-99 and 1999-2000 were normal rainfall years and 2000-2001 was less rainfall year. In this period the farm activities, decision making and involvement of women in socio-religious activities remained the same but only changes were noticed in case of time utilisation pattern of men and women in farm, home and dairy activities.

In addition to the primary data thus collected, the secondary data relating to the working and role of women were also collected from the various national and international reports and research articles of various researchers.
1.7 ANALYTICAL TOOLS AND TESTS USED

The data collected for the purpose of the study were edited, tabulated classified and analysed. The statistical techniques that are employed are tabular analyses, $\chi^2$ test and Student’s ‘t’ test and correlation analysis.

1.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The present study yields useful information regarding the need to promote and enhance women’s participation in agricultural development which leads to the rural development.

The results of the present study would help to have a clearer understanding of the farm women as related to their participation in various agricultural and home activities which in turn would enable the planners and the institutions to take up suitable measures to make women’s role more meaningful in Agriculture.

Suitable measures and programmes may be planned by knowing their knowledge levels and constraints involved in performing operations.

The study will be of great use to the extension administrators, research workers, extension personnel and all those who are involved directly or indirectly in attempting to increase the welfare and understand the role of farm women.
1.9 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study will have limited generalization as the population of the study were restricted to only four villages of Dharwad district and the respondents selected were 480. Hence the implications made in the study may be generalised cautiously for large areas.

Since the study was designed as an ex post facto type the memory bias on the part of the respondents cannot be ruled out.

The items included in the study for detailed investigation were also limited because it was not possible to study all the items in the short time available to the researcher.

1.10 DESIGN OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation has been presented in six chapters.

The first chapter covers the introduction about the topic. It deals with the role and involvement of women in the development of agriculture, The objectives and hypotheses formulated, the research plan, sample design, nature of data and analytical tools employed in the study are also discussed. The scope, limitation and design of the dissertation are also covered.

An extensive review of literature on the research topic is explained in chapter second. The micro level studies undertaken by individual researchers as well as macro level studies of various national and international bodies are reviewed in this chapter.
The synoptive view of the role of women in agricultural development of world, India and Karnataka is described in the third chapter. Based on the secondary data the various aspects of women in agriculture, her involvement in decision making and gender inequality are studied. An attempt is made here to examine the present and changing scenario of farm women in the world, India and Karnataka.

The main findings of the research study carried out on the role of woman in home, farm and dairy activities and time utilization pattern of men and women are presented in the first part of the fourth chapter. The involvement of women in decision making, social involvements are presented in second part of the fourth chapter. It also includes women’s control over material and non-material resources, other issues related to gender inequality and the problems faced by women. The analysis related to the research are presented through a series of tables, graphs, etc. and also the discussions about the results.

The various government measures aimed at the development of rural women in the study area have been detailed in chapter five.

The concluding chapter covers the summary findings of the previous chapters and the comprehensive policy suggestions made with respect to improving the status and conditions of women.
REFERENCES


2. GANDHI, INDIRA, 1988, Message to Indian Farming, November, back of cover page.


