1.1 Introduction

The record on Indian women presents a unique dichotomy. On the one hand, scholars both in India and abroad agree that Indian women are participating more than in any other society at the highest level of practical and legal fields and in the decision-making process; on the other hand, many of them are still subjected to purdah system and are made victims of evil, social customs and religious rites.

The National Planning Committee, under the chairmanship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, had formed a number of Sub-Committees to deal with all aspects of national life. One of such sub-committees was a committee appointed to India including consideration of her social, economic and legal status, her right to hold any property, carry on any trade, profession or occupation and to remove all obstacles or handicaps in the way of realizing an equal status and opportunity for women.¹

¹ Women's role in Planned Economy, National Planning Committee Series, Vora, Bombay, 1947.
The various reports of the sub-committees were published in 1947, the year in which India attained independence. These sub-committees had touched almost every aspect of women's life and role in the national development.

The view of Raja Rammohun Roy and Gandhiji on women were regarded as quite radical and also the National Movement of India, which helped the cause of the women in great measure.

The liberal ideas of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his farsighted vision of India emerging as a strong developed nation is very much evident in the 'status' and 'role' he accorded to the 'women' in the planned economy. The following lines bear ample evidence of the lofty objectives of the sub-committee:

"We have touched in this report upon subjects which are delicate and controversial, as the very nature of this work and demanded a scrutiny of all problems connected with the social order. An


3. Women's Role in Planned Economy, ibid.
essential characteristic of our time is the rational application of scientific thought and experience to all vital problems; and it is in this spirit desirous of finding practical solution, that we have tried to approach each subject."

For, after nearly three decades of planning, the recommendations of the sub-committee do not seem to have made any significant impact on the development of women. The economic imbalances under which they laboured have not altered much and the social changes that were expected to precede the economic development have not come off. In some areas, much to the dismay of the policy makers, the social imbalances have been widened.  

Numbers of legislations have been passed since independence which have been considered quite revolutionary like the Hindu Code Bill, which confers equal rights on women; the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, which prohibits bigamy and gives woman the right to divorce and remarry; the Hindu Succession Act of 1956

by which the son, daughter and the wife inherit equally and become absolute owners of the property; Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, and the more recently passed equal Remuneration Act of 1976. But majority of our women are unaware of these social legislations.

The International Women's year in 1975, highlighted this lag in various spheres of women's activities, particularly in India. While Hindu traditions and customs are often quoted by men that women in India have always enjoyed a high status, the gap between theory and practice has been widening. This is very much evident from the rapid increase in the social evils and abuses of the rights and dignity of women. The custom of poverty of "Vara Dakshina" for instance, which existed more as a token of affection and respect, has now assumed alarming proportions. It has lost its sanctity and has been reduced to a commercial level of bargaining. The high ideas of marriage laid down by Vedic tradition have been reduced to mockery. In quite a few cases, the marriage is contracted not because a man wants a partner or 'saha Dharmini' to share his life, in the "Grihasthāshram" but for want of a bonded slave or glorified house-maid. Marriage by choice is still looked down upon even amongst the educated classes. Widow remarriage, though permitted,
still does not find much favour. In the sphere of employment, women are often discriminated, either by way of wage differentiation in rural areas and unorganized sector, or by blocking their promotions to higher categories of jobs in urban areas.

The Indian civilisation has given women such a place in the society where she can make her best contribution in the social activity in conformity with her potentials and abilities without having to lose her fundamental femininity. An analysis of the various institutions and practices in our society reveals that even the impediments faced by a particular section of the society may prove to be a blessing in disguise. The girls brought up in an atmosphere with preference to the boys were indirectly made more conscious to their responsibilities ranging from looking after the younger children. The preferential treatment for the male child resulted, paradoxically enough, in developing the female child into a stronger personality to face the situation in her future life as wife and mother. Instead, the male children having developed in a preferential atmosphere could not
develop a corresponding motional strength and were even dependent on the women's care: first on the mother's care, then on the sister's care and later on the wife's care.

1.2 **Women and Indian Constitution**

The preamble to the Constitution of India resolved to secure to all its citizens: Justice-social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of individual and the unity of the nation. To attain these objectives, the constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights and freedom such as freedom of speech, protection of life and personal liberty. Indian women are beneficiaries of these rights in same manner as Indian men.

Articles 14, 15, 16, 21, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 45 and 46 of the Indian Constitution become pertinent to mention here in the context of equal rights between men and women and going a special provision to women.

**Article 14**

Secures to every person equality before law and equal protection of law.
Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. The provision contained in Article 15(1) does not prevent the State from framing any special provision for women. Article 15(3) specifically mentions that "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children."

Thus, so while on the one hand discrimination against women has been prohibited, no bar has been imposed to discrimination in favour of women. The special provisions in various Labour Legislations like Factories Act, Mines Act, Plantation Labour Act etc. are the result of this provision of the Constitution. Thus, Article 15(1) has been paramount in appropriating to women socio-economic equality through the protection of their rights.

Article 16 states that "there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State."

Article 16(2) states that no citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, decent, place of birth residence or any of them be ineligible or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the State."
Thus, Articles 14, 15 and 16 underline the significance which our Constitution makers attached to the 'principle of equality'.

Article 21 provides for the 'protection of life and personal liberty,'

Article 38 states that "The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as affectively as it may, a social order in which justice, social and economic, shall inform all the institutions of the national life".

Article 39 states that "the State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing:

(a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood,

(b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;

(c) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to common detriment;

(d) that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;
(e) that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter vocations unsuited to their age or strength; and

(f) that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

Article 41 states that "the State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want."

Article 42 states that the state shall make provision for securing just and human conditions of work and maternity relief."

Article 43 states that "the State shall endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural,
industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, condition of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full employment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities and, in particular, the state shall endeavour to promote cottage industries on an individual or cooperative basis in rural areas.

Article 45 states that "the State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years".

Article 46 states that "the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Schedule Castes and the Schedule Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation,"

Besides the preamble, the Directive Principles of State policy embodies the major policy goals of the welfare State. Though these principles are non-enforceable, they are nevertheless pointers to the fundamental vision of the socio-political order. The State is expected to take notice of these following principles while formulating laws: Free and compulsory education for all children up to
the age of fourteen, right to an adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally, equal pay for equal work and maternity relief are some of the women-specific directive principles. In short, Fundamental Rights as well as Directive Principles not only provide the framework of the ideas of the State, but they are the instruments to attain national objectives of justice, liberty and equality.

Besides providing a formal structure of equality our government used law as a major instrument to change society. The enactment of Hindu Law guaranteeing the right to divorce and remarriage to Hindu women, the Inheritance Act providing equal share to women in the property and the principle of monogamy are some of the important aspects introduced in the Indian social structure affecting women's status and role. The termination of Pregnancy Act, the Maternity Benefit Act, the Dowry Prohibition Act etc., are some of the measures of relief for all women irrespective of caste, creed or religion. The criminal law (Second Amendment) Act 1983 defines a new offence of cruelty by husband or relations of the husband to women for the intention of meeting unlawful property.
1.3 Women and Indian Development Policy

The Planning Commission's Plans and prospects for Social Welfare in India, 1951-1961 spells out social welfare services as intending to cast for social need of persons and groups who by reason of some handicap social, economic, physical or mental are unable to avail of or are traditionally denied the amenities and services provided by the community. As the authors of "Towards Equality' mention, "women are considered to be handicapped by social customs and social values, and therefore, social welfare services have specially endeavoured to rehabilitate them.5

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 some attention was paid to generation of employment for women.

It is only since the sixth Five Year Plan draft was formulated that there has been special

mention of policies affecting women. Women found their claims being considered only in the section social welfare and there too they were bracketted with children. In the Sixth Plan there has been a separate section on the women's employment situation and outlook. This has been necessitated both because of the pressure from some of the concerned women organisations as well as the noticeable adverse affects on the position of women as a result of the plan strategy.6

Social Welfare State:

The emphasis of India's being a welfare state, has also significant impact on the state and role of women. The Government of India in 1953 established a central social Welfare Board, with a nation-wide programme of grant-in-aid, for promoting welfare and development services for women, children and under-privilaged groups. The Board has its State counterparts, as it aims at providing assistance to voluntary agencies, improving and developing welfare programmes

6. Draft Sixth Five Year Plan, P. 90.
and sponsoring them in areas where they do not exist. This programme of the Government on the one hand encouraged growth of a large number of women's organisation and, on the other hand, provided status and activity to many of the erst-while active women. Proliferation of Mahila Mandals is a striking phenomenon of this period.

To sum up, the Government articulated the norms of equality through the constitution and using law as an important agent for social change and for formal equality. Accepting planning as a model for development Government initiated various economic measures as well as provided thrust to various sectors of economic development.

While our social policy recognises equality of rights between men and women, the society implicitly accepts a sharp distinction in their roles and spheres of activity. True parity will be possible only when the implications of the constitutional equality are accepted by people's mind. Even with regional variations, basic notions about male and female roles
A woman is primarily associated with the home, is expected to look after domestic charges and her typical roles are those of a housewife and mother. In the cultural understanding of the people, home-making, like child-bearing and child-rearing is identified with feminity. Whether women work in the fields, factories and mines, at construction sites, or in white collar jobs all of them are expected to be home makers in the same manner as women who confine themselves exclusively to home-making activities. Their role in the outside world has not yet been accepted in the same manner as that of men's.

1.4 Role of Women in Economic Development:

One of the urgent needs in the context of integrated rural development is the expansion of the resource base of the rural society. This warrants maximum harnessing and utilization of its existing resources. For a poor country like India, people are the only abundant asset. This is reinforced by the fact that the Indian population has reached the stage of

explosion. Women constitute nearly half of this population.

What has been generally done so far is to recognize and support the contributions that a woman can make as a mother. While conceding that this is definitely a significant contribution, it has to be admitted that the economic roles of women have been generally bypassed so far.8

The economic role of women in traditional rural society largely depends upon two important factors, namely: (1) The need for augmenting the family income, (2) opportunities available for participation in such economic activities. It has been reported that women play a vital role in the economic welfare of the family. It is generally felt that the role of women in traditional societies is just confined to the household management based on traditional values, attitudes, and customs. In fact, the family culture in the context of which early socialization takes place is very important factor which later on induces or prohibits women's participation in economic activities of the family.

8. Ibid.
The various activities of women can be discussed under two broad headings, namely: Market activities' and 'Non-market-activities'.

Market activities consist of women in agriculture, cottage industries and non-agricultural labour activities. This includes both self-employed and wage-employed activities. Non-market activities include personal care of children, cooking, washing clothes, washing utensils, religious activities, sweeping, fetching water, purchases and animal care.

Women's economic roles and their opportunities for participation in economic activities can not be done in isolation of the society's stage of development, the socio-cultural attitudes towards women's role in the family and in the wider society, and the social ideology concerning basic components of status. At certain stages of development, capacity of

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9 The term, market activities' and 'non-market activities' are used here in the sense that while the former means activities which bring certain income to the family, the latter means such engagements which are also productive but do not bring income directly.
work may provide the highest claim to status. But when society becomes inegalitarian, leisure may substitute work as the indicator of status.

The debate regarding women's economic roles and the need for equality of rights and opportunities for economic participation centres round the following three approaches:

1. That women's subjugation or dependence leads to exploitation and is a denial of social justice and human rights.

2. That the development of a society requires full participation by all sections of population, and opportunities for full development of the potentialities of women.

3. That modern trends in demographic and social changes, e.g., rising age of marriage, smaller families, urbanisation, migration, rising costs, and standards of living and calls for greater participation in decision making, are introducing major changes in women's roles and responsibilities.

The opposition to increasing women's economic
activities springs from (1) the conservative view that women's roles must be confined within rigidly defined limits (pattern of this division of labour between sexes has varied, not only between but even within societies) and (2) the fear that chronic unemployment may result if women enter the labour market on a large scale. This results in theories of women's marginal role in the economy. The theory is, however, inapplicable to agrarian societies where the family is the unit of production, and men, women and children all participate in production process. Transition from traditional agricultural households to industry and services, and from rural to urban areas, destroys the traditional division of labour, and substitutes the competitive relationship between individuals as a unit of labour for the complementaries of the family. Technological changes in the production methods call for new skills. Women handicapped by lack of opportunities to acquire these new skills, find themselves unwanted by the new economy.

This is the situation that the large masses of Indian women face today. Among cultivators, the artisans and those performing menial economy, women
play a distinctive and accepted role in both production and marketing, and continue to do wherever the traditional economy forms prevail, particularly among marginal and landless agriculturists, most scheduled castes and tribal communities, and traditional industries and crafts like weaving, basket making, and food processing. 10 Though there are regional variations in the norms governing women's work, a traditional upper class norm, that of excluding women from labour outside the family, still remains a status symbol, and is often emulated by many who want to enhance their social status.

Women of the poorer sections of the society, whose days are spent on hard labour (in earning and housework), are extremely overworked and can give little attention to the bringing up to their children. Among the middle class, where the women have to cope with both housework and employment outside home, the lot of women is not much easier. Of

course, the urban life brings certain aids to the women and makes house work easier, for instance, they may not have to fetch water and fuel from a distance. But an urban woman is expected to give greater care and attention to the children and their studies, to keep the home in a better and a more attractive manner, to provide more varied menus and to play hostess to guests and friends of the family more frequently than her counterparts in rural areas.

In the middle class, however, the spheres of men and women are more sharply demarcated. There is a clear distinction between work done for one’s household and that for others. Women are supposed to do only the former. Where they assist the family business like grocery tailoring or knitwear, food processing etc. by preparing things in the home, their contribution is not acknowledged, with the result that they are not recorded in the census as workers. It is considered unfortunate for women of these classes who have no other qualification or skills to engage in these jobs as a means of earning livelihood, because the prestige of the family suffers when their women have to work for others.

Rural women do work the whole day. They fetch
water from well. They are also engaged in farm and household activities and make an important contribution to the rural economy. They are responsible for seed storage, post harvest food processing, vegetables and fruit growing, poultry raising, livestock care, fruit processing, food preservation, fuel gathering, household manufacture, building maintenance and repair. These activities are often invisible because women do work out of the sight of men.

Women are spared much of the drudgery of housework because of domestic help, but they are expected to run the home and bring up the children. Home making is raised to a fine art, and trifling details assume exaggerated importance. The precise activities may depend upon the locality, educational level and extent of modernization, but the real differentiation remains.

Women learn early in life the need for flexibility, adjustment and submissiveness, and hesitate to develop strong opinions and commitments which they may not be allowed to pursue after marriage. Among the poorer sections, where girls contribute to the running of the house

as well as to the family economy, their education is often sacrificed while the boys are encouraged to study. Apart from economic reasons, there is also a lurking fear that education may alienate girls from their conventional roles and make them less submissive to the family.

Though women contribute substantially to the economic resources of the family both by way of service rendered and wage earned, yet their potential is not duly recognized and very little attention is paid to involve them directly with developmental activities and enable them to become more affective and productive.

Rural women never seem to figure as an important component of development programmes. While development projects are meant mainly for men, social welfare schemes cater mainly to women. The later generally include talks on family planning, health and child care etc., which are regarded as women's issues. This kind of compartmentalization of rural programmes seem to be purely 'man-made'. There is imminent need for women to be integrated in rural development programmes, it is equally imperative that men are involved in health care programmes for women and
children and that they develop a healthy attitude towards such programmes.

In the prevailing social system where the women have no financial independence whatsoever they are hardly in a position to spend anything on themselves or pay much attention to their own health needs. The average rural housewife generally subsists on leftover after feeding the husband and the children.1

1. To quote Gandhiji, the Indian women especially in rural society continues to drudge for a household—not only is the women amendment to domestic

slavery—but when she goes out as a labourer to hunt for wages though she works harder than man she is paid less". The rural women's lot has remained much the same in spite of nearly four decades in planning.

The majority of women workers in India are engaged either in agriculture and traditional rural industries or in service occupations. The work participation rate of urban women is significantly lower than that of rural women and that of literate women lower than that of illiterate women.

The secular trend is for the participation rate for women to fall. Unless countervailing influences come into play, economic development with accompanying urbanisation, spread of education and growth of modern industries will be accompanied by progressive decline in the participation rate of women.

Participation of women in large numbers in strategic sectors like education, health, rural extension and social welfare can be a major factor in accelerating changes in attitudes and behaviour patterns which will contribute to modernisation and increase in output. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate the reasons for decline in work participation rate of
women and for their negligible participation in modern activities. Basically women's primary obligations revolve around family and home. Their participation in economic activity is contingent upon certain factors, e.g., economic need, institutional restrictions on their employment, and the kind of employment available (especially if it can be combined with their primary roles etc.).

Ashok Mitra 13(1980) has rightly stated "In India, agriculture still provides 42 to 45 percent of the gross domestic product and engages 68 percent of the working population of this latter figure again anything between 20 to 50 percent, depending upon the part of the country, are working women, whose wage value of labour is either outrightly denied to women or squeezed out of reckoning or fixed at much lower rates than for males even for equal or more arduous physical labour like transplanting or hoeing. Clearly, therefore, enforcement of statutorily fixed wages in the agricultural sector will have a salutary affect at

the lowest income level of the country. If in addition the quality and productivity of women's labour in agriculture is augmented through a minimum of formal education and upgrading of skills, the value added element in this sector of industry as well as the income distribution pattern is bound to improve."

The forces which have affected the role of women in the Indian economy are: the general decline of handicrafts; increasing pressure of population on agriculture; poverty in the rural sector resulting in migration; development of modern industry with its increasing technological advance; the spread of education; and the increasing cost of living. In the initial phase of industrial development, textiles and just as well as plantation and mines continued the traditional pattern of family participation, and employed large number of women and children, confining them to certain unskilled and semi-skilled types of work at lower rates of wages. Technological changes have since affected the employment of women in these industries adversely. At the same time the decay of village industries has thrown more and more women on agriculture for their livelihood, increasing their numbers and percentage but reducing their levels of employment.
Because of this differential impact of development, a macro analysis of women's economic participation, purely in quantitative terms, cannot tell the whole story. An appraisal of women's economic roles has to be separated for specific segments, differentiated by socio-economic and locational characteristics as well as by their degree of adjustment to the economic process. The greatest difficulty in understanding the problems of women's participation has thus been caused by looking at women workers as a homogeneous group.

A macro analysis if conducted, should reveal that women's economic participation has been declining since 1921, both in terms of percentage of workers to total female population and in their percentage to the total labour force. While the total number of women workers declined from 41.8 million in 1911 to 31.2 millions in 1971; their percentage in the total labour force declined from 34.33% in 1911 to 17.35% in 1971. The percentage of women workers to the total female population declined from 33.73% in 1911 to 11.86% in 1971. During 1961-71, while the male and female population increased by 25% and 24%, respectively, (20% and 21% in working age group) and the number of male workers
increased by 15.2%, women workers declined by 41.4%.

As Prof. Mitra mentions, after 1951 there has been no significant structural change and practically no transfer from agriculture to non-agriculture. In fact the primary sector remained firm in providing great bulk of employment. 14 This is further corroborated by the fact that work participation rate of women in major towns shows a declining rate. 15 It is often argued that this decline is the result of the changes in the definition of workers adopted by these censuses. It is a fact that the census basically measures the level of employment of men and tends to ignore the interchangeable role of women as housewives and gainful workers. Since many of them are unpaid family workers, exclusion of secondary activities from the definition of workers affects the recording of female employment adversely.

In India agriculture accounts for almost 78 percent of total working population of women in India. Of these almost 50 percent are agricultural labourers and

14 Mitra Ashok, Cr. Cit. P. 439.
15 Ibid, P. 430.
about 30 percent are cultivators. The issue at stake, however, is not what the size of the share of their involvement actually is, but what it can or should be. And from this point of view it is important to understand the factors that influence the participation of women in agriculture.

It is well known that in societies that practise shifting cultivation, the participation of women in agriculture is fairly higher. Apparently, in this type of agriculture, men and young boys perform the heavy tasks of felling tree and clearing the ground for cultivation, but it is the women who perform all subsequent operations like the removal and burning of felled trees, weeding, harvesting and storing the crops for consumption. In societies that have progressed to settled agriculture, on the other hand, the participation of women is much smaller. There is a little need for female labour except in the harvest season. Ploughing, sowing and most other activities need to be done by men. This situation, however, tends to last only as long as settled farming is simple and extensive, but when it becomes labour intensive, the participation of women increases. Women do not get equal payments for the tasks they perform.
The main problem of achieving equal opportunities for women in the labour market is related to the social view that a woman's first responsibility is to her home. This social view finds its full expression in the division of roles and responsibility in the family household—a division that is far from equal between husband and wife. The fact that wife and mother are working seems to have little effect upon her expected performance in the home as cook, chauffer, laundry helper, cleaner, nurse, child attendant and teacher. Women who take on or continue in paid employment after marriage and the birth of children assume a second work load, bearing the major weight of the double burden of job and family. Household tasks obviously continue when a married woman enters the labour force.

Men have argued that their position as heads of households means that they must be the main contributors to the household budget. They were reluctant to allow women, and especially their daughters, whose earning would be lost to the household on marriage, to be the main contributors to the budget.

The position of women, consequently, has often to be subjectively assessed. Nevertheless, certain
aspects can be adjectively compared and we can say without much fear of contradiction that in a traditional society the greater part of women's role is ascribed rather than achieved. Further, we can assume that her status is affected by rules of residence as well as kinship. Though, broadly speaking, she is regarded legally as a minor for the greater part of her life. Sometimes she is a person of rank and, like the queen, has special prerogatives and duties of great importance to society at large. Also, elder women, in particular, are usually held in esteem, and are selected, sometimes, as head of extended families and other kinship groupings. In ordinary everyday life, however, there is generally a good deal of social distance between men and women, including the relationships of spouses. This separation is symbolized as well as reinforced by the sexual division of labour which, nonetheless, is essentially a form of co-operation.

Consequently it is tempting and fairly accurate to describe the role of women as complementary rather than subordinate to that of men, even though women are, as a rule, under the control of males. This is generally so, both before and after marriage, and is
usually the case in matrilineal as well as patrilineal systems because in matrilineal systems women come under the authority of their mother's brothers or their own brothers.

In India, there is a great discrepancy between the idealised concept of women and the real life situation in which women find themselves. Women are burdened with cumulative inequalities as a result of poverty, high infant mortality, the requirements of the family work force and old age security.

High fertility in a sex segregated society affects the status of women in several ways. First, the birth of the first child at a very early age and repeated pregnancies combined with malnutrition lead to high maternal mortality and foetal wastage. Women play a vital part in the village household and in cottage industries and thus contributed to the household economy in the past. But with the disappearance of such industries in the present times, they have been pushed to the corner where they remain inactive economically and add to the burden of the family.

However, it is generally recognised that rural women have lots of potentialities for development and
all that is required is to identify their problems as resources and motivate them to socio-cultural and economic discriminatory practices which, until recently, have been taken for granted as though they were part of the immutable scheme of things established by nature. Women are denied equal access with men to opportunities for personal growth and social development in education, employment, marriage and the family and professional life. In India, women are less likely than men to continue their education to higher levels and are more likely to be found concentrated in female occupations like teaching, nursing, social work and typing—all of which have low status and low remuneration.

It is generally true that in India a woman's sense of personal worth is related to her fertility performance and the social standing she achieves as a mother of sons. The typical Indian woman knows of no acceptable alternative role for herself than that of wife or mother, and the mark of her success as a person is in her living, thriving children. By the time she has completed her reproductive span, an Indian woman has an average of five to six live births. In the rural areas where the economic advantages of having many children, particularly sons, is widely recognised, high fertility
becomes less a personal choice of the woman than an outcome of a combination of socio-economic factors such as participate in activities needed for self development of family and the village.

Apart from the possible role of women's in economic development, there is also the broader area of social development where women can play a key role. Some of the components of social development are health, education, recreation, family welfare and so on. Health here includes the health of both the mother and the child. Recreational opportunities should be fully exploited by women also as this would free them from the day's drudgery of monotonous and hard work.

Education, particularly formal education, has a very significant role to play in accordance to the social status of women. Education is a major avenue of upward social mobility. Education is the key that opens the door to life which is essentially social in character. Similarly, education for the adults as well as the children is needed. Success of both formal and non-formal education depends upon the participation of women, both qualitatively and quantitatively.
There are various factors responsible for the relative backwardness of Indian women in general and rural women in particular. These constraints are: dominant position of male, superstitions, economic dependence of women or men, social evils like dowry, polygamy, unaccountability of the husband to the wife etc. In other words, the existing and accepted cultural values have made women totally subordinate to the dictatorship of men.

So we can say that a married woman's world is her home and she is primarily required to look after the welfare of her husband, her pregnancy, and other members of the family, if any, and husband's task is to assume full responsibility of making adequate arrangements for the provision and protection of the family. While the sphere of wife has been strictly limited and confined to home under the protection of man, husband's field of activity is largely outside the home.'

In the social structure of the tradition-oriented family, the typical pattern of husband-wife relationship is male dominance and female dependence. The husband enjoys the superior position over the wife and the major decision making roles are mostly the domain of the husband. The wife tacitly accepts a subservient
position in the family and her roles in the domestic sphere remains complementary. Meeting the expectations and obligations corresponding to her various status within the fold of the family-nucleus, with adhesion of joint, largely occupies her routine.

With this addition in roles and status, there is liable to be a change in her actual performance as also in her attitude and expectations with regard to her husband's and her own 'role-set' and 'status-set' in the family. This may necessitate a readjustment in the already existing complex of "role sets" of each person's traditionally assigned "status set". She may experience marital frustration and disappointment, if the members of her "role-set" do not simultaneously make necessary modifications in their expectation complex.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

One of the major concerns of ours is to examine the rural social systems in the changing conditions and the present position of women who can act as catalysts in development process. Handy data on rural women are very much needed by planners, administrators and social
workers so as to identify the problems of rural women and contemplate remedial measures. Some of the research studies have confirmed the point that development of rural women is a pre-requisite for the overall development of rural society.

But the actual situation is that in the first instance we do not find enough literature on the status of women in general. Even the available literature is virtually on urban women and further, it is not much empirically tested. In other words, we lack primary data.

Secondly, there are hardly any research studies on rural women. Even the limited studies available cover disjointed, limited areas, touching mostly education. There are a few studies which cover the various social legislations and organizations which have profound influence on the development of rural women.

Thirdly, information on the major religious groups and caste groups as related to education, organizations and legislations is not generally available and hence even comparative studies become impossible. The present study aims at filling up these gaps to the extent possible.
Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the extent and structure of women's economic participation and their relative inputs into household economic decisions. In fact, this study is carried out in the context of the broader issues of women's status. How do we measure the relative status of women in a given community and how is it effected by various economic, educational demographic and socio-cultural variables? Therefore, we make an attempt to establish such relationships and point out the implications both in terms of equity and growth which they might have for the formulation of development policy.

The specific hypotheses which we plan to test in the course of this study and in the context of rural Haryana consist of the following four groups:-

**Group-I**

1. The earlier marriage age, negative female gender stereotypes lack of female choice in marriage partner and marriage at greater distance from the women's home are positively associated with the relative confinement of women's work time to domestic and subsistence production.

**Group-II**

2. Women's total work burden is only slightly affected by the economic status of the household.
3. The household's property and economic status are inversely related with women's participation in the subsistence and market sectors.

4. Women's participation in subsistence and market production increases with the number of days spent outside the village per adult male in the family.

5. The presence of children of 10 to 14 years of age in the household reduces women's input into domestic work and releases her for other kinds of work. This relationship is stronger in the case of female children than in the case of male children.

6. The presence of children aged 9 and below has a negative influence on women's participation in subsistence activity and in-village and out-village market participation.

7. Agro, on the whole, is a positive factor in determining women's work burden and the level of their participation in subsistence production and particularly in in-village
and out-of-village market activities.

8. Membership in an extended family reduces a woman's total work burden.

9. The household's property and economic status are inversely related with female input into household decision-making.

10. Women's independent wage or salary income has a positive effect on their decision-making role in the household.

11. Membership in an extended family reduces women's contribution to the decision-making process in household.

12. Women's input into household decisions increases with age.

13. Participation in domestic and subsistence production activities has a positive effect on women's input in farm management decisions.

14. Participation in domestic and subsistence production activities does not increase women's decision-making input in the area of domestic or resource allocation decisions.
15. Women's relative confinement to domestic and subsistence production activities contributes inversely to female input into decisions about the disposal of household production and the management of household assets.

16. Women's participation in the local market economy and employment outside the village contributes positively to female input into decisions on the disposal of household production and management of household assets.

1.6 Chapter Outline:

We now briefly state the specific contents of our study.

The study begins with an introduction to the place of women in general and rural women in particular in the development process. In this introductory Chapter I, the nature and scope of the present study has also been pointed out.

Chapter 2 is devoted to explain the research methodology which we have adopted in this study.

Chapter 3 deals with the cultural pattern and the structure of female economic participation.
In the course of this chapter we analyse the female marriage age, the female choice in marriage partner, the distance of the place of marriage, and their confinement to domestic and subsistence production.

The extent and structure of female economic participation vis-à-vis their household's economic status is discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 focusses on the demographic factors and their effect on the structure of female economic participation. It deals with the relationship between the women's participation rate in the subsistence and market production on the one hand and the presence of children, their sex and age group, and the type of family on the other hand.

The relationship between the household decision making, the structure of female economic participation and other factors is discussed in Chapter 6. Our focus in this chapter remains on the household's property and economic status, women's independent wage or salary income, their family structure their age group, and their economic participation on the one hand and the female input into household decision making on the other hand.
The concluding chapter 7 summarises the main points of this study and suggests certain elements of reality in the context of rural women in Haryana which must be taken into account in the formulation of women's development policy in future so that the objective of equity and social justice can be attained.