In India, a large number of women are slowly emerging out of the system that has oppressed and exploited them for centuries. Today they have pervaded every conceivable sector of the national activity. They work in agriculture, food preservation and family household duties. The works they perform, depend not only on where they live but also on other places within the rural economy. Yet, they have not been actively involved in the main stream of development and there is hardly any appreciation and recognition of their extensive contribution. By and large, they have remained as 'invisible workers'.\(^1\)\(^\text{Wassi, Muri, 1986}\) This is the essence of several studies on women. An objective review of the studies is presented in this chapter, organised in four sections dealing with (a) status of women, (b) participation rate, (c) wage discrimination and (d) decision making power. In this chapter, the women studies made relating to female participation in rural economy mainly agriculture and the discrimination in wages are presented to give an outline of the status of working women in agriculture.

**CONCEPTS:**

In order to avoid ambiguity and to enhance clarity in discussion, it is necessary to define the concepts used in the study.
Wet Land:

Any land receiving irrigation from assured sources (canals, tanks) of surface irrigation is called a wet land.

Dry land:

Dry land receiving an annual average rainfall ranging from 375mm to 1125mm and with very limited irrigation facility, is the dry land. Areas which receive less than 375mm of average rainfall are considered as absolutely dry or desert areas and are not suitable for crop cultivation. Areas which get annual rainfall above 1125mm are treated as irrigated areas\(^2\). (Ramkumar, 1990)

Agricultural Labour:

Agricultural labour refers to all those persons employed in agriculture in return for wages in cash or in kind or in both and such persons may or may not own land\(^3\). (ILB, 1977)

Employment:

Employment in agriculture refers to employment in fields, gardens etc., and in various tasks connected with preparation of soil, ploughing, sowing, weeding, planting and harvesting, under the direction of some one else\(^4\). (Abba, 1951)

Serfdom:

Mostly takes the form of the debt bondage - A labourer borrows money from a landlord, in return for which he agrees to work till the debt is repaid. The debt tends to increase rather than diminish and the man sometimes even his family, is bound for life\(^5\). (ILB, 1977)
Casual Labour:
Casual Labour refers to a worker who is not having regular work in another person land.

Hired Labour:
Hired Labour refers to a worker who works in another persons land for wages in cash or in kind on day to day basis.

Contract Labour:
Contract Labour refers to a worker who works on contract in another persons land for wages in cash or in kind. The contract may be for piece of work or a period of time.

Main and Marginal Workers:
The main worker is defined as any person who has worked for atleast 183 days in a year and wage worker who has worked for less than 183 days is considered as a marginal worker. (Ishwar and Dhingra, 1991)

Wage Labour:
Wage labour refers to a worker who works as coolie or as contract labour for wages in cash or in kind.

Non Wage Labour:
Non wage labour refers to a worker who works in the other subsistence works like rearing domestic animals, kitchen gardening, house work, child care, for no wages. (1981, Census) In this study, the unpaid work rendered by the women and other members of the family is considered, non wage labour. It is done usually on their own farm or enterprise.
Family:

The family is a biological unit implying institutionalised sex relationship between husband and wife.\(^8\) (Vidhya Bhushan, 1991)

Nuclear Family:

The nuclear family is most frequently used to refer to a group consisting of man, a woman and their socially recognised children.\(^9\) (David, L. Sills, 1985)

Joint Family:

Joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, hold property common and who participate in common and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred.\(^10\) (D.G. Karve, 1948)

Family Female Labour:

A female worker who is working in her own farms or in the lands taken for lease.

Female hired Labour:

A female worker who works in the land of another person for wages in money, kind or share of produce.

Income:

Income is defined as the current earnings, (both in cash and kind) during the reference period from one or more of the following sources. (i) Land put under seasonal and off seasonal crops, (ii) Livestock, (iii) renting out tools, livestock, (iv) wage income; and (v) non agricultural income.
Consumption Expenditure:

It refers to the total current expenditure by households on goods and services whether or not these were actually consumed during the period. It is broadly classified into expenditure on (a) food items and (b) non-food items\(^\text{11}\). (Frederic Behnam, 1975)

Savings:

Savings is defined as the excess of income over consumption expenditure. It is that part of income received in a period which is not used for consumption during the same period. In other-words, savings, is the accumulation of wealth through the postponement of consumption\(^\text{12}\). (R.D.Gupta, 1983)

Wages:

Mouly described wages as the payment for the services of the labour \(^\text{13}\). (Mouly, 1969)

Wage Income:

As per The National Council of Applied Economic Research, wage income refers to household earnings, both cash and kind realised by the family members during the reference period as reward for the labour service rendered by them \(^\text{14}\). (N.C.A.E., 1961)
REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

STATUS OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE:

Women have to perform some assigned works in the family just as they are being women. In India rural women constitute a large section of population of the country, their lives are characterised by hardwork, drudgery and without any basic amenities. They are trapped in the vicious circle of low income, illhealth, low nutrition, low productivity and low wage. Further, they spend a great deal of time in search of money, food and other essential commodities to support the family living. According to Saikia (1986) women are usually over burdened with monotonous household chores and other economic activities. Most of the women are engaged in activities in the family, farm and some in outside wage earning jobs. Parsons (1959) has characterised the role of a woman in the family as "empressive" and that of the man as "instrumental". The empressive role of the female also helps in the stabilisation of the adult personalities by relieving them of tensions which arise because of their performance of the instrumental role. Jerferey (1979) has pointed out that world over the women and children at home depend on the labour of the men-folk for their subsistence needs and, therefore, women are supposed to be marginal in a capitalist society. Under this system they are considered as consumers and socializers of children and not as wage-earners. In fact during the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) "for the first time in history of the world were focussed on that 50 t. of its
population who, by virtue of an accident of birth, perform two thirds of the world's work, receive 1/10th of its income and own less than 1/100th of its property—they are the female human beings. Ward (1894) has considered four types of sex-based social inequalities viz. the inequalities in dress, education, duties and rights as contributing factors in the sub-orientation and dependence of women in society. These inequalities prescribe a different set of roles for women beneath the dignity of men workers, because of the belief that women are not capable of performing male tasks\(^\text{18}\). Oakley (1974) has shown that socialisation of the young can be undertaken by the institutions such as the Kibbutz other than the family. She strongly feels that gender roles are determined culturally rather than biologically\(^\text{19}\). Majumdar and Madan (1956) have explained that status of women in all types of societies, but particularly, on the patriarchial, is determined by various types of taboos that are attended to women generally\(^\text{20}\). Agarwal (1988) has observed that the role of educated working women is changing fast but their status is not changing in the same rate. Limited control on wealth has been found related to her low status in the family. The traditional attitude towards women and their role also hampers their participation in the development process particularly in a rural community, on rural areas women are important productive resource. The prevailing extended family pattern proves to be quite conducive for women to perform both productive as well as motherly roles\(^\text{21}\). V.S. Hansa and D.S. Dhillon have reported that women have equal contribution
to make in every sphere as cultivators, agricultural labourers or house wives they constitute a sizeable section of rural work force.  

Sahasasudhe (1987) has found that "the most depressed class in our society is the women folk, deprived of their rights to property, secluded from the wide dynamic world, confined to their homes, clamped down by antiquated social customs steeped in poverty, ignorance, squalor and ill-health, with no other interest in life except marriage and feasts". The two facets of the role of women - in production and reproduction - should be conceived as complementary and interactive. In order to realise women's potential for fuller participation in the productive and decision making processes there is a need, not only for a sharing of parental responsibilities but also for institutional provision, which would benefit children and families.

Mukta Mittal (1995) has reported that women donot undertake economically productive work, where as the bulk of agricultural and farming operations are performed by women but not accounted for in national labour and income accounting because this is not a wage labour.

As observed by Majid (1986) the economic condition of the agricultural labour families is such that it is impossible for them to survive without the contribution made by their women towards the income of the family. Education is the major factor which influences the status of women.
In a basically exploitative system the women perform a dual productive role as all paid workers outside home and as unpaid workers in her own household. In spite of this the Indian women continue to remain abysmally backward. This may be the main reason why India moves so slowly in the total process of modernising herself, because the prosperity and growth of a nation depend on the status and development of its women as they constitute nearly half of its population. The crucial role of women in agriculture, allied occupations and household activities have however been under-estimated and undervalued. The multiple roles played and the productive inputs made by women have found little appreciation.

According to Debal K. Singharoy (1989), the female agricultural workers are absolutely from the lowest section of the agrarian class. The female agricultural labourers are, however, predominantly from the landless and semi-landless households. Majority of the female workers work in the field primarily as agricultural labourers and a section of them as agricultural labourers-cum-household farm workers.²⁶

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

It has been observed from various studies that the female labour force participation rate all over India is on the increase. It is attributed to the poor economic conditions of agricultural families and increasing population which depends on agriculture for its survival. In this section the studies made on the female participation in work all over India and in different states are reviewed. Hansa
and Dhillon revealed that the participation of women in agricultural operations varies from region to region, crop to crop operation, depending on agro climatic and socio cultural variations. In India women force is over-whelmingly engaged in agriculture. Joke Muylwijk has pointed out that women take part in agriculture in most places though circumstances differ locally. C.Lorri Claridge and Shankariah Chamala have found that women in visibility in agricultural production is worldwide.

Bhat et.al. (1987) has observed that factors such as regional variations in cropping pattern, irrigation facilities and economic, demographic characteristics have influence on the use of female labour. He also finds that the female labour force participation rates are higher than the male labourers for all size class. Number of female workers decreased with the increase in the size of holding.

A study by Baboo (1988) has revealed that the mechanisation of rice-huller has displaced women and is responsible for lower participation of women in agriculture. However, the impact is felt differently in the irrigated and non-irrigated villages and also by the tribal, peasant and sub-urban villages.

Naik (1983) has observed that although they fulfill such an important role in the rural economy, and are a primary force for the development of their children, women usually are excluded from formal decision making. The role of women in decision making is of a subordinate. The low status of women in the process of decision making is
attributed to their lesser involvement in activities, particularly economic activities.\textsuperscript{32} (Gandhi 1987)\textsuperscript{33} Saxena (1987)\textsuperscript{34} have observed that the rural women work for longer hours than men but receive less remuneration. Decision making as regards the fulfillment of the 'bare-survival' needs such as food, clothing and housing, the women in the developed village were in a better position while women in backward village have more sufferings than benefit as shown by Churyalu Reddy\textsuperscript{35} (1987). In the study on participation of rural women in agriculture Singh et al. (1988) have revealed that on an average three fourths of the total work in agriculture is performed by female workers of the family. The average per capita employment of women workers is twice that of their male counterparts. Women have played a pivotal role in Indian Agriculture from time immemorial; women contributed to farming either in their own farm or as hired labourers\textsuperscript{36}. Achanta\textsuperscript{37} (1983), Devi, and Reddy\textsuperscript{38} (1984) have observed that women belonging to middle age group, having non-formal education coming from lower caste, having less urban contact, possessing small land holdings, participation in agricultural operations in larger proportions than others. Sisodio (1985) while analysing the role of farm women in Agriculture finds that cultural norms and certain economic, demographic characters do affect women's participation in agriculture. The employment of hired labour increases with increase in the size of holding. Similarly the employment of hired female labour also increases with increase in farm size\textsuperscript{39}. 

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According to Debaj K. Singh (1985), in a predominantly agricultural society women play crucial roles along with men in agricultural production. Their preoccupation with the household and reproductive activities also provide the basis for productive activities. They perform important economic roles both in terms of subsistence activity and reproduction of the children to provide hands to maintain the system, in the earning of a livelihood of the family, "handicraft". Apart from these, "they spend almost 10-12 hours per day doing the household chore, including fetching of water and getting fuel"; thus in the agrarian production process, women are an economic asset. Their roles in the agrarian society are of vital importance not only for an economic earning of the family and cultural survival of the society.

A study conducted by Chatterjee (1985) on landless agricultural women labour has found out that female agricultural labourers in this country are mostly casual workers as they have the responsibility of looking after their households. The employment of women in agriculture is mostly due to necessity of household economy and the need for supplementing meager family income. Women labour force participation receives special attention as agriculture is still a mainstay of the majority of the people. From the beginning, a low level of participation, declining trend over time, rise in the proportion of women labour in total labour force, emerged as the striking features about women's involvement in agriculture. Considering per capita income,
assets per households, structure of employment, sex ratio, average size of households and literacy level, as explanatory variables, Dholakia and Dholakia have explained the differences in the level of female participation. Besides economic factors, non-economic factors also influence the level of female labour participation. This can be mostly observed in the eastern states of India. Sinha (1980) and Saradamani (1988) have stated that caste and class influence, women's participation in economic activities. One cannot generalise the factors of influencing the female labour participation because there are certain regional variations which cannot be ignored. Even in a small state like Kerala, women do not go for harvesting, in some southern most villages. As it goes to northern side harvesting becomes more of women's job. At the extreme north, only women participate in harvesting.

Ponghal and Ram (1985) in their study have observed that as the size of farm increases, the participation of women also increases. This is due to the fact that the larger the size of farm, more is the amount of hired women labour required. Singh and Rathore (1982) have found that during the slack season, the problem is less serious to agricultural labourers than for cultivators, because the agricultural labourers can afford to leave the village and seek every other opportunity of employment. The self employed cultivator is precluded from doing so by the very nature of enterprise which requires his presence even during the off-season. The most time-consuming and unproductive but
necessary activity is the social and family functions. According to Singh and Bhata (1985) women's share in total farm work is 62 percent on marginal farms; 57 percent on small farms and 59 percent on medium farms. Changes in crop production technologies would add to the existing work of females, whereas livestock improvement programmes reduce this work load. It is also emphasized that for too long, reaching women with extension services and inputs has not been an important part of development planning. It is high time to realise the enormous cost of ignoring women's role in the rural areas.

The empirical survey by Yadav and Yadev (1985) has indicated that with the new form technology the cropping intensity has increased by 70 percent and farm labour requirements more than doubled. They also participate in a variety of farm operations such as land preparation (excluding Ploughing) transplanting, harvesting, mechanical thrashing, winnowing and primary processing of agricultural commodities. Due to their enhanced participation in work on farms, seasonal variation of agricultural labour use has declined.

Sharma et al., (1985) have examined the pattern of labour contribution to the total labour supply by female farm workers as associated with modernization of agriculture and to estimate the extent and analyse the pattern of contribution of the total labour supply to the farm sector made by female workers by performing supportive activities of cattle up-keep under various conditions due to agricultural moderni-
sation. As regards irrigation effect, it is noteworthy that female labour absorption is more by 13.79 percent of the total farm labour supply under unirrigated conditions.

According to R.P. Hooda, M.S. Turan, while agriculture is distinctly the basic occupation of the general caste, agriculture labour is the main source of living of the backward and, more so, of scheduled castes. Chaudhry and Sharma (1961) have reported in their study that the rural women participate in agricultural operations like manuring, weeding, land preparation, hoeing, sowing, taking care of the standing crops, applying manure and fertilisers, harvesting, thrusting, storage, carrying the produce from farm to home and animal care.

Another study by Thangamani (1971) has explained that women's participation is high in respect of sowing, transplanting storing and supervision of labour, particularly women labour. Puri (1975) has reported that bringing fodder from the field, chaff cutting, giving water and food to cattle, bathing and cleaning cattle and making cow dung cakes are done by the women only. An analysis made by Deepali (1979) has revealed that farm women participate to a large extent in 11 out of 17 farming operations (taking all crops). Out of these eleven, time devoted to five operations ranges from 62 to 66 per cent (gap filling, manure and fertilizer application, harvesting, thrusting, winnowing and rodent control). Anandalakshmy and Kelkar (1980) have revealed that during the harvesting season, utilisation of
women labour is maximal. Carrying bundles of harvested crop to the spot where thrusting is done in a heavy task which is performed mostly by woman bare foot walking over the sharp shrubs of the harvested fields. Men rarely do this task\textsuperscript{55}. According to Kanjla (1980) the tasks which are exclusively performed by women are preparing milk products, milking the cattle, cooking food for calves, care of pregnant and milch animals\textsuperscript{56}. Dixon (1982) has found that ploughing and irrigation are men's tasks, sowing may be restricted to men or women shared it, weeding and transplanting are women's tasks, harvesting is frequently shared and most of the post-harvest operations (thrusting, winnowing, drying, husking, cleaning, storing) are performed by women\textsuperscript{57}. Gandhi, et.al, (1986) have reported that women provide on an average 70-80 percent of labour for transplanting, 70-85 percent for weeding, over 60 percent for harvesting. They do all the husking and other important operations in seed selection and storage\textsuperscript{58}.

As found by Saikia (1983) work participation rates of females are 58.37 percent in marginal farms, 57.07 percent in small farms 53.91 percent in medium farms. Agriculture is the most important sector promoting employment to 97.54 percent of the female workers both in primary and secondary occupations. Out of the total female workers engaged in farm activities, 84.38 percent work full time and only 15.62 percent are engaged as part time workers\textsuperscript{59}. Saini (1983) has observed that women managed alone the household tasks like
work in the kitchen, care of the house, care of children, religious activities etc. The women from farming families spend much more time in the kitchen than those of non-farming families who are mainly be labour class women, who are either paid in cash or kind. In addition, the sowing and harvesting periods require much more time of the home maker than the slack period.

Sridevi (1984) has found out that women from agriculturally progressive villages spend on an average 8.2 hours per day on farm as compared to 7.6 hours per day by women farm workers. They work for about 250 days in a year in the progressive village compared to about 210 days in the less progressive village. Saxena and Bhatnagar (1985) has found out that participation of women in farm activities is more or less same for tribal as well as non-tribal farm women (about 8.25 hours per day). According to Dak et.al., (1986) that majority of farm women play monopolising or dominant role in eight out of seventeen agricultural tasks-four of them are tending cattle, collecting fodder, and selling livestock products. Devi (1987) has reported that the low income category of rural women perform more work in farm activities while the high income category perform more work in home activities. The remaining 43.8 percent time is utilised for sleeping, leisure time activities etc. Lepcha (1987) has found out that average daily hours spent by women in agricultural and livestock production activities is about 7.2 hours per day. Satapathy (1987) has found out that participation of farm women, especially in respect of small
holding, is quite substantial in respect of all important animal related activities. Involvement of women in milking and marketing is independent of land holding systems\textsuperscript{66}. Anandalakshmy and Sawhney (1988) have concluded that women play a prominent role in crop cultivation, post-harvesting operations, food management and management of milch cattle and milk products. All women in rural areas irrespective of their age, size of their family, size of land holding, caste and community, perform major agricultural tasks. Women of landless labour families are the poorest, bearing a heavy burden of work in cultivation and performing even the task of land preparation, along with all other tasks\textsuperscript{67}.

Nand et.al (1988) has observed that 62 percent of farm women in Simla devote more than eight hours per day for farm work during the peak period and 76 percent of them devoted four to six hours per day during the slack season. However, on plains, majority of women spend six to eight hours per day and two to four hours per day during peak and slack seasons (in Bhojpur, Bihar) respectively\textsuperscript{68}. Devadas (1975) has reported that in modern agriculture women share a number of farm operations with men\textsuperscript{69}.

**WAGE DISCRIMINATION:**

A study by Rao and Reddy (1987) has revealed that though women workers possess more skill and are as competent as the male workers, the wages paid to them are lower compared with wages paid to the male workers, in all the three crops studied viz., paddy, tobacco and sugarcane. The
difference is wider during Rabi season than in Kharif season in wet land and the contrast is observed in dry areas\textsuperscript{70}. Balaraman (1985) has observed that sex discrimination in farm wages is a fact of life in most parts of the world, whether developed or under developed and it exists in two ways. The first one is paying less to women for the same type of work which he calls 'open discrimination' and the other, is restricting women to low paid unskilled jobs denying them access to better paid jobs and he confirms that both these types of discrimination exist in India and in TamilNadu also\textsuperscript{71}. Parmar (1987) has given the following reasons for lower wage rates of the female workers. Lack of continuity in employment due to their domestic pre-occupation, lesser number of hours of work per day in some cases, nature of farm operations, and impact of technological changes on cultivation as a result of mechanisation. Agricultural labourers are largely disorganised and hence their bargaining power is comparatively weaker than that of industrial workers. It accounts for lower wage rates and unjust wage differentials\textsuperscript{72}.

The Equal Remuneration Act (1976) was passed in 1976 according to which "no employer shall pay to any worker, employed by him in an establishment or employment, remuneration, whether payable in cash or in kind, at rates less favourable than those at which remuneration is paid by him to the workers of the opposite sex in such establishment or employment for performing the same work or work for a similar nature\textsuperscript{73}". According to Recent Madras Award (1988) with
regard to wages, women are paid very low and this is undeserved discrimination\textsuperscript{74}. Becker (1964) has introduced non-pecuniary motives into economic theory and said that discrimination is the result of \textquote{taste} and that a price could be put upon this taste and it becomes equivalent to the wage differentials which can not be explained by productivity differences\textsuperscript{75}. Sliglitz and Madden (1973) have pointed out that imperfect labour markets are responsible for wage differentials and hence discrimination is then a product of, for example, trade union involvement, minimum wage legislation, monopoly power or imperfect information\textsuperscript{76}. Bergman (1974) has pointed that exclusion of women from certain jobs force them to get crowded in a few women specific jobs, ends up in lower earnings because it is believed that excess supply in certain jobs would end up in diminishing marginal productivity\textsuperscript{77}. Mincer and Polachek (1972) have hold the view that the occupation preferred or chosen by women are defined as less productive and less skilled and hence they are less rewarded\textsuperscript{78}.

Cross cultural data collected by Rayan and Reiter (1975) has revealed and dispelled the idea that men (or women) are unable to do some of the tasks assigned to women (men)... Academics no longer hold the position that particular roles or tasks universally belong to either men or women because of simple differences in bones, muscles and sex organs. However, if men and women can never be substituted for one another on the same job, male and female labour would constitute a poor case of \textquote{Non-competing groups}\textsuperscript{79}. In Cairne's (1874) has
sensed this means transfer from one group to the other is not possible and no wage differential is acceptable and justifiable. But no two goods and job groups can be substituted for one another, they do not constitute a pure sense of non-competing groups and these wage differentials is not justifiable.  

In some cases for example as pointed out by Arputhamurthy (1990) women may have less education or are in a lower skilled jobs. They may have fewer years of seniority compared to men and the working women are concentrated in regions that as a general rule have lower pay. However, the average difference between the level of men's and women's wages in most countries is nearly as much as 50% - a difference which seems considerably greater than what can be attributed to factors such as differences in education, experience or skill.  

Surkar reports (1970) has reported that apart from the differences in wage rates among different types of labour contracts, there is significant inter villages variation in wage rates for each category of labour. Rao (1972) has found that variation in wage rates over years is less in those areas where the cropping patterns shows a fair spread over the Kharif and Rabi Seasons than in those where agriculture is confined to a single season. Morothia and Sharma (1985) have observed in their study 'low female labour participation in rice farming' observe that the share of female labour in total earnings is higher than male wage earnings in all farm size groups. The relative share of female labour in total paddy output is slightly higher on
small farms, but it is significantly higher on medium and large farms. Grewal in his case study has analysed the pattern of employment and wage structure for scheduled caste workers in Punjab agriculture. They observe that female workers are employed mainly in four farm operations, viz) paddy transplantation, paddy wheat harvesting, interculture of crops and cotton picking where as male workers get employment in all selected farm operations except cotton picking. In the study area, farm workers are paid both in cash and kind wages. Differences are noticed in daily money wages operation wise and sex wise which may be attributed to the nature of work, seasonal importance of the operation, physical efficiency and strain involved. Contract money wages have taken roots in Punjab agriculture particularly in paddy transplantation and paddy and wheat harvesting. All the respondents show preference for contract money wages; as all members of the family irrespective of age and sex are engaged in farm operations leading to higher wages per worker. It is further observed that farm workers also prefer to work on kind wages in paddy or wheat harvesting. Thus the technological break through in agriculture has increased the working days per year of agricultural workers resulting in more earnings for this class.

Savitri Arputhamurthy (1990) has pointed out that the jobs which are most tedious, messy and dirty involving extreme patience, endurance and health hazards are subtly allowed to women and paid lower wages while those involving more strength but requiring only less patience and endurance
causing less health hazards are allotted to men and paid higher wages.86

DECISION MAKING

Women's involvement in agricultural operations, is besides their usual obligation of discharging domestic work. Therefore they have to allocate time available to them judiciously between the two sources of demand. The poor woman can never neglect her duties at home; yet they are too poor to remain unemployed. Therefore how do the women manage to play the dual role has received the attention of researchers. The related literature on decision making is presented below. Though women may not enjoy equal powers in the household they do participate in many activities and take decisions on crucial issues (Giriappa, 1988). Decision making connotes power. In a male dominated society it is generally the male who is in control of the family. In families where women also make economic contribution the situation is slightly different. Rural Society, where agriculture is predominant is one such area. A working peasant women who receives lower wages than her male counterpart does not necessarily enjoy an enviable position in the family. The situation is still worse in dry areas as compared to wet cultivation. A sample survey conducted in Dakshina Karnataka by Giriappa reveals that the female headed household (FHHs) report a better decision role in deciding household expenditures and family maintenance, leisure and recreation and health, education, travel etc. Put together, those who took major and equal decisions come to 45 percent in FHHs 29.7 in Male headed household (MHHs)87.
Arya (1964) has reported that younger group of male family heads depend more on female family members for decision making. As age of male family heads advances there is a greater tendency to consult sons and hence the importance of female (wife) decreases. However, the female members specially the wife, continues to influence decision making regarding home improvement, irrespective of age of the family head. In her study Puri (1968) has found that consultation of women in decision making is the highest in respect of marriage of children followed by children's education and it is the least in taking loans, and farm related tasks. According to ILO (1975) study most of the decisions about the allocations of resources within the household are made by men and earnings from increased crop yields are also controlled by them.

In decision making is the highest (81%) in storage and sale of produce. Women participate jointly with their husbands in decision-making about cropping pattern only in 15 percent of decision making on choice of seeds, use of chemical fertilizers, adoption of plant protection measures (use of insecticides and pesticides).

In case of different socio-economic status Yadev (1982) reported that farm women in higher socio-economic status do not enjoy as much involvement in decision making process regarding farm operations, as those of middle or low
socio economic status families\textsuperscript{92}. According to Bajwa (1984) decisions relating to children's education, marriage and dowry are taken jointly by the husband and wife, while women have practically no say in decisions relating to saving, loan transactions and purchase of land\textsuperscript{93}. Similar findings have also been reported by Ghosh(1987) that a very high percentage of women play a role in the decisions made regarding payment of dowry, food given to expectant and nursing mothers and storage of farm produce. However, they are not involved in decisions taken regarding education of children, taking loans for consumptive expenditures, expenditure pattern of family and farm related activities except in storage and sale-purchase of animals. Farm Women's involvement in decision making regarding farm and home related tasks does not seem to be uniform across the different socio-economic strata of rural women\textsuperscript{94}. Sharma and Singh (1970) have reported that farm women participate in farm operations such as seed storage, winnowing, care of animals, harvesting, weeding, sowing, applying manure and using implements in the above order. The author also indicates that in the majority of the cases husband and wife together take decision on, care of animals, selecting seed and at the time of selling farm produce\textsuperscript{95}) Thangamani (1971) has observed that farm women participate in all agricultural activities and the extent of their usual participation is higher in transplanting and hoeing than in others\textsuperscript{96}. Devadas, Muthu, and Thangamani (1972) have observed that the extent of participation of farm women is higher in storing produces followed by sowing and transplanting of
seedlings. They also observe that women supervise all other operating implements and selling the produce and farm women are almost always consulted in making decisions on various farm operations like getting new seeds, selecting crops, getting fertilizers and pesticides and appointing labourers. According to Pandey et al. (1980) rural women have a supportive role in most of the agricultural decisions. They play quite an active role in the purchase of livestock, fertilizers and selection of market.

Sitalakshmi (1975) has stated that while women express their desire in farming practices they state that managing in farm and home simultaneously is reported to be a problem experienced by them. A study by Dhillon (1980) on rural women in decision making action has revealed that an overall analysis of the decision making on the farm and home management, women indicates that in 27.7 percent cases she has no say at all, while in the remaining 2.3 percent the decisions are taken on joint basis, of these, in 15 percent they enjoyed equal say as their husbands, while in 19.9 percent 13.7 percent and 5.7 percent they hold rank of the second and third order of importance in the family respectively. This reveals that the rural women is increasingly participating in taking decisions.
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