CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSIONS

Assumption that the benefits of development will trickle down to the less privileged sections of the society, is increasingly being challenged. The investigation of the differential impact of development process on different classes of society has become a common theme. Of late there has been stress upon the analysis of differential impact of development on gender division of labour as well. It is argued that development has increased differentiation by class and gender. Due to the unequal access to technology, credit, education and training, women are continuously being marginalised.

Studies have been conducted to assess the impact of green revolution technology on female labour utilization in agriculture. But no uniform conclusion can be drawn from these studies. In fact the impact of new technology is influenced by many factors such as regional, socio-cultural and class differences as well as the extent and nature of technological change.

The state of Punjab having considerably higher irrigated area, consolidated land-holdings and relatively
better institutional and infrastructural facilities, at the
time of introduction of HYV seeds, experienced very rapid
transformation of its agricultural economy. It took a lead
over other states in the use of almost all components of the
new technology. Moreover, there has been a excessive stress
on mechanization in this state. It is natural to expect that
technological transformation with this magnitude, in the
Punjab state should have exercised a much wider impact,
compared to other areas, on employment structure in general
and female employment in particular.

The aim of this study is to examine the female
employment structure and intensity of work participation and
to see how it is influenced by class, caste and agricultural
development. To capture the impact of agricultural
development the primary data have been collected from three
regions of Punjab which represent three different levels of
agricultural technology and development. The North-Eastern
region is a sub-mountainous area with relatively backward
agriculture having lowest use of modern inputs and machines.
In the South-Western region, despite the extensive use of
machines, the limited supply of water restricts the choice
of crops and intensive use of certain inputs like
fertilizers. In the Central region, representing the highest
level of agricultural development, use of all modern inputs
is fairly widespread and intensive, resulting in higher
yield levels of most of the crops. In total 410 households have been surveyed out of which 100 are from the North-Eastern region, 140 from the South-Western region and the remaining 170 from the Central region.

Conventional labourforce statistics, especially in less developed countries, are biased in the direction of excluding a good proportion of the activities in which women are involved. The underestimation results mainly due to inadequate definition of work as well as faulty enumeration procedure. To have an accurate record of female labour-force participation an effort has been made to redefine the concept of economic activity. Since large number of women engage themselves in subsistence and semi-subsistence activities in agricultural sector, all activities associated with agricultural production whether commercial or subsistence, are included in gainful work. An attempt has also been made to evolve a methodology so as to minimise some of the problems of data collection.

To analyse the data, households have been divided into five landholding size-classes as well as four main caste-groups. Depending upon the occupations recorded in the sample data, the total female and male working population of 15 to 59 age group is divided into three main sectors comprising agriculture, secondary and tertiary. These three
sectors are further sub-divided into nine occupational categories.

The analysis of data has revealed that animal husbandry is predominantly female specific occupation in all the three regions. The proportion of females is also considerable in two other occupational categories i.e., secondary traditional and traditional services. Their share in the category of cultivators declines with agricultural development. Occupational diversification is higher in case of landless and scheduled caste women vis-a-vis women of land operating upper castes and Jat families. Male occupational structure is more diversified than female. Among the different regions, diversification is much higher in the backward North-Eastern region with three-fourth of the men in non-agricultural occupations. Small size of the holdings and lower land productivity are the main factors pushing out male population out of agriculture. The job opportunities provided by some public sector undertakings in the nearby town act as a pull factor. But most of these male workers are doing manual jobs on daily wage basis.

Agriculture is still the mainstay of around 70 per cent male workers in the South-Western region which is at a intermediate level of agricultural development. But diversification again increases in the most developed
Central region where it is the result of higher levels of education and increasing accumulation of capital. There is a qualitative difference between the backward North-Eastern and the developed Central region as far as shift towards non-agricultural occupations is concerned. Male occupational diversification in the Central region is not out of distress, but it is a result of higher agricultural development.

The forces which contributed to the diversification of male occupational structure do not act in the same direction with respect to females. Lack of spatial mobility, especially in case of higher castes, and lower educational levels in the North-Eastern region do not permit women to reap the benefits of available job opportunities in the surrounding areas. Whatever non-agricultural work they are doing is mainly in the house (secondary traditional) and having almost no link with the modern industrial establishments in the region. Again in the Central region, where men are shifting to non-agricultural business and jobs, women are withdrawing even from cultivation and are being concentrated in animal husbandry alone. Increasing level of education of women facilitating them to join modern jobs is the main hope for women. A modest beginning has already been made in this direction in the Central region.
The village wise analysis of occupational structure of workforce on the basis of distance from nearby town does not show any systematic pattern. Proportion in non-agricultural occupations in the villages near the town (VNT) is higher among males in the North-Eastern and the South-Western region but in case of females it is in the North-Eastern region alone. In fact, due to better road and transport network, people (especially men) are able to commute to the towns in Punjab if available opportunity is better than what they get in the village. This possibly explains relatively less occupational differences in the South-Western region and almost no difference in the Central region among VNT and VAT villages.

Examination of the extent of multiplicity of occupations revealed that in case of both males and females, it declines when one moves from backward to developed region. In the backward region, factors behind this combining of more than one occupation are under-employment and compulsion of producing subsistence. Specifically in case of females, higher occupational multiplicity is due to lower (and also less remunerative) amount of work available in animal husbandry. In the Central region in addition to higher availability of work in animal husbandry, and also more remunerative due to higher investment in milch cattle, withdrawal of females from many kinds of outside work is
also responsible for lower occupational multiplicity. In this region, mostly male workers are engaged in more than one activity not for producing subsistence but to enhance their incomes.

Socio-economic variables such as caste and class play an important role in deciding the boundary of work space for women. Caste-wise differences are quite sharp, in the backward North-Eastern region. It is only upper castes women who usually work within the house. All women from other caste groups, including Jats, work outside home but within the village. As a result of development and prosperity in the South-Western and the Central region, Jat women have also started withdrawing from outside work. Withdrawal is almost complete in case of most developed Central region.

For analysing the women's contribution on the basis of nature of activity, the total work days (per annum) have been divided between gainful and domestic work. Gainful work is further divided into paid and unpaid with the latter having three sub-categories that is, commercial, semi-commercial and subsistence.

In all the regions, women's share is around one-third in total gainful work. Within gainful work they
contribute a major share in semi-commercial and subsistence part of gainful unpaid work. Non-gainful domestic work is almost exclusively performed by women. Total load of work, gainful plus non gainful, is much higher on women than men and it is increasing with agricultural development. Perhaps this increase is basically due to increase in the quantum of domestic work. Distribution of women days on the basis of nature of activity suggest that share of female days in gainful paid out of total female days more or less declines whereas percentage share in unpaid commercial and semi-commercial together increases with rise in landholding size.

While examining the relative contribution per female vis-a-vis per male, it has been recorded that average days per female worker spent on gainful work varies between 60 to 67 per cent of the average male days in all the regions. However, total work burden per woman is much higher than among the men. It is one and a half times higher than men in the North-Eastern region, 1.7 times in the South-Western region and almost double in the Central region. Region-wise differences in average female days (per annum) in gainful work are almost non-existent, but within each region landholding size-class wise differences are important. In fact, it is the combined impact of caste and class which determines the outcome.
Female work participation rate is an important indicator of women's contribution in the economy. The present analysis shows that nearly 83 per cent of the females of working age-group (15-59 years) in the state do participate in the work and around 27 per cent are main workers. Region-wise differences in the proportion of main workers are negligible though with development the proportion of those who never participate in any kind of economic activity has increased.

Comparison of these results with NSSO and census data reveals that official figures are gross underestimates. Though in case of NSSO, female work participation rates are considerably higher than those revealed by census data, yet these are lower than the present study. Definition of work used by NSSO is quite liberal but inadequacies in the methods of data collection and socio-cultural biases of enumerators and respondents result in under-counting of women workers. Underestimation is much more serious in the census data. In addition to inadequate definition of work and other problems of data collection, quality of enumerators engaged in the collection of huge data and amount of training they get, also determine the outcome.

The examination of female labour use in crop production brings out some interesting results. The analysis
shows that female labour participation declines with agricultural development. Decline is considerably sharp in case of family females. Complete absence of hired labour, economic necessity and absence of mechanization may be some of the reasons responsible for higher female labour participation in the North-Eastern region. On the other hand, widespread use of machines, changing organization of agriculture and increasing incomes are some of the plausible reasons of withdrawal of female labour in developed region, especially the most developed Central region.

In the backward region, caste factor is more important than landholding size in explaining the differences in female participation in crop production. Landholding size exhibits a negative relationship with share of female family labour in total labour, in the relatively developed regions. Evidence from intra-household comparison in female labour use on the basis of technological level is too poor to warrant any firm generalization.

Crop-wise analysis shows that female labour use is not crop specific but widespread in the North-Eastern region and mainly in cotton in the South-Western region. In the developed Central region women's contribution (in the form of hired labour) is quite significant in case of vegetables,
sugarcane and cotton, but area under these crops is negligible. Overall female labour use in crop production, in this region, is quite low. Except for cotton picking in the South-Western region, differences in female labour use are less due to operations and more because of regional differences. Cotton picking is largely the female specific task.

Above all, it appears that overall agricultural development of the region is an overriding factor in explaining the withdrawal of female labour from crop production. Changes in the production process with the introduction of machines and emergence of new roles, may be an important factor, but withdrawal may not be only in those operations which are mechanized. Moreover it may not be due to mechanization alone. Increased incomes and changing value system ('sanskritization') of 'nova' rich and their demonstration effect on not-so-rich, results in general withdrawal of both family and hired labour.

One of the objectives of the study has been to find out the possible determinants of differences in the intensity of female work participation. The linear regression analysis suggests that average female days in all kinds of gainful work are positively influenced by the number of milch cattle and negatively by the caste status.
Other important variables, which effect the intensity of female work participation negatively, are educational status of the household, ratio of hired labour to family labour in crop production and family size.

Two most important variables, having negative impact on the intensity of female participation in outdoor work, are caste status and number of adult males in the family. In fact negative impact of caste status becomes more widespread and intensive on female work outdoors compared to their participation in all kinds of gainful work. Other relatively less important variables are ratio of hired labour to family labour and value of agricultural implements with negative impact and number of milch cattle with positive impact on female work participation outside the house.

Negative impact of family income is felt only in the most developed Central region. Domestic work and number of children below 4 years are no constraint on female work participation in gainful work. Two other variables, which it seems have no impact on household wise differences in female participation in gainful work are area under paddy and cotton.

It has been noted earlier that, as a result of
agricultural development, women have started withdrawing from outside work and are being concentrated in animal husbandry. Though the regional differences in overall female work participation in gainful work are almost non-existent, with the modernization of agriculture, women's work in the most developed region has become more 'invisible'. The question arises, whether there is any relationship between declining female participation outside the house and the status of women?

Some qualitative information was collected about the position of women in the household. Respondents were asked the following questions:
1 Are women consulted in important household matters?
2 Do women go to the market, both within and outside the village, for sale purchase of goods?
3 Are they free to participate in cultural activities?

Though available information, based on above queries, is not very comprehensive to determine the status of women, yet it indicates that there is almost no relationship between women's work outside the house and their participation in the decision making. However, development has a positive impact on women's education. In the most developed region, proportion of women passing high school bar is considerably higher than the other two regions. Moreover, with development, gap between male
female literacy rates has also declined especially in case of population of 5 to 30 years age-group; those who born after the advent of Green Revolution technology.

An important implication which emerges from the present study is the need to scrutinize data relating to women's participation in work force. Our sample data have shown that women's participation in gainful work in general and agricultural sector in particular is substantial. But because of the use of inadequate concepts and definitions of work and lack of commitment, probing capacity and training of the enumerators as well as ideological biases of the enumerators and respondents (including women themselves), official statistics grossly underestimate the women's contributions in economic activity. Basing on such data, planners and policy makers can reach to highly misleading conclusions and it may result in inappropriate policies and programmes. Thus it is necessary to begin with a good data that include both commercial and subsistence productive activities performed by women within and out-side the house. To achieve this changes in the definition of work and proper training of investigators, if possible recruitment of women investigators, become necessary.

Non-recognition of women as workers and seeking work has many ramifications. Agricultural development
strategies have given very little attention to women in comparison to their active involvement in the sector. They have not been adequately recognised while formulating policies of input distribution including bank loans, forming cooperatives and in the training and extension programmes. Various rural employment schemes are general in nature and women are not benefiting fairly from these schemes. In fact, during field survey it was found that women are not even aware of these schemes. Specific programmes for women are not employment oriented and their main target is teaching of 'home economics'. One such scheme, which we came across, was organization of Mahila Mandals. Even these Mahila Mandals, informed the respondents from landless scheduled castes families, are monopolized by the women of few leading landowning families. However, one positive aspect of this situation is that lower caste landless women were highly critical of this attitude and were expressing strong resentment against their exclusion from these Mahila Mandals.

Upgradation of women's skills is an area which requires utmost attention. Education can play an important role in this direction. It can become an instrument not only of achieving higher female participation in economic activities which are more productive but also can act as an agent to modify existing attitudes and behavior patterns.
However, the acquisition of degrees in non-technical education may not help much. Efforts should be made to increase women's accessibility to vocational and technical courses especially in newly emerging technologies. Incentives may be given to the girls, in the form of free-ships and scholarships, to join these courses and if need be some seats may also be reserved for them. Nevertheless, these skill development programmes must be linked to employment opportunities available in the surrounding areas.

The data have revealed that in relatively developed regions, female share is considerable in those non-foodgrain crops in which case harvesting/picking operation is non-mechanized. Thus, crop diversification with an emphasis on these non-foodgrain crops like cotton, sugarcane and vegetables would benefit females, at least from landless agricultural labourer families. Production base of another allied activity, dairying, where women play a major role, should be strengthened. Efforts should be made to buy better quality milch cattle through separate women's cooperatives. They should also be provided training in the management of cattle and marketing of dairy products.

The other most sought after vocations were stitching, knitting, spinning and embroidery. But in the developed regions women were ready to join these vocations
provided the work is available and returns are worth their efforts. Organizing such activities through women's cooperatives and locating them in a central work place will have further advantages. It will facilitate technological innovations and capital investment and will also draw women out of the isolation and conservatism of their domestic environments into social interaction with one another (Dixon, 1978: 26). Separating women physically from the pervasive influence of the domestic environment for at least a few hours each day may be essential for the overall development of their personality.