Chapter 1

Introduction

Women thy name is creation. The undivided care and attention for a period of nine months and nine days have enabled women to nuttier life within them so as to maintain the spontaneity of human civilisation. "When women move forward the family move, the village move, and the nation move" these words of Pandit Nahiru are the central the socio-economic paradigm of the country. As it is an accepted fact that only when women are in the mainstream of progress, the economic and social development can be meaningful. Agriculture is the mainstay of Indian economy as over 70% of Indian population depend upon agriculture and allied occupation for their livelihood. The rural women often called, as farmwomen constitute almost 50% of farm work force and play a significant role in Indian agriculture. Women undertake various types of farm operation along with men in this country; to assess their significant contribution to agriculture some allied operation like livestock forestry etc. need to be considered as well.

The status of women and the role of women are not universal. Even within a single social section women may have high status in same area of community and none at all in others. The role of farm women can be classified under three broad categories paid labors, cultivator, when they work in their
own land as unpaid labors, manager of certain aspects of agriculture production.

When pages of history were scanned it was revealed that women are the pioneers of farming. It was women who first domesticated the crop plants and thereby the art and science of farming. While the men went out hunting for food, women gathering seed from the flora and began cultivating for need of foods, fodder, fiber and fuel thus women have an umbilical attachment with agriculture since time immemorial.

The study of women comes in the sociology of gender consider the way in which the physical differences between men and women are mediated by culture and social structure. Gender role is the set of behavioral attitudes and motivations culturally associated with each sex and it is socially developed and encouraged differences between two sexes.

The various theoretical perspectives on the position of rural women and men in society are not mutually exclusive and are not contradictory. Engle (1972) constructed a theory of the subjugation of women. The maintains that to understand the basic of subjugation of women in a society, it is need to understand the development of the family and the evaluation of women in the family. The type of family found in a particular society is related to mode of prediction which in turn largely determines the position of the sex in that society.
Males gained power and were able to enforce monogamy and female subordination because they controlled the new private property. Furthermore, the new wealth disrupted the matrilineal communal family structure and raised the patriarchal family. According to this, the wife became the property of the husband whom use whatever means necessary to guarantee her sexual fidelity and thereby paternity of her children the sexual double standard related into the subjugation of women with the patriarchal family and monogamy.

The domestic role also allows employees to draw upon the unpaid labor of to make the male employees more efficient workers. As women take care of the male worker food, clothing, household maintenance and child care needs they free the men to concentrate on their public jobs.

Sanday (1976) acknowledge the importance of differentiating respect, power and authority within the domestic sphere from respect, power and authority in the public sphere. Sanday bases her analysis on female power and authority in the public domain on 1) female control over material objects outside the domestic realm such as land products) the demand for female produce or the exchange value of goods and services produced by females. iii) female political participation. iv) female solidarity groups for protecting female political and economic interests. An important factor, which Sandy emphasizes, is women's economic control rather than their economic contribution.
The appointment of the national committee on the status of women in India in 1972 and the publication of its report in 1975 marked the first official attempt in contemporary times to study the status of India women and recommend changes to improve their position. The report highlighted that despite constitutional guarantees the roles, rights and participation of women in all spheres of life were limited. Development has been defined by the world conference of the UN decade for women held at Copenhagen in July 1980 describes development as a means of total development including development in the political, economical, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life as also the physical, moral, intellectual and cultural growth of human person. Women development should not only be viewed, as an issue in social development but should be seen as an essential component in every dimension of development. While the new technologies have created employment opportunities for women and increased the household income of women of some classes, they have at the same time displaced women from the labor forced women to migrate and has not reduced the drudgery in traditional women’s works as much as initially anticipated.

What has been the reality for these women? A list of the kinds of problems faced by women as exemplified in the reports sent between 1979 and 1983 by various women’s groups to a well known, city-based feminist magazine resulted in the following breakdown. Rape was major issue with grassroots autonomous women’s groups. This was followed by a concern for
conditions of women at work. It included demands for, equal wages for equal work, maternity benefits, crèche facilities and the need to organise workingwomen. Another major issue was the portrayal of women in media—the depiction of violence against women.

The struggle for the upliftment of women began in India in the nineteenth century. It was an offshoot of the fight against colonialism and the aspiration for national freedom. By contrast, in contemporary times women have taken the effort to improve the status of women themselves. According to one estimate in 1985 there were as many as fifty-five autonomous women's organisations /activist groups all over India. This did not include women's wings of political parties. As the international level the UN organised women's conferences have been concerned with the participation of women in the development process this ha included equal representation of women in education politics and labour.

Traditionally their lack of participation in these spheres has been explained as due either to the demands on their natural role as a mother, which is seen as being antithetical to their public role or intellectual and personality differences springing from biological variables that made it difficult or even impossible for women to participate in traditional male endeavours. Minority women are almost invisible in social science literature and rural women groups deserve to be in studies in their own right. Studies on lower class and rural women had to be omitted, as there is insufficient research on them and contrary
to the major focus of this anthology it takes a predominantly developmental and economic focus. Minority women are almost invisible in social science literature, and where studies have been made on them they are seen as embedded in the practice of traditional and archaic customs like purdah rather than seen as seriously questioning and challenging these customs.

The roles women play in society and the images we have of them have developed not simply from the exigencies of biology and social situations but are rather deeply rooted in myths and legends, religions and culture. In a patriarchal culture, what we get is a masculine definition of ideals and images of women. These ideals and visions are not women’s creations. They are not born out of their own experiences. The perspective developed by social sciences is influenced by the culture ideology. The sociological perspective identified in the functional framework reserves instrumental functions for men and expressive function for women.

In her paper women and the Hindu tradition "Susan Wadley speaks of the duality of women in Hindu ideology identified with nature, she is a giver of birth and protector of their children. On the other hand she is evil and destructive. How her sexuality is controlled determines her essentially benevolent or malevolent nature. Everyday behaviour and role she is expected to play are dictated by this mythical view of femaleness. Sudhir Kakkar in his paper ‘Feminine Identity in India’ looks at a woman’s development and transition through the various stages of her life cycle from a psychoanalytic
perspective. A variety of social agents prepare her for motherhood, a role in which her identity finds completion. In ‘Women versus Womanliness’ Ashish Nandi directs our attention to the dynamics that keep women in her constricted place in society. The centrality of motherhood in a culture inevitably produces certain kinds of sons and men A challenge too this all-consuming role contains the seeds of liberation. Suma Chitnis warns us of the pitfalls of adopting a western model of liberation in her treatise ‘Feminism the Indian ethos and India convictions’. According to her greater sensitivity to the historical as well as the contemporary social context coupled with India women particular brand of psychological strength would be worth examining to provide alternative paths to equality.

The concept of the female in Hinduism presents an important duality on one hand the woman is fertile benevolent- the creator, on the other she is aggressive, malevolent- the destroyer. ‘A popular statement characterize the goddess in all her manifestations thus; in time of prosperity she indeed is Lakshmi who bestows prosperity in the homes of men. And in time of misfortune she herself becomes the goddess of misfortune and brings about ruin’ (Jagdisvarananda, 1953, quoted in Babb, 1970). Both goddesses and women – for there is no differentiation of super human and human in Hindu belief (Wadley, 1975)-reflect these characteristics of the female as both benevolent, fertile creator and malevolent, and as an aggressive destroyer (Hart, 1973).
The basic rules for women's behaviours are expressed in the following passages from the laws of *Manu*, written early in the Christian era. "By a young girl, by a young woman or even by an aged one nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be independent...

Though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure (elsewhere), or devoid of good qualities (Yet a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by faithful wife) by violating her duty towards her husband. A wife is disgraced in this world; (after death) she enters the womb of a jackal and is tormented by diseases (the punishment) of her sin. She who controlling her thoughts, words and deeds never slights her lord resides (after death) with her husband (in heaven) and is called a virtuous (wife) (Buhler, 1964).

Yet women are treated as a homogeneous category in much of the Indian classical Literature while great care is taken to classify men with minute details of distinction. Moreover, the status of women is clearly defined – they are unambiguously equated with the *Sudras*. Even the *Gita* places women, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras* in the same category and describes them all as being of sinful birth. According to another text, the punishment for killing a woman and a *Sudra* is identical (Thapar 1975). In the legal discussions of this period of Indian history, women were treated as part of a man's property. This applied specifically in those areas of the country where paternalism was firmly
established then as an aspect of elite culture. A woman could be given as a pledge, the interest being one – seventieth of her value, though how her value was to be computed is nowhere clearly stated (Thapar 1975)

The domestic roles of men and women do not overlap and are not interchangeable. Men have always attended to the tasks outside the household. The woman has complex constellation of roles; manager of the household; caretaker of the children and distributor of love and affection. She routinely performs such tasks as cleaning, sweeping and decorating the house; washing vessels; cooking and serving food; looking after children and welcoming and entertaining guests (Mukherjee, 1958; Sengupta, 1960; Rao and Rao, 1982; Ross, 1961; Jacobson, 1977; Wadley, 1977; Mandelbaum, 1970; Duve, 1978; Dube, 1963; Altekar, 1962; Prabhu, 1962) Despite the rigid differentiation of roles, unqualified generalizations about sex roles would be misleading because of differences in caste, for example lower caste and untouchable women not only do household work but also engage in agricultural and non agricultural work outside the household. The status of a wife improves upon the birth of children. As a mother she is given higher esteem in the family, a greater degree of independence (Mandelbaum, 1949). Because of the importance accorded to son who is believed to save the father from going to hell the position of a mother with sons improves even more. Mother son relations are described as strong. Close, affectionate, dependable and tender, the mother's influence gradually increases in domestic as well as outside matters. However, urban
educated women, according to Professor Srinivas, have 'broken out of the status trap' unlike the high status rural women. Professor Srinivas also refers to the status dimension in women's education, and of the need for the wife of an educated man to be educated, but not as much as or more than he is.

In 'Some Reflections on Dowry' (1996) Professor Srinivas refers to dowry as an archetypal institution that generates intense interest among sociologists. He argues that dowry ought not to be viewed as an economic institution alone. It is embedded in kin relations, and the caste system. It is related to the marriage system and its features differ north and south of the Vindhyas. In the north dowry is linked to hyper gamy and hypergamous ideology. Here, hypergamous marriages involving asymmetrical relations among hypergamous castes are customary. These marriages result in asymmetrical relationships between wife-givers and wife-takers, the latter enjoying a higher status. Thus dowry is an important part of hypergamous asymmetrical relationships. While dowry is associated with high caste status as well as with hyper gamy in north India, exchange marriages and marriages on payment of bride price have also existed in the same region. The economic condition of a high caste may sometimes determine whether it practices dowry or bride price. Generally, the richer and higher strata of hypergamous castes pay huge dowries. while poorer members of the same caste or a lower caste/stratum pay bride price or resort to marriage by exchange. For example, the rich land-owning Patidars in central Gujarat pay dowry while the poor
Patidars pay bride price. Similarly, the rich land-owning Desais among the Anavil Brahmins pay dowry while the Bhatelas, the poor Anavils, practice exchange marriages. Thus, bride price and marriage by exchange are integral to the dowry system of hypergamous castes. The practice of bride price makes brides scarce for the poorer grooms, who may remain unmarried.

**Concept of status**

Status is considered to be the most important sociological concept related to the form of this study. The term status has broadened in modern time to encompass all culturally prescribed rights and duties inherent in social positions whatever their origin. Darid Popeone (1977) a status is a position in the society involves also a certain amount of ranking. According to Ralt Cinton (1936) status and role are inter linked. Status is abstract is position in the social system occupied by designated individuals and role is the behavioral enacting by designated individuals and role is the behavioral enacting of the patterned expiation attributed to that position status represent his position with realization to total society. Mulclver (1962) is of the opinion that for an individual the status ditarmineds the extent of respect prestige and influences in the society.

H R Trivedi (1976) found certain qualitative derivation of prestige honor esteem etc., in this connection according to Romila Kapoor 1972 status refer to right and privilege power & prestige and the grading of a person in order of
what is socially valued and what gives him the ability to influence or control of social environment Mulkraj Annds cerectarstics based on such criteria as education receding income and family background. Lenski 1956 has taken four scales one each for income education occupation and ethnic standards as the measure of the status. How ever it may be particularly be stressed that the concept of statue and role mending only in relation to other status and role ( Friedl of Pteitter ,1977 ) Robert Mertron 1968 found each person in the society veritably occupies multiple status and to status and to each of status there is an associated role. Lerisi 1956 regards individuals of or family status as series of related hierarchies. Devid Popenoe has tried to associated the active contribution of stratification to the actual process of status derivative on of community .Talcat Person 1964 views the status of given individual in the system of stratification of society as a result of common valuation under lying the attribution of status are kinship unit personal qualities, achievements possessions authorities and power.

When we talks about the status of woman in India, we have make a designation between the rural women and urban women. The status of rural agriculture women can not therefore escape the influence of Saul social system, customs, values, beliefs and attitudes but the modern society counteracts the traditional system of social stratification. Status that is generally based on berth before looses its importance and the power and the way for the achieved status is cleared
Economic status of women

Socio-economic status is the base of measuring the standard of living of any society. In rural India the status of women in the society is defined through the socio-economic status of family. Rural women working on small farms or for low wages enjoy low status. With in the family her economic status is depends upon her male counterpart because mostly women do not have any source of income, they help in agriculture and other allied activities but the product is marketed by men, who keep the all produce amount.

Why has Indian development neglected rural women so far, especially when they constitute an important productive asset? Being a women in a specific culture determines whether she will be allowed to survive (after birth), what roles will be assigned to her, whether she will receive an education and if so, what kind. Her productive role is also influenced by economic conditions as well as by socio-cultural parameters. Mencher refers to the class orientation of the traditional image of womankind, and to what Professor Srinivas calls the ‘bibliocentric view’ of society. This view of the Indian women results in the neglect of the rural women, even though she participates in productive activities. Srinivas (1977) also mentions that the productive activities of men and women together are essential for survival (1978). Therefore, marriage is a precondition for successful agriculture among the small and marginal farmers. Rural women working on small farms or for low wages enjoy low status, while women whose husbands do not depend upon their economic contribution enjoy
higher social status. Higher social status for women entails giving up productive activity and leads to their immurement, argues Epstein (1973).

A gender-based division of labour also means that agricultural labour is assigned the lowest status, and clerical work is considered to be a little higher. Discussing the labour force participation of women, Epstein (1973) refers to the low status attached to female work she argues that small and marginal farmers may hide the fact that their women work on the farm while agricultural labourers may not. John Mencher, follows through empirical data, discussing the meaning of farm household and division of labor in agriculture and refer to the overlap between caste and class like Epstein she mentions that the size of land holding is crucial in determining women’s participation in agriculture activities. Lower caste women with small landholding work in their field. Higher caste women generally do not working in the field except in large landholding household where women play a supervisory role in field operations. In addition the increasing caste of agriculture has forced women to work in their field. An increase in land holding leads to the withdrawal of women from farm activity. This may not necessarily be due to status value but because they have to undertake new agriculture related task. These task frequently ignored by data gatherers including food for labourers (which the household can now afford to hire) and soaking sheet before they are sowed. This makes them invisible as agriculturist. The exploitation of women continues in spite of law to protect women rights and various schemes for
women welfare. This happens because of traditional views about women (for example the reluctance of banks to give loan to women). Desai mentions that that mechanization has had an adverse impact on women because they are relegated to the labor-intensive task or substitution (Boserup 1990). Modernisation has resulted in food processing emerging out of the unorganised sector there by depriving women of a source of income, which is crucial for the survival of the family. Thus women's employment is governed by the ideological underpinning of gender relations and therefore men and women sell their labour power under different conditions.

The social practices and attitudes that affected the growth of women education were Purdah or female seclusion in the north and sex segregation and early marriage in large part of India. The after effects of Purdah were that to start with parents were reluctant to send their daughters to school. The interplay of external and internal factors and macro and micro processes affects the options available to women (Rousseau 1992) On the one hand, the macro situation and external factors (such as improved irrigation and commercialisation of agriculture) influence the position of women. On the other hand, the size of land owned and caste affiliation influence the perception of the feminine role and the value accorded to women. Internal factors (namely, family strategies and decisions regarding getting educated or not, whether they work, and the kind of work they undertake (Papanek 1990).
Various threads weave the papers together. One of the issues is the economic contribution of women and their labour force participation. Feminists have been concerned that development planners exclude women's activities (Bunch and Carrillo 1990; Tinker 1990) This point has been debated in India for quite some time and, therefore, the 1991 Census collected data on the 'invisible' work of women. One of the main planks of the feminists who pushed for change in development planning was that women should not be just the recipients of welfare doles but be treated as active participants in the development process. Even when women were included in development plan and programmes, as Tinker mentions, the results were not necessarily spectacular (Tinker 1990) There is ample evidence to show that women in the urban areas are adversely affected by several factors, such as education and employment, and those in the rural areas by increased agricultural productivity, the introduction of technology and higher literacy. In fact, mechanisation of the use of the capital intensive techniques exclude women from agricultural activities of marginalized women (Mencher and D Amico 1986). In some cases, they become domestic workers (Arizpe 1977).

What is work in the context of women? Work here is used to cover all kinds of economic activity – employment outside home as well as home based work in the context of household production. Thus Epstein argues states that the type of crop and the nature of women's economic contribution are related. However, whether a woman works or not is a purely economic decision.
instance, a poor woman has to work to ensure the survival of her family. But among the higher caste several other factors affect women’s role in production. Professor Srinivas refers to the immurement of women as part of the process of Sanskritisation and as a result of mobility. It is witnessed even now in India. In northeastern Rajasthan, where the introduction of irrigation gas commercialised agriculture and brought prosperity, the practice of bride price is being replaced by dowry (Miller 1981: Caldwell, Reddyand Caldwell 1983). Without generalising, it may be mentioned that dowry has some connection with the withdrawal of women from agricultural activity; a point mentioned by professor Srinivas (1978). So long as women are involved in economic activity, a woman’s natal family suffers a loss through marriage, which is to be compensated by the groom and his kin group; therefore, bride− price has to be paid. In some parts of Rajasthan, until recently the bride’s parents would say that when a daughter goes, a tractor comes. Now they say that a daughter goes and a tractor goes. Thus, the withdrawal of women from economic activity seems to be directly related to the economic status of the family.

In line with these generally elitist reference models, working for wages has come to be regarded as the mark of low status. This applies to both men and women. For women, in particular, upward mobility leads to their immurement. Men, on the other hand continue to go to the fields but cease to do any manual work they. To keep female labour off the fields and for men only to supervise agricultural activities is a luxury that only the wealthy can
afford. For the large majority of small farmers and land less labourers, agriculture has always been a familial activity. It emphasises the interdependence is marriage; marriage is, therefore, a precondition to successful agriculture. This accounts for the fact that in rural India, except for the ascetic who dons the sobriety robe, marriage is the rule.

The importance of a gender-based specialisation is, curiously enough, reflected in a son-preference among rural societies. Villagers usually explain that they want sons rather than daughters because although sons are often only of little use, they add a permanent woman to the household, while daughters move away to their in-laws homes (Das Gupta 1976) Therefore, son-preference by villagers should be seen as a means to an end (that is, to ensure the presence of a woman of working age) rather than as an end in itself (that is, to have sons rather than daughters)

Women belonging to the lower socio-economic strata have thus been productive assets for a very long time. In rural areas, in particular, the poorer the household the greater has been the productive contribution by its womenfolk. According to the Census of 1961, 42.9 per cent of women workers from scheduled castes were agricultural labourers. The number of scheduled casts women employed as agricultural labourers was over 9 lakh in Andhra Pradesh, over 9 lakh in Tamil Nadu and 7 lakh in Uttar Pradesh' (Srinivas 1974). As already mentioned agricultural labour ranks among the least prestigious tasks. In contrast, clerical work is associated with higher status. It is
only natural that two types of work should be differently evaluated in a society whose members are so keenly pre-occupied with status. It is understandable too that agriculturists in a community which seeks to raise its social status should try first and foremost to ensure that its women do not work at jobs which are ill-paid and universally regarded as demeaning (Beteille 1975).

Many liberals – minded people consider the emancipation of women as being closely linked with their right to work. These views again reflect an upper-class bias. They fail to recognize that much of agricultural work is backbreaking. Those who have to do it, more often than not regard it as a necessary evil rather than something to which they aspire. This applies to men, and even more so to women. It has now generally been realized that many Indian village women who participate in productive activities work longer hours per day than their male counterparts. For instance, Das Gupta, in her study of a village in northern India, found that women and children perform all the manual agriculture tasks, the operation which have been mechanised are those which previously had been associated with men. ’As the man who has learnt a little English commented...’In this village when it come to work we say “ladies first”’ (Dasgupta 1976).

Recent changes have put village men into a more advantageous position to learn about new technologies –They are better-educated and more mobile than women. Unlike men farmers, who learn about chemical fertilizers package
mainly from govt. extension services. The majority of farmwomen reported they had acquired their knowledge for their own husbands or other male villagers. The organizers of the Indian agriculture extension services obviously do not consider village women a suitable audience to inform about new farming technologies. They are oblivious of the fact that a large and still growing proportion of village women participate actively in directly productive activities. Most planners and administrators still cherish the traditional women’s model, which depicts her as a loving wife, subordinated to her husband. In spite of empirical evidence, the traditional women image is strongly embedded in Indian culture, the myth that women do nothing other than perform their domestic duties is still shaping the design of development programmes. This low status of women in large segments in Indian society cannot be raised without the opening up of opportunities of independent employment and income for them, but the process of change to raise the status of women under spheres of socio-economic activities would require sustained effort over a period of time (Government of India 1981).

Do farmwomen really share a major responsibility in agriculture to justify their exposure to new technologies? And do they participate in the making of farm decisions (Chakravarti 1977). These continued doubts about women’s participation in agricultural production and decision-making in the face of the overwhelming evidence of their important roles are responsible for the general neglect of women in rural programmes. Development planning
programmes in agriculture, education, health and nutrition will be most directly affected by ignoring women in the planning process but, in the long run and in varying degrees, most programmes dealing with commerce, finance and industry will also be affected (Olin 1977)

Many attempts to foster agricultural development have failed because men refused to weed a crop which moment had no time to weed or the introduction of cash crops was retarded because women lacked knowledge of the same. Such a refusal to change traditional sex roles in the labour market occurs not only in India but also in all parts of the world (Boserup 1975). An agricultural society has its own distinctive symbiotic relationship with nature since the time of Neolithic agriculture. This distinctiveness has lain primarily involved in gentling and nurturing and breeding; it was her capacity for tenderness and love which give the earliest agricultural settlements of man their touch of security, receptivity, enclosure, nurture; and it was she who made fully possible the growth of civilisation (Mumford, 1961). If it was sure that the specialisation was rooted in physiological and psychic differences between the sexes, we should expect to find that the same task were performed by males of females all over the world. Clearly, the key to understanding all these patterns is in the field of culture rather than in human physiology of anatomy (1975) the gap between labour productivity of men and women continues to widen. Men are taught to apply modern methods in the cultivation of a given crop, while women continue to use traditional methods in the cultivation of the
same crop, thus getting much less out of their efforts than the men (Boserup 1971).

While it is true that workers, irrespective of sex, are exploited in the unorganised sector, women suffer more by the fact of their gender. There is enough evidence to substantiate the view that developmental processes have only pushed women to states of survival. Until recently, their contribution to the economy through self-employment and home-based work has gone unnoticed. It is small wonder, then, that women participation in the unorganised sector, and even more their contribution to the household economy, was readily set aside. Although the socio-economic status of women may vary over a spectrum of variables, several common issues do straddle their lives, creating platforms to come together. The thrust of this section is to pose common issues that underpin their struggles, and not forces that make for differentiation. Women have a noticeable presence in several segments of the unorganised sector. They participate extensively in agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying, social and agro-forestry, fisheries, handicrafts, khadi and village industries, handloom weaving and sericulture. In agriculture, where their participation is substantial, their activities range from sowing to weeding, transplantation and harvesting.

A further discriminating feature is differential wages. It is now a commonplace that women get paid much less than men, often for performing similar work. Their earnings are low because wages are discriminated and
work is seasonal. They are the lowest segment of the workforce and are afforded hardly any statutory protection either with regard to wages or hours of work, and are the first to be dislodged when work is scarce.

Going by definition, much of the work that women perform as part of family labour or as self-employed at home based producers are either not recognised as work of it is dubbed a subsistence activity, therefore, a subsidiary activity. The conventional tools of various national data gathering agencies simply fail to capture their contribution. The all round neglect of women’s labour finds reflection if various poverty alleviation programmes and social legislation. Several policy documents, in particular the Report of the national committee on the status of women in India and the Blueprint of action points and the National Plan of Action for women brought pressure on the government to recognise them as active participants in development. The chapter on women and development in the Sixth plan resulted in the introduction of schemes specifically oriented to their needs, and the incorporation of special components in various others.

While the sixth plan attempted to meet their needs in the areas of education, health, employment, industry, science and technology and welfare, the Seventh Plan further stepped up these efforts. None of this means that, the situation of women in India is satisfactory or acceptable. Regardless of all the factors cited the fact remains that the country measures poorly in terms of any
of the indicators that are normally issued to measure the status of women. The ratio of women to men in the population of the country is low (933 f to 1000 m) accounted for by poor care of female infants and of women in their childbearing years. The disadvantaged status of women is also evidenced in the low level of their literacy (24.8% as compared to 46.9% for men), their poor representation in the workforce (45 million females) and the fact that their dropout rate, from primary and middle school is at least 10 per cent higher than it is for men.

**Overviews of the literature**

The literature referred for the study is described briefly in the following description. The National Committee on the status of women in India (1972) published a report on the status of Indian women and recommend changes to improve their position. The text of the report highlighted that despite constitutional guarantees the roles, rights and participation of women in all spheres of life were limited. Development has been defined by the world conference of the UN decade for women held at Copenhagen in July 1980 describes development as a means of total development including development in the political, economical, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life as also the physical, moral, intellectual and cultural growth of human person. Women development should not only be viewed, as an issue in social development but should be seen as an essential component in every dimension of development. While the new technologies have created employment opportunities for women and increased the household income of women of
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Socio-economic status is the base of measuring the standard of living of any society. In rural India the status of women in the society is defined through the socio-economic status of family. Rural women working on small farms or for low wages enjoy low status. With in the family her economic status is depends upon her male counterpart because mostly women do not have any source of income, they help in agriculture and other allied activities but the product is marketed by men, who keep the all produce amount. Why has Indian development neglected rural women so far, especially when they constitute an important productive asset? Being a women in a specific culture determines whether she will be allowed to survive, what roles will be assigned to her, whether she will receive an education and if so, what kind. Her productive role is also influenced by economic conditions as well as by socio-cultural parameters. Srinivas (1977) also mentions that the productive activities of men and women together are essential for survival. Therefore, marriage is a precondition for successful agriculture among the small and marginal farmers. Rural women working on small farms or for low wages enjoy low status, while women whose husbands do not depend upon their economic contribution enjoy higher social status. Higher social status for women entails giving up productive activity and leads to their immurement, argues Epstein (1973).

Sen Gupta in his work “women worker in India” (1966) has ably produced employment profile of Indian women. It is generally assumed that the education and employment generally improve the status of women his
study an status, role and power of Bengal tends to show that inspite of women’s increasing participation in Varity of professions one cant say that the study of women has improved. Gharpur 1954 has focussed on the life and labour of full time dogmatic servants in Poona City. Buch 1968 has discussed the problem in women education with particular reference to the recommitted in education commission women’s health problem has been highlighted. Padma Prakash 1986 women political statuses have also received attention by scholars like kaum 1968 ,Sinha 1974 ,Majumdar 1974 etc.

SC Dube “Men’s and women’s role in India” 1973 reviewed the men and women role while dealing with traditional roles of women during ancient India it was found that in the traditional system a wife had to obey her authoritarian and dominating husband.. In the work “women and violence” 1989 Sinha explained that violence against women were sectioned in the from of control and cohesion gender relationship of men’s dominance Girirappa in “role of women in rural development” 1980 said the status rural women Could be visualised through social change economic change occupation structure, culture change, change in education, nutrition, sanitation and political awareness. Prithi Raj & Sharma in “women Employees and Rural Development(1995) analysed the role and status of women in his social development.

Epstein (1973) discussing the labour force participation of women refers to the low status attached to female work she argues that small and marginal
formers may hide the fact that their women work on the farm while agricultural labourers may not. Mencher, discussing the meaning of farm household and division of labour in agriculture and refer to the over lap between caste and class like Epstein she mentions that the size of land holding is crucial in determining women's participation in agriculture activities. Lower caste women with small landholding work in their field. Higher caste women generally do not working in the field except in large landholding household where women play a supervisory role in field operations. In addition the increasing cast of agriculture has forced women to work in their field. An increase in land holding leads to the withdrawal of women from farm activity. This may not necessarily be due to status value but because they have to undertake new agriculture related task. These tasks frequently ignored by data gatherers including food for labourers (which the house hold can now afford to hire) and soaking sheet before they are sowed. This makes them invisible as agriculturist. The exploitation of women continues in spite of law to protect women rights and various schemes for women welfare. This happens because of traditional views about women (for example the reluctance of banks to give loan to women). Desai mentions that that mechanisation has had an adverse impact on women because they are relegated to the labor-intensive task or substitution (Boserup 1990).

The after effects of Purdah were that to start with parents were reluctant to send their daughters to school. The interplay of external and internal factors
and macro and micro processes affects the options available to women (Rousseau 1992) On the one hand, the macro situation and external factors (such as improved irrigation and commercialisation of agriculture) influence the position of women. On the other hand, the size of land owned and caste affiliation influence the perception of the feminine role and the value accorded to women. Internal factors (namely, family strategies and decisions regarding getting educated or not, whether they work, and the kind of work they undertake (Papanek 1990).

Various threads weave the papers together. One of the issues is the economic contribution of women and their labour force participation. Feminists have been concerned that development planners exclude women's activities (Bunch and Carrillo 1990, Tinker 1990) This point has been debated in India for quite some time and, therefore, the 1991 Census collected data on the 'invisible' work of women. One of the main planks of the feminists who pushed for change in development planning was that women should not be just the recipients of welfare doles but be treated as active participants in the development process. In fact, mechanisation of the use of the capital intensive techniques exclude women from agricultural activities of marginalized women (Mencher and D Amico 1986). In some cases, they become domestic workers (Arizpe 1977).
The importance of a gender-based specialisation is, curiously enough, reflected in a son-preference among rural societies. Villagers usually explain that they want sons rather than daughters because although sons are often only of little use, they add a permanent woman to the household, while daughters move away to their in-laws homes (Das Gupta 1976) Therefore, son-preference by villagers should be seen as a means to an end (that is, to ensure the presence of a woman of working age) rather than as an end in itself (that is, to have sons rather than daughters). Epstein argues that the type of crop and the nature of women's economic contribution are related. However, whether a woman works or not is not a purely economic decision. For instance, a poor woman has to work to ensure the survival of her family. But among the higher caste several other factors affect women's role in production. In northeastern Rajasthan, where the introduction of irrigation gas commercialised agriculture and brought prosperity, the practice of bride price is being replaced by dowry (Miller 1981: Caldwell, Reddy and Caldwell 1983). Without generalising, it may be mentioned that dowry has some connection with the withdrawal of women from agricultural activity; a point mentioned by Srinivas (1978) and Epstein. In contrast, clerical work is associated with higher status. It is only natural that two types of work should be differently evaluated in a society whose members are so keenly pre-occupied with status. It is understandable too that agriculturists in a community which seeks to raise its social status
should try first and foremost to ensure that its women do not work at jobs which are ill-paid and universally regarded as demeaning (Beteille 1975).

Chakravarti (1977) argues that do farmwomen really share a major responsibility in agriculture to justify their exposure to new technologies? And do they participate in the making of farm decisions these continued doubts about women’s participation in agricultural production and decision-making in the face of the overwhelming evidence of their important roles are responsible for the general neglect of women in rural programmes. Development planning programmes in agriculture, education, health and nutrition will be most directly affected by ignoring women in the planning process but, in the long run and in varying degrees, most programmes dealing with commerce, finance and industry will also be affected (Olin 1977)

Many attempts to foster agricultural development have failed because men refused to weed a crop which moment had no time to weed or the introduction of cash crops was retarded because women lacked knowledge of the same. Such a refusal to change traditional sex roles in the labour market occurs not only in India but also in all parts of the world (Boserup 1975). An agricultural society has its own distinctive symbiotic relationship with nature since the time of Neolithic agriculture. This distinctiveness has lain primarily involved in gentling and nurturing and breeding; it was her capacity for tenderness and love which give the earliest agricultural settlements of man
their touch of security, receptivity, enclosure, nurture; and it was she who made fully possible the growth of civilization. If it was sure that the specialization was rooted in physiological and psychic differences between the sexes, we should expect to find that the same task were performed by males of females all over the world. Clearly, the key to understanding all these patterns is in the field of culture rather than in human physiology of anatomy (1975) the gap between labour productivity of men and women continues to widen. Men are taught to apply modern methods in the cultivation of a given crop, while women continue to use traditional methods in the cultivation of the same crop, thus getting much less out of their efforts than the men (Boserup 1971). Tim Hanstad, Jennifer Brown, and Roy Prosteman(2002) in their article Larger Homestead Plots as Land Reform described how attached the women to their homested.Jennifer Brown, Kripa Ananthpur, and Renee Giovarelli, “Women’s Access and Rights to Land in Karnataka. Sujata Das Chowdhuri (2002) in her paper “Women’s Access and Rights to Land in West Bengal: A Field Study describes gender and women rights.

The present study

The present study is an attempt to understand the socio economic status of agriculture women at Punawalikhurd village of block Babina of district Jhansi. The village has a heterogeneous caste distribution. Total population of the village is 875, which is spread among 11 castes and 133 households. Village Punawali khurd is about 32 km to the west of
Jhansi town. In order to reach Punawali Khurd one has to travel 12 km. to Raksa on Jhansi-Shivpuri highway then turn left and travel 14 km on Raksa-Rajapur road to reach a junction. Understanding of socio-economic status woman requires analysis of socio-culture, social-economic and demographically environmental dimension of the region, on the other hand nature of involvement of women in agriculture and dependence of the family their livelihood. It is the economic relations, which provide the needed linkage between society and environment.

The focus of the study centre around the socio-economic status and Agricultural rural women for this a detail, understanding would be required of women involvement of agriculture and same allied operation, economic necessity of them, their productive, reproductive role of institution.

The study attempts to explore the manner in which the interaction between society and environment articulated through material culture, cultural values and gender decision of labor. Women must be included and accepted as full patterns in economic social and environmental development.

The rural woman section is not much different from the traditional women society. This section is exposed to various factor and trace of modernization, at the same time it is linked with tradition family and traditional social structure. Hence from sociological point of view it is highly interesting to study the socio-economic status of rural women.
Hypothesis

- Rural women earning can directly improve their development.
- Rural women are spent more time in productive and reproductive work than men.
- The poor and SC/ST family is more dependent on women’s earnings.
- Investment on female worker and production received by women is smaller than men.
- There is an inequality between men and women in the distribution of power.
- There is an inequality between men and women in the distribution of resource in education.
- There is an inequality between men and women in the distribution of resource in health and Family planning services.
- Unequal division of labor in production of cash crop leads lower status of women in rural area.
- Sources of availability of the loan to rural women from financial institution are very few.

Rural Women Status can be measured by the degree of freedom she has in the following:

- To use own income in her own way
- To participate in family decision-making.
- To participate in community meeting.
- To chose and hold a job.
- To control over the resources.
- To access the health facility.
- To have right to say yes or no.
- To recognise her productive and reproductive contribution.
Objective of the Study

1. To know the profile of respondents.
2. To know about the rural women in their family structure and interaction pattern amongst family member.
3. To know the structural features of the village.
4. To study the status of women in agriculture and it allied operation like livestock, forestry etc.
5. To study the economic status of rural women, particularly belonging to SC/St other backward class and economically weaker section of society.
6. To study the role of social institution, community based organization and other agency to uplift the status of women.
7. To study the introduction of cash crop (instead of food crops), how did affect women role in agriculture.
8. To find out time period invested by the Farmwomen in their productive activity (the production of good and service for consumption and trade), reproductive activity (the care and maintenance of the house holds and its member) and community activity (collective organization of social events and services at community level).
9. To study the status of the availability of loans to Farmwomen and role of financial institution.
Methodology and Chapter schemes
Household survey with the use of interview schedule. Key informant interviews were conducted, male and female outside and within the target communities with knowledge of the agriculture, economic, socio-demographic and/or health situation of the area. PRA Activity Group of 10-20 adult and of mixed sex and caste of all cluster was included in PRA activities, Some PRA activities like gender analysis and daily activities profile were conducted in two clusters with general and OBC male/ Female and SC male/ Female. Case study method used for the study of women headed household, Rich and well off family and poor family.

Chapter one focus the understanding of socio-economic status of women, role of farmwomen in agriculture, over views of literature and hypothesis and objective of present study. Chapter two focus on area and people of study area and the methods and technique, which use for primary data collection, detail about sample, and data collection technique, procedure and field experience of data collection. It is also described the infrastructures facilities, development programme, information channels. social, political and economic structure, social custom. Chapter third, focuses nutrition, mother and child health, family planning, resource access, power dynamics, gender division of labor community meeting and participation. It is also described the economic status of women, cash crop production and its effects on the farmwomen, mechanization and housing facilities of women respondent. Summary and conclusion is presented in the Chapter forth. An exhaustive Bibliography along with case study and the tools used for data collection is attached in the Appendix