Chapter II

*Historical Review of Women Field Labourers in Uttar Pradesh during 1881-1951*
HISTORICAL REVIEW OF WOMEN FIELD LABOURERS IN UTTAR PRADESH DURING 1881 - 1951

Women, as a class have always played a pivotal role in the process of economic development. In the rural economy women were mostly viewed as the ones who supplemented their family incomes by helping men on agricultural fields and at the same time carrying out household responsibilities. At household level women’s roles were complex and diverse. The responsibilities of looking after children and elderly persons, managing the family, attending to the household chores and earning a livelihood for the family, have made their life distinct and challenging.

In Uttar Pradesh, caste played an important role in deciding the status of a woman in a family. It was found that women of the upper castes were highly restricted from moving out of the boundaries of their household. The seclusion of women was prevalent among Hindus and the Muslims. According to Duffrin (1890) “A Brahman or a Thakur lady would never go out of the harem to assist her husband or son in the field, nor will do any work outside the four walls of her zanana”. The Muslim cultivators also kept their women in purdah and in order to maintain the dignity of the family, women were restricted from moving out for work. The only work she would do was spinning thread inside her house.
While the ladies in the landowner's family spent their time in cooking and supervising the kitchen (Jafri, 1985). The custom of purdah was also common among the high caste Hindus. Due to which, the women belonging to the Brahmana and Ksatriya castes were not generally concerned with any type of economic activities (Tyagi, 1994). Generally women did not work in the agricultural fields, but only those who belonged to the lower caste worked as agricultural labourers. A major portion of women in agriculture comprised of day labourers. They were assigned menial tasks and particularly those tasks in agriculture which required lot of energy.

Traditionally women belonging to low castes like Chamar, Passi, Dhobi and Koris provided agricultural labour and other services. These were by and large landless peasants. Women of the Chamar or other lower caste agriculturists worked together with their male family members (Duffrein, 1890). There were two more castes mentioned by Jafri (1985) i.e. Kachhis and Kurmis whose women worked in the agricultural fields. Women of the poor peasant households assisted their men in the fields.
Females belonging to the lower social hierarchy were mostly engaged in productive activities in order to supplement their family income. These women usually worked in pastures and fields and therefore worked independently for their family needs. During 1881 the total female population of U.P was 21,195,313, out of which 63.85 per cent had no occupation of their own; these were employed chiefly in the domestic work of their families (fig.1).

**Figure 1. Total Working and Non-working Female Population of U.P. in 1881**

![Pie chart showing 63.85% total working population and 36.19% total non-working population.](image)


While the remaining 36.19 per cent were those women who assisted their husband's occupations, or earned their own living by some special employment. Of these working women, 59.27 per cent fall into the agricultural class (Fig 2). This constituted mainly 37.99 per cent cultivating tenants, 17.89 per cent agricultural labourers and 2.85 per cent
landholders (Census, 1881). In U. P., the number of women agricultural labourers was less than the total cultivators because of the fact that the agricultural holdings were so small that they were looked after by the members of the cultivating owners, and no outside labour was necessary (Jafri, 1985).

**Figure 2. Distribution of Female Workers in Different Employments in 1881**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>59.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>26.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>14.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *ibid*

Note: Other classes included, domestic class (0.82%), professional class (0.85%), Commercial class (0.22%), and Indefinite class (12.77%).

Women of the cultivating families assisted in agricultural business, where they watered the fields, sowed the seeds and also performed household duties. According to Duffrin (1890) the conditions of the labouring classes were distinctly worse. Labourers were less permanent than cultivators; they had less credit and did not get loans easily. In the slack season when there was lesser work, they had no cattle to sell and
little stock of grains to survive. Women of the labouring classes used to help their husbands by selling grass for 1 ½ annas a day. They hardly had enough to eat, sometimes women collected saag (leafy vegetables) which was boiled along with a small quantity of flour.

The laboureres earned well only during the harvesting season, when there was a demand for labour. The participation of women in the workforce also depended upon the economic wellbeing of the family. Among rich cultivators women were never allowed to work outside their homes. It was found that field labour was not women’s main occupation in all the classes. They were compelled to work only when the family faced economic crises or if the male family members fell ill or became incapable of working on the fields. For instance, in the Agra Division, the wife of an agricultural labourer was compelled to work on fields when her husband became physically incapable to work. Lord Duffrin (1890) also mentioned other cases where women were forced to work for field labour, if the husband passed away or fell sick. Women of the small cultivating classes also worked when their stock of grains got exhausted and the men migrated in search for daily labour (ibid).

Migration of male labourers was usually seasonal as they returned back to their fields when the crops became ready for harvesting. In the absence of the male members the responsibility of the family and the
outside work directly fell on the women's shoulders. Since women were mostly employed in low paid work in agriculture therefore it was very difficult for women agricultural workers to survive during hard times.

Once employed in field labour there was a distinction between the work performed by women and men. Women by nature were considered a weaker sex than man. In agriculture they were given those tasks which were more manual and repetitive in nature, such as weeding, transplanting, harvesting, sowing, etc. All these tasks were also remunerated with the lowest rate and were considered menial.

2.1 Agricultural Operations

Since the Vedic period the laborious functions of yoking the bullocks to the plough, driving them to the field, tilling the land, mixing the soil with the manure, sowing the seeds, guarding the crops for days and nights, harvesting the crop, winnowing out the grains and taking them home for storage were undertaken by the farmer himself. He was assisted by all the members of the family which included the women and children. Hence women were always seen as assisting their males on fields.

Women were never seen as a farmer or held high as a cultivator. In Gorakhpur district of U.P., a cultivator was always seen as a person who
was a man and who worked hard to till the land. This could be seen in one of the agricultural saying which stated that,

"Mangsar kahe kisan ho ja mardaana,
Teri paki aai Kharif ise jan gawana,
Khene jugta rakh tu ghar mein tiyai,
Rakhte ko de bech tayyar jab baki kiyai,
Kar genhun mein dene ki taiyari,
Yeh mahnat ka wakt hai tere bharf."

The Cultivator Mangsar says, “now be a man! Your autumn crop is ripe. Now is the time to harvest it and keep as much as is required for food in your household. Sell the rest and prepare to pay the rent. Now prepare to give the first light watering to your wheat fields. This is the time when you must work hard” (Amin and Crook, 2005). This saying showed that a cultivator was viewed as a man, who was responsible for watering the fields, harvesting the crops and selling it in the market and paying the rent. This indicated that all the important tasks of farming were carried out by the men. In the saying, there was no reference given for the work done by women.

In agriculture, ploughing was considered as the most skillful operation and was predominantly done by male agricultural labourers. The plough was held in very high esteem and was regarded as an auspicious article. Of all farm labourers the ploughman was paid well
enough (Duffrein, 1890). Women being considered inferior to men were not allowed to use the plough. But in spite of this, women performed almost all agricultural operations, from tilling of land, to sowing of seeds or transplanting, watering the fields, manuring, harvesting, threshing and winnowing. Women worked along with their men folk in order to augment the needs of the family. All the menial operations in agriculture were performed by women. In the hilly district of Garhwal women agricultural labourers were held in very low esteem. They nearly did all the field work except the actual ploughing. They sow, weed and reap, and between harvests were employed for carrying fuel and fodder from the neighboring hills (Walton, 1910).

2.2 Pre-Harvesting Operations

Weeding: In agriculture women were largely employed in all kinds of field labour, not excluding the more arduous kinds, but chiefly in weeding and cutting (Atkinson, 1874). Weeds and grasses were collected by women out of the ploughed fields. Deep weeding was known as gorab and the superficial weeding was known as nikāi, nirāi, or nirwāi. The tasks of weeding (nirai) and hoeing (kodai) were chiefly performed by women along with men. The excellence at this work of Kurmi women was proverbial-

"Bhali jat Kunbin ki; khurpi hath"
The spud (khurpi) was the usual instrument of weeding. While hoeing was generally done by men armed with large hoes (kasi) (Atkinson, 1879). Extensive weeding is required for the Kharif crops, because weeds grew in abundance during rains. Weeding was normally done twice or thrice in the months of July, August and September. In the Gorakhpur and other eastern districts, weeding was carried out before the fields were ploughed (Amin and Crook, 2005). Most of the hand weeding was done by women. Men usually performed those weeding operations for which bullock power had to be used for example the weeding between the rows of standing crops.

The most valuable Kharif crop was cotton. The crop required ploughing only once or twice and needed more weeding. Hence cotton was entirely weeded by women (Brockman, 1909). Weeding of cotton was done by hands. The weeding operations were carried in the midst of hot weather in the fields, there was no shade and the task was done in a squatting position. These tasks were not easy but they were considered as lighter form of field work and were performed entirely by women (Nevill, 1907 c). In Bareilly district, during the month of June and July, women
visited the north or east of the fields, where they picked a few of the
largest pods, and hung them by their fiber to the tallest visible stalk
(*bhogaldai*). They then squatted round the stalk, and filled their mouths
with parched rice and puffed it out over the field. The parched rice was
scattered across the same field when the crop flowered. The object behind
was said to be that the cotton must swell out like the rice (Atkinson,
1879).

**Transplanting:** In rice farming, the men ploughed and planted the
nurseries whereas women transplanted the seedlings in the mud. The
transplantation of rice was known as *dibbling*, it was done by both men
and women. Two to six plants were dibbled together, and a space of five
or six inches was left between each of the clumps known as *bán* (Beckett,
1864). Transplanting rice was the hardest work done by women. It was
done in the midst of fields filled with water and in extreme heat of the
sun. The women had to bend continuously to do the planting, sometimes
leading to spinal problems (Crooke, 1907).

**Sowing:** Sowing of crops was also performed by women (Walton, 1910).
In furrow sowing women used to carry baskets filled with seeds and
dropped the seeds into the furrow. In most states in India, even now,
whereas ploughing is done by men it is the women who follow the plough
and drop the seeds in the furrows (Randhwa, 1980).

**Irrigation:** Women also participated actively in irrigating the fields. Although the number was not large but there are evidences which showed participation of women in various types of irrigation.

**Pur Irrigation:** Illustration 1 shows the working of *pur* Irrigation where only three labourers were required; one labour to drive the pair of bullocks which draws up the bucket, another to empty the bucket at the top of the well, and the third to distribute the water in the field.


Women were sometimes employed in *gharra* and *Pur* irrigation, both for drawing the bucket filled with water and emptying it at the wellhead. In *pur* irrigation women were seldom employed, except at the wellhead to empty the bucket (Beckett, 1856). Jafri (1985) in his work on United Provinces also founded that in the *pur* irrigation, the labourer who
pulled the pur was generally a woman and for which she used to get three and half annas per day.

**Gharrá Irrigation**: in the gharra irrigation six labourers were required to pull the gharra, and three more labourers were used as a relief party in order to keep the drawing steady for the whole day. One man always stood at the top of the well to empty the bucket, and another was needed to distribute the water in the field. Illustration 2 shows that women were also employed in gharra irrigation, both for drawing the bucket and emptying it at the well head.

![Illustration 2](source: ibid, p. 104)

**Charkhi Irrigation**: In Charkhi irrigation a broad open pulley, which was something like the wooden wheel, was used. The labourer stood on a plank over the well, forced down one end of the rope and brought up the other with the vessel filled with water (ibid). Illustration 3 shows the
working of *Charkhi* irrigation. The picture also shows a woman sitting in a squatting posture and doing her work at the well. Women were not frequently employed in either lever or pulley irrigation because the work became more mechanical by the use of pulley.

**Illustration 3**

![Illustration of Charkhi Irrigation](source:image)

Source: ibid, p. 106

**Dhenkul Irrigation:** *Dhenkul* is a type of lever irrigation. It consisted of a long pole, with a lump of mud stuck as a weight on the thicker end. A rope was attached to the other end on which an earthen pot was hanged. The pole was set upon a strong support, where one end was fixed in the ground at the distance of foot from the well. Illustration 4 shows a labourer pulling down the lever by the rope.

The pot was then lowered through the space into the well. And after filling the water he would then empty it into the water course at the top of the well. Since it was also lever irrigation, women were not seen at
the well top to fetch the water. Although a woman sitting in a squatting position is also seen in this picture. Women sometimes were not actively involved in the irrigation process but they were always seen assisting the men in some way or the other.

**Illustration 4**

![Illustration](source: ibid. p. 106)

2.3 **Harvesting and Post-Harvesting Operations**

Reaping was also known as *lahi* and the reaper was called as *lehra* (Atkinson, 1879). The women carried huge bundles of reaped crop over their head and walked long distances. The entire harvesting operation in rice and wheat cultivation was a joint venture calling for a full day’s labour.

Women also performed other agricultural operations such as threshing, winnowing, tending cattle, tending sugar-mills, preparing the
soil for the coming harvest, etc. “The unhusked grain was shelled chiefly by the women” (ibid). Women’s most laborious work was that of husking and grinding grain. The rice was cleaned in a wooden mortar, which was pounded with a heavy pestle.

Illustration 5

The women belonging to less affluent and low caste families used to grind the grain to turn it into flour. There was always a stone mortar in which the grain was pounded with a heavy club which had a ring of iron at one end (Illustration 5). Grinding flour was much more tiresome and was done before sunrise. While working on the grinding mill, they had to lean forward in a strained position. These women worked with good will and were often heard singing songs. According to Jafri (1985), such songs were called ‘the Song of the Mill’.

“This song may be heard at early dawn,”
Mid the sound of the whirling wheel.
When golden clouds tinge the eastern sky,
And shadows homewards steal.
'T is sung by matron and by maid,
As the heavy stone goes round,
The noise of crushing grinding corn,
By their voices almost drowned”.

Women also added to the family income, by collecting the harvested crops. Some of them earned wages in grain by rendering menial services in the houses of the landowners and upper tenant classes, where they were engaged in drawing water, making cow dung cakes for fuel and manure. Since agricultural work was seasonal, most of the times female labourers worked as casual labourers.

Women also helped others by digging grass and collected firewood for sale. “They assisted in gathering fuel, or watching fields, or carrying loads, or herding cattle” (Duffrein, 1890). They carried food for their men who worked on the fields and also gathered saag (green vegetables) from the fields and cooked it.

2.4 Agricultural Implements

For agricultural operations the tools used by men and women were very simple. Illustration 6 shows the different implements used by men
and women for agriculture in the Allahabad region. The tools used for hoeing and weeding were the *kasi* and *phaora* (spade hoe), the *khurpi*, a spud or scraper was used for scratching grass and weeding (Atkinson, 1879). According to Jafri (1985) a *khurpa* or a small hand hoe was generally used by girls in the weeding operations. The instrument was also used for loosening the earth round the roots of plants; for this last operation the *kudar*, a kind of sharp pointed axe was generally employed. The *hansya* or sickle was mostly used to cut the crops. In Allahabad region the *gandasa*, which was better known as *garansi* or *garrasi*, was used for chopping sugar-cane and fodder. The *khudari*, an adze-shaped implement, and the *tangi*, a kind of hatchet were generally used. The *pharwa* or *phaora*, or a large hoe was commonly used by men.

**Illustration 6**

2.5 Wages

Since 1882 the agricultural labourers were estimated to receive wages in kind and cash. In cash the wages included rupee, annas and pice, while in kind they were paid in sers of coarse grains. According to Nevill (1907, b) in Ballia district the wages of agricultural labourers for ploughing and sowing were 2 ½ sers, or half annas. The wages for weeding and watering was 1¼ sers. For digging and thrashing the rate was 1¾ sers or 1½ annas. While for reaping the labourers obtained one bundle in 16, which was approximately 6⅓ sers of grain or five annas in the day. Women were more extensively employed in the lighter forms of field work such as weeding and watering, received only two-thirds of a man’s wage. Wage discrimination was seen as the women were paid less then men for the same nature of work.

The women were largely employed in field labour but their work was considered less skilled and simple. According to Atkinson (1874), in the Hamirpur district women casual labourers who worked on fields received lesser wages then men. During the sowing and reaping seasons the men used to get money or its equivalent in grain to the amount of seven or eight pice, while women received only six pice per diem. During the rains men received six pice for weeding, whereas women received only four pice. During the harvest time the women were paid in kind.
They got two seers of grain and a bundle of reaped crop. Whereas the men use to get four seers of grain and a bundle of crop for which they were hired for harvesting.

During 1873 the women were largely employed in harvesting operations and received half anna to one anna a day or its equivalent in grain (ibid). According to Nevill (1922) the largest wage-earning class was that of the agricultural labourers and the payment in grain was made, so that the wage rate remained unaffected by the value of the amount received. Still whether payment was made in kind or cash the women agricultural labourers suffered with wage differentiation. Brockman (1911) also stated that, although women were most commonly employed in manual labour such as earthwork and weeding, they were remunerated at a smaller rate than the men. Sometimes the men received wages in cash along with food for a day, while women were not provided with food since there was a notion that she cooked the food for the household.

In Bareilly district the rate of remuneration for women for the task of weeding and hoeing was three quarters of an anna and food, or one anna in all. For men the wage was one anna a day and food (Atkinson, 1879). Although the rates of wages in agriculture for field labour increased during 1860’s to 1880’s, still the women labourers were paid less. “In 1860’s the wages of agricultural and general labourers increased
from one *anna* to one *anna* three *pice* per day, while in 1872 the rate had risen to one *anna* six *pice* or two *annas*" (Nevill, 1907a).

However in 1881 women’s wages remained at one and a half to two *annas*. Hence the economic condition of the farm women in agriculture was worst. Women agricultural labourers were relatively poor, mal-nourished, weak decision makers and economically less organized.

The village women rarely had any bedding of their own and most of them passed their nights in their day clothes. In such conditions the women agricultural labourers of poor households had to live a very tough life. There were evidences which showed that women of the lower classes were insufficiently clad during the winters. Women were malnourished as most of the times they remained empty stomach. It was assumed that an adult working male’s health was required in order to supplement the needs of the rest of the family (Duffrein, 1890).

2.6 Women’s Participation in Agriculture

The North-Western Provinces and Oudh was essentially an agricultural state. But the participation of females in agriculture depended mostly on the level of socio-economic factors. According to the Census Report (1931, a) women in the Western Himalayas were largely employed in the agriculture sector. Their level of participation was much
higher than that of males. One of the reasons behind this was that there was no *purdah* system in this region. Due to which women were not restricted to work outside on the agricultural fields. Another reason was that most of the times the head of the family remained away from home in search of better employment. Therefore the family cultivation was carried entirely by the women and children were left alone at home.

In the Western Indo-Gangetic region there was low participation of women in the agriculture sector. As these areas were dominated by high castes and higher branches of other castes whose women either did not do any work apart from housekeeping or sometimes the heads of the families did not disclose the fact that their women worked, for the sake of respectability.

In the Indo-Gangetic, Central and Eastern regions the number of women workers was higher. Moreover the number of women working in cultivation was higher in the Eastern plains than the Central plains. In the Eastern plains also, the influence of temporary migration was noticed in Jaunpur and Ghazipur districts. In these districts seasonal migration took place into the jute mills of West Bengal fields (Nevil, 1908; Nevil, 1909). Men migrated in neighboring states for regular income as work in agriculture was seasonal. They came back in harvesting season, when the crop was ready.
Figure 3. Distribution of Female Agricultural Workers in U.P., 1931

Source: Census of India (1931, b) United Provinces of Agra & Oudh, Volume XVIII, Part II – Imperial and Provincial Tables.
Among all the districts of U.P. the Gorakhpur district which lies in the Eastern Sub-Himalayan region had the highest participation of females in agricultural sector (Fig. 3). Lowest participation of women was found in the Etah district which lies in the Western Indo-Gangetic region.

Although U.P. was an extensively agricultural state and women were actively involved in farming, still there was a large section of females that were not employed in the active labour force.

During the Pre-Independence period the total number of female working population was much less than the number of non-working population (Fig 4).

**Figure 4. Percentage of Working and Non-Working Female Population during 1881 to 1931**

![Bar chart showing percentage of working and non-working female population from 1881 to 1931](image)

Source: For 1881 percentage was calculated from data available in Census Report of the N.-W. P. And Oudh, 1881. For 1911, 1921 & 1931 percentage was calculated from the values given in Census of India (1931, a) United Provinces of Agra & Oudh. Vol. XVIII, Part I-Report, Allahabad, 410.
The available data from Census 1881, 1911, 1921 and 1931 showed that large proportion of females remained out of the work force and were involved only in domestic responsibilities of the household. The Census did not involve the domestic work under the main head of working population. Those women who were engaged in domestic duties like cooking, grinding of grain, drawing water from wells and taking food to their families in the fields were always shown as unemployed and therefore were never classified as workers (Census, 1921).

The concentration of women largely in domestic work was because of the fact that social obligations restricted women’s movement outside their homes. According to the Census Report (1931, a) it was certainly regarded as socially respectable for a wife to be engaged at home in household duties instead of working in the fields. The caste system also played an important role in reducing women’s participation in the workforce. Due to higher social standing in the upper castes women were usually kept at home.

Women’s participation in the agricultural sector was more in the lower castes. But in these castes also the economic condition of the family decided whether it was necessary to send the females to work in the fields or not. Moreover a continuous rise in the percentage of the non-working population was seen from 1881 to 1911 (Fig 4). But during 1921
the number of non-workers dropped to 61.93 per cent and the working population rose to 38.07 per cent which was higher than the previous census.

According to the Census report (1931, a) the increase in female work force was due to the rise in cost of living and heavy mortality caused by influenza during 1921. These two factors necessitated for every available woman to lend a hand in the fields and supplement the family's income. The increase took place solely in the agricultural sector. Later in 1931, on the return to more normal conditions the population also increased. And there was a decline in female working population from 38.07 per cent in 1921 to 30.5 per cent (1931) (Fig 4). But with this the number of non-working population also increased again from 61.93 per cent in 1921 to 69.5 per cent. This showed that in normal circumstances women were always preferred to stay at home however during the crisis they worked in the agricultural fields. Therefore women agricultural workers were less permanent and faced lot of hardships in the workforce.

In 1940's women were again found mostly doing agricultural operations. According to the Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee (1948) the cultivation of land was a common task which was generally performed by women workers. But precise information about later developments in the participation of women work
Later the Census Report (1951) showed that, women of the lower castes usually worked either for separate wages or at the family occupation. In the rural areas women usually participated in the family cultivation. There was a sharp fall in the proportion of female workers. It was 514 per 1000 males in 1921, 423 in 1931 and 374 in 1951. In 1951 the participation of women in family occupations, especially in agriculture declined because of the prevailing under-employment.

Social barriers like *purdah* also restricted women’s movement outside their homes. Where *purdah* was observed by women they could not as a rule do much to augment family incomes and even if they worked their work remained hidden from the enumerators.

Among various regions of Uttar Pradesh the participation of female workers in agriculture sector was higher in the Himalayan region than the western plains. The important factors affecting this distribution were the sex-ratio, the very active participation of women in the agricultural occupations and emigration of males of working ages. The ratio of female among the working agricultural classes of the Himalayan division was highest in the state, being 1,057 against the State average of 930 for all
agricultural classes (fig. 5). Women in this region took an active part in agriculture which was the main occupation of the majority of the population. People also owned small holdings and they worked their land themselves and rarely employed labour. In the rural areas women usually participated in the family cultivation. Since purdah was not prevailing in hill regions therefore there was no attempt to conceal the fact that women worked on agricultural land.

However the Western Plains had the lowest proportion of females in agriculture among all regions of U.P. (Fig 5). The agricultural classes of this division were the most prosperous in the State and had a high proportion of high castes and higher branches of other castes. They did not permit their women to work in the fields, or, even if they did, the fact was concealed from the census enumerators.

The Hills and Plateau had the second highest proportion of workers. It was the second highest in the State after Eastern Plains, which was only slightly higher. Women in this division worked freely in the fields and there was no attempt at concealing this fact.
2.7 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to reconstruct the situation of women field labour in Uttar Pradesh from government reports of pre-independence period and gazetteers. It was found that various castes and communities constrained women from working outside the house. The evaluation of the British reports and various census reports helped showing that women of rich cultivators were restricted from working on fields. But women belonging to poor peasant households were found assisting their men in the field without any restrictions. Women of the lower castes like Kachchi, Koris, Kurmis, hamar, Passi and Dhobi worked as agricultural labourers along with their husbands. Although
these women actively participated in agriculture the work they did was considered inferior.

Also the tools and implements that were used for farming were very minor. It was found that where the tasks were more mechanized women were not employed. For instance in irrigation, women were only employed where there was a need to empty the bucket on the well head. The use of Persian wheel and animal power in irrigation again did not require female labourers. The use of plough was also highly restricted to women. There were social obligations that forbid women to use the plough on fields.

Across different regions, more women were found to be engaged as labourers in agriculture in the Western Himalayan region and the Central and Eastern plains. Moreover migration was also another factor which lead to the increase in participation of women agricultural workers in these regions. The Western plains witnessed the lowest participation of women in the agriculture sector. The lower level of female participation in this region was due to the prevalence of purdah system. Women were also badly affected by the unequal distribution of wages between men and women for the same nature of agricultural work. The wages for agricultural labour were made in kind and cash and women were always paid less then the amount received by men.
It can be concluded that in all the agricultural operations i.e., sowing, weeding, transplanting, harvesting, and reaping etc., women were always paid less than men. Therefore wage differentiation persisted in United Provinces. Unfortunately even today despite increase in wages the unequal distribution of wages for women still continues. Also the active participation of lower caste women in agricultural work force depended on the economic status of their families. In adverse conditions women had to work on agricultural fields as wage workers.