Chapter III

Women’s Role in Agriculture since 1951
WOMEN’S ROLE IN AGRICULTURE
SINCE 1951

Although women have been performing an important role in the agricultural sector but they have always remained invisible due to traditional values, gender bias, illiteracy, superstition, dominant role of males in decision making etc (Giriaapa, 1988). As a consequence the crucial role played by women in farming has not been recognized.

They have been rarely identified as farmers or owners of agricultural holdings. Women still use minor tools and implements and are economically backward. Even though they were the first originators of the art of cultivation and many other related civilizations but, they are always considered as the weaker sex and inferior to their male counterparts (Tyagi, 1994). Female agricultural workers are responsible for the most back-breaking jobs like transplanting, weeding, sowing, etc., but their work has always remained unnoticed. They were mostly seen helping and assisting the male members on agricultural fields. For instance, if a woman was spotted collecting the stubbles of the previous crops and applying manure along with her male counterpart then she was never called a farmer but was always seen as a helper to the male farmer. Various studies have shown that women were often found assisting their men in sowing the fields behind a plough (Madalia, 1985; Kansara,
1995). According to the National Commission Report (1988) also known as Shramshakti Report, women’s contribution in agriculture was always considered as ‘secondary’, ‘marginal’ and ‘supplementary’. In agriculture they were best known as ‘helpers’.

Therefore women have always been considered a weaker sex and it was because of this that they were not regarded as the main producers in the agricultural sector. In the male-headed household it was impossible for a woman to take decisions regarding the production of agricultural crops. Giriappa (1998) found that among all the agricultural workers, women were relatively poorer, undernourished, weak decision makers and economically less organized. Various studies have highlighted that there were certain socio-economic factors that affected the participation of women in agriculture (Singh & Singh, 1993; Nayyar, 1987; Row, 1985; Bagchi, 1981).

Men and women have been performing different roles in the society, but aspects such as cultural expression, work and mobility, education, health and social awareness have changed the role of women over the years. It was because of all these factors that overall participation of women in the work force was very low. According to Census 2001, female population of U.P. only 6.35 per cent females out of 47.31 per cent were actively involved in the work force. Among the working
females 71.18 per cent were primarily involved in the agricultural sector as compared with 62.70 per cent males (Fig 6).

Figure 6. Distribution of Workers in Different Sectors in Uttar Pradesh 2001

Since agricultural work is scattered and disperse in nature therefore, the work-force is characterized by scattered and fragmented area of employment, seasonality of employment, lack of security and low legislative protection to the workers (GOI, 2001 a). Since agricultural work is highly gendered therefore it became even more difficult for women agricultural workers to survive. They also suffer with lack of mobility and inequality. Majority of them work as agricultural labour or as unpaid workers on family-owned land. There is wide disparity between men's wages and women's wages, with women being paid far less than men. The technological changes in the agriculture sector also eliminated
many jobs traditionally performed by women and the migration of men from villages has also imposed further burdens on them (Labour Commission, 2002).

Women’s lives in villages are very hard; they wake up at 3 a. m. and attended all the household chores, collect water and also work for eight hours a day in agriculture (GOI, 2007 a). While women carry the prime responsibility of taking care of the household and helping their men on fields, these responsibilities were considered secondary to the role of male bread winners. Her personal contribution got merged with the family and became invisible. They were best seen as providing supplementary income to the family (Shramshakti, 1988). Discrimination in every sphere, whether it is work, wages or share in agricultural land, has adversely affected the position of women.

3.1 Gender Division of Work in Agriculture

A very strict division of labour on the basis of gender characterises agricultural activities (Labour Commission, 2002; Singh and Meenakshi, 2004). There are certain tasks assigned to men only and certain for women. Women almost never perform ploughing operations, while transplanting is more or less exclusively the domain of women. According to Boserup (1970), the division of labour in terms of sex was a natural result of physiological and psychological differences between
men and women. But apart from child bearing there were not many examples of sex division of labour which were truly reasonable. To be an independent farmer was a male dominated task in India.

The Census data from 1951 to 2001 showed that in U.P. more females then males were employed in agriculture sector (Fig. 7). But due to the male-centered society women in general could not independently perform all the farm operations on their own.

For example ploughing is a male dominated activity in farming, and therefore it was never assigned to female agricultural labourers. Since ancient times plough has been used for tilling the land and was held in high esteem and also regarded as an auspicious article, as a result women were restricted from using it (Kansara, 1995).

**Figure 7. Percentage of Male and Female Agricultural Workers in U.P. during 1951 to 2001**

![Bar chart showing the percentage of male and female agricultural workers in U.P. from 1951 to 2001.]

Women did not work in land preparation because of male dominance and the strict restrictions on the use of plough. It was also believed that men were stronger and could handle the plough better than women and therefore it uprooted women from the leading role in rural life (Tyagi, 1994; Kaur & Sharma, 1992). Therefore, the sex-typing of tasks in the production process lead to increased separation of women from their active roles. Since there were taboos associated with women operating the plough therefore, women were forced to depend on men to begin the process of cultivation (Jain, 1984). Although, Prakash (2003) stated that, where both men and women had equal access to modern methods and inputs there was no evidence that either sex was more efficient than the other.

The tasks that were assigned to females were more repetitive in nature, less paid and unskilled. While the work that men did was more mechanical, highly paid and skilled. It was because of this that the employment of casual women agricultural labourers was heavily concentrated in harvesting, weeding and transplanting activities (Chattopadhyay, 1982).

All the tasks that were primarily carried out by women were considered lighter form of work. While the work specifically performed by men was considered heavy and arduous (Sen, 1999). There existed a
common pattern of work performed by men and women. For instance, the heavy physical work of land preparation was performed by men only. While the women were assigned only those tasks which were repetitive and time-consuming. Weeding was exclusively women's work, while harvesting involved both men and women (Srinivas, 1977). The traditional manual transplanting of rice in the paddy fields was performed by women only (Bagchi, 1981).

Other tasks that were primarily performed by women included, clod breaking, seed selection, sowing, transplanting, weeding, watching the crops, spreading of manure, threshing, winnowing and cleaning the farm produce. (Chun, 1957; Randhawa, 1980; Madalia, 1985; Shramshakti, 1988; Sakesena, 2004). Of all the agricultural operations women were stereotyped in three most common agricultural operations viz, weeding, transplanting and harvesting.

3.2 Regional Variations in Women's Work

There were regional variations in the participation of women workers in agriculture. According to the General Report of the Census (1961) the participation of females was higher in the hilly regions, namely Tehri Garhwal (677), Uttar Kashi (664), Chamoli (662), Almora (620), Garhwal (618) and Pithoragarh (615). Table 1 showed the districts of Uttar Pradesh, where participation of women in agriculture was higher.
than their male counterparts as well as those districts where their participation was less than 20 per thousand female workers.

It was remarkable that in the hills districts of Tehri Garwal, Uttar Kashi, Chamoli, Almora, Garhwal, and Pithoragarh, there were relatively more workers among females than males. It was noticed that, in the hills crop production was done on slopes and terraced fields. Mechanization was virtually impossible therefore all the work was done manually. Women in these areas actively participated in farm production. They took decisions regarding the choice of crops, storage, livestock, credit and farm inputs (Bhati and Singh, 1987).

While in the plains only one-sixth of females were in the working force; districts like Bijnor, Moradabad, Budaun, Rampur, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Aligarh, Agra, Etah, Mainpuri, Farrukhabad and Etahwah formed a solid block, where less than 20 per thousand females worked in agriculture. A study conducted by Singh and Sharma (1992) in Uttar Pradesh also revealed that farm women’s contribution in various agricultural activities was greater in the hills regions as compared to western plains of Uttar Pradesh. Women particularly in the western region had a lower participation in agriculture sector. One reason behind this was because of the development of the secondary and tertiary sectors in the economy in U.P as a whole.
Table 1. Male and Female Cultivators and Agricultural Labourers per Thousand Workers in U. P. (1961)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.NO</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Cultivators &amp; Agricultural labourers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Uttar Kashi</td>
<td></td>
<td>548</td>
<td>664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Chamoli</td>
<td></td>
<td>493</td>
<td>662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Pithoragarh</td>
<td></td>
<td>435</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Tehri-Garhwal</td>
<td></td>
<td>508</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td></td>
<td>380</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Almora</td>
<td></td>
<td>442</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Bijnor</td>
<td></td>
<td>322</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Moradabad</td>
<td></td>
<td>408</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Budaun</td>
<td></td>
<td>522</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Rampur</td>
<td></td>
<td>449</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Bareilly</td>
<td></td>
<td>411</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Pilibhit</td>
<td></td>
<td>450</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Shahjahanpur</td>
<td></td>
<td>499</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Saharanpur</td>
<td></td>
<td>274</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Muzzafarnagar</td>
<td></td>
<td>328</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Aligarh</td>
<td></td>
<td>338</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Agra</td>
<td></td>
<td>271</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Etah</td>
<td></td>
<td>450</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Mainpuri</td>
<td></td>
<td>442</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Farrukhabad</td>
<td></td>
<td>460</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Etawah</td>
<td></td>
<td>450</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The western region was more industrialized as more than one-fourth of the total workforce was involved in industries, trade and commerce, and services (Subas, 1984). Secondly, in the plains the social tradition did not favor women's movement outside the boundaries of their homes. While women in hill regions did not observe purdah, this was quite common in other parts of India (Bhati and Singh, 1987). According to Boserup (1970) seclusion of females was related to the economy and its demand for female labour; purdah was prevalent in those areas and farming systems where female field labour was not required.

3.3 Social Constraints

In Uttar Pradesh there were social customs which also restricted women to work on others' fields. And because of this women's participation in the work-force was below the all India average. Gopalan (1995) also examined that it was strongly the cultural factor which excluded women from working on others' fields. The primary reasons behind the low participation rate of female work-force were social stigma and taboos that restricted their movement outside the boundaries of their homes. "The women of the higher orders i.e., Brahmana, Ksatriya were not generally concerned with any type of economic activities" (Tyagi, 1994).
“Farm women in higher socio-economic status did not enjoy as much involvement in decision making process regarding farm operations, as those of middle or low socio-economic status families” (Varma, 1992). In Uttar Pradesh the high caste males never allowed their females to work on the agricultural fields. This was seen for both Hindu and Muslim communities.

“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 which would help the male members in smoothing his path for earning bread. Similarly a Muhammadan lady, who has an old tradition about the former greatness of her family, will not get out for work, and the only work she would do is spinning thread inside her house” (Duffrein, 1890). It was observed that, in the patriarchal society those women who worked outside on fields and survived on wage employment were kept under the lower hierarchy. Because a woman’s physical presence in the public sphere was not accepted by the society (Bennett, 1992).

Purdah is the most common form of female seclusion in the world. It revolves around the physical segregation of females through the use of boundary makers such as curtains, veils, and walls. It is closely associated with Muslim religious tradition in India, but the Hindus of North India
also practiced a form of *purdah* (Miller, 1982). In Uttar Pradesh both Hindus and Muslims practiced *purdah* (*ibid*). Here the rigid caste taboos coupled with sexual isolation or *purdah* was responsible for restricting women’s activities to the home environment (Bagchi, 1981). Therefore the upper caste females who observed ‘*purdah*’ did not work outside on agricultural land.

However, females belonging to the lower social hierarchy were always engaged in productive activities in order to supplement their family’s income. These women mostly worked in pastures and fields and therefore worked independently for their family needs (Jafri, 1985; Tyagi, 1994). The backward class women formed a large section of wage agricultural labourers. The lower class women have more mobility and freedom then women belonging to the upper castes.

Among schedule castes women were more actively involved in the labour force because of two factors. Firstly, they were economically backward and secondly because there was no social stigma attached to women in these communities. In western Uttar Pradesh, there were districts where the upper caste *Thakurs* never allowed their women to take part in farm operations (Lerche, 1998). Although landless women working as agricultural wage labourers were less bound to traditions that
restricted women of higher classes, still they faced considerable hardships in carrying out agricultural activities.

3.4 Technological Constraint

The decreasing demand for labour, changes in cropping patterns and increased mechanization also eliminated many employment options for women agricultural labourers. Agriculture totally changed from a female occupation to male occupation with the use of plough. Since ploughing was predominantly done by the male agricultural labourers therefore female agricultural labourers were assigned non-mechanical tasks. Women were considered unskilled and were never allowed to plough the agricultural fields.

The invention of various kinds of technologies for instance, pump sets for irrigation, wheat threshers, tractors and wheat reapers displaced women from the those tasks that were traditionally performed by them (Kaur, 1988). Men and women were equally involved in the traditional use, preparation and application of manure but after the introduction of chemical fertilizers men performed the task rather than women (Punia, 1992). The use of herbicide based weed management adversely affected women's employment in agriculture. Women were the principal labour force for weeding operation and they suffered most from the introduction of herbicides (ibid).
The new agricultural technology has largely adversely affected women’s participation in farm activities. According to Tripathy (1996) and The Committee on status of women in India (1975) has reported that, "another problem that affects women’s participation in agriculture is the introduction of modern methods of cultivation, which is resulting in a gradual displacement of women and shrinking of their activities". Therefore women especially from the poor socio-economic background have become victims of new technology.

Technology referred as, “the knowledge applied by man to improve production or marketing process. It is seen in hybrid seeds, improved crop varieties, pesticides, machinery and fertilizers” (Reddy et. al., 2006). The objective of technology in agriculture was to provide more output from a given bundle of production inputs. The use of advanced technology in agriculture was first adopted in the post Green Revolution period. The term ‘Green Revolution’ was perceived as a period of productivity break through that emerged from the high-yielding variety of seeds. The second phase of the green revolution was a phase in which the technology was internalized during the decade 1970 (Basu, 2007).

The rapid modernization and the introduction of new technologies such as those that characterized the green revolution had a differential impact on rural population by both class and gender. As far as women
were concerned, their level of participation, knowledge and inputs were marginalized, and their role shifted from being “primary producers to subsidiary workers. The improved agricultural technology also heightened the productivity gap between men and women. In mechanized farming, men monopolized the use of new technology even though it required less muscle power (Ram, 2004).

The modernization process in agriculture sector which included the introduction of high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and modern implements, displaced women from traditional activities and pushed them to less skilled jobs and as support agents rather than major handlers of equipment (Verma et al., 2006). The Green Revolution, which focused on increasing yields of rice and wheat, entailed a shift in inputs from human to technical. According to Varma (1992) the participation of women agricultural labourers in land preparation and weeding operation reduced as a result of technological advancement. Threshing and winnowing was handled by men because of the use of mechanical equipment. This indicated a rapid loss of women’s control over means of production and their inadequate recruitment in the active labour force in India (Kaur, 1988).

Agriculture, is however, modernized due to technological advancement. But as soon as the agricultural operations were
mechanized, that work was taken up by men and women labourers were
thrown out of work (Varma, 1992; Kak, 1994). Increased use of
mechanized farming relegates the role of women to simple manual
operations. An immediate consequence of technological modernization is
the straight displacement of women’s labour through the elimination of
various traditional activities. Under these circumstances, men cultivated
cash crops through the use of new technology while women were left
with the cultivation of subsistence food crops with the help of traditional
cultivation methods. An obvious consequence of this was that the labour
productivity of men increased manifold while that of women remained
stable or declined. This loss of women’s labour productivity further
contributed towards a decline in their position (Ram, 2004).

The technological changes have exerted multiple and complex
effects on women, some of which created a negative impact on their
labour participation and productivity. For instance, in eastern Uttar
Pradesh, arrival of machines like combine harvester took away jobs from
women. This in turn reduced the number of working days for women
during the harvesting season. As a result women received inadequate
wages (Gupta and Maiti, 2008).
3.5 Problems Faced by Women

**Health Hazards:** Women in the agricultural sector were burdened with tedious operations like sowing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting. These activities had poor bearing on their health. Weeding was done in a squatting posture or at times in bending posture with the help of short handle tools such as *Khurpi, Khunti, hand hoe, spade,* etc. Therefore the posture adopted while performing this activity was strenuous and resulted in body discomfort, leading to serious health problems (Gandotra and Patel, 2009).

Women had to bend continuously while carrying out transplanting operations. Apart from backaches, they got sore, infected feet with fungal growth (Shramshakti, 1988). Labourers also got snake bits while working in water filled rice fields and sometimes agricultural equipments caused them few minor or medium grade injuries (Joshi, 1999 and Hasalkar, 2006). Both men as well as women had serious health problems while working in agricultural fields. Blair and Zahm (1995) pointed out that there were not only biological differences but also physiological differences between the sexes. Women were likely to be affected more than men due to biological factors such as their menstrual cycle, reproductive function and menopause (Mediratta, 2009).
Generally women received no medical help since they were the only unorganized labourers where the government did not provide any medical attention. It is also surprising that, the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 was not applicable to women agricultural labourers. This Act was only applicable for workers employed in factories, mines and plantations. Mediratta (2009) also highlighted the shortcoming of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 in not providing maternity protection for women employees in the informal sectors.

Table 2. Occupational Health Hazards in Agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Health problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Generalised body ache; aches in calves, hips, back, legs and shoulders; nasal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>catarrh irritating coughs, irritation of the respiratory system; respiratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>allergies; respiratory tract infection; tightness of chest; chest capacities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pneumoconiosis; cutaneous allergies; skin irritation; rashes and pruritus;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mycosis; eye irritation; paddy keratitis; helminthiasis — schistosomiasis,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ankylostomiasis; paronocia; fungal infection in feet; eczema; osteomyelitis of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fingers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>High rate of thresher accidents, especially while crushing sugarcane and ginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cotton; also serious physical injuries occur from cutting edges of implements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>such as sickles and machetes; for lack of first aid facilities, small injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>become serious and often lead to tetanus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxicities</td>
<td>Pesticide poisoning; intestinal respiratory and neurological disorders; nausea;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vomiting; abdominal cramps; diarrhoea, cough; headaches; vertigo; blurred vision;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>muscular twitching; convulsions; loss of reflexes; loss of sphincter control;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disturbance of equilibrium; jaundice; coma and ultimately death may result by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>respiratory arrest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gynaecological</td>
<td>Abortions; premature deaths and still births; high rate of neo-natal, infant and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maternal mortality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For women workers the heavy work such as cultivation and harvesting have high rates of still and premature births and female and infant mortality. There were a series of health issues related to women workers in agriculture (Table 2). According to Fulekar (2000), women's exposure to a variety of pesticides was associated with spontaneous abortion, premature births, low birth weights, and birth defects. There is still ignorance about the proper use of pesticides among women. No government records of women's health in the unorganized sector were maintained.

Seasonal Migration: Agricultural operations were seasonal in nature and resulted in periodic unemployment. Therefore Indian agricultural workers remained idle during a large part of the year and there were evidences that such rural underemployment has increased (Sharma and Singh, 1993; Chun, 1957). Although both male and female employment exhibited seasonality, its effect was far greater for women than men. Men were engaged in farm activities throughout the crop season but that was not the case for women (Saikia, 2004). But in situations when there were minimum opportunities for men's work, there was more possibilities of males to migration.

Another factor that led to male migration was the mechanization in agriculture and better employment opportunities in neighboring cities and
states. According to Shramshakti Report (1988) the polarization between rural and urban areas with considerable concentration of wealth and social services in the urban economies led to migration of male workers in large number. In Uttar Pradesh, the seasonal migration frequently occurred in the eastern districts, Garhwal regions and western districts as well, where men migrated to neighboring states of West Bengal and Delhi (Sen, 1999; Chopra and Ghosh, 2001, Paris et al., 2005).

Migration was classified into short term and long term on the basis of duration of absence from the village. In short term migration or seasonal migration, male family members left the villages after land preparation or planting seasonal crops and came back during harvesting due to increased demand for daily labour. In the long term migration, migrants remained away from families for more than six months or more than a year. Since women were geographically less mobile than men therefore, they faced various hardships (Acharya and Mathrani, 1993). Migration of men, especially under distress situation implied more work burden for women.

There was an increase in the number of wage-paid days of employment for female workers between 1987-88 and 1993-94 compared to male workers in U.P. This increase was attributed to the migration of male workers in adverse conditions as well as for further enhancement of
their economic earnings (Krishnaraj and Shah, 2004). In the absence of male members, women bore the main brunt of poverty. As a result, they were compelled to take up the responsibility of various farming operations and the household work (Prakash, 2011). Since all the decisions were made by the male family members therefore in their absence women's work became more complex.

It was perceived that women worked independently in the absence of male members of the family and had a better status in the family (Griappa, 1988). However, Jetley (1987) revealed that there was little change in the authoritative structure of the family, and the major decisions regarding purchase of cattle, inputs or land were postponed till the migrant males visited. Women only took decisions on problems regarding the daily subsistence of the family. Since women had limited access to the economic resources they were forced to depend on their male family members.

Women cultivators faced difficulties in the absence of males. Since land is an important economic resource in agriculture and women hardly had independent land holdings, therefore limited access to land rights restricted women in taking loans for the use of better farm technology and seeds. Thus women only acted as mere caretakers of the agricultural land.
Unequal Land Rights: Generally women farmers did not hold agricultural land and were completely dependent on the male members of their families. In the absence of the male members it was difficult for them to get loans from banks for buying seeds, manure and advance technology for cultivation (GOI, 1974). Land rights served multiple functions in the lives of rural women, which were not easy to replicate through other means, apart from the direct benefits in terms of growing crops, trees, fodder, fuel, and vegetable garden, or keeping livestock, practicing sericulture, and so on. Indirect advantages in terms of collateral for credit or an asset, which could be sold or mortgaged when needed. Title to land also enhanced the probability of finding supplementary wage employment and served as an asset base for rural non-farm enterprises (Sridhar et al., 2009).

As the Land laws provided by the government were so rigid, there was no scope for women to become the individual owners of agricultural land. In U.P., agricultural land is distributed according to the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Land Reform Act, 1950. This Act only provided land to widows, and unmarried daughters but that too in the absence of male sons. There was no place given to unmarried daughters. For women farmers to use land more efficiently and for contributing to food security, they needed land.
Inadequate Wages: Another form of discrimination faced by women in agriculture was the inadequate wages. The wage differentials between female and male agricultural workers were based on a pre-assumed gender character. Employers and contractors offered lower wages to women, regardless of their performance in work. Discrimination to farm women was practiced in two ways, one by paying them lesser than men for the same type of work and the other was by restricting them to low paid unskilled jobs and denying them access to better paid work (Punia, 1992; Joshi, 1999). In such a situation of social and economic neglect, women had no better options.

Uttar Pradesh incidentally had relatively lower female agricultural workers’ wages and higher male-female wage differentials compared to other states. Not only in U.P. but also in rest of the India the estimated all-India agricultural average daily real wage rates for males and females showed that female workers’ wage continued to be lower than that of male workers (Singh, 1996). Another problem that women faced was that majority of women in agriculture comprised of unpaid family labour. Those women who worked on their family farms were often classified as unpaid family workers in the Census (National Commission, 1988). Therefore the work of women in a family was not recognized and never counted in the economy. Unpaid work and inadequate wages forced
women to depend on their husbands and male members in the family for financial support. There existed a myth that since females were inefficient therefore the wage rate paid to females was lower than that of their male counterparts even for doing the same work in same time (Suman, 2008).

**Long Working Hours:** Female agricultural workers had to work for long hours. There are number of studies which showed that women worked longer hours and contributed more than men. According to Chopra and Ghosh (2001), women on an average worked for 11.75 a day and minimum 8.5 hours per day. Women in developing countries generally worked longer hours than men and shouldered a disproportionate share of responsibilities and time for household maintenance and care activities (FAO, 2005; FAO, 2011 a). Women farmers faced greater time constraints than men because they spent more time than men on domestic work. They shared the responsibility of the family both within as well as outside their homes (FAO, 2011 b).