Chapter I

Introduction
INTRODUCTION

Rural women are the major contributors in agriculture sector and form the bulk of the agricultural work force in the world. They are responsible for half of world’s food production and are the main producers of staple crops such as rice, maize and wheat, which accounts for 60 to 80 per cent of the food intake in most developing countries. In rural areas it is always women who are responsible for ensuring the well being of their families and at the same time works on agricultural fields. Women are also the key players in day-to-day agricultural tasks, the instigators of activities that generate agricultural and non-agricultural income and the custodians of natural and productive resources (ILO, 2007). Rural women are the most important productive work force in the economy of the developing nations including India. Their role varies considerably among and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world where economic and social forces have transformed the agriculture sector (FAO, 2011 a).

Women’s participation in the Indian rural economy is significant as about 84 per cent of the economically active women population is engaged in agriculture and allied activities (GOI, 2006). Women’s daily work in agriculture, fisheries and forestry as well as in food processing and market is evidence of the vital contribution they make in the rural
economy. Still, access to productive resources such as land, credit, inputs, appropriate farm technology, training and extension services have always been insufficiently available to women. It is known from early civilization that women were the first agriculturists, while men went out for hunting and tending livestock (Habib, 2001). In simpler systems of agriculture, the cultivation of ground by means of the wooden digging stick, the stone hoe or an iron blade was done by women, though the physically stronger male sex was often called upon to perform some of the heavier tasks (Goody and Buckley, 1973). Later the introduction of plough in agriculture displaced women towards less skilled operations. Ploughing became the most skilled activity and was dominated by the male agricultural workers. Since then the sexual division of labour emerged and women’s role in agriculture became secondary.

This “gender gap” hinders women’s productivity and hinders their contributions in agriculture sector. It also restricted in the achievement of broader economic and social development goals. Sulaiman et al. (2003) described the term ‘gender’ as the socially determined attributes of men and women. These included, differences in economic and non-economic functions of male and female, differential access to and control over resources and differences in knowledge and skills. Therefore the term ‘gender’ referred to the socially constructed relationship between women
and men. The concept of gender with respect to work is also essential for
gender analysis. Gender roles were visible not only in division of work
but more significantly in the allocation of wages, rewards and
recognitions in society. Certain farm activities and roles were taken for
granted for women simply because of the fact that they were considered
the weaker sex, while others were considered fit for men (GOI, 2001 b).
This showed that gender bias was institutionalized by the society.
Although, the gender awareness scenario revealed that women performed
more than sixty percent of agricultural operations but their contributions
remained undervalued and marginalized (ibid). Gender as a socially
construct must be understood in right perspective for developing
harmonious roles of women and men in agriculture production process.

An exploration of in-depth gender information will also lead to
saving of human and non-human resources. In spite of women’s great
involvement in agriculture, they remained invisible and their contribution
in agriculture remained unaccounted and their problems remained
unattended. This lacuna was seen in almost all the States of India. Uttar
Pradesh being the most populous and an agricultural State was also
characterized by a high percentage of landless women workers
(Arunachalam and Kalpagam, 2006; Gupta and Maiti, 2008). In North
India various caste systems forbid women from working on agricultural
fields. Although women constituted 47.31 per cent of the population in Uttar Pradesh, only 6.35 per cent women were actively involved in work force (Census, 2001). Out of this workforce 71.18 per cent females were employed in agriculture sector. Statistically more women than men were employed in agriculture still, there existed gender based inequalities. Almost everywhere women faced more severe constraints than men in accessing productive resources, markets and services. They were also restricted from performing those agricultural operations which were done chiefly by men. Wage discrimination among men and women was also an essential feature of the agricultural labour force.

1.1 Brief History of the Study Area

Uttar Pradesh forms a major area of the Northern fertile plain or the Indo-Gangetic plain. It was known as ‘the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh’ and was referred as U.P. In the 19th century the name given to the British possessions in the regions which came to comprise U.P. varied from time to time. “The Benares region was acquired in 1775 and the Ceded Conquered Provinces were acquired in 1801 and 1803. These ‘Ceded and Conquered Provinces’ were renamed the ‘Upper Provinces’ in 1809” (Reeves, 1991). In 1836, Benares and the Upper Provinces, together with later additions in Garhwal and Bundelkhand became the North-Western Provinces. After the annexation of Oudh (more correctly
‘Avadh’) in 1856, Oudh was separately administered by a Chief Commissioner until 1877 when the North-Western Provinces and Oudh were joined together under a single Lieutenant-Governor.

In 1902, following the formation of new province called the ‘North-West Frontier Province’, the NWP and Oudh was renamed the ‘United Provinces of Agra and Oudh’. Later in 1937, this was made simply the ‘United Provinces’ (ibid). The United Provinces was renamed as the state of Uttar Pradesh in Independent India after 1950.

According to Census 1951 the state was divided into 51 districts and these districts were grouped into 10 revenue divisions as given below:

1. Meerut Division: Dehradun, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Bulandshahr
2. Agra Division: Aligarh, Mathura, Agra, Mainpuri, Etah
3. Rohilkhand Division: Bareilly, BijnorBudaun, Muradabad, Shahjahanpur, Pilibhit, Rampur
4. Allahabad Division: Farrukhabad, Etawah, Kanpur, Fatehpur, Allahabad
5. Jhansi Division: Jhansi, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Banda
6. Banaras Division: Banaras, Mirzapur, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Ballia
7. Gorakhpur Division: Gorakhpur, Deoria, Basti, Azamgarh
8. Kumaun Division: Nanital, Almora, Garhwal, Tehri-Garhwal
9. Lucknow Division: Lucknow, Unnao, Rae Bareli, Sitapur, Hardoi, Kheri
10. Faizabad Division: Faizabad, Gonda, Bahraich, Sultanpur, Pratapgarh, Bara Banki.

In 2001 Uttar Pradesh has 70 districts, after division of the State into Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. In fact, 20 new districts were created after 1991 Census before the formation of new State of Uttranchal. These new districts are Rudra Prayag, Bageshwar, Champawati, Udham Singh Nagar (All in Uttrranchal) and Jyotiba Phule Nagar, Baghpat, Gautam Buddh Nagar, Hathras, Kannauj, Auraiya, Mahoba, Chitrakoot, Kaushambi, Ambedkarnagar, Shrawasti, Balrampur, Sant Kabir Nagar, Kushinagar, Chandauli and Sant Ravidas Nagar Bhadohi (All in Uttar Pradesh).
Map 1. District Map of Uttar Pradesh, 2001
1.2 Geography

Uttar Pradesh is bounded by Nepal in the North, Himachal Pradesh in the North West, Haryana in the west, Rajasthan in South West, Madhya Pradesh in South and South-West and Bihar in East. Situated between 23° 52' N and 31° 28' N latitudes and 77° 3' and 84° 39' E longitudes, this is the fourth largest state in the country. It occupies the central position in India and along with some other states like Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan, it is completely landlocked (Gazette, 1981).

Part of North Western Uttar Pradesh was formed into a new state Uttarakhand on November 9th 2000. The state is also divided into three geographical parts; the Himalayan region and some of the foothills areas in the north, the vast plain covering much of the state and the Vindhya Mountains in the South. Both in terms of geography and in political and administrative terms, U.P. could also be divided into five zones; the Western zone, which is comparatively well developed and better off than the rest in terms agriculture and industry. The Eastern zone is flooded and drought prone and therefore has slow pace of development, the Central zone and the hill region, which may emerge as a separate state from the rest of U.P. and the Bundelkhand region in the south close to Madhya Pradesh. The Gangetic Plain is mainly covered by Ganga, Yamuna and its
allied rivers- Ram Ganga, Gomti, Ghaghara and Gandhak. The entire plain is watered by these rivers which has made the soil alluvial and very fertile (Shukla, 2007).

1.3 Climate

Uttar Pradesh has tropical monsoonal climate type with hot summers and cold winters. There are basically three distinct seasons: cold season from October to February, summer from March to mid-June and rainy season from June to September. In the plains, the climate is cool or cold from November to early March although the days are pleasant and often warm. After the middle of March it gets to be hot and in May the temperature could rise to 45 degree Celsius or even more in the plains. June is both hot and humid until the South-West monsoon sets in. The rainfall is more towards the eastern parts of U.P. and it goes on decreasing as one approach the Western parts.

1.4 Land-use Pattern

Uttar Pradesh comprises 7.6 per cent of India’s land, including 16.4 per cent of the country’s area under food grain production and 12.33 per cent net area under cultivation. Almost 51 per cent of the land in Uttar Pradesh is used for cultivation and 74 per cent of the net cropped area is irrigated (GOI, 2007 a). Since the pressure of population in U.P. is very high as it comprise of 16.67 per cent of the national population. Therefore
most of the land holdings are small holdings i.e. from 1 hectares to 2 hectares and marginal holdings comprising below 1 hectare of land. Though the state covers only 7 per cent of the geographical area of the country, it contributes about 23 per cent to national food grain production. Agriculture has a strong base in the state, and has the potential to feed major population of the country. Statistics shows that Uttar Pradesh is also the largest producer of wheat (25031 tonnes), sugarcane (133949 tonnes), potato (10248 tonnes) and third largest producer of rice (11124 tonnes) in the country (GOI, 2007 b).

1.5 Objectives and Hypothesis

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To reconstruct the role of women in agriculture from pre-independence era.

2. To examine the factors that affects the participation of women in agriculture.

3. To examine the changes in agrarian structure brought about by the Zamindari Abolition Act and the subsequent land-ceiling legislations

4. To examine the effect of changes in landed property and inheritance laws on women’s position.
5. To study gender based discrimination in agricultural wages.

Taking into consideration the above objectives, the following hypothesis were formulated for this study.

1. Women belonging to the lower caste actively participated in agriculture.

2. Women performed all the important farm operations in agriculture.

3. Modernization of agriculture adversely affected the women’s participation in agriculture.

4. Land rights were not distributed equally among men and women.

5. Wage differential existed in male and female agricultural labourers.

1.6 Methodology and Limitations

This study is based on various Gazetteers of Uttar Pradesh, Census Reports, Census data, Government reports, FAO documents and ILO reports. It also included the Duffrin’s Report, 1890, various Wage Laws and Land Reform Acts, Agricultural Wages of India, National Sample Survey Reports, non-official surveys, and academic papers and books.

The limitation faced during the study was the unavailability of Census data for the year 1901 and 1941. Moreover, the information on women
agricultural workers in Pre-independence era in India was insufficient and scattered.

1.7 Review of Literature

Different writers have shown that women more than men are largely employed in the agriculture sector. Varma (1992), Tripathy (1996), Grover & Grover (2004) Nautiyal et al. (2009) and others found that Indian women were extensively involved in agricultural activities.

However Samanta (1995) found that although women took active part in agriculture but they did not benefit in the same way as men. The author also found that the women farmers faced lot of problems due to lack of education. Miller (1982) found marked variations in female agricultural labour participation in India. According to him these variations resulted from female seclusion and segregation which were practiced in north India, particularly in states like Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh than in Southern states. Veiling in the northern regions was a highly visible symbol of female seclusion.

Immanuel (1998) found that in the three main rice growing States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, women made crucial contribution to the entire process of cultivation. He also included West Bengal as one of the states with highest involvement of women in agriculture. However Varma (1992) found the participation rate of women agricultural labourers in
Haryana to be above the national figure of women’s work force. Krishnaraj and Shah (2004) also deviate from the distinction made that the southern regions showed a higher participation of women work force in rural areas than the North and North-West regions. The pattern was significantly different in states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, where the percentage of female workers engaged in agriculture was relatively higher. The reason behind this was due to the migration of male members of the households and higher incidence of commercialization. Jetley (1987) and Paris et al. (2005) also reported that in Uttar Pradesh during migration of male, women from nuclear households took over tasks which were traditionally done by men, particularly during land preparation and other tasks during the peak-cropping seasons. However, women faced certain hardships like labour shortage, lack of access to new seeds, new skills and knowledge on improved methods of rice farming.

Sridhara et al. (2009) stated that, in the backward and hilly regions there were more women than men engaged in agriculture, for example in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttranchal. Punia (1991) and Kalpagam et al. (2004) also reported that in Uttar Pradesh the participation of females in the labour force was highest in the hills and lowest in the western plains. According to Pandya (2007), the
responsibility of agricultural production in hills rested on the shoulders of women because men generally migrated to cities in search of employment. Since farm mechanization was not possible in the hilly areas due to terraced land therefore farm women did the entire work manually.

Kaur (1987) also stated that in the tribal societies of Arunachal, Tripura, Mizoram, Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur, women were actively involved in farming. This was mainly because of the ‘Jhumming cultivation’, which is a form of shifting cultivation where women workers played an important role in agriculture.

It was found that not only in India but also in other developing countries women’s participation in agriculture was greater than men. White et al. (1981) and Coontz and Henderson (1986) witnessed that in African continent there were a large number of female agricultural workers. According to them this was mainly because of the absence of plough cultivation. Schultz (1990) reported that women were largely employed in South and West Asia, followed by North Africa and East Asia whereas developed countries like Latin America had the lowest participation of women in agriculture. Burnettee (2004) also found that in England the involvement of women in agriculture reduced due to an
increased demand for women in factories and the changes in the methods of farming system.

In spite of the large participation of women in agriculture, women’s work remained mostly invisible. One of the reasons behind this was the involvement of women in less skilled agricultural operations. According to Moser (1993) and Mahapatra (2006) there was gender division of labour in Indian agriculture. Chattopadhyay (1982) showed that agricultural tasks like weeding, transplanting and harvesting were exclusively done by women. These activities were always considered lighter forms of field work. Chun (1957), Srinivas (1977), Lebra et al. (1984), Chopra and Ghosh (2001) and Saksena (2004) also had similar views. According to Gopalan (1995) the work of women agricultural labourers was characterized as ‘repetitive, monotonous and arduous’. The Gazetteers of Atkinson (1874) Brokeman, (1909) and Nevil (1907) reported that in Pre-Independent India women agricultural labourers in the United Provinces usually performed lighter form of field work.

Sen (1999) considered that the work carried out by men was always arduous in nature. However, according to Prakash (2003) the physical strength had nothing to do with the sexual division of labour. Once men and women had equal access to modern methods of farming then either sex would be equally efficient in performing all the
agricultural operations. Pandolfelli et al. (2007) believed that in gender division of labour women and men’s role and responsibilities were separate but complementary to one another.

Since Pre-colonial period out of all the agricultural operations women were chiefly employed in few tasks. According to Moosvi (1994) in the 18th century the field work that women did, included transplanting, weeding and helping in harvesting. Randhawa (1980) showed that ploughing was specifically done by males while the females followed the plough and dropped the seeds in the furrows. Crooke (1907) reported that in the rice districts of Punjab, the men ploughed the fields and planted the nurseries, while the women transplanted the seedlings. The Gazetteers of Atkinson (1874), Nevil (1907), Brokeman, (1909) and Walton (1910) also pointed out that in Uttar Pradesh the agricultural operations like sowing, weeding, cotton picking were exclusively done by women labourers and these tasks were considered as lighter form of field work.

According to Dixon (1982) in the developing countries the sex-related biases in labour force statistics led to the assumption that women’s economic contribution in agricultural production was negligible. This wrong assumption resulted in exclusion of women from the access to crucial production inputs.
There were also studies which showed that except ploughing, women were performing almost all activities in agriculture. For instance Giriappa (1988) revealed in his study that the rural women participated in agricultural operations like manuring, land preparation, sowing, watering, weeding, harvesting, threshing, transporting, storage, processing, grading, carrying the produce and marketing. Similar findings have also been reported by Punia (1992), Jain (1985), Balakrishnan (2005) and Immanuel (1998).

Hansara and Dhillon (1995) studied that women played a significant role not only in crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post-harvest operations, agro-social forestry and fisheries but also in non-farm operations along with their household. Similarly Jamali (2009) reported that women in Pakistan were major contributors in agriculture and its allied fields. Their work ranged from crop and livestock production to cottage industry.

Basically women of lower classes performed field work in agriculture. Landless women working as agricultural wage labourers were less bound to traditions which otherwise restricted women of higher classes. Varma (1992) found that community-wise women participation in agriculture was highest among tribes, followed by scheduled castes. Rout and Panda (2008) observed that in southern State like Tamil Nadu,
women agricultural labourers belonged to Scheduled castes and tribes. Lebra et al. (1984) also showed that a large proportion of agricultural laboureresses belonged to the socially disadvantaged castes, often referred as *Harijans*. According to Bennett (1992) in the patriarchal society women who worked on field and survived on wage employment were mostly those who belonged to the lower hierarchy. Jafri (1985) and Tyagi (1994) stated that, females belonging to the lower social hierarchy were always engaged in productive activities in order to supplement their family’s income.

Lerche (1998) reported that in the higher classes a woman’s physical presence in the public sphere was not accepted. Bagchi (1981) also reported that in Uttar Pradesh the rigid caste taboos like ‘Purdah’ were responsible for restricting women’s activities to the home environment which largely affected their participation in agriculture.

Singh and Singh (1992), Nayyar (1987), Row (1985) and Bagchi (1981) held the view that, various socio-cultural factors were responsible for women’s invisibility in the agriculture sector. While Sethi (1982), was of the opinion that the role of caste and cultural factors resulted in low participation of female workers in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. According to Bhati and Singh (1987) the social traditions like *purdah* system did not favour women’s work outside the boundaries of their
homes. Miller (1982) also gave strong evidence that *Purdah* was the most prevalent 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. He also said that, it was closely associated with Muslim religious tradition in India, but the Hindus of North India also practiced a form of *purdah*. While, Boserup (1970) showed that seclusion of females was related to the economy and its demand for female labour. According to him seclusion was found in those areas and farming systems where female field labour was not required.

While Prabhakar (2004) showed that occupational immobility among women agricultural workers was caused by a variety of economic and social factors which included landlessness, lack of organization and inequality of status. Smyth *et al.* (1999) argued that women's invisibility was the result of their low status in the community. However, activities performed by women were valued less than men's work. A patriarchal society not only restricted women from working on field in India but also in other countries. Rothschild (1985) attributed women's invisibility in African agriculture to patriarchal values that rigidly sustained powerful male supremacy.

Apart from socio-economic factors the introduction of technology has also affected the participation of women in agriculture. According to
Singh (2006) and Sridhar et al. (2009) technology was not gender neutral. Therefore the introduction of new technology had a negative effect on the role of women. Gopalan (1995) stated that the agricultural implements were not designed according to the anthropometric rules and therefore it was physically inconvenient for women to handle almost all the equipments. Singh (2010) also felt that the technological need of women were different than men. Within rural societies, gender differences in needs and household production demands gave rise to diverse technology requirements. Ram (2004) stated that, improved agricultural technology also heightened the productivity gap between men and women. Men monopolized the use of new technology even though it required less muscular power.

Verma et al. (2006), Punia (1992) and Tripathy (1996) were of the opinion that fertilizers, pesticides and modern implements displaced women from the traditional activities and pushed them to less skilled jobs and as support agents rather than major handlers of equipment. Kaur (1988) showed that the degree of technological impact was different on women from different socio-economic strata. On one hand it freed women completely, who were working on their own farms and who belonged to the upper socio-economic strata. While on other it negatively affected those women who were from lower castes by reducing the
demand for labour employment during the peak season. A similar view was given by Duvvury (1989).

Agarwal (1984) examined the impact of technological change on women and men workers for three rice-growing regions, viz., Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Orissa. It was found that in all the three states the technology had a negative effect on the female labour. Similar results were found by Arunachalam and Kalpagam (2006) in Karnataka. Panda (2008) also found that women agricultural labourers were displaced by men in areas where technology was introduced. Chattopadhyay (1982) showed that in those regions where cultivation was highly non-mechanized, female agricultural labourers were preferred by employers for certain operations.

Although most studies found that technology had adversely affected the work of women agricultural labourers, their views were criticized by Chand et al. (1985), who were of the opinion that modernization of agriculture in Punjab had resulted in increased employment per hectare of cultivated area for all kinds of female labour. Further Kalaimathi (1988) also said that ensuring technological change in agriculture increased women's welfare not only in terms of their employment but income, health and nutrition as well. As far as other counties are concerned Whyte and Whyte (1982) also showed that in
Korea and China the mechanization of agriculture had increased the participation of women workers.

Dash (2008) characterized farm women as illiterate, unskilled, less paid, ill-informed and ill-equipped to overcome socio-cultural barriers. Jamali (2009) also showed that in Pakistan majority of rural women in agriculture were uneducated, unskilled and tradition-bound, therefore their productive capabilities were also low and they were counted as unskilled labourers.

Whyte and Whyte (1982) also believed that lower level of education among Asian women restricted them in learning new skills. Halim and Alam (1995) not only gave importance to education, but also emphasized agricultural research and extension for improving the plight of agricultural women workers in South-East Asia.

Rao and Kumari (2005) showed that in spite of the efforts of Central and State governments as well as of NGOs for more than 30 years, rural women had gained very little in terms of gender equity in the labour market. Various authors like Samanta (2005), Mishra (2002), Kaur (1988) had identified that training along with general level of education was an important tool for empowering women in agriculture.

Although women were found to be increasingly responsible for farm work, they were not perceived as ‘farmers’. They did not own
agricultural land, which was one of the causes for the persistent gender inequalities in agriculture. According to Rausch (2011) men controlled the land and therefore the government training programmes were generally designed for the male farmers. Even the low interest agricultural loans were made available largely to male farmers. Kelkar (2011) reported that, if women were accepted as owners then they would be perceived as farmers. Also it was more likely that they would be targeted for training as farm managers and not merely as home managers. Garikipati (unpublished) suggested that owning agricultural land will significantly improve women’s relative domestic power and provide better working conditions.

The need for land rights for agricultural women was highlighted by various authors. While Sen (1999) highlighted that land rights were very important for women whose men migrated in search of better employment opportunities. Agarwal (1994) gave four broad categories for the need for independent Land Rights for women, which included Welfare, Efficiency, Equality and Empowerment. Titling women with land rights in the absence of males could enhance agricultural productivity by increasing their access to credit, technology and information of improved agricultural practices.
According to Sridhar et al. (2009), agricultural land not only provided direct benefits in terms of crop output, trees, fodder, fuel and garden produce but, also indirect benefits such as collateral credit or an asset which could be sold when needed. Further, it was also reported by Agarwal (1998) that, the ownership of land also provided security and support to old widows from their family members. Vas (unpublished) revealed that women living in landless households were more prone to violence, starvation and discrimination. Smith (1999) described the importance of land as an asset whose productive capacity had enormous potential for wealth generation and those who controlled this asset had status and influence. Chand (unpublished) showed that just titling of land to women did not empower them but it was also important to ensure that the land records showed cultivation under women’s name where they actually managed the farm.

As far as various Laws related to land rights were concerned, women were never considered the rightful owners of agricultural land. According to Kalpagam and Arunachalam (2008) and Chaturvedi (2002), the law in northern India, especially in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi did not permit women to own agricultural land. When the land owner died, the land was devolved only to male children and not to daughters. Mearns (1999) also stated that the social
obstacles restricted women in North India from having access to land rights. Ray (2005) also argued that due to lack of land rights in Uttar Pradesh, women were not regarded as farmers or as equal partners in the productive enterprises of farming households.

Some states amended the inheritance Laws and provided land rights to women. Cotula (2002) reported that Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerela had given agricultural land rights to women. Mishra (2006) and Bhatt (2008) also found that laws were amended to give land rights to women in Maharashtra, Gujrat and West Bengal. However, Mearns (1999) found that in Maharashtra, Gujrat and West Bengal women’s ownership rights on agricultural land were only in name and they were not able to exercise effective control over land.

Various studies in other countries also found that women did not have equal rights in agricultural land. Gurney (1995) found that women in Latin American countries did not have equal access to land even where legislation had removed gender barriers to land ownership. He further found that even though the usufruct right to own agricultural land prevailed in Africa. Still women were essentially temporary custodians of land which was passed from father to the male heir. In contrast to India, the African women usually lost the rights to own agricultural land after the death of their husbands.
Singh (1996) revealed that the benefit of agricultural growth had not been equally distributed between male and female agricultural wage workers across the states, as there were a continuous wage rate differences. Farouq (1980) in his work on Bangladesh found that female labourers were given half of the wage of male labourers even though she worked for a full day.

Krishnamurty (1988) found that wage differences among agricultural labourers were due to sex rather than caste. Acharya and Panwalkar (1988), who examined gender wage gap, found that it had originated from allocation of work among men and women, for example ploughing, a high wage work which was always done by men.

Sridhara et al. (2009) revealed that throughout South Asia, women’s wages were less than those given to men. They further showed that the inequality in the wage structure was particularly marked in Pakistan where women received, on an average, just about one-third of the wages paid to men. While in India the wage differential were as high as 38 per cent. The Maldives and Nepal had least disparity in the wage structure, but there too women did not receive more than 60 per cent of the wages paid to men. Stoeckel and Sirisena (1988) reported that in Sri Lanka, women earned 14 to 39 per cent less than men in the same agricultural activities.
A study conducted by Rani et al. (1990) in Andhra Pradesh showed that in the rice and cotton based cropping system, wage differences were observed among males and females for different operations. According to Jayashanker and Narayana (1983) the minimum wages Act for agricultural labourers had not yet been implemented properly. The report of GOI (1974) showed that the machinery for fixation and enforcement of minimum wages was not uniform. The casual nature of women’s employment, poverty and illiteracy among agricultural labourers and their ignorance of the law were the reasons that forced women to receive inadequate wages. It was also found that not only in the agriculture sector but in industries too women earned less than men. Omati (1955) showed that in India and in the rest of the world women earned less than men because most of the women workers in the industry were unskilled and their number was relatively small. Thus they lacked bargaining power.

Various authors made recommendations for improving the plight of rural women in agriculture. Bagchi (1981) suggested that in case of the restrictive communities where women were restricted from working on other’s fields, schemes or activities that could be carried out closer to the home situation could provide opportunities to rural women. These activities ranged from income generation to supervisory which in turn could contribute to the village community.
Sharma and Singh (1992) recommended that, for improving the plight of unskilled female agricultural workers, education, employment and creation of income earning opportunities should be given top priorities.

Saksena (2004) suggested that, along with employment generation schemes for agricultural women, there was a need to upgrade women’s skills in farming practices like horticulture and floriculture. However Reddy (1979) believed that the welfare of rural female agricultural workers lay not in the conventional policy of creating additional employment but in easing their work burden. According to Farouq (1980) education and non-farm employment opportunities may help women for better livelihood.

In providing adequate wages to women agricultural labourers two important Acts were the Minimum wages Act 1948 and The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. Various authors suggested that these acts should be properly implemented in providing sufficient wages to both men and women, without any discrimination. Rani et al. (1990) the authors suggested that the Equal Remuneration Act should be strictly implemented for similar work performed by men and women. Stoeckel and Sirisena (1988) emphasized on having a policy for eliminating wage inequality between the sexes.
1.8 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis has been divided into six chapters.

**Chapter 1** gives a general background of the gender issues in agriculture. It also consists the background of the study area and also reviews literature on women’s involvement in agriculture in broader perspective.

**Chapter 2** deals with the historical review of women’s participation in Uttar Pradesh which was known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh from 1881 to 1951. It shows the various agricultural operations performed by women during this period. It also shows the socio-economic profile of women agricultural workers.

**Chapter 3** deals with factors that affect the participation of women agricultural workers since 1951. There existed various social and economic constrains which negatively affected the participation of women. Technological constraints also forced women into low skilled operations. Women in agriculture also faced various problems that created adverse conditions for them.

**Chapter 4** deals with the changes in the land legislations and the women’s position in agriculture. Although women are greatly employed in agriculture but in the absence of land rights they could not use the resources. This chapter critically examines various tenancy Acts along
with inheritance laws that restricted women’s independent ownership of agricultural land.

**Chapter 5** deals with the gender disparities in the agricultural wages. Furthermore it deals with the various wage laws that claim to provide equal wages to both men and women. The agricultural wages were also looked upon to examine regional and inter state disparities among women labourers.

**Chapter 6** gives the conclusion and also recommended various measures that may help in improving the status of women agricultural workers.