

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Involved in an unbelievable variety and multiplicity of activities, millions of poor Indian women live below the poverty line and work for the sole purpose of providing for the survival needs of their families. Their multiple roles as workers, child bearers, rearers and family maintainers through a variety of overlapping activities account for much debated invisibility and undervaluation of their unpaid labour. As contributors to the family economy and its survival, their role is far beyond that of men's. If the family economy is recognized as an integral aspect of the national economy, then women's contribution to the latter, to say the least, requires fresh assessment.

Women's Participation in Economic Role

Multiple economic involvement is one of the characteristics of tribal economy. Several researchers over the years have attempted to study the work pattern of rural and tribal women and the time they spent on various activities. The results have highlighted that women work 3 to 4 hours a day more than men in the same society. With overwhelming uniformity they depict women working for extremely long hours (Jain and Chand, 1980; Kaur, 1986) and expending more total energy in tasks they do (Batliwala, 1982). A wide variety of tasks, all of which are crucial to a family's survival, are performed without adequate rest.

Tribal women's domestic activities include meal preparation, child care, household maintenance, shopping, fetching wood for fuel, water, fodder and other miscellaneous activities. These women also spend considerable time on agricultural activities either on their own farms or on farms of other people, especially during peak season. They are involved at all stages of agricultural activities like pre-sowing, cultivation, harvesting and post-harvesting. The tasks allotted to tribal women are generally time consuming, strenuous and back breaking. The various activities are : land preparation, fertilizer application, hoeing, weeding, harvesting, winnowing, storing grains etc.

Tribal women, besides performing household and agricultural tasks, have been predominantly engaged in livestock care. Among livestock care women are engaged in activities such as bringing fodder from fields, preparing feed for cattle, milking etc. The limited amount of leisure time available to women in rural areas is spent partially on resting, spinning, weaving, and sewing. Saxena and Bhatnagar (1985) found that during peak season tribal women spent 14.66 hours on daily activities out of which 8.24 hours were spent on agricultural work and 6.42 hours on home activities.

Women gainfully employed outside their homes have a longer work day as they are also engaged in household work, agricultural activities and household industry related tasks. Women get very little leisure time if they work outside homes as well as inside (Kaur, 1982).

Women's Labour Force Participation

According to Census of India, the total number of workers in the country are 314.90 millions constituting 37.64 percent of population. Out of these 34.12 million of the population are main workers and 3.52 percent are marginal workers. About 85 per cent of marginal workers are females. The total female work participation rate in India is 22.69 per cent. The work participation rates for females increased from 23.06 per cent in 1981 to 27.20 per cent in 1991 in the rural areas of the country, showing thereby increasing participation of women in economic activities during the decade 1981-91.

The percentage of female workers in Himachal Pradesh is 36.57 per cent in rural areas. Out of the total rural female worker population of Himachal Pradesh 90.11 per cent are cultivators followed by 2.25 per cent as agricultural labourers, 0.91 per cent engaged in household industry and 6.73 per cent engaged in other works.

Women's Status and Economic Role

Status refers to a position in social system or sub-system which is distinguishable from, and at the same time related to other positions through its rights and obligations. Position in a social structure can be viewed in terms of powers, privileges, advantages and disadvantages. According to Linton (1936) status is a collection of rights and duties.

The status of woman is one of the most important criteria for estimating with precision the degree of civilisation attained by that particular society. In India status of women has seen many ups and downs. Historical research has now established beyond doubt that women held a position of equality in all spheres of life before 1500 B.C. The position of women during the Vedic period was somewhat better than in the later stages. In the post Vedic period society experienced a change in the direction of rigidity. Manu, the great law-giver of this period, deprecated women and conceded to them an inferior status. After 1800 A.D. various socio-cultural politico - economic circumstances, protest movements, brought about changes in the position of women through educational, socio-economic and legislative measures. After independence, improvement in status of woman was a pledge, made by the constitution makers and admitted by the Government from the very beginning as one of the major tasks facing the country.

Theoretically, the low status of woman is accepted even in tribal societies exceptions being matriarchal, matrilineal and polyandrous communities. But in practice the tribal women enjoy comparatively more freedom and are devoid of many constraints imposed on non-tribal women. Dhebar commission (1961) reported that women in tribal society are not beasts of burden but are able to exercise a firm hand in family matters. The equalities and the constitutional directives, meant to elevate the status of women have not been supported by our social system in general and educational programmes in particular.

A woman's status may be said to be higher when she contributes greatly to the subsistence of society and does so in such a form as to retain control of wealth and/or products she produces. Generally the relationship between earning activity, status and autonomy within the family for the woman depends to a great extent on the status of her earning capacity (Indian Council of Social Science Research 1975).

However, the low status of women in a historical perspective is largely based on the myth that women are inferior as agents of production. Much of the labour contributed by them, specially in domestic chores and also outside, are not usually considered as productive. Most of the contributions made by women to the farm sector also go unaccounted as they are not directly paid. Since women are producing predominantly for subsistence, and /or consumption within the household, they retain their subservient status even when the labour hours expended by them exceed those of men. Their inferior social status is based on the implicit assumption that their labour is unproductive or less productive. The common notion that female labour is a less efficient input than that of her male counter part is not borne by facts. Though studies focussing on rural and tribal women over the last 15 years have invariably concluded that women's labour is critical for the survival of their families, social perception of women in general continues to be as protected, dependent, non-worker or marginal worker, whose earnings are supplementary or secondary. This perception continues in defiance of empirical studies and the rising incidence of women who are sole or principal

supporters of their families. It has been pointed out by various researchers that there is a relatively greater concentration of female headed households in the economically disadvantageous strata of our society (Visaria and Visaria, 1985).

Quantification of Economic Role

The quantification of the invisible multiple roles of women and productive inputs in terms of contributed work hours or equivalent income generated by them was earlier neither attempted nor recorded in the Census. The United Nations Decade for Women has helped to reduce the invisibility of women's productive activities and raised serious questions about the distinction between the so called productive and non-productive work of women (Nickols and Srinivasan 1988). To understand women's work and their economic contributions some workers/agencies have attempted to define work in the following ways.

Census of India 1991 defines work as participation in any economically productive activity, such participation may be physical or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work but also effective supervision and direction of work. It also includes unpaid work on farm or in family enterprise. The Census of India recognises production for own consumption in cultivation as economic activity (including cultivation of crops and cereals and excluding cultivation of fruits and tea plantation). In other words, with the exception of cultivation the census does not include any non - market economic activity as work.

National Sample Survey Organisation (1988) defined work as activity pursued for pay, profit or family gains or in other words, the activity which adds value to the "National Product". It includes any market and non-market activity related to agriculture sector, but excludes household chores as work or gainful activity.

Dixon M. et al., (1988) proposed four definitions of labour force. Progressing from the least to most conceptualisation, each provides distinctive information on labour market and on various forms of contribution to household and national income.

- "(a) Paid labour force : Persons engaged in wage or or salary employment for which they are paid in cash or kind.
- (b) Market - oriented labour force : Persons in paid employment plus persons engaged in activities on a family farm or in a family enterprise that sells some or all of its products.
- (c) New standard labour force : Persons engaged in activities the products or services of which should be included in the national income accounts statistics according to United Nations recommendations. This definition of economic activity corresponds with the one recommended by the Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians. It includes persons engaged in the production of goods and services for the market as well as the processing primary products produced by the household such as growing vegetables, caring for livestock etc., but omits house work, child rearing etc.
- (d) Total labour force : Persons engaged in economic activities as defined above, plus those engaged in the production and processing of primary and non-primary products and services for use in home (sewing clothes for family members, preserving foods) and other domestic and related activities such as meal preparation, care of clothes, care of house, care of other family members etc. These

activities are also economic in the broad meaning of the term, i.e., they use the scarce resource of labour to produce goods and services. The distinction between domestic activities that are included in the total labour force, and domestic activities that are not, can be made by applying the "third person" principle i.e. activities are considered to have "economic value" if they could be performed by a paid worker to achieve the same results (Reid 1934, quoted in Goldschmidt Clermont, 1987). Cooking a meal or child care has economic value while social visiting and religious observances etc., do not. This comprehensive concept of economic activity is useful for planning purposes that require a full assessment of the value of goods and services produced by all household members."

It is generally agreed that existing data are not able to capture all the dimensions of women's work, particularly in rural and tribal areas and the consequent invisibility of women's economic contribution has emerged as a major concern in research on women's work (Anker 1987).

There are two basic reasons for the usual failure to measure women's work correctly. Firstly, international definition of work is not able to capture women's work as according to it work depends on production of goods and services which are exchanged in the market and common methods of enumeration often omitted seasonal and part-time work, ignored unpaid family workers on farms and household work. Secondly, social attitudes and perceptions that undermine women's contributions, lack of understanding / recognition of women's work, low self perception, disregard of home based women's work in data collection, reflection of bias in male respondents / investigators, framing and ordering of questions in data collection, questionnaires etc.

There is reason to think that omission of women's work provides a very distorted picture of the total output. (Basson, 1986; Anker et al., 1987). The subsequent analysis is based on fundamental observations which emerge forcefully from the background studies.

"Women are important productive workers in India's national economy. Even the "Statistical Purdah" imposed by existing methods of measuring labour force participation renders much of their work invisible. Women make up one third of the labour force. When women engaged in the collection of fuel and fodder, or in dairy, poultry or kitchen garden production for the family, are added to women in conventionally defined labour force, the female labour force participation rates rises from 39 per cent to 51 per cent... only 13 per cent points lower than the male participation rates of 64 per cent."

(Bennett, 1991)

In recent years considerable attention has been paid in identifying and imputing value to women's unpaid domestic work in the household, but until very recently, hardly any research was undertaken on women's non-market work. This is paradoxical because it is now known that the contribution from this work frequently provides the very basis for family survival particularly among the extremely poor.

Women's Economic Role, Status And Household Development

The household is the fundamental production unit in every type of economy. The ultimate purpose of production activities carried out at the household level is to meet the basic needs of household members. The world around, it is primarily women who manage and perform household production. Shah (1950) in his study

of women in the tribal life holds that the social structure and organisation of the tribal life was centered around the family. As the pivot of family life was the woman, her position and social change that took place in her status and daily life was most important.

Women's ability to manage resources so as to produce products that can generate some income in cash or kind generally determines the level of living achieved by households in the low income and subsistence sectors of developing countries. The innumerable productive activities carried out mainly by women within the household sector are of critical importance for society's survival, growth and development. Household production results in feeding, clothing, sheltering, nurturing family members, thus fulfilling a vital role in contributing to the welfare of the family. Household production is essential for providing the calories that produce energy with which to work in any sector of economy. The level of any individual's health is largely determined by the household's ability to produce shelter and food to meet or exceed basic requirement. Further more, the household is society's primary institution for the replacement and development of human capital through the process of reproduction, socialisation and nurturance. Without this capacity societies can not continue to exist.

Women as a vital part of human resources of a country are the potential contributors towards development and productivity. The total development of women is imperative for the development of a society. The stark reality is that the future of development

and society lies equally in the future of women and men. Never has it been more apparent that women's issues can't be compartmentalized and isolated as secondary issues in development (ESCAP 1981).

The economic status of women is now accepted as an indicator of the household's and society's stage of development. The recognition of the productive capacities and potentials of women in development is a recent phenomenon. The role of women in household development has not been given its full weight in the struggle to eliminate poverty, hunger, inequality and injustice at the national as well as international level. The continued assumption that the responsibility for child rearing and for the family needs lies with women alone as well as the persistence of intra-household inequalities place severe strains on women's health, limit their capacity to participate efficiently in the production processes which further jeopardizes their contribution to society. It is thus becoming overwhelmingly clear that in searching for a solution to these contradictions the inequality between men and women have to be examined particularly from a development perspective. On the one hand, the concerns relevant to women cannot be resolved automatically through economic growth alone. On the other hand, egalitarian processes and policy action to improve women's position within developing countries are only a necessity but not a sufficient condition to improve the quality of life of women in these countries, particularly in view of the grave consequences of the world's economic crisis. Simultaneous and concerted action is necessary to improve the conditions for

growth and development by appropriate domestic and international policies.

Rationale for the Study

Despite repeated observations that women participate more actively in economically productive work more than men do, their participation goes unrecognized and unappreciated. Evidence suggests that inconsistencies in enumeration of the economically active population are most likely to appear among women particularly engaged in agriculture and unpaid household work.

As a result of male orientation, there is a tendency to view women's work in household, agriculture and allied spheres having less or no value resulting in an under-estimation of their real economic activity rate. (GOI, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 1988).

The policy-makers are largely unaware of the dimensions and extent of rural women's work or they choose not to notice it. The result of that ignorance or disregard of the problem causes omission of the kinds of policies which would be relevant. The failure to see women as individuals in their rights has been identified as the main reason for the invisibility of women to programme planners and administrators and mystification of their contribution to society. There is not much of statistical information and research data on women's productive activities in different spheres of economy. There is a need to do research in this area and gather enough data to sensitize planners and policy

makers to massive contribution of women who play a pivotal role for survival of their families in subsistence activities especially in rural and tribal areas.

Many research studies have been conducted on time use pattern and contribution of rural and urban women in performing various activities. But research is lacking in the indepth data collection tools and techniques which give authentic, appropriate and relevant information on time - use data to be quantified and given monetary value to ascertain the economic contribution of these women. Considerable research has been done using various techniques of quantification of women's work time and giving it monetary value in other countries. Consensus is still awaited as to which technique is appropriate as no technique has been perfected. More detailed research is awaited in this area. In India there is virtually not much empirical evidence in standardizing monetary valuation techniques of women's work time which is multifarious and overlapping in nature.

Participation in economic activities and its outstanding characteristics are mutually reinforcing phenomenon which have an impact on the status of women and household development. Increased contribution through economic role is often considered to be an essential pre-condition for improving women's status. The additional income earned by women will enable a family to consume more goods and services, avail of better health status and living patterns, in other words, overall development of the household. But review of available evidence on analytical and empirical work on economic role, household development and status

of women confirms a lack of indepth quantitative and qualitative data. Micro research studies at household level in village level testing has yet to be carried out in order to add depth and meaning to sweeping generalisations regarding women's status and economic role.

It is a recognized fact that rural and tribal women have lot of potentialities for self development, development of families and the village. Government and international agencies now recognize that integrating women effectively and fully in the development process is not just a question of equity, but one of necessity for national and international progress. Although literature on the development process is considerable, involvement of women in the process has seldom been systematically looked into in a proper perspective.

The significance attached to women's economic role and its impact on their status and household development have motivated the investigator to design the present study wherein a systematic assessment of economic role with specific reference to status and household development of tribal women is envisaged.

Also, this study might be of great utility to the Home Scientists, Home Management Specialists, extension personnel and administrators who are involved directly or indirectly in attempting to recognize women's economic role and status, resulting in improvement in their level of household development while planning and executing the educational and development programmes.

Tribals are the poorest unit of society. Though more than four hundred tribal communities live at present in India, every tribal group has its own demographic, socio-economic, political and cultural background. By studying the lives of one group of tribal women one can not make general conclusions for the rest of the tribal groups. Tribals of hilly area lead tougher life than those from plain areas. Tribal society is unique in the sense that women's status is different from that of rural and urban areas. 'Gaddi' tribal area of Himachal Pradesh is backward due to difficult terrain, harsh climate, poor communication links and lack of exposure to outside world. The 'Gaddi' women are mainly responsible for carrying out multitude of productive tasks especially when men folk migrate with flock of sheep and goats or in search of employment in extreme winters. Some families of 'Gaddi' tribal area of Himachal Pradesh have been studied by Anthropologists but neglected by the social scientists. There is dearth of information regarding women's status and household development of this tribe. Hence, there is a great need for indepth empirical investigation to provide answers to questions such as : What are different dimensions of tribal women's work? What role do women play in household, agricultural and allied activities ? How much time do they spend in performing these tasks ? What is the monetary value of time spent in various productive activities ? What is her present status ? Do they have better status due to their economic participation in various household productive activities and gainful employment ? Have their involvement in community activities enabled them to take part more effectively in their economic role ? What is the

general level of household development of tribal households ? The present research was planned to obtain answers to these questions about women's economic role performance, status and household development.

Statement of the Problem

The present investigation is an attempt to determine the impact of economic role performance on household development and status of "Gaddi" tribal women of Himachal Pradesh.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives formulated to give direction to the investigation were :

1. To identify demographic and socio-economic characteristics of "Gaddi" women and their households.
2. To examine the occupational pattern and the extent of women's participation in terms of time spent on :
 - a. Household tasks.
 - b. Agricultural tasks.
 - c. Allied tasks.
 - d. Gainful employment.
3. To estimate the economic role performance and its contribution.
4. To assess the status of tribal women and identify the factors contributing to it.

5. To ascertain the level of household development and the influencing factors.
6. To investigate the influence of personal, family and situational variables on economic role performance of women.
7. To determine the impact of economic role on :
 - a. Household development.
 - b. Status of women.

Assumptions of the Study

The study is based on the assumptions that :

1. Due to modernisation, tribal community is in the process of change.
2. Tribal women perform various productive tasks and differ from each other in status.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There will be a difference between time spending pattern on household, agricultural and allied activities due to personal, family and situational variables.
2. The personal, family and situational variables will influence the economic role performance of women.
3. Personal and family variables are expected to be the key determinants of women's status and household development.
4. Economic role will influence household development and status of women.

5. It is predicted that gainfully employed respondents will have better household development and status than non-employed respondents.

Delimitations of the Study

1. The sample consisted of 200 tribal women only.
2. The data were collected during agricultural lean season.