6.1 Introduction

A critical peep into the literature reveals that rural women remain the most vulnerable and the least developed lot even today, in spite of the fact that they are equal partners. Beside their biological and social right through history, contribution of rural women in term of times or efforts is not low or less than men in any way. However, this is largely implicit, unpaid, home based and, therefore, not visible and as such it is neither counted nor considered. Even the constraints that are put by this large chunk of unpaid work of rural women on their development opportunity are not concerned or evaluated in the right perspective by the policy makers.

Gender equality is one of the constitutional mandates in most of the developing countries and the importance of understanding rural women's socio-economic status and livelihood security has now been recognized by a number of international development agencies.
Because, if their condition is not improved, the chances of all round development of these people, who constitute a major portion of the population, are rather bleak and it will adversely affect overall development of the nation.

In rural areas, these females are playing major role in almost all the domestic chores as well as in agricultural and non-agricultural operations since ages and hilly areas are no exception. Unfortunately, their contributions to farm sector and various economic activities have been ignored, unsupported and inadequately understood. Many studies have pinpointed the issues relating to women, but not much attention has been paid to examine their socio-economic status and livelihood security. Moreover, hitherto conditions of women in the plains have been examined by scholars concerned with the development of women, the hilly and remote areas, however, have been neglected for a long time. In view of the above facts, the present investigation was planned to throw reasonable light on the various pointers of socio-economic status and livelihood security of women in hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh (India) and Sri Lanka.

6.2  Objectives

The present study is based on the following specific objectives:

- To identify the key socio-economic pointers contributing to the status of women
- To study entrepreneurial behaviour of women and their involvement in various activities/organizations for women empowerment/upliftment of the family, community and society.
- To examine livelihood security of women and problems faced by them in socio-economic upliftment.

6.3  Materials and Methods

The present study was restricted to tea growing locations of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh (India) and Nuwara Eliya district of Sri Lanka, as both areas have almost similar type of agro-climatic conditions as a result of which, tea cultivation dominates the cropping pattern in higher ranges of both regions. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select tea growing locations, villages and households. In the first stage of sampling,
three tea growing locations were randomly selected from each district and one village was randomly selected from each selected location in the second stage of sampling. In the final stage, 25 households were randomly selected from each sampled village, thus, making total sample size of 150 households. The present study was based on primary as well as secondary data at the household and village level. Primary data relating to various parameters of socio-economic status, entrepreneurship and livelihood security were gathered through specially designed schedules by survey method for an agricultural year (2006-07). The secondary information was collected from various published/unpublished sources, different offices of Govt. (District Statistical Office, BDO office, Panchayat office, Gramasevaka office, District Secretariat office of Nuwara Eliya, Govt. schools, Primary Health Centers, Tea Small Holding Authority etc.), NGO’s (Women organizations, Aanganwadi, Balwadi, co-operatives, CARE Sri Lanka, Centre for women Research, Sri Lanka, Beredina, etc.), despite that information was collected through participatory approach and from key informants in the village.

The Tabular technique was extensively performed to workout averages, ratios, percentages, and indices relating to various socio-economic features of sample households, women’s involvement in various activities, contribution of components of entrepreneurial behaviour of women, livelihood outcomes and constraints & problems faced by women. To identify key determinants of status and entrepreneurial behaviour of women, step-up regression analysis was employed. In addition, Pearson’s correlation coefficients were calculated to examine impact of women’s income on household food security.

6.4 Main Findings

The main findings emerged out of present investigation are summarized as:

1. The sex composition showed that the proportion of male population below 19 years in Kangra as well as in Nuwara Eliya was relatively more than females, implying thereby preference for male child in both the study areas. Whereas on the basis of overall average, proportion of males and females was more or less similar in Kangra district, but it was found that proportion female population was higher than males in
case of Nuwara Eliya which mainly was due to more mis happenings with males as a results of militancy.

2. The incidence of widow was relatively higher among females in both the districts, the reason of which was same for the both study areas as male counterparts of most of widow women were serving in defense / security forces and as such, they were killed during encounter. Moreover, the life expectancy of females is higher than males mainly due to health unfriendly dietary pattern of males in both the study areas.

3. The literacy rate was markedly higher for males (98 per cent) as compared to females (84 per cent) in Kangra district which amply speaks of disparity of education among females and males. Whereas in case of Nuwara Eliya such type of disparity was not found. This was due to the facility of free education to all up to graduation level in Sri Lanka.

4. The land ownership pattern was found more skewed towards males in Kangra as only 24 per cent of the total women respondents had land in their names. On the other hand, 41 per cent of the total sampled women respondents of Nuwara Eliya had entitlement of land.

5. The distribution of sampled households according to per capita income indicates that majority of households belonged to medium and low income group (77 per cent Kangra and 92 per cent Nuwara Eliya). Across the study areas, the higher proportion of respondents was found in the high income group in Kangra (24 per cent) as compared to Nuwara Eliya (8 per cent). The similar trend in distribution of sampled households on the basis of per capita expenditure was observed in both the study areas, except varied proportion of respondents under medium and low income group (about 80 per cent Kangra and Nuwara Eliya).

6. The nutritional status revealed that calorie adequacy ratio was more skewed towards males in both the study areas. Across the study areas, the calorie adequacy ratio was more for females and males in Nuwara Eliya as compared to that of Kangra.
7. The decisions relating to daily family expenses, personal needs, treatment for sick child, visit to natal kin and joining family friends were taken by females in the study areas. Whereas, the decisions relating to major finances (investments), saving and borrowings were taken by the males alone in Kangra. In case of Nuwara Eliya, it has been observed that decisions relating to major finances were taken by males and decisions relating to saving were taken by females. The decisions relating to ornaments were taken jointly by females and males in both the study areas. Overall, it may be concluded that the decisions rights/power lies more with the women of Nuwara Eliya as compared to Kangra.

8. The marital status, education and social participation were the significant pointers determining the status of women in both the study areas. Also, caste was found one of the key pointers in Kangra and type of family was observed as another parameter determining the status of women in Nuwara Eliya.

9. Among the components of entrepreneurial behaviour, achievement motivation, management orientation and risk taking ability in order of ranking were the important pointers for the women of Kangra district. Whereas, achievement motivation, management orientation and ability to co-ordinate the farm activities were found to be the important components of entrepreneurial behaviour for women in Nuwara Eliya. Interestingly, the women in Kangra were found of more risk averse nature and reverse was found in Nuwara Eliya.

10. Education, farm income, economic motivation and accessibility to market were identified as the key determinants of entrepreneurial behaviour of women in Kangra district. Whereas, age, farm income and information sources were the important determinants of entrepreneurial behaviour of women of Nuwara Eliya.

11. The proportional contribution of women to the household income from farm activities was comparatively higher in Nuwara Eliya (74 per cent) as compared to women of Kangra district (52 per cent). In case of off farm income the reverse was found true. Women income share to total household expenditure was more in Kangra (63 per
cent), than Nuwara Eliya (44 per cent), but in case of saving it was found reverse.

12. Based on the livelihood security index, overall the women of Nuwara Eliya district were found better in all the indicators as compared to their counterparts of Kangra district.

13. The problems faced by the women being a house manager were found almost similar for both the study areas. The most important problems pointed by women were lack of training programmes, followed by no loan facilities for household infrastructure.

14. As an entrepreneur, the most important problems of women were high cost of raw materials and lack of knowledge about financial institutions, training institutions in both study areas.

6.5 Policy Implications

1. The women of Kangra district lagged behind in respect of literacy, sex ratio, calorie intakes, land holdings and decision making rights as compared to their male counterparts in the study area and female counterparts in Nuwara Eliya district of Sri Lanka. This is a serious concern which needs to be addressed through concerted efforts and policy support.

2. In both the study areas there is a preference of male child which leads to fall in sex ratio that has serious repercussions in the long run for the society. Therefore, it needs to be checked by launching effective public and communication systems to create awareness among the society about the equal importance of male and female child.

3. Comparatively, the position of females in Nuwara Eliya has been found better in terms of pointers of status and livelihood security as compared to females of Kangra district. To improve the existing status and livelihood security of women in Kangra district, there is an urgent need to enhance the literacy level of females by imparting free education to them up to graduation level as in case of Sri Lanka.

4. Lack of training programmes on management of various household / agricultural activities, new livelihood avenues, etc., have been pinpointed by the majority of
female respondents from both the study areas. For this, the concerned institutions should come forward to impart training on the said aspects and revise their training courses as per the need of the females from time to time.

5. Understanding existing patterns of intrahousehold allocation is a key step to formulating effective development policies. While policies may affect the intrahousehold allocation of resources and the existing intrahousehold allocation may lead to policy failures. Moreover, reallocation within the household may offset the effects of targeted interventions. What is needed is a two – prolonged strategy. First, in the short run, it is important to assess the actual impact of policies and programmes that can match the intended impact. Second, in the medium to long run, policies need to improve the status of women by acknowledging the crucial role they play as harbinger of household food security and nutritional status and as major contributors to the overall household economy.