CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Importance of the women
1.2 Purpose indicating original contribution to knowledge
1.3 Justification of the study
1.4 Research Methodology
1.5 Universe
1.6 Approach to the study
INTRODUCTION

THE INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER opens with the importance of the women's position, justification of the study, objectives, research methodology and the women's movement since ancient times to the present with special reference to rural women of Kanpur.

Once, painting the picture of democracy, a Unani Philosopher Plato said, "Half of the World's population (women) strength spends its time in washing utensils and dishes, not in development of the nation and building up a character'.

To realise the above disheartening picture of the women, the Government of India also reiterated its commitment of women empowerment on international Women's Day, March 8, 1997, for
setting up of Commissioner for women's rights and National Resource Centres for women in order to create a conducive environment for the advancement of women.

It is obvious that how can, in such situation, real development, be achieved when about half of the strength is deprived of the main stream of development. Historical studies and scriptures also prove that Indian women enjoyed a comparatively higher status during the early Vedic period (1000 B.C. to 200 B.C.)

Similarly to realise the importance of the women, (Late), Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru said, "In order to awaken the people, it is the women who has to be awakened. Once she is on the move, the household moves, the village moves and the country moves."

The principal and value of gender equality is not a concept of recent origin in India. This was accepted by the Indian National Congress through the fundamental right resolution in 1931, which later found a place in the constitution of Indian republic. It is also a reassertion of the ideology enunciated by the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.


A little less than 80% of the women live in rural India and a majority of them is labourers in the agricultural sector and allied field. These poor women have the dual burden of contributing to the family income and of shouldering the responsibility of looking after the family.

The work pattern of these women extending from 13 to 17 hours speaks of the struggle they have to put in to make a living. They have to spend long hours in husking, grinding, cooking, fetching potable water, fuel collection, etc. Work outside the home may include work at her own farm or cattle shed, employment on wages, or income generating activities. During off-season she has to perform more work than physically feasible and even then she has to live below subsistence level with no nutritious diet. The common characteristics of these agricultural labourers include lack of land ownership rights, insecurity in employment, unemployment, underemployment, lack of bargaining power, low wages and over extended work days.

Nothing belongs to them and they have got no power or status either in the family or society. Higher paid jobs, like ploughing, digging, etc., are done by men who are paid in cash and low paid jobs like sowing, weeding, transplanting, irrigation, etc., are allotted to women who are paid in kind.
On the other hand though women's votes are considered to be important yet they have no place in the village power structure. Panchayats or Sabhas have no separate wings for women. The social restrictions and constraints prohibit rural women from taking part freely in cultural and recreational activities. Women do not deal with Panchyats and even who co-opted in them, their husbands carry out the functions expected from them.

In emerging phenomenon in the rural area is the female headed household. This may be due to the death of the husband or migration of men seeking employment in urban areas. The woman has to assume the role of the head of the household and responsibility for the support and care of children and elders of their family. Her income is not adequate to meet the family needs and there is not enough money received from the man folk.

A review of the status of rural women with reference to demographic, education, health, aspects, etc., reveal certain continuing distressing features.

While the sex ratio shows a decline in the female population from 972 in 1901 to 930 in 1971 and 935 in 1981 for the whole country, rural areas, normally, also reflected as similar pattern even through in certain rural parts the ratio of females was found to be higher, the reason for which may be male migration.
It has been observed that the ratio of infant mortality rates in rural areas is nearly one and half times that of urban area which is an indication of the low health status and conditions of malnutrition among rural women. But is interesting to see that the mortality rate declined from 136 in 1970 to 124 in 1980. These are indication of linkages between the literacy rates of mothers and child mortality rates as is evident from the fact that infant mortality rate was 132 (rural) and (urban) in the case of illiterate mothers as against (90 rural) and 53 (urban) in the case of literate mothers.

The National Family Health Survey of India estimates that in the early 1990's, close to 1,10,000 women died each year from causes related to pregnancy and child birth. Other estimates for India place the figure at 1,25,00 women each year.*

Kerala, reduced its infant mortality rate from 37 in 1981 in 1993, an average annual reduction of 8%. Similarly, Tamil Nadu lowered its infant mortality rate from 91 in 1981 to 56 in 1993, recording an annual average of reduction of 4.6%, significantly higher than the national average of 3% during this period.**

Large number of children suffer from malnutrition, one of the main reasons for which is stated to be mother's poor health. Anemia

** IDB : Page No. 43. Family Planning, Material mortality, Primary education, gender equity, child labour - marking the progress towards India’s goal for children (UNICEF) material Mortality, Pge No. 43, 1995.
among rural women is estimated to be 60 to 80%. The situation for Kanpur Dehat rural women is more starting in respect of particularly above headings.

This literacy learning is also producing social changes in making the women conscious of their rights, enabling them to organise themselves to fight various social evils like the sale of arrack, dowry demand and deaths and violence against women. Literacy education is bringing about amelioration in the gender disparities. Both at the level of the illiterate, where some 60-70% are women, as well as in formal educational, where taking primary education, girl enrollment has grown from 5.4 million in 1950-51 to 42.4 million in 1991-92 and at the upper primary (elementary) from 0.5 million to 30 million between these years. even so, frills constitute only some 30-355 of the total students at every level (when they should be nearer 50%). This trend is also to be found in secondary level and higher education and in employment and wages/salaries.

Literacy learning makes the literate conscious and aware of these and other forms of disabilities to which they are subject.*

PURPOSE INDICATING ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE:

The main purpose of this study is to ameliorate the position of women in rural India and the sustain the equality of status in order to see the overall development of the nation. To fulfill this purpose, the scholar will analyses and to through the determinants of women's status responsible for their plight.

According to the recent survey, the death of half a million women a year in pregnancy and child birth is described and indicated that about a quarter of the world's women are violently abused in their own homes. Community based services have yielded higher figures upto 50% in Thailand, 60% in Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Korea and 80% in Pakistan and child. In the United States of America, domestic violence is the single biggest cause of injury to women, accounting for more hostel admissions than rapes, muggings and road accidents combined. Besides, 94% women labourers hardly need education rather than facilities and quality in their respective economic activities. Since it is estimated that about 94% of female labour force is engaged in informal or unorganised sector. In terms of numbers, this is a very large group. The national commission on self employed women defined this sector as follows:
Their characteristics can be roughly summed up as fewer and poorer opportunities to work, greater impact of unemployment, under employment and casual nature of work. All these activities generally need no literacy or education. If this 94% unorganised women labour force is strengthened through facilities and qualities of products used in agricultural upliftment and, these labourers are trained in their respective economic activities, there will be more economic independence amongst the rural women.

If this fact will emerge out from the present study, it will be the original contribution to the knowledge that is hardly recognised by the policy makers, executors and planners etc. till now.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY:

In the context of the changes in the position of women in India, it is highly necessary to study the women agricultural labourers for establishing quality and ameliorating the lot of rural women, because, they from an important segment of the entire labour force in Indian agriculture. Equality of status and of opportunity is the pledge made by the constitution of India. But in the case of rural women of Kanpur in particular, and rural women of India in general, as observed during the course of this study, it has been only a social document.
In fact, they face with greater inequality, exploitation and atrocities today. Improvement in their employment opportunities, educational facilities and working conditions etc. not merely on the grounds of social justice but as a basic condition for the social and economic development the study has been highly needed and sufficient justification in the interest of the society.

The above discussion reflects that the status of women constitutes in almost all societies and it has emerged today as fundamental crisis in human development. The inequalities inherent in our traditional social structure, based on caste, community and class have a very significant influence on the position of women in different spheres. Socially accepted rights and expected roles of women norms governing their behaviour and of others towards them vary among different groups and regions. They are closely affected by the stage and methods of development and the position held by the group in the social hierarchy. All this makes out a case of "A study of socio-Economic studies of women in India (1947-1990)".

OBJECTIVES:

As is very much clear from the above, that the overall objective of the study in hand is to study the socio-economic factors of Indian women in order to raise it status thus main factors is given on socio-economic factors in the study. Besides, the following specific objectives have also been undertaken in the present study.
a) To study the historical perspectives in reference to women of Indian History.

b) To assess the impact of the constitutional, legal and administrative provisions on the social status of women, their education and employment, particularly in rural sector during the last three decades.

c) To examine the status of women in the changing social pattern and.

d) To suggest remedial and other measures by going through the latest literature in the field of law, sociology, education, employment, politics, cultural and population policy etc. Which would enable women to play their active role in building up and national and the character in addition to ensure impartial in the development process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In order to attain the above objectives, the study is designed on the basis of available data both published and unpublished. In addition, a case study of village “RAUGAON” District Kanpur has also been conducted in order to advance the operational suggestions for ameliorating the lot of women.
SOCIAL FACTORS:

1. Education
2. Health
3. Religion
4. Political participation

ECONOMIC FACTORS:

1. Income
2. Occupation
3. Employment

DECISION MAKING:

Besides, Govt. commitment, policies and programmes are also undertaken to reach the operational suggestions. The hok study rewarded raved the about factors.

UNIVERSE:

As has been explained above, in order to advance the operational suggestions case study of village "RAUGAON" (Makanpur) district Kanpur, has also been done.

Thus the universe included only one village of district Kanpur for the study of socio-economic factors of the status of women in India. The analysis is based on the primary and secondary data collected through a survey of chosen household in the village. This
The survey has thrown light on some aspects of female employment to empirical verification.

The village selected for the survey is situated 4 kms away from Rakanpur on Visdhan road, an important commercial town of Kanpur. The village is linked with a metalled road. The village consists of a total number of 701 household constituting forward, Backward, Muslim and Scheduled castes. The total population of the village was about 3571. There is no industry in the village. The working force in the rural areas usually comes from backward and scheduled castes and as such distribution of household population as given in Table No. 1.1 assumes significance. The Table 1.1 gives the distribution of household population by sex and caste.

**TABLE 1.1**

**DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD POPULATION IN SAMPLE VILLAGE BY CASTE AND SEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Forward Caste</th>
<th>Backward Caste</th>
<th>Scheduled Caste</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26 (32.10)</td>
<td>125 (30.64)</td>
<td>25 (31.25)</td>
<td>199 (31.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23 (28.40)</td>
<td>109 (26.71)</td>
<td>24 (30.00)</td>
<td>196 (27.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>32 (39.50)</td>
<td>174 (42.65)</td>
<td>31 (33.75)</td>
<td>286 (40.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total households of the village have been satisfied on the basis of land holding and then from each strata. 20% of the households were selected at random for intensive study with the help of a structured questionnaire enclosed as Appendix-1. Altogether, 113 households were included in the sample.

RESEARCH TOOLS:

The structured questionnaire comprises of both open and closed ended questions. The overall research tools on the basis of changing position of rural women have been analysed are given as under:

i) Income - occupation

ii) Education

iii) Decision making

iv) Health & family welfare

v) Religion

The have helped the researcher in drawing conclusion and advancing suggestions for ameliorating the lot.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF RURAL KANPUR:

Rural Kanpur (District Kanpur Dehat) is situated at the right bank of River Ganga. Geographically, it lies between 25°, 26° and
26° 58' latitude and 79° 31' and 80° 38'E longitude. With its area of 5072.30 sq.km. the district is divided into 5 Tehsils and 17 development blocks as per Table No. 1.2

CLIMATE:

The climate of the district is sub tropical continental transitional between the dry of western India and hot and humid of Eastern India. The district experiences wide variations in temperature and rainfall such as 15.7°C (January) to 45°C (June) in temperature and 5.6mm (April) to 28.50mm (August) in rainfall.

DISCUSSION FOR THE WOMEN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

WITH VILLAGE PRADHAN RAUGAON

A view of the village RAUGAON under the study
DISCUSSION WITH THE WOMEN OF VILLAGE RAUGAON

A view of the discussion made with the Pradhan of the village RAOGAON Shri Ganga Ram on the Socio-economic problems of the women.

LAND UTILISATION:

3/4th Area of the district has good fertile, alluvial soil where wheat, barely, gram, maize, rice, millet and pulses are grown. Among the cash crops tobacco, potato and groundnut is cultivated in some parts of the district. The remaining 1/4th of the area has either forest or user land where babool, kareel etc. abound.

MEAN OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION:

The district is well concocted with rail, road an river. It has close links through G.T. Road and broad and meter gauge railway lines with many tehsils and nearby districts.

With regard to means of communication, district Kanpur is well connected with nearby districts by telephones and all the
tehsils of the district have post and telegraph offices, public call office etc.

THE SURVEY AND CONCLUDING REMARK:

The castewise distribution of population as mentioned in Table 1.1. is quite skewed in favour of backward castes which account for 59.20% of the total population. The schedule castes account for 18.83% of the population whereas forward castes constitute 11.55% of the population. Women is the working age group constitute about 28% of the total population. The percentage is almost same for different castes of the society. So far as education is concerned, women are almost neglected. As high as 96.43% of the female population is illiterate (Table 1.3), whereas only 63.93% of male population is illiterate. The percentage of illiteracy is also very high (92.50) amongst female children showing that discrimination against females in respect of education would continue to stay.

TABLE 1.3
LEVEL OF LITERACY IN SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Educational Level (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illiterate Upto Middle Upto Matric Above Matric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63.93  17.81  14.15  4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>96.43  2.04   1.02   0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male child</td>
<td>88.41  9.42   2.71   -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female child</td>
<td>92.50  7.50   -     -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was found during the survey that respondents were not so willing to report about the working women in their families. They appeared to have taken it against their dignity that they make the women of their family work. This is what one may expect in a well-to-do family. It is also found in an upper caste family. However, it is significant that it was reported in poor and backward caste families. This shows that working of women in the agricultural activities is taken slowly and against dignity. It is only under compulsion that one makes women of one's family work either on own farm or on other farmers. That is why the female work participation rate in the reporting village is very low. Whereas 94.48% of the male population is working age group is engaged in some or the other work. The work participation rate in case of females is as low as 8.67% (Table No. 14) of the total of 196 female population in the working age group, only 17 were reported to be engaged in economic pursuits. The remaining women, were reported to be engaged exclusively in household activities and enjoying a good deal of leisure. The female work participation rate is 6.42% for the village “RAUGAON” Kanpur and 18.88% for U.P., as a whole. The findings of the study are thus, not contrary to the fact.
TABLE NO. 1.4

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(48.68)</td>
<td>(05.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Trade &amp; Business</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(05.82)</td>
<td>(05.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(38.09)</td>
<td>(88.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(04.76)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(02.65)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>189</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The working women are mostly agricultural labourers. As high as 88.24% of the female working force was reported to be working as agricultural labourers (Table No.1.4). They mostly belong to the Muslim and scheduled caste families. Out of 17 working women, one woman was reported to be a cultivator and another engaged in business. In case of male working force, the percentage of agricultural is 43.75. Obviously, women are not placed satisfactorily on the work front and they are shadowed by men. The engagement of male working force is well diversified. The working condition is rural areas also go against women as compared to men. A comparison may be
made between the working conditions of male labourer and female labourer in agricultural activities.

**TABLE NO. 1.5**

**STATEMENT SHOWING AVERAGE WORKING HOUR & AVERAGE WAGE RATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Working hours/day</th>
<th>Average wage Rate (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Activity</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonagricultural activity</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be observed from Table 1.5 that the male workers are able to get jobs for 8 hours on average, whereas female workers are provided with jobs for 5 hours on average; whereas male workers are engaged for 20-25 days a month, female workers get jobs for only 10 days a month on an average. It shows that female workers remain unemployed for most part of the year. Further, they are engaged in light agricultural activities such as weeding, picking up ripe crops, harvesting etc.

Obviously, they are underutilized. Further, women workers are reported to be grossly underpaid. They average wage for the male
workers in the agricultural activities works out to Rs. 18/- whereas it is only Rs. 10/- in case of female workers. Obviously, women works are discriminated again in respect of wage payment as compared to male workers showing the engorgement of the Equal Remuneration Act infractions. This findings is in conformity with what was observed by the second National conference on women's studies held in Thiruannanthpuram from April, 1984 to April 12, 1984. The male workers are also engaged in a big way in nonagricultural activities where they earn Rs. 25/- to Rs. 30/- an average. This is indeed a sad commentary on the working conditions of women in rural areas. the profile of the working conditions of women in rural areas would appear glomier if one considers the fact that they are unable to get the benefits of labour welfare legislations either.

From the above, it may be derived, that female work force is mostly confined to household drudgery in rural areas and only a small fraction is engaged in gainfull activities. That women as manager of households significantly contribute to economic development, cannot be benefit, Their role as “Worker” is not so encouraging. That this phenomenon is obvious in other villages of district Kanpur Dehat (U.P.) is a matter of common experience. The engagement pattern of female workers reluctantly work as agricultural labourers. It is possible that given the somewhat superior jobs in nonagricultural activities, female work participation rate may
improve substantially. The rural women have sufficient time at their disposal and they are reluctant to go for work activities is not taken as dignified. The working condition of rural women is not satisfactory because of sex discrimination and their poor bargaining power. Because of widespread illiteracy, female workers and subject to a number of common devices that categories work into different grades for the purpose of legitimising unequal wages.

WOMEN MOVEMENT SINCE ANCIENT TIMES TO POST INDEPENDENCE INDIA:

When the chronicle of women of the 20th century is written, probably the most remarkable feature in its annals will be the history of woman development. Far and wide, particularly throughout the Third World today, a new energy is spreading amid the ranks of women of every class. Rich and poor, educated and ignorant all alike feel the dawning of an era of fresh usefulness for their sex. for any serious investigation about the status of Indian women needs to go back to the earliest days of Indian civilization.

The role, status and position of women has not been status through the ages but has actually ranged from that as mentioned to have been one of freedom and a position of importance to the other extreme of considerable subservience. The women movement can be divided into the time periods such as the vedic age, the age of the
later Samhitas, Upanishad and the Epics, later Smaritis and Medieval India, Modern (British) India and post independence India.

Since the information regarding the position of women in earlier periods of the history is available on the elite sections of the society, viz, the high caste and upper strate, a very little material is obtained on the lives and positions of the large majority of women, who were not members of the elite group. Subject to this overriding limitation, the literature indicates that the position of women in Hindu Society during the Vedic age was much better than what one would ordinary expect.

Fillers were given education at par with boys and had to pass through a period of Brahmacharya. Child marriage was not in vogue and marriage of girls were performed at a fairly mature age of 16 and 17 years. Educated grownup brides had a lot of say in the selection of their partners in life. There was no succession of women and they had a position of great importance in the performance of religious rites. Marriage was a religious necessity for both men and women. Though polygamy was practiced in the rich or royal families, monogamy as the social rule.

The custom of “Sati” was unknown and a widow had full liberty to contract another marriage. The only major disability for women lay in proprietary rights since they could not hold or inherit any property. According to Vedic literature, the community as whole showed
concern and respect and they played a significant role in familial, social and political life.

During the period of the later Samhitas and Upnishads also, women retained relative freedom. They were equal partners in marriage practiced to "Prudish" and were permitted the right to divorce and widow remarriage. But gradually they had ceased to attend public meetings. From 500 B.C. to Muslim period, women of these classes not only lost their position and freedom but sank into a state of subservience. Writers have given their now reason for this deterioration. Women had gradually ceased to be useful member of society for the epid and later began to be considered unfit for vedic studies and for performance of religious duties. With education no longer a factor in a women's life the age of marriage was gradually lowered.

In the day of the later Samhitas a son become a religious necessity and not only a secular one. Women were married off soon after attainment of puberty, to be the mothers of sons as soon as possible. The Vedic studies was gradually abolished for them, education was neglected and early marriage came into vogue. An uneducated child wife could hardly be an equal partner for a man or an effective personality in the family or society. By 500 A.D., among the upper caste Hindus, marriage became in irrevocable union so far as the wife was concerned and widow marriage was not permitted.
The custom of "Sati" was no longer confined to the warrior class but began to spread to other communities. The only direction in which the position of women improved was in the sphere of property rights.

Throughout Indian history, however, there has been social consciousness to encourage the liberalisation of attitudes to the status of women. Religious movements like Buddhism and Jainism advocated greater freedom for women that was permitted by Brahminism. The order of nuns in Buddhism and Jainism provided an alternative vocation to marriage. This trend of thought was continued during the Bhakti movement also and its teachings encouraged women saints like Andol, Mirabai and others.

Burring the early medieval I period up to 1200 A.D., some women of the upper strata received considerable literary education, some of them distinguishing themselves in the field of scholarship. Sheela may be made to Indralekha, Sheela and Subhadra. But this tradition diminished with the establishment of Muslim rule. In spite of the fact that V the Turks had brought their own heritage and women of the royal families took active part in political and social life, the lifestyles of women in general deteriorated considerably.

The "Purdah" system a practice mainly in vogue among Muslims, was also adopted by Hindu women partly in imitation and to some extent to protect their honour from foreign invaders. In the
south, where Muslim influence was weak, "Purdah" system did not develop.

Child marriage had become a popular feature in the Muslim period both among Hindus and Muslims, and the custom of "Sati" had its raging effect on the unfortunate Hindu widow. Among Muslims, widow remarriage was permitted by Koranic Law but the influence of the social environment reduced its prevalence among the upper classes. Society frowned upon the widow who did not perform "Sati" and her life was one of suffering and misery. Some of the Mughal emperors, like Akbar, Jehangir and Aurangzeb tried to ban this practice but did not achieve much success.

The common women or girl was left or less without education. There was no system of education, and due to the rigid "Purdah" system, school meant for boys were beyond the reach of girls. Though a few women of upper classes were highly active in political and social fields and were very accomplished in their literary pursuits, in ordinary families, girls remained mostly ignorant. No education was possible by the age of 9 or 10 which was the usual age of marriage.

At the advent of British rule, literacy among ordinary women was almost non-existent. Even women of respectable families felt uneasy about being educated. The generally illiterate, inexperienced child wife could never be a companion to the husband.
and naturally ceased to inspire respect and her position vis-a-vis the husband life and family deteriorated further. Society attitude was to look at women with considering eye and polygamy became more of a custom without there parallel right of divorce for the women or the right to remarry after widowhood. Because of child marriages, frequently, to much older even, the number of widows was large.

During the 19th century, social and religious reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Daya Nand Saraswati, Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekanand, Jyotib Phule and others made efforts through legal measures and educational programmes to eradicate these evils. The major impetus in changing the attitude towards women however came from the national movement for independence. In order to build the mass movement, the message had to be extended to all classes and participation of women in the national movement was a necessary part of the programme. Through the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, women were brought into active participation and political leadership.

The greatest advantage of women's participation in national if he was that it brought them to the forefront and Indian women after independence received rights that could be own only after a long struggle by women in the West. The right to equality of status and opportunity in education, public employment and participation in political life were guaranteed to all citizens by the constitution.
In this connection, the Articles 14, 15 and 16 ensures "Equality before the Law", prohibits any discrimination and guarantees equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state and forbids discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any one of them. The Directive Principles of state policy impose certain special obligations on the state to promote women's welfare particularly the protection of their health as mothers and their dignity as individuals. There have been programmes for women's upliftment, and welfare boards at the central and the state levels have been set up to enable women to play an effective role in national building activities.

The position of women in India, is tagged to the peculiar setup of our society which is divided in itself among the unequal halves, the rural population and the urban population. The experts have confirmed this statement with the help of statistics that out of 368 million women, 278 million live in the rural areas and their vast majority is illiterate. The figures place this majority to 75%. Out of the rest, 20% are semi-literate, hardly 5% may be termed as educated. Thus a huge mass of humanity is ignorant about their

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rights or status/position. They are not aware of it because they are not educated. This fact is reflected not only from the national level statistical data but through the primary data collected from the field of a village Makanpur (Bilhaur Block) in Kanpur Dehat, U.P. also. The details are given in the following chapter. In general, rural women of Kanpur had the same characteristics and status/position as the rural women of most part of India as whole due to their illiteracy. In the context of changing economic and social conditions, it was lamented that various policies and programmes aimed at improving their lot had failed to produce the desired impact on the rural women of Kanpur in particular and of India in general.

Equality of status and opportunity is the pledge made by the constitution of India, but in the case of the rural women, it has remained a social document not only in Kanpur Dehat but also in whole of rural India. In fact, they were faced with greater inequality exploitation and constraints. Not merely on the grounds of social justice, their employment opportunities and working conditions as well as their basic conditions for social and economic development were found deteriorated but prime concern was their exploitation in many wages also there.

APPROACH TO THE STUDY:

The present thesis contains six chapters. Chapter-I discusses the importance of women status, problems faced by them, justification of the study, objectives, research methodology, socio-economic background of rural Kanpur and the summary of the survey conducted in a sample village "ASGAHA" with concluding remark in addition to women movement since ancient times post independence India.

The second chapter reviews the studies which encompass different aspects of women status during the last about 50 years upto the present, besides discussing women welfare during plans. The review of different aspects covered in the chapter are as follows:

I. General Studies
II. Studies on social problems
III. Political studies
IV. Legal studies
V. Studies on Art and culture
VI. Economic studies

Chapter-3 elaborates the importance of income, occupation, decision making capacity of women, education, health and family welfare and religion in reference to the status of rural women. The chapter reviews and analyses the factors/determinants and sees
their conformity with the sample survey results. Problems concluded in the discussion have been depicted separately factorwise in the last of the chapter. Organised and unorganised rural women labourers have also been studied in detail in the chapter.

Chapter-4 has been discussed on the same lines as chapter-3. It elaborates political participation, women and law, socio-economic, socio-cultural determinants as well as Government commitments, policies and programmes upto the data prevailing in the field.

The Vth chapter assess the impact of the Government commitments, policies and programmes for women development from the last about 50 years.

The chapter-6 specialy discussed reaching rural women, women and employment programmes, participation of women in IRDP, women's participation in JRY, Programmes upto the ninth plan.

Chapter-7 outlines the problems derived from the proceeding chapter 3 and 4 in reference to rural women of Kanpur. Suggestions regarding the co-operative system, Panchayati Raj system and establishment of directorate for the unorganised rural women labour as well as establishment of special Tribunals for justice and equality of status to the rural women are also cited in the chapter.