Part One : Background Information.
CHAPTER I
Introduction

Economic development involves a rational process of utilization of the resources, both natural and human, for useful economic activity. In the production process labour is an active factor. The quantity, quality and efficiency of labour depends on availability and quality of human resources in the country. According to Kindleberger\(^1\) "Labour is measured in number of people occasionally divided between men and women". Female labour is an integral part of the total labour force, although the extent of female participation in economic activities may vary from one region to another. "While home and children have been the major preoccupation of women through the ages, there was no period in the recorded history of any country when women were completely shut out from productive employment"\(^2\). But the nature and


\(^2\) Ministry of Labour and Employment - Women in Employment Labour Bureau Pamphlet, Series No. 8 1964.
type of works done by females have undergone a continued transformation in accordance with the changes in social and economic spheres, educational attainment and with changing concepts regarding the extent to which women's contribution is desirable and necessary.

1.1 Factors Influencing Female Participation In Economic Activities

The availability of female labour for participation in economic activities is dependent on several socio economic and cultural factors. Such factors determine broadly the nature of economic and non-economic role of women in the society.

Female participation in economic activities is highly correlated with the level of technology, occupational pattern and income of the household. Work participation of women is higher among the lower economic and social groups and particularly among the weaker sections of society. Economic activities of females are vital for the survival of such families as earnings by male members alone are not sufficient for their maintenance.
Demographic features of female population like age composition, age at marriage, rural urban composition of population and nature of migration, health and caste determine the potential labour force which can be utilized for productive purposes. Social status and prestige, customs and attitudes, religious beliefs also affect the volume of female labour supply in the society. Educational standard influences the nature of occupations for females. It was found that spread of education among females in India has contributed to a decline in the total number of female workers in agriculture and household industry. Although employment opportunities for educated women have increased, participation rate of illiterate and semi-literate women has declined in urban areas inspite of increase in the number of population in absolute terms. For instance during 1961-71, participation rate for illiterate women declined substantially from 81.1 per cent to 65.8 per cent in urban areas but showed marginal variations in rural areas.

The stages of economic development through which the society has been passing determine the extent of...

women's employment outside the house. Economic development transfers many of the activities of women from the household to outside establishments and releases women for works with greater specialisation and efficiency in such establishments. Therefore an appraisal of women's economic roles and their opportunities for participation in economic activities are closely linked with the society's stage of development, the socio cultural attitudes towards women's role and social ideology concerning the basic components of status.

In a highly monetised developed economy many activities of women are reflected in employment and income statistics. While in a developing and underdeveloped economy such activities of women are unaccounted in the group of non market activities due to existence of large non monetised sector. If the total range of women's activities both within and outside the house are taken into account, the actual involvement of women in the daily business of life will be much higher both in developed and under developed economies and particularly in the rural areas of Asia, Africa and

5. ICCSR - Status of Women In India P. 59, 1975.
Latin America. One I.L.O. Report reveals that out of the total female activities included in the labour force, 34 per cent are market activities and 28 per cent are non-market activities, while for male labour the percentages are 66 and 10 respectively. But in the case of the activities not included in the labour force, 62 per cent of female activities are non-marketed while it is zero in case of male. This is because of the nature and type of works that females perform and pattern of combination that females make between domestic duties and economic activities.

The rate of fertility and child care practices in the family also affect the extent of female participation in economic activities. Responsibility for the care of children competes with the incentive to seek employment by women. Competition between the role of women as mothers and as income earners restricts the choice of employment, particularly in the child-bearing period of 15 to 40 years, which is also the most active period for women. A decline in birth rate and rise in the age of marriage is expected to widen employment prospects of women.

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Duration of working hours per day and working days per year for female workers are further affected by socially accepted habits regarding monthly cycle, breaks for meals, recreation, festivals and social ceremonies. Moreover whether and to what extent married women will be available for works outside the house is decided by social and economic considerations within the family and also the surrounding community.

The willingness or unwillingness of the females to participate in works outside the house are important determining factors for female workers as they have to take higher work burden of domestic duties and work outside the house. But such test of willingness are not given due weight for determining the potential labour force due to some practical problems. "sieh" observed that "even in countries where exists a highly developed labour market with a comprehensive system of employment exchanges and positive inducements for unemployed or partly employed workers to register at such exchanges, it is in practice difficult to determine accurately the amount of labour time which workers are willing to supply. In the conditions prevailing in the Asian countries no adequate and reliable test of willingness is available for use in field investigation!"

1.2 Economic Role of Females - International Variations

Economic role of women varies significantly among the countries of the world.* During 1965-66, the proportion of women in the total labour force was 42.3\% in USSR, 38.9\% in Eastern Asia, 35\% in North America and 34.4\% in Europe.\(^8\)

Myrdal made a comparison of female work participation rate in South Asian cities and observed that it was highest among Chinese women in Singapore and lowest in Pakistan. In India it was found 7\% with considerable variations among individual Indian cities.

Female participation rate is very high in Eastern and Western Europe and in North America and rather low in Latin America and in some Middle Eastern countries. Even among the industrially advanced countries, a distinction may be drawn between two groups of countries including U.S.A., Canada, U.K., Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland where women's participation in economic activity is concentrated almost exclusively.

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* Female work participation rate in selected countries is given in Appendix I.

S. L. Mullerot - Women At Work : A European Profile
The UN/ECO Courier, November, 1974.

G. Gunnar Myrdal - Asian Drama - An Inquiry Into The Poverty Of Nations Part II,
in the non agricultural sectors. In other countries such as U.S.S.R., Austria, Finland, Hungary, Japan, Poland, the Federal Republic of Germany and Denmark, women's participation though high in non agricultural pursuits is also sizeable in agricultural occupations. The developing countries, where agriculture is the dominant sector, are grouped into three categories. The first group of countries where women's participation is very high but confined to agriculture includes Nepal, Nigeria, Thailand and Turkey. In the second group, female participation is at 'medium high' level and the concentration is in agriculture. Countries like India, Malaya, Morocco, and Tunisia fall in this group. The third group where the rate of women's participation is low and restricted principally to handicrafts and domestic service includes countries like Latin America, Iraq and Pakistan. 10

In some western countries like Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, there was "feminization" of agriculture. Industrialization, collectivisation, and modernization of agriculture and rural urban migration had involved mostly male peasants. Women had a slower exodus from farming and had taken over a very important

10. Labour Bureau Pamphlet Series No. 8 Op cit P. 5c.
group of agricultural activities which in previous
decades were carried out by men only. The opposite
trend of "masculization" of agriculture was observed
in France where there had been a faster outflow of rural
women than of men. Even the young women who remained
in rural community looked for employment outside
agriculture. Inspite of such variations in the economic
role of women in different countries, it is an
acknowledged fact that female labour constitutes an
important segment of the total labour force in all
countries and they contribute very significantly
towards Gross National Product.

1.3 Female Labour In India

In India expansion of education among female
population has created qualified and expert hands to
serve in trade, commerce and industry, but such educated
women constitute a small proportion of the total working
women in India. The 1971 Census revealed that literacy
rate among females was only 18.7 per cent. About the
total female literates, 40 per cent had no educational
levels (semi-literates), 7.8 per cent were matriculates
while only 1.4 per cent were graduates and above. The
largest group of illiterates and semi-literates are
engaged in the unorganised sector of the economy.

particularly in agriculture and small scale and cotton industry.

The 1971 Census indicated that in India, there were 31 million women workers, 28 million in rural areas and only 3 million in urban areas. The total work force in the rural areas was estimated at 228 million and out of it 36 per cent were women. In rural areas, 37 per cent of the women workers were engaged in agriculture and less than 2 per cent were engaged in manufacturing industries other than household industry. In urban areas, the largest percentage of women workers were engaged in the service sector (32 per cent) followed by agricultural labour (17.5 per cent) manufacturing industries other than household industries accounted for 13 per cent. In rural areas, 13 per cent of the women were in the work force while in urban areas it was less than 7 per cent. The Report of the committee on Status of Women indicated that in India even in biggest cities the participation rate for women does not exceed 7 per cent. Under the impact of economic necessity and the gradual process of modernization, the attitude towards work in non household industries has changed in urban areas only and not in rural areas.

1.4 Occupational Pattern of Females in India

A review of the economic role played by women in India indicates that in the large sector of village community consisting of cultivators, artisans and wage labours, women play a distinctive role for earning livelihood for the family by engaging themselves in production and marketing of products of agriculture and handicrafts. Females also hire out their labour in agricultural operations and domestic activities including works in handloom industries. About 50 per cent of the labour force in plantation industry consist of female workers. During the last decades the occupational pattern of females has not undergone significant changes and female workers continue to dominate the primary sectors. During 1971, 94 per cent of the women workers were engaged in the unorganised sector of the economy, 81.4 per cent in agriculture and the rest in non-agricultural occupations. Occupational distribution of female workers into nine industrial categories is shown in Table 1.1. It is seen that only 2.8 per cent of women workers are engaged in manufacturing industries of the modern type, 4.3 per cent are engaged in household industry and the majority are engaged in cultivation.

Some agricultural products like vegetables, processed and semi-processed food stuff and handicrafts are generally produced and marketed by women in India.
### Table 1.1: Distribution of Women Workers Into Nine Industrial Categories 1971

*Figures in Thousands, Total Workers 22,966, Total 100.0%*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industrial Categories</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Cultivators</td>
<td>9,127</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>9,266</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Agricultural Labours</td>
<td>15,211</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>15,795</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting and plantations, orchards and allied activities</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Mining and Quarrying</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Manufacturing Processing, Servicing &amp; repairs</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>1,331</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Household Industry</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Other than Household Industry</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Construction</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Trade and Commerce</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Transport Storage and Communication</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>2,229</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Other Services</td>
<td>22,966</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3332</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>31,298</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 1971.
Among tribal and scheduled caste communities, production and marketing of handicrafts are mainly carried on by women. Women also participate in marketing of fish, poultry and eggs amongst the tribals and scheduled castes in many parts of India. In the North Eastern States of Nagaland, Manipur, among some communities of Arunachal Pradesh and in Assam, weaving is done mainly by women. In Manipur many women are engaged in marketing handloom products. In other parts of India women are engaged in weaving and in other handicraft industries both as helpers and as handicraft workers.

Based on 1961 Census, Mitra et al. found that 12.1 million females were engaged in household and non household industries other than cultivation. States in southern and western zones of India employed higher proportion of females. Female participation was found higher in household industries like textiles, tobacco products, forestry and logging. Such industries are of high labour intensity, less mobility, less skill and also less remuneration. Non household industries where female participation was found higher included water supply and sanitary services, educational and scientific services, Medical and Health Services and other services where females enjoyed equal status and pay with men.

A significant group of women in the unorganised sector are construction workers who are mostly engaged in unskilled laborious jobs. Women construction workers constitute 9.2 per cent of the total workers in the industry.

Many women workers in the unorganised sector serve as unpaid family workers. The 1961 Census estimated unpaid family workers aged 10 and above, at 14 per cent for males and 41 per cent for females. The Expert Committee on Unemployment indicates that the proportion of unpaid family workers declines considerably in the case of the males after the age of 24, but for females who form a higher proportion in the age group of 10-19, the decline is marginal.

During 1971, only 6 per cent of the women workers were engaged in the organised sector. Engagement of females in factory industry is dependent on the provision of some amenities like maternity benefit, creche facilities etc. Operation of protective legislation reduces employment of females in hazardous works and also limits the competitive position of females. Myrdal observed

that decline in the employment of females in factory industry was more than simply a by-product of protective legislation.

The nature and extent of modernisation process lead to introduction of highly capital intensive technology and consequently retrenchment of workers particularly women workers. In 1967, ILO undertook a preliminary survey to analyse impact of scientific and technological progress on the employment and conditions of work of women in selected industries, and came to the conclusion that in industries like metal trades, textiles, clothing, leather and footwear, food and drinks, printing and allied trades, women were displaced from previously held jobs to low productivity and low wage occupations.

1.5 An Analysis of Employment Data on Women

A review of the employment data on women give different pictures of work pattern of females. The Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry (1956-57) found that average employment of women workers was 131 days in agriculture and 10 days in non agricultural jobs, the corresponding figures in the First Agricultural Labour

Enquiry (1951) being 120 and 14 days respectively. The absolute figures indicate a decline in the number of women workers. Between 1950-51 and 1956-57, the number of women workers in agriculture came down from 14 million to 12 million.

The Census findings indicate a varying trend of female participation rates. Female work force was 32.75 per cent of total female population according to 1961 Census. Work participation of females were found declining in the subsequent Census findings. In 1951, female work force was 23.43 per cent but in 1961, it was found as 26.96 per cent and in 1971 it declined sharply to 13.18 per cent. But these Census figures cannot be strictly compared due to use of different definitions of 'worker' in different Census enumerations. For example, in 1951 Census the adoption of 'Income Approach' resulted in female workers at 40.45 million while in 1961 Census, a liberal definition of worker increased female workers to 59.55 million. But in 1971 Census the 'Main Activity' approach reduced female workers to 31.30 million only.

During 1961-71, male female population increased by 25 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. The number of male workers

* For male workers average employment was 189 days in agricultural and 29 days in non agricultural jobs according to First Agricultural Labour Enquiry and 194 days and 28 days respectively according to Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry.
workers increased by 15.2 per cent but the number of women workers declined by 41.4 per cent during the period.

Comparison of the Census data on female work force with the findings of National Sample Surveys reveal that Census data indicate a continuous decline in female participation rates since 1961 except during 1963. **NSS findings indicate fluctuations in female participation rates over the years.** \*\*\* 21st Round 1966-67, found female work force as 27.20 per cent of female population as against 13.18 per cent indicated by 1971 Census. For 27th Round 1972-73, collected data on labour force both on usual status and current status. In the case of females the usual status approach resulted in a larger number of females in the labour force than the current status approach.\*\*\* This is because the movement of females from the class of 'labour force' into the category of 'outside the labour force' is more frequent than males. The NSS data also revealed that by usual activity status, 40.12 million females were engaged in agriculture and out of them 30.39 million worked as helpers.

* Comparison of Census Data and NSS data is given in Appendix II.

** NSS 27th Round Data is given in Appendix III.
1.6 Trend of Participation Rate of Female Workers

The Census data indicate that the long term trend in economic participation of women shows a decline in terms of percentage of workers to total female population and percentage of females in the total labour force since 1911. The percentage of women workers to total female population declined from 32.72 per cent in 1911 to 11.86 per cent in 1971. The fall in the activity of females has been a continuous one to which the 1961 Census figures are only exception. Dandekar found that the ratio of females to male workers has registered an overall decline in all categories in the rural and in most categories in the urban areas. Pattern of employment of female workers since 1911 is shown in Table 1.4. Proportion of women workers declines in industry and service sectors and their dependence on agriculture increases.

An examination of the statewise percentage of female workers to their total population during 1961 and 1971 indicates that participation rates have declined in all states for both urban and rural areas and in some states the decline is sharper for urban areas. 

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Table 1.2  Trend Of Distribution Of Women Workers 1911-1971
(In Thousand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female Workers</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
<th>Percentage to total female population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>30,896</td>
<td>6,137</td>
<td>4,767</td>
<td>41,803</td>
<td>32.77</td>
<td>14.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(73.9)</td>
<td>(14.7)</td>
<td>(11.3)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>30,279</td>
<td>5,409</td>
<td>4,407</td>
<td>40,095</td>
<td>33.73</td>
<td>14.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(75.5)</td>
<td>(13.5)</td>
<td>(10.0)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>27,177</td>
<td>5,147</td>
<td>5,276</td>
<td>37,600</td>
<td>37.37</td>
<td>21.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(72.3)</td>
<td>(13.7)</td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>31,062</td>
<td>4,554</td>
<td>4,923</td>
<td>40,539</td>
<td>23.30</td>
<td>12.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(73.8)</td>
<td>(11.2)</td>
<td>(12.1)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>47,274</td>
<td>6,884</td>
<td>5,244</td>
<td>59,402</td>
<td>27.93</td>
<td>12.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(70.6)</td>
<td>(11.6)</td>
<td>(8.8)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>25,060</td>
<td>3,307</td>
<td>2,931</td>
<td>31,298</td>
<td>11.86</td>
<td>17.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(80.1)</td>
<td>(10.5)</td>
<td>(9.4)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures within bracket denote percentage of Women Workers.

Source: Census of India 1971.

The decade there is also variation in the position of states according to level of participation. In 1961 highest female participation in rural areas was in Andhra Pradesh but in 1971 female participation was highest in Jodhpur.

* Statewise variation of female participation rate is given in Appendix IV.
In urban areas highest female participation was in Andaman Nicobar during 1961 and in Manipur during 1971.

1.7 Some Features of Female Workers in Agriculture In India

Direct engagement of females in agricultural operations is seasonal in most parts of India as they are found to work in the field during specific agricultural operations. But women folk in a farming family perform some other activities like animal care, maintenance of poultry etc. which may not be termed as specific agricultural operations but these are in the nature of farm support activities. Female workers remain busy during crop seasons in conducting agricultural operations and also in farm support activities and overall hours spent by females is higher than the actual number of days worked in the field.

Variations in the proportion of female workers in agriculture is observed in the earlier decades prior to 1951, but their proportion has increased continuously during the last two decades. One significant feature is that during the last decades the number of female cultivators has declined while female agricultural labours have increased considerably. Table 1.3 indicates dependence of female workers in agriculture and proportionate increase in the number of female agricultural labour and decrease in the class of female cultivators.
The Fourth Rural Labour Enquiry (1974-75) found that between 1964-65 and 1974-75, total rural households increased from 70.4 million to 82.1 million (by 16 per cent) while agricultural labour households increased from 15.34 million to 20.74 million (by 35 per cent).

Table 1.3 Proportion of Female Workers In Agriculture And Proportion of Cultivators And Agricultural Labours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Proportion of Female Workers in Agriculture</th>
<th>Proportion of Cultivators</th>
<th>Proportion of Agricultural Labours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>45.54</td>
<td>25.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>45.42</td>
<td>31.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>55.72</td>
<td>23.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>29.69</td>
<td>50.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1971.

Such a situation in the state of female workers in agriculture indicates inadequate growth of employment opportunities on own farm when females have to seek wage employment on others farms. Due to higher incidence of landless cultivators, the status of female workers in agriculture is reduced to the class of agricultural labours. This is also an indication of growing poverty.
among females in rural areas. Female workers in cultivator families are in better economic position than the females in agricultural labour households.

The causes of continuous swelling in the ranks of female agricultural labours since 1901 is the result of several factors relating to demographic features, economic status, changes in tenancy rights and organisational set up. It is also related to regional variations in the levels of economic development. Srimany commented that the spectacular increase in the class of female agricultural labour occurred from (a) the component of growth of population of agricultural workers (b) increase in agricultural enterprise as a result of agricultural inputs (c) recruitment by displacement from the household industry and service sectors and (d) slowing down of rural urban migration during the decade. The proportion of agricultural labour is bound to increase in future due to "demographic pressure on available land and proletarianisation of small farmers and artisans as a result of eviction and/or technological displacement".


Another significant feature is that during the last decades no real change has taken place in the nature and magnitude of works performed by female workers in agriculture in India. This is revealed by various surveys conducted from time to time on the pattern of female labour utilization in rural areas. These studies indicate that female labour utilization in rural areas remain unchanged in nature and they continue to engage in specific agricultural operations.

1.8 Female Participation In Assam

The economy of Assam is characterised by a large agrarian sector and low stage of industrial development. The people of Assam are mainly rural and 90 per cent of the total population live in rural areas. Out of the total working force, 76.68 per cent are absorbed in agriculture and its allied activities. Agriculture is not only the primary occupation of the large section of the people of Assam, but it has far reaching influences on the life and culture of the Assamese people. Social habits, customs and ceremonies in rural Assam are centred around agricultural crop cycle to a great extent.

ii) Madhya Pradesh Studies In Economics of Farm Management 1956-57.
Female population is a significant force in Assam. Percentage of female population to total population of Assam and sex ratio is shown in Table 1.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of female population to total</th>
<th>Females per 1000 males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>47.27</td>
<td>908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>46.64</td>
<td>886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>46.68</td>
<td>886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>46.45</td>
<td>877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>46.49</td>
<td>876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>47.25</td>
<td>899</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, Assam 1971.

In Assam the proportion of women workers is higher in agriculture than in the other sectors of industry. In plantation and allied activities females work in the same capacity as that of men and the proportion of male female worker is 4.5 and 4.1 per cent respectively. In Assam, 20.4 per cent of the women workers are engaged in cultivation which is higher than all India average of 15.6 per cent. The number of women engaged in household industry is 4.6 per cent against 2.2 per cent for all India. In the secondary sector, the
percentage of females engaged in household industry is highest in Assam among the major States of India but the percentage of that of males is the lowest. In Assam, out of every 1000 total cultivators, 139 males have household industry as their secondary occupation against 707 females. Again, there are 57 males and 106 females with household industry as supplementary occupation per 1000 agricultural labours. In the tertiary sector, the percentage of women workers is almost one-tenth of that of men workers.

From 1951 to 1961, female workers in Assam increased by 40.80 per cent while male workers increased by 35.77 per cent. But from 1961 to 1971 total workers decreased by 17.4 per cent which is due to sharp decline of female workers from 17,139,571 in 1961 to 3,85,569 in 1971, a decrease of 77.50 per cent, while male workers increased by 12.59 per cent. But during this period male population increased by 124.60 per cent and female population increased by 137.55 per cent. The labour force participation rate as revealed by 1961 Census was 55.6 per cent for urban males and 8.5 per cent for urban females and 53.8 per cent for rural males and 30.8 per cent for rural females. The 1971 Census revealed a sizeable shift in participation rates which was 59.4 per cent for urban males and 3.5 per cent for urban females.

The percentage for rural males and females were 49.7 and 4.8 per cent respectively. According to the 19th Round of the NSS 1964-65, the rates were 48.8 per cent and 10.2 per cent for urban males and females and 47.8 per cent and 15.5 per cent for rural males and females respectively. The proportion of male workers is uniform in all the districts of Assam while female participation rate varies among the districts. The Census data indicate that women participation is 100-200 points above the state average in hill districts and 100 ± state average in other districts.

Age groupwise participation rate in Assam as revealed by the Census data indicate that in the age group 0-14, the proportion of workers in cultivation and agricultural labour is 7.2 per cent and 11.5 per cent for males and 10.8 per cent and 12.9 per cent for females. In 15-34 age group, the participation of women in the primary sector is higher than men which is 48.5 per cent for males and 59.4 per cent for females. In the next group 35-50 and 60 ± female participation declines in all kinds of works.

In Assam, the increase in the number of workers in agriculture as compared to non agriculture is more marked in the case of females than male workers. During

23. Government of Assam - Draft Outline, Fifth Five Year Planning and development Department.
1951-61, male workers increased both in cultivation and agricultural labour but female workers increased only in cultivation and declined in agricultural labour. But during 1961-71, female workers declined in cultivation and increased in the category of agricultural labour.

Among females, non workers were 64 per cent in the age group 0-14 years, 21 per cent in the age group 15-34 years and 10.4 per cent in the age group 35-50 years. In the age group 60+ the percentage of non working females was 4.5 only which indicates that few women are alive in this age group.

In Assam, agricultural production is carried on by the joint labour of the family members in farm household. While certain operations (like ploughing, harrowing) are done exclusively by male family members, some other operations (like transplanting and harvesting) are done mainly by female members. In certain operations like thrashing and some post harvest operations both male and female members participate. The extent of participation varies from one region of the state to another. For instance while the transplantation of paddy (winter rice) is done mainly by female workers in Lower Assam (Kamrup and Goalpara District), harvesting is done by male workers in these regions. But in Upper Assam, harvesting is done mainly by female workers and transplanting is done by both female and male workers.
The pattern of female participation in agricultural work varies in the hill districts and in the plains districts depending on farming practices, level of adoption of agricultural technology, cropping pattern and crop intensity. Female participation in agriculture is also affected by socio-economic situations, customs, habits and culture of the different communities and also religious beliefs. In tribal villages and also among plains tribes female participation rate is equal to male and sometimes female rate is even higher.

In Assam, majority of the females work in the family farm as unpaid family labour and a smaller percentage of them work as agricultural labour. Females participate directly in farm activities during specific agricultural operations. But in the farm households, females perform a number of other allied agricultural activities and share the overall burden of crop production along with men.

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(ii) Borkuloi - Socio-Economic Survey of a Plain Village.
(iii) Khejurbon - Socio-Economic Survey of a Dimasa Village.