



## An Enquiry of the Status of Women in the Sumera and Nagola villages of Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh, India

### KEYWORDS

Rural women, agricultural society, educational level, awareness

**Arti Sharma**

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Geography, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, India.

**ABSTRACT** *The village is the very first scale of enquiry in an area. Every small town has a singular individuality. It accumulates all the signs of past, present and future development of human beings. A village also offers an opportunity to understand general principles of a peculiar society with a closer lens. So, this article deals with the close study of two villages in the Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh, India. In this study, women's status about their age, religion, marital status, education level, their occupation and their awareness about various government schemes run by the government of India has been inquired. Research findings show that the status of women in rural areas of Aligarh district is still not good. The social norms continue to be rigid in the 21<sup>st</sup> century too. The perception of people about women is changing, but it is at a very slow pace.*

### Introduction

The role of workers in the agricultural economy is very crucial because the availability of labour is a major constraint in the agricultural land use and cropping patterns of a region. The availability of labour, its quantity and quality at the periods of peak labour demand have greater influence on the decision making process of the farmer. The different crops and agrarian system vary in their total labour requirements. Even then, in many parts of India, seasonal unemployment remains on most of the holdings, while during the peak periods of crop sowing and harvesting, there occurs acute shortage of labour which influences the sowing and harvesting operations.

Female labourers constitute the most neglected class in the Indian rural structure. Though, time immemorial, women played different roles in their home and farm activities. As wife, they support their husbands. As mother, they nurture their children. And as housewife, they manage their homes. In addition, women also played a pivotal role in agriculture and livestock management. In modern agriculture too, women continued to share a number of farm operations with men.

### Objectives

In the present work an attempt has been made to study:

1. To assess the general characteristics of sampled females like their family size, marital status, education, and awareness about various government programmes.
2. After obtaining above information, the status of women in the rural areas and conditions and processes which determine their life style has been studied.

### Data Base

The data were collected both from primary source. Data from primary sources have been collected through:

1. Field Survey
2. Household Surveys
3. Interview with Females

The field work was done during the months of January and February in 2006 through a structured interview. Sufficient care was taken to make the questions, communicable to the respondents.

### Methodology

The data for studying the socio-economic conditions of females were drawn from a comprehensive survey of 175 female's households in the study area. The first stage consisted of selecting villages in the Aligarh district. In the second stage, general survey of villages had been done. In the

third stage, sampled female households from two villages i.e. Sumera and Nagola had been selected for the survey. Fourth stage consist the interview with sample female.

In both villages 10 % sampling has been done. In village Sumera 95 females and in village Nagola 80 females were selected. After primary data collection, tabulation of primary data had been done. Simple percentages have been calculated for the easy understanding of the data.

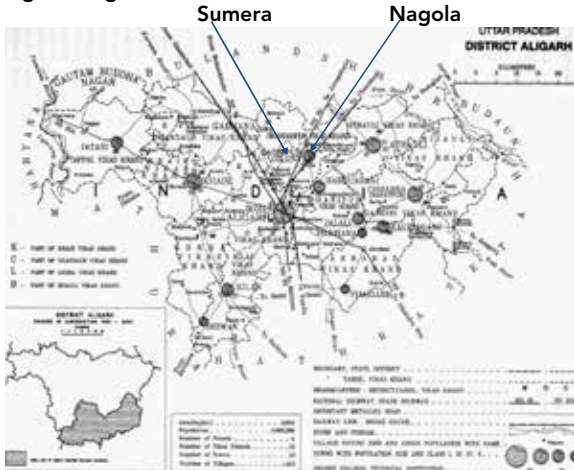
### Study Area

Aligarh is one of the important districts of Uttar Pradesh located in the north western part of the state. It lies in the central part of the Ganga-Yamuna doab. Aligarh district has good climatic conditions, vast reservoirs of surface and ground water and fertile soil which have favoured agricultural development. So in such an agriculturally advanced district it was thought worthwhile to examine the role of females in the agricultural economy. The villages Sumera and Nagola which were studied come under the Jawan Block in Koil Tahsil.

According to the village head (Pradhan), Sumera village had 1250 total register voters, out of which 750 were males and 500 were females at the time of the village survey in 2006. This village accommodated 950 total households. The main occupation of the dwellers of the village was farming, and a very small numbers of workers were in government jobs. The scheduled castes are more in number as compared to higher castes in the village.

Village Sumera had not clean roads and drainage. But the water logging condition was not prevailing there in the month of January and February, 2006. The settlement pattern was compact and houses were small in size. There was no open space in the village and piles of garbage could easily be seen in the village. The village had the facilities of a junior school, some shops, electricity, telephone, and water supply by head pumps. The village was and still is connected by a cemented road from main road to the inside of the village. There was no hospital in the village.

**Map 1: Approximate location of Sumera and Nagola vil- lage in Aligarh district**



Source: The map of Aligarh district has been taken from Census of India 2001 Uttar Pradesh Administrative Atlas Vol- ume-1

According to the village head (Pradhan), Nagola village had total registered voters of 2400 persons out of which male were 1400 and 1000 were females spread in 800 households. The occupation of the inhabitants of the village was mainly farming and less inhabitants were engaged in jobs both gov- ernment and private. Hindu was the dominated religion of the village and Jatav (a scheduled caste) was the dominated caste of the village. After Jatavs; Kshatriyas, Brahmins and other castes were also present in the village respectively.

The general environment of Nagola was clean and not crowded. The water logging condition was not present in the village. Garbage in the village was not seen anywhere. The sizes of houses were large in the Nagola. The village had the facilities of two junior schools (one Govt. and one private), roads (Kharanja) inside the village, shops (grocery), electricity, telephone and water supply by head pumps. There was not any hospital in this village also. The village Nagola was better developed as compared to Sumera village.

**Research findings**

According to the field survey all the respondents are (100%) female in both villages, among which 10.86% are under the age group of 15 to 25 years, 30.29% are under the age group of 26 to 35, 21.71% are under the age group of 36 to 45 years, 28% are under the age group of 46 to 60 years and the 9.14% is above 60 years of age. It shows majority of female population in both the villages were youth and in the age group of working population.

**Table 1: Sampled females under various age groups**

Age Groups (in Year)	Total Number	Percentage	Rank
<15	-	--	6
15-25	19	10.86	4
26-35	53	30.29	1
36-45	38	21.71	3
46-60	49	28	2
>60	16	9.14	5

Source: Based on Field Survey (2006)

According to the survey the marital status of women in the sampled villages 89.14% were married and 3.43% were un- married. I did not find any divorced woman in the village. But there were 7.43% women widowed. Thus, it was noticed that women of lower income group are marrying at an early age and separation from their husbands is not followed in the soci- ety. Once a woman is married to a man, she is supposed to live with him with all the adjustment and compromises from

her side. A divorcee woman has been undesirable person in a rural family of study area.

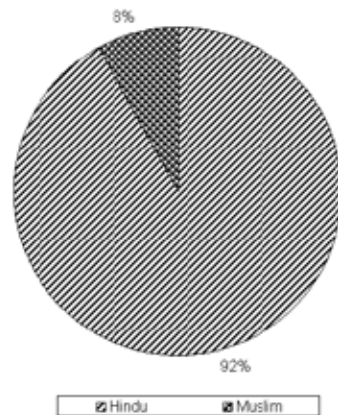
**Table 2: Distribution of the sampled females, according to their marital status**

Marital Status	Total Number	Percentage	Rank
Married	156	89.14	1
Unmarried	6	3.43	3
Divorced	--	--	4
Widower	13	7.43	2

Source: Based on field survey (2006)

In the sampled respondent, Hindu religion was followed by the majority of the population with an average of 92%, while the remaining 8% were Muslims population, and no other religious group was found in both the villages during the field survey.

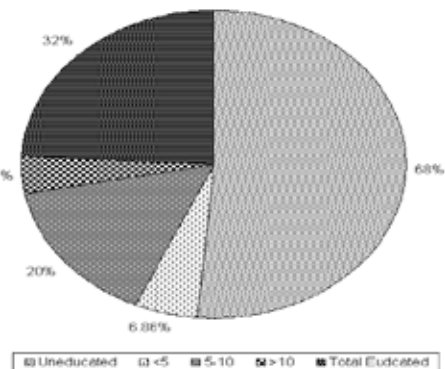
**Figure 1: Religion-wise distribution of the Sampled Fe- males**



Source: Based on field survey (2006)

Education level is very low among women of Sumera and Nagola village. Only 32% women are educated, and out of total 6.86% were educated only up to 5th class, 20% were educated between 5 to 10th classes and only 5.14% women got an education above class 10th.

**Figure 2: Educational Standard amongst Sampled Females**



Source: Based on field survey (2006)

So far as the educational status of the sampled females is concerned, their condition is not very encouraging. Most of them are uneducated. About 119 females are illiterate. The total number of educated women is 32% only. However, vari- ous efforts are being made by government for raising the literacy rate amongst females, but it is still low among rural women.

**Awareness of Various Government Programmes**

Data regarding the awareness of various government programmes like Minimum Wage Act and Family Planning Programmes are collected through fieldwork and discussed in this article.

**Table 3: Distribution of the Sampled Females on the Basis of Awareness of Various Programmes**

Awareness	Total Number	Percent	Rank
Aware	24	13.71	2
Not Aware	151	86.29	1

Source: Based on Field Survey (2006)

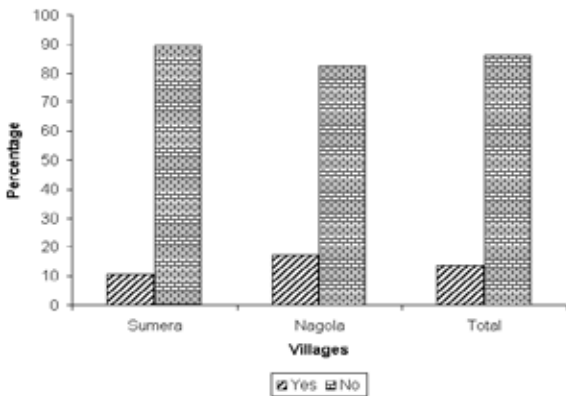
This table shows that only 13.71% of the respondents were aware of these programmes but they showed no concern about its implementation. A large number - 86.29% of the respondents were not aware of these programmes. The respondents were aware of the Family Planning Programmes. But they did not know all the benefits of this programme.

in their family and the other being women considered less efficient in comparison to male in the studies. A woman's domestic work in her own household does not bring money and so it is seen as her natural responsibility towards the family whereas on the other hand the male's work brings money to the family and hence is considered superior.

**Acknowledgement**

I have my sincere gratitude towards rural women of Sumera and Nagola village. In my every visit they always endowed me with new knowledge of their status in a patriarchal society. Because of their support this study could be completed.

**Distribution of the Sampled Females on the Basis of Awareness of Various Programmes**



Source: Based on field survey (2006)

**Conclusion**

The majority of rural women were engaged in home and farm operations. Mostly female labour belonging to scheduled and backward castes and most of them were uneducated. They were not aware of the Minimum Wage Act and all the benefits of Family Planning Programme. Women of both the villages were working on rate fixed by either owner of land or contractor. Owner of land and contractor fixed wage rate on the basis of general trend in the area or availability of labour in a particular season/day. Since these rural women were illiterate, they could not fight for their rights also.

Lack of opportunities for education in rural areas is found to be responsible for the existing gap between urban and rural women, especially, in terms of equal participation in social affairs. Development cannot take place in the absence of the participation of women. Women are the agents of social exchange and carriers of the future culture.

Education is the most important factor for determining the status of women in any society. Most illiterate women have a very narrow perception of things and little knowledge about the world. They neither have political awareness nor have any knowledge of government schemes for poverty alleviation or any other women's development programmes. It has been noticed that women of rural areas are working so hard, but are unable to enjoy the fruits of their hard work.

Two basic and fundamental causes found to be responsible for the disadvantaged position of women were acute poverty