CHAPTER - 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

This chapter summarises the major findings of the empirical investigations undertaken in the study and endeavours to relate these findings with some of the theoretical dimensions on women’s work participation.

The study began with a socio-historical analysis of gender discrimination in society and pointed out that the process of gender construction has affected the form and extent of women’s educational achievements and subsequently their work participation. Thus, gender construction has been the root cause of discrimination and subordination of women.

Chapter 2 of the study has presented an overview of the literature. Majority of the literature on women’s work participation in the industrial sector highlighted that (a) family compulsions, both economic and social, were the major factors, behind women’s work participation in this sector, (b) gender discrimination in the work place in the form of their high concentration in the low paid unskilled jobs following from their double burden of work, irregularity in the work participation, and their low access to education and technology, (c) technology displaced the women workers from job and pushed them back or forced them to be confined to the traditional, repetitive, monotonous activities and widened gender gap in the labour market by confining women workers on the unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, (d) gender discrimination on education started in the
family and women workers were disadvantaged with respect to their access to education. This created a situation of pre-market gender discrimination for women, (e) traditional social customs and values, dual burden of work left with little time for participation in trade union activities, (f) protective laws have adversely affected the patterns of work participation in the industry since the employers are not interested to extend these facilities to women because of extra financial implication for them.

Chapter 3 of this study has described the socio-economic profiles of the women workers. It has been found in this study that SSIs have emerged to provide employment to a large number of women workers. Significantly, most of the women workers are from the general category of caste background and are from urban areas. This has been mostly because of the facts that: (a) these women are well informed about the job opportunities available in this sector (b) they possess the required skills and qualifications for these jobs (c) their family conditions push them to opt for a job in this sector (to be discussed later) (d) the scope of factory job is relatively high in the urban areas because most of these small scale factories are concentrated in the urban areas.

The overwhelming majority of the women workers are of young age and the maximum percentage of women workers (74.1%) belong to the age group of below 25 years. It is interesting to note that women workers belonging to the age group of 40 years and above are virtually missing. It has been observed again that of the total women workers only 28.6 percent are married. These phenomena has been
explained in terms of the preferential treatment extended to young and unmarried women workers by the employers on following grounds that: (a) unmarried women/girls do not need any protective facilities like maternity benefits, crèche facilities, etc. which involve extra expenditure for the employer, (b) they are committed towards their duty, since they are free from the reproductive responsibilities, (c) they usually do not participate in any trade union activities, (d) they are considered as temporary since there is a tendency among them to withdraw from the labour market soon after their marriage, (e) employers avoid the appointment of married women as they may aspire for permanent jobs which will create extra financial burden in the form of maternity leave, provident fund, insurance etc. on the employer. Even when married women are employed, they are mostly kept purely on temporary basis. It reveals that protective laws for women have been crucial blockades for recruitment women workers in the SSIs on permanent basis.

So far as their educational status is concerned most of the women workers are having 10th standard education (64.8%) while matriculation and graduate degree holders in technical subjects like engineering constitute 28.7 per cent. Insignificant segment of these labour force are illiterate.

The study showed that there has been a high concentration of women workers in the electronic industry (72%) followed by the hosiery (10.16%) and garment (8.99%). Remaining are distributed in electrical and leather industries. High concentration of women workers in electronic industrial units is explained in terms
of the relationship between the job requirements of these units and some inherent qualities of women workers viz. their swiftness in the work, dexterity of hands, patience for doing the monotonous and repetitive works for long hours which are the requirements of the electronic industry.

Women workers in the SSIs are working predominantly in jobs which are unskilled in nature. There has been high concentration of women workers in the assembling and allied activities (i.e. 93 %). Whereas in the managerial and supervisory category their representation has been very marginal. Women's participation in the professional (managerial/supervisory) activities has been very low mostly because of (i) low educational qualifications and low skills of women workers, (ii) conservative outlook of the employers, (iii) preoccupation of women employees with their household commitments, (iv) employer's preference for women for assembling and stereotype jobs where only the dexterity of hand and patience are needed.

Economically the women workers in the SSIs are predominantly from poor economic background whose parental earning are very meagre. 49.2 per cent belong to the parents whose monthly earning are in the slab of less than Rs.1000/- per month. Balance 22.1 per cent of women workers are from the slab of Rs.2000/-, 19.7 per cent and 9 per cent are from income slab of Rs.2001 to 3000/- and Rs.3001 and above respectively of their parents.

Job insecurity, low wage have the mode of their work participation in the SSIs. It is observed 41% of the women workers are working on ad-hoc basis in the SSIs. It
also shows that the majority (86%) of them earn a salary of less than Rs.1000/- per month whereas only 7.4 per cent and 6.5 per cent of them earn in the range of Rs.1001-2000/- and Rs.2001-3000/- per month respectively. None of them earn more than Rs.3001/- per month. Indeed there has been high concentration of women workers in the lowest earning slabs. It further highlights the low status of women in this job market. This study identifies a close interface between women's low economic background, low level of educational attainment, technical knowledge and skill on the one hand and their placement at low income slab and concentration in the unskilled jobs. This situation has arisen because of the existence of pre-market gender discrimination against women.

Empirical evidence revealed that household compulsion have pushed most of them for a job in this sector. They have chosen the present jobs in the SSI units mostly because of low income of their parents, unemployment and under employment of husband or brothers and for poor economic conditions of a household. Besides economic factors, the social factors like illness of the parents/husband, sudden or early death of the parents/husband, separation of mother and father, separation from brothers (in case of unmarried girls) are found to be important factors responsible for pushing women towards SSIs for earning their livelihood.

The study observes that there is no wage discrimination between men and women in the same occupation in the units under study. In most of the cases the occupation held by women is totally dominated by them and wherever there is participation by men, there is no such wage discrimination. The employers reported that women are
as capable as men and they sometimes perform their role much more efficiently than their male counterparts. It is also observed that at times women earn more than the men in those cases where payments are made on the piece rate basis. However, though there is no wage discrimination in a given job, discrimination is often manifested in terms of job allocation. In other words, occupational discrimination against women workers is observed in the SSI units where the women workers are concentrated in low paid, unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

Significantly, the adoption of new technology has not altered the form and extent of women's employment in the SSIs. Most of the women workers have coped with the new environment after getting required training. New technology has not affected women's work participation adversely there, mostly because of the fact that majority of the women workers are in the electronic industry where women work in the assembly line. Adoption of new technology in these industries has expanded the scope of women's employment in unskilled jobs.

The attitude and approach of the employers towards their employees at the workplace largely affects the productivity of the workers. Most of women workers (92.6%) are reported to have experienced indifferent behaviour of their employer and they are reported to have treated equally by the employers. Only a small section find that employer are comparatively more strict to women workers than towards their counterparts. Most of the employers on the other hand reported that they find themselves easy with the women workers as women are relatively easier to control and do not cause trouble as per their experience. However, they
are explicitly interested to employ only unmarried women, who do not come under the Protective Laws. If possible they deliberately avoid married women.

The trade union activities are discouraged by the management of the SSI units. In order to avoid the formation of union, the employer prefers to keep less than the minimum number of regular employees required to form an union. The general feature is that women worker of the SSI units are not interested in the trade union activities. Only a few of the total women workers (1.6%) actively participate in the union activities. Most of the worker are not even aware of the concept, role, function, structure and objectives of trade unions and their existence as well. Again those who have enrolled as members of the union are very passive in their participation, in the sense that they are not interested in attending the meetings or taking part in various other activities of trade union. The job insecurity casual, contract and the part time nature of employment and double work burden of women adversely affect their participation in the trade union.

The relationship between women workers' education and their work participation is discussed in chapter 4. The study finds that there is a positive corelationship between the poor economic background of the women workers, their low level of educational achievement and their placement in the low paid jobs. It further showed that workers with higher levels of education generally belong to relatively higher economic background and got a higher placement in the SSIs. It is found that low income acts as an impediment for higher education by forcing the parents to send their daughters to job market rather than to education. Illiteracy,
low educational qualifications, lack of job experience and training usually narrow down job opportunity for women. These further force them to opt for unskilled or semiskilled jobs with low wages in the SSI.

A substantial proportion of women workers belong to families which are educationally backward. Parental education background also affected the educational level of the worker. It is found that none of the women workers belongs to the family whose parents have even above tenth standard education. Most of the illiterate women workers belong to the illiterate parents and semi-educated women are the first generation learners. Again, most of the women workers are having average level of educational performance. Household responsibilities, economic insecurity, poverty, non-conducive study atmosphere at home, etc. have affected their educational pursuits.

It is found that all the technical graduate degree holders are employed in the managerial ranks whereas most of the workers with IX-XIIth standard of education are engaged in supervisory and assembling work. All illiterate women workers are involved in the knitting activity. Since most of our women workers are less educated, they are mostly placed in assembling activities with low pay. It is significant to mention here that educational merit is also directly related to earnings. The highly meritorious students (presently women workers) are found to be placed in a better position in the job market and are earning relatively more. It further implies that higher educational qualifications and good educational performance as well, directly influence the working capabilities and efficiency of
the workers in terms of earning more by holding good positions in the job market. As most of the women workers have faced a pre market discrimination through low level of education they are placed in low paid jobs and earn less.

Education has played a positive role in making workers aware of their rights. Women workers who are aware about the government policies and programmes (related to protection of the employees' interest) are having the higher educational qualifications. On the other hand the women workers who are not aware or only partially aware about the government policies etc. are mostly less educated or illiterate.

The educational attainment have stratified women workers not only in terms of their placement and earnings, but also created variations in women's perception about their work and wage. Illiterates workers are fully satisfied with their wage rates and work burden whereas the relatively educated and graduate degree holders are not satisfied with their wage structure. As level of education goes higher, the dissatisfaction with job and salary also go up. The educated workers are relatively more aware of their rights and privileges and the form and extent of their exploitation by the employers. They are interested to quit the job at the earliest opportunity. It is found that most of the illiterates and less educated, in view of market conditions, are satisfied with the present job.

The study observed a mismatch between educational specialisation and job requirements in the SSIs. These are due to various reasons: (1) lack of interest of required qualified workers to join this sector, forces the employers to keep the
employees having other type of specialisation by giving short-term orientation course. (2) sometimes lack of appropriate job opportunities in their specialised areas forces the employees to join the work requiring different specialisation. Thus most of the highly educated workers, especially the graduate degree holders feel that their education is not at all related to their present work. This feeling, however is less among the less educated and illiterate women workers. It is found that a majority of women workers, even having dissatisfaction with the present job and the gap between their educational qualification and the job requirements, are continuing in the same job. It is the only job available to them at present and they are there till they get an alternative.

It is found that most of the women workers have not taken the membership in any trade union. And a few of them i.e. 1.6 per cent, who are the members, do not have much to say in terms of their participation in union activities. The reasons given by the women workers for their no-participation may be listed as follows: (1) union is mainly male dominated, (2) the problems related to men workers are only duly recognised by the union leaders while women’s issues are under represented there, (3) unions are over politicised, (4) trade unionism needs extra time, which women can not afford due to their family responsibilities, (5) leaders use union strengths for processions, strikes, etc. in order to fulfil their own interests, thus women can not give their full participation, (6) employers’ discouragement for union activities and (7) job insecurity. All these in general have discouraged women to become trade union activists.
Based on education and literacy, there is difference among the women workers regarding their association with trade unions. None of the illiterates are interested in involving themselves in any of the trade union activities. For them this sort of forum is not needed. Indeed this feeling comes out of a high sense of uncertainty prevailing among them. But the feeling of workers with relatively higher educational qualifications is totally different from that of illiterates. To them there should be women headed trade unions which can take up women's issues and fight for their rights.

**Women Entrepreneurs and Small Scale Industry**

In the changing socio-economic scenario of the country a small section of women has come forward as entrepreneurs in the SSIs. The case studies collected for this study depicted some significant trends of the commonalties and differences in the nature and extent of their involvement in entrepreneurship, problems faced and over come by them, and the rate of success and failure. Though all the women entrepreneurs are from the upper strata of the caste hierarchy, traditional caste background has not been the determining factor in one's participation and success in the entrepreneurship. All the women entrepreneurs have sound economic and educational backgrounds. Significantly most of the women entrepreneurs have entered into this venture at their own initiatives though the help of relative or friends have contributed in the process. Along with the traditional background and experience, modern institutional arrangements of the state have also contributed towards the success of the entrepreneurs. However, all women entrepreneurs have not achieved the same rate of success because of their diversified experience.
There are three women entrepreneurs with high rate of success. They are from business background. The technical education and entrepreneurship training background have given these women entrepreneurs an edge over others in terms of expertise and skills in their field of operations. While the family background has given them the traditional skills and financial support, education has provided them with the required guidance to run the enterprise efficiently. They have taken full advantage of the initiatives of the states meant for the women entrepreneurs in the SSIs.

Women entrepreneurs who have achieved a moderate rate of success are from upper caste background but without experience of business. These cases depicts that even though encouragement from relative/friends and family resources are sufficient to launch a venture, these are unable to provide the required efficiency to run the business successfully. They are moderately successful entrepreneurs mostly because of the fact that they are still in the process of learning through the method of trial and error. They have the urge for achievement which will prove them to be successful entrepreneur in future if other things remain the same. Though, they are partially dependent on the relatives for finance, marketing and general guidance, they have also shown their own potential of independent initiatives. This study shows that traditional background and money are not sufficient to be successful in entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurs who have a very low rate of success are either from traditional Bania caste or from traditional Kayastha caste-cum-service background.
Interestingly enough none of them was interested in entrepreneurship but entered into this arena with the initiative of others. They lack innovative initiatives and suffer from the backward self image.

The above mentioned case studies suggest that there has not been one to one relationship in the entrepreneurship development. It is a complex function affected by diversified social and economic variables. The notion that the traditional business caste/community can be successful entrepreneur does not hold true especially for women entrepreneurs in view of the fact that various non-business community women have been successful in the business while traditional business women have been very marginally successful or has achieved a low rate of success. Entrepreneurial abilities have grown across the caste or community whereby the state initiatives, formal education, training and the process of traditional socialisation have played composite roles. Entrepreneurship in the small scale sector is a secular endeavour, the forces of tradition and modernity have maintained a continuum therein.

6.2 Conclusion

The SSI sector have played a crucial role not only by providing employment to a large section of women workers specially from the economically lower strata of the society but also providing the avenues for the fulfilment of one's aspiration to be an entrepreneur. In the present context of expansion of education, rural-urban migration, spread of communication network and technological changes, the importance of SSI sector has increased not only being producers of specific items
but also being the employers of a significant section of marginalised groups of our society.

Gender bias, however has been clearly depicted in the SSI units specially in the pattern of recruitment of women labour force. It is only a few types of SSI units that recruit women workers viz. electrical, electronic, garment industries. They are also recruited only in the specific types of activities (mostly in the assembly line) where gender roles are required. Again gender bias is clearly reflected in the pattern of job allocation. As a result women workers are mostly concentrated in the unskilled/semiskilled activities which are usually low paid. The employers have also taken full advantage of the low economic condition of women workers by keeping them as temporary, paying low wages, denying maternity benefits etc.

The low economic condition have shown a positive relationship with women workers and their low level of education. It is the poor economic condition that have compelled them to be drop outs from the school system. Again this poor economic condition associated with various social and economic compulsions which have pushed them to join the labour market to substantiate the family income.

Their educational background (whatever little it may be) was helpful in getting employment in SSI units. They also found them to be helpful for the performance of regular duties. The relatively higher educated women on the other hands found them to be miss-matched in the SSI units. These workers were dissatisfied. A large
section of these workers are dis-satisfied with the exploitative condition of work. However these dissatisfaction has not got the scope of immediate expression mostly because of non-availability of alternative employment, household compulsion, poor economic background and their non-involvement in the trade union.

The educational and economic background of the women entrepreneurs, however have been helpful in initiating and sustaining entrepreneurial activities in the SSI sector. For them it was not compartmentalisation of traditional background from modern education, but assimilation of the two that have been helpful to be the successful entrepreneurs.

Women in the SSI sector are put in a paradoxical condition. While the upper strata women (though very few in number) have used this sector as an instrument for the fulfilment of their aspirations. The lower strata women has used the employment in this sector as their survival strategy. The upper strata women has used the traditional resources (money, network, etc.) for their better utilisation and economic empowerment. The traditional background and insecurity of the lower strata of women workers are used by the employers to keep them marginalised in the labour market. Because of the labour intensiveness of SSI, more and more women workers join this sector for employment. More women entrepreneurs also will take part in this sector as the trend shows. Against this backdrop, we propose the following questions for further research:

- What is the prospect of organising the women workers of SSI units to set up co-operatives to launch their own enterprises in the areas of their choice and specialisation?
• What are the channels of upward mobility of women workers in this sector? Can the process of mobility be smoothened by providing them adequate training and expertise?