CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

‘I pity that man who wants a coat so cheap that the man or woman who produces the cloth starves in the process’

-Benjamin Harrison (1890)

1.1 Introduction

The people are the most valuable resource of a nation. The operation of an economy depends, to a great extent, on the employment of people, i.e., on the purchase, sale and performance of labour services. It is the work of labour which builds our towns, cities and factories, which makes the things we buy and which supplies us with services of all types. In fact, labour is the source of all wealth and backbone of the nation (Jiwitesh Kumar Singh, 1998). Thus, it is obvious that labour is the sole source of all production. As a factor of production, it is most important, because, the utilization of other factors largely depends on the proper and optimum utilization of time and energy on the part of workers. As a matter of fact, workers are human beings, capable of holding responsibilities, extending co-operation and achieving objectives. They have their own attributes and aspirations which, if handled properly, lead to the success of industry and growth of the economy. Besides, labour is no more an unorganized mass of ignorant and unconscious workers, always ready to obey the arbitrary orders and dictates of their employers. Today, they are very much articulate and form an important and vocal section of the commodity. They have now acquired a dignity and social status in society. They have a crucial and significant role to play in a developing economy like India.

1.2 Labour Market

Economic development of a country is generally equated with its industrial development. It is the worker who stands at the centre of the industrial activity and assumes various roles in a country’s development process. Labour, being a human factory, is different from other factors of production. It has certain characteristics that give rise to various labour problems, which centre round the purchase, sale and performance of labour services in all countries. In fact, labour problems and industrial relations are the basic elements in the socio-economic life of a nation. They attract growing attention not only of the employers and the employees, but also of the Government and the people at large.
The term ‘labour market’ has been defined in various ways by different writers depending upon the problems studied. Purely from the theoretical standpoint, labour market may be defined as “a process by which supply of a particular type of labour and demand for that type of labour balance or seek to obtain a balance”. Labour market may be defined as a system of allocating and rewarding labour. Its main function is to match workers and jobs and to fix remunerations in a manner that ensures required quantity as well as quality of labour supply; its performance is judged by the efficiency with which labour market process performs this function (Prohit, 1985). As labour has a price – wage, the supply and demand of labour are likened to exchange on a market. The theory envisions rational workers as ‘sellers’ and employers as ‘buyers’ of labour, coming together in a competitive market, in which their mutual exchange decisions yield an equilibrium wage rate and equilibrium level of employment (Pencavel, 1991).

Labour markets play a central role in determining the macro economic success of stabilisation and adjustment policies and in mediating the impact of these policies on living standards of the people in general and the poor in particular. As different types of labour exist, differentiated by skill, location, gender and so on, different types of labour markets also exist. But these markets are linked with each other as the conditions in one can influence the working of other. Evolution and operation of labour markets has been a subject of considerable research and controversy in the economic analytic literature. The emergence of the concept of labour market reflects a growing need of human resource allocation for the mechanism of economic welfare which is consistent with optimum production structure.

1.3 Categories of Labour Market

The labour market has been variously categorised as primary Vs secondary, formal Vs informal and organised Vs unorganised sectors. It is widely accepted that, among these classifications, not much variation is identified. In India, many researchers consider organised as equal to formal and unorganised as equal to informal classification of labour market. Based on the classification of industrial sectors as organised and unorganised, labour market has also been classified and analysed in related terms. The concept of informal sector was first introduced by Keith Hart (1973), with the distinction between
wage and self-employment as the essential difference between the formal and informal sectors. Later International Labour Organisation (ILO) broadened the scope of the informal sector. Informal activities are typically characterised by ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprises, small scale of operations of labour intensive and adaptive technology, skills acquired outside formal schooling system and unregulated and competitive markets. The Distinguishing Characteristics of Formal and Informal sectors are explained in Table 1.1.

**Table -1.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. no.</th>
<th>Formal Sector</th>
<th>Informal Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Difficult to enter</td>
<td>Easy to enter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Legal form of enterprises, corporate ownership</td>
<td>Cottage enterprises, family ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Large size of operations</td>
<td>Small size of operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Capital intensive and foreign technology</td>
<td>Labour intensive and indigenous technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Regulated and restricted competition</td>
<td>Unregulated and restricted competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>High level earnings</td>
<td>Low level earnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Definite structure</td>
<td>Structure less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Permanent and stable</td>
<td>Temporary and unstable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Official channels of communication</td>
<td>Own communication, commonly known as grapevine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Access to government favours</td>
<td>Development of activities without government support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Siddhartha Sarkar, 2006)

Labour market in India is also characterized by labour market dualism where there is co-existence of modern sector with the traditional sector. Such labour market dualism has long since been recognized by eminent scholars like Lewis (1954) and Todaro (1969). In a dualistic framework, the modern sector is consisting of large scale industries, employing capital intensive methods of production and the traditional sector, consisting of small scale industries, employing labour intensive methods of production. This labour market dualism is also variously described as ‘organised’ and ‘unorganised’, ‘formal and informal’, ‘urban and rural’ and ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ sectors. Within this
broad spectrum, there may be segments of protected, regular, wage workers and unprotected irregular, casual, contract work forces. In each of these segments, there are different modes of wage payment, hours of work, duration of contract, extent of protection and other social security conditions. Studies on segmented labour markets in India are few in number. This may be due to the peculiar characteristics of the Indian labour markets or may be due to the lack of availability of suitable cross section and time series data on the existing labour force (Kannappan, 1985; Papola, 1985).

The informal sector represents an important part of the economy and certainly of the labour market in many countries, especially developing countries, and thus plays a major role in employment creation, production and income generation. In countries, with high rates of population growth and/or urbanization, the informal sector tends to absorb most of the growing labour force in the urban areas (Ralf Hussmanns, 1998). It is estimated that informal sector provides employment to 93 percent of the work force whereas formal sector provides employment to just seven percent of the total work force. Of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) 52 percent is contributed by formal sector and 48 percent by informal sector. It has also been observed that capital productivity in informal sector is relatively higher than in the formal sector. Conversely, the relative labour productivity in informal sector is much lower in comparison to formal sector, implying that the value added per employee in the informal sector is less as compared to that in the formal sector. In spite of low productivity, the informal sector engages the vast majority of Indian work force and is a source of livelihood and subsistence for them.

The use of the term 'organised' and 'unorganised', as used in India, is internationally known as 'formal' and 'informal'. In the Indian context, the enterprise concept (i.e. to define the unorganised sector) and the employment concept (i.e. to define unorganised employment) lack in conceptual clarity and uniformity across the sub-sectors of the economy. For example, the Central Statistical Organisation uses the term organised enterprise as small units with ten or more workers with power or 20 or more workers without power for the manufacturing sector. However, the absence of similar statistical data till now prevented this definition from being extended to the service sector. Table 1.2 presents the usage of criteria relating to informal sector by some selected researchers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Author / Researcher</th>
<th>Study Area (Reference Population Year)</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Estimated size as a percent of total employment</th>
<th>Criteria used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joshi and Joshi (1976)</td>
<td>Greater Bombay 1971 41,52,000</td>
<td>59,71,000</td>
<td>47.7(1)</td>
<td>Employment in unorganized sector is a residual of organized sector including all public sector establishments and all privately owned establishments with more than 25 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Deshpande (1979)</td>
<td>Greater Bombay 1961 1971</td>
<td>41,52,000</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bose (1978a)</td>
<td>Calcutta 1971</td>
<td>31,48,746</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>For manufacturing all non-household units including non-household units (with less than 20 persons) and excluding registered units. For non-manufacturing with all units employing 4 or less workers including independent workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Papola (1976)</td>
<td>Ahmedabad 1971</td>
<td>16,06,165</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>Workers in units 10 or less workers and all unattached workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Breman (1977)</td>
<td>Valsad District (Gujarat) N.A</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Informal non-organized workers for the entire district including seasonal migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mazumdar (1980)</td>
<td></td>
<td>23,59,408</td>
<td>61.4(6)</td>
<td>Residual of workers in all units employing 10 or more workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>OGR (1978)</td>
<td>Madras Metropolitan Area, Area, 1971</td>
<td>25,00,000</td>
<td>50-70(7)</td>
<td>Workers in all establishments employing 10 or less workers and unattached workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Utpal Chowdhury (2006)

1.4 Work Force Structure in India

India is the most populous country in the world, next to China. If one looks at the characteristics of Indian population, it reveals the interesting dimension about the existence of unorganised sector, which is the dominant sector and could not be properly
attended under the social security measures initiated so far. As per the 2001 census, the total work force in our country is 402 million, of which 313 million are main workers and 89 million are marginal workers. Out of the 313 million main workers, about 285 million is in the unorganised sector, accounting 93 percent (Economic Survey: 2005-06). The estimates provided by the National Sample Survey Organisation also reveal a similar pattern. As per the NSSO estimates for the year 2004-05, India had a population of 1093 million, with a work force of about 385 million. Of these, about 7 percent belong to organised and the rest 93 percent of the work force includes the self-employed and employed in unorganised sector. In India, the term ‘informal sector’ has not been used in official statistics. The term used is ‘unorganised sector’ which consists of the units, which are not covered under the regular statistical reporting mechanism in each segment of the economy (Economic Survey 2007- 2008).

The informal sector provides employment to the poor, absorbing some of the labour that cannot find employment in the formal sector. The informal sector plays a supplementary role in employment and income generation. It also plays a complementary role in the provision of goods and services. According to Fidler and Webster (1996), the urban informal sector is a major provider of employment and income to three categories of socio-economic groups in urban areas: survivalists (i.e. very poor people who work part-time in income generating activities), the self-employed (who produce goods for sale, purchase goods for resale or offer services) and very small businesses (i.e. micro-enterprises that usually operate from a fixed location with more or less regular hours). About 370 million workers constituting 92 percent of the total work force in a country were employed in the unorganized sector as per NSS Survey 1999-2000. It plays a vital role in terms of providing employment opportunity to a large segment of the working force in the country and contributes to the national product significantly. The contribution of the unorganized sector to the Net Domestic Product and its share in the total National Domestic Product at current prices has been over 60 percent (labour.nic.in/ss/informal sector, 2008).

1.5 Women in Informal Sector in India: An Overview

The backbone of Indian economy is the unorganised sector. The sharing of economic activities by Indian women is nothing new. From time immemorial, women have been working both at home and outside, though not in the strict sense of earning wages.
Of the total female population, female work force’s share in the formal sector is only 4.2 percent while the rest of the 95.8 percent are in the unorganised sector. Thus, it could be said that the informal sector in India is a women's sector.

The rise of female participation in the informal sector is more due to economic compulsion than due to any change in work ethos. In a labour surplus economy like India, with low employment avenues and increasing cost of living, females have been increasingly pushed into labour market. In the developing countries, among the poor households, the movement of women into the work force has been occasioned by many factors like, the necessity of supporting a family as a single head of household, the need to supplement a husband’s income, increasing levels of education among women and new opportunities of employment in the industrial sector. The international trend has been an increasing rate of female participation in the labour force (Standing, 1999). With increasing rates of labour force participation among women in most developing countries, coupled with shrinking job opportunities in agriculture, more and more women are turning to the informal sector for employment and survival. Iyer (1991) offers the following characteristics of women working in the informal sector:-

- Casual or irregular employment with little or no social security benefits,
- Falling outside the scope of protective labour legislation,
- Predominance of sub-contracting jobs done for the organized sector, engaging women and children at lower wages than men,
- Deplorable working conditions, often without basic amenities,
- Very limited opportunities for skill up gradation or improved production techniques, and
- Little if any trade union participation or organization.

In addition to this, there are certain broad features of working conditions of women in the unorganized sector:

- Exploitation of women in unorganised sector is on the increase, in respect of wages. In majority of the industries Equal Remuneration Act is not properly implemented,
- There is no job security for women workers in these industries. After marriage and child birth, lot of them are compulsorily thrown out of job. During job reduction due to restructuring and modernization etc., women are invariably the first target,
• Young women are often being subjected to sexual exploitation in work places,
• Even the basic facilities like first aid, medical facilities, rest room and crèches are not provided to them. Provision of separate toilet facilities for women is not treated as an important amenity. In addition, quite a large number of women and children are working as contract labourers who have no service regulations whatsoever and whose conditions are highly deplorable, and
• Laws enacted after bitter struggles like Equal Remuneration Act, Factories Act and Plantation Labour Act are not implemented properly (Rameswari Pandiya and Sarika Patel, 2010).

Also, in many countries, a very high proportion of all female employment is absorbed by the informal sector. The plight of women in informal sector is very miserable as they work at extremely low wages, with total lack of job security and social security benefits, long hours of work, under unsatisfactory working and living conditions and with no protection by any government labour legislation (Saba Anjum, 2011). Hence, the unorganized sector is one arena which has seen a substantial growth in the number of workers since independence, with maximum concentration of women workers in it.

1.6 Social Security- Meaning

The concept of social security implies collective action by the community to help a member against misfortunes and wants; he/she cannot meet with his/her own resources. The concept finds its mention in the early Vedic hymns which wishes everyone to be happy, free from ill-health, enjoy a bright future and suffer no sorrow. Today, it is based on the “ideals of human dignity and social justice”. Social security, according to Lord Beveridge, “is an attack on five giants, viz., want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. Social security is defined by International Labour Organisation (ILO) as “the security that society furnishes, through appropriate organization, against certain risks to which its members are exposed”. These risks are essentially contingencies against which the individual, who has small means, cannot protect himself. These contingencies include employment injury, sickness, invalidism or disablement, industrial disease, maternity, old-age, burial, widowhood, orphan hood and unemployment.
Social security is a basic need of all people, regardless of the employment in which they work and live. It is an important form of social protection. It should begin with birth and should continue till death. In a general sense, social security refers to protection extended by the society and State to its members to enable them to overcome various contingencies of life. Social sufferings such as poverty, unemployment and disease are the sound grounds for advocating the provisions of social security measures in India as national programme. Social security is a dynamic conception which is considered in all advanced countries of the world as an indispensable chapter of the national programme with the development of the idea of the welfare state; it has been considered as the most essential for the industrial workers, though it includes all sections of society. Hence, it is obvious that the purpose of any social security measure is

1. To give individuals and families the confidence that their level of living and quality of life will not erode by social or economic eventuality,
2. To provide medical care and income security against the consequences of defined contingencies,
3. To facilitate the victims’ physical and vocational rehabilitation,
4. To prevent or reduce ill health and accidents in the occupations,
5. To protect against unemployment by maintenance and promotion of job creation and
6. To provide benefit for the maintenance of children (Madava Rao, 2002).

1.7 Social security for the unorganized sector in India

The workers in the unorganized sector practically have no social protection. The massive poverty in our country is partly due to low wages and partly due to lack of secure employment throughout the year. The employment generation schemes cannot deal with the problems of low wages in the unorganised sector, especially when there is large scale unemployment. Most of the social security benefits in our country basically cater to the needs of the organized urban work force, which constitutes only one-tenth of the total work force. There is hardly any popular social security scheme for the unorganised workers. The schemes have poor coverage and the benefits are very little (Dharmaraj 2007).
In recent times, provision of social security to unorganised sector workers assumed unprecedented significance in the development discourse in India. It was argued that India had a long tradition of social security and social assistance system directed particularly towards the more vulnerable sections of society. The institution of self sufficient village communities, the system of common property resources, the system of joint families and the practice of making endowments for religious and charitable purposes provided the required social security and assistance to the needy and poor of the nation. These informal arrangements of social security measures underwent steady and inevitable erosion (Dhas et. al., 2008).

A large share of employment is in the informal sector. Inadequate safety and health standards and environmental hazards are particular evidences in the case of the informal sector and the workers here do not possess the necessary awareness and resources to implement health and safety measures. Most of the times, the workers have
to work in unhealthy conditions due to which they have to face different types of physical disorders. This decreases the enterprise’s productivity and income because an unhealthy worker cannot work effectively. Again these, workers cannot make sufficient arrangements for their treatment and most of the time they have to bear their own medical expenses. This becomes time consuming which consequently has an adverse impact on productivity.

The most important issue for workers of informal sector today is the need for social security on the grounds of social justice. As research studies have shown, the informal sector is characterized by irregular employment, unstable income and prevalence of piece wage rates and absence of any legal protection in regard to income, employment, health and safety measures. As observed in our previous Five-Year Plans, in the absence of any legal protection, workers in the informal sector suffer large-scale exploitation in terms of hours of work as well as wages. Further, as the casual workers in the informal sector are illiterate and relatively less skilled, there is hardly any scope for them to achieve ‘vertical mobility’ on the occupational ladder. But the introduction of formal social security for the masses in the informal sector is, however, constrained by many factors like irregularity of employment and income, absence of a permanent employee-employer relationship and above all, the poor resource base of the backward economies (Vibha Mahajan, 2006).

1.8 Statement of the Problem and Need for the Study

Labour is an important aspect of the industrial system for the future economic growth of the country. Therefore, there is a great need for a clear understanding of the various labour problems. The problems of industrial workers are very much complex and dynamic. Their complexity is a matter of concern for the partners of industry, scholars and academicians, planners and policy makers, labour leaders and social workers. During recent years there has been a growing awareness of the existence, importance and needs of the unorganized workers. The Report of the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (2007) highlights the existence and qualification of unorganized or informal workers, defined as those who do not have employment security, work security and social security. Employment in the unorganised sector has hitherto been derived as a residual of the total workers minus workers in the organised sector as reported by the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET).
The Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) figures, however, fail to capture the informal / unorganised employment in the formal / organised sector - a phenomenon, which is becoming increasingly significant in the Indian economy (NCEUS Report, 2007). The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) has estimated that during 2004-05, 49 percent of the workers shown in the organised sector were actually unorganised/informal workers; they were not provided any job or social security by the employer. During 1999-2000, the corresponding figure was 46 percent (Kannan, 2007).

During the recent past, problems of unorganized workers in India have been increasing. A vast majority of India's working population is in the unorganized sector and is consequently unprotected. Evidence indicates that many Indian urban workers are trapped in the unprotected segment of the labour market, where the incidence of poverty is high. Having no fixed employer, these workers are casual, contractual, migrants, home based and own account workers who attempt to earn a living from whatever meagre assets and skills they possess. Most informal workers are deprived of secure work, workers’ benefits, social protection and representation or voice. Moreover, a higher percentage of informal sector workers are poor. Unlike workers in the organised sector, unorganized workers do not have steady employment and secured or sustainable incomes and are not covered by social security protection. Deprivation and vulnerability to vagaries of the life are the major threats to the workers in the urban informal sector.

The ‘unorganized sector’ has been criticized as a low productivity area where the earnings are meagre. But in absolute terms, this sector contributes more to the economy and employment in India. Nine-tenths of India’s population is surviving on employment in the unorganized sector. Thus, in spite of its considerable contribution, the unorganized sector lacks adequate protection. The unorganized sector labourers are exploited in many ways. They are exposed to all the vagaries of climate and weather while at work. Workers are exposed to serious health hazards which affect their longevity. Workers in this sector do not get social and other benefits as their counterparts in the organized sector do (Meenakshi Gupta, 2007). For most of them, conditions of work are utterly deplorable and livelihood options extremely few (NCEUS Report, 2007).
In addition to the above, social security still eludes most workers in the informal sector, especially women workers. Existing schemes are mainly restricted to the organised sector with barely 10 percent of the Indian workforce, where employer-employee relationships can be clearly established. For millions in the unorganised sector or informal economy, social security continues to be a missing link in their struggle for survival. Yet, it is these unorganised workers who are the poorest of workers and are most exposed to shocks and multiple risks that threaten their very survival.

Researchers in India and elsewhere have called attention to the informal sector as a major area of women’s employment and to the role of gender in informal sector stratification: while men are dispersed throughout the informal sector, women are clustered in enterprises at the bottom of the informal sector hierarchy, involving the lowest remuneration and the least capital investment (Nelson, 1979; Papola, 1980; Harriss, 1986). These enterprises tend to be seen as “women’s work” (Moser and Young, 1981). Various studies by Papola (1992), clearly and emphatically show another amazing fact that the urban labour market discriminates against women much more than the rural labour market. This discrimination results in decline in the participation of women in economic activities. The biggest problem with the informal sector in India is that there is no precise information or the total number of women workers engaged in this sector and also their respective ratios in various diversified occupations. In this situation, women employed in informal sector are vulnerable to exploitation. But they are struggling to manage their household budgets (Khan and Khan, 2009). The issue of poverty and inequality of the disadvantaged groups need to be specially looked after. The workers of the urban unorganised sector constitute one such disadvantaged group. For this proposition, a plea is often made for a policy to favour unorganised sector in matter of government policy of providing public utility services, financial help and other assistance (Banerjee, 1983).

Women, particularly, are confined to unorganized sector employment, with 96 percent of all female workers being in this sector. Given the nature of employment in the unorganized sector, it is to be expected that the returns from their work tend to be low and uncertain. Most workers do not have year round employment, and even when employment is available, the income is low. Social security – such as health care, old age
benefits child care and housing that is taken for granted by organized sector workers is not even dreamt of by the unorganized sector. In this connection, it is worth noting that 39.7 percent of India’s population is reported to be living under the poverty line, all of them from the unorganized sector (Renana Jhabvala and Subrahmanya, 2000). Within the informal sector, women are generally found in low-income activity that barely guarantees survival. Majority of women workers in informal sector come from those sections of the society which need income at any cost. Nearly 50 percent of these women workers are sole supporters of their families.

The women workers play the triple role of a worker, housewife and mother. The lack of capital and assets, low and irregular income, aided by frequent accidents, sickness and other contingencies, poor working and living conditions, low bargaining power and lack of outside linkages and opportunities for skill upgradation are all interlinked factors and they drag these women into deprivation, trapping them in the vicious circle of poverty. Thus, the Indian woman worker lives and works under many constraints. She belongs to the poorer families in the village or town. She also belongs to a backward caste, a scheduled caste or a minority group. Being a woman, she would have a lower status in her family. Her family would own few assets and have few opportunities for better work, and such assets or opportunities that existed would be for the males of the family and not for her. Often, she may be a widow or live alone with her children. She faces a crushing work burden - of work for income, work for subsistence, work for the household and care work of children and aged. The policies of liberalisation have an adverse effect on her life. Even when it creates opportunities, the working conditions are very poor. Coupled with it are the trends of increasing casualisation and women's lack of access to skills and technology. The shrinking role of the state further adds to her burdens. It is her labour and enterprise which create the wealth of the nation, and whose hard work leads to national growth. She needs security, a decent life, a share in the prosperity of the nation and the dream of a good life for her children. In a way, the change in economy has brought about a visibility for the woman worker which did not exist before. The term ‘feminisation of labour’ is now widely used and women are becoming more visible in many areas of work which were traditionally barred to them.
The unprotected and unorganised workers are, by definition, disadvantaged workers. The degree of disadvantage, if one may say so, varies from segment to segment. There have been a large number of researches in the field of unorganized labour. But very few studies have been carried out about the unorganized women workers belonging to textile and foundry units, who form a sizeable proportion of the total labour population engaged in the informal sector. With the increasing informalization of the work force and the large number of persons below the poverty line, there is an urgent need to focus social security for unorganized women workers. In India, social security has so far benefited, by and large, only the workers from the formal sector. The vast informal sector of the country has never been touched by the very sophisticated labour laws of the country.

As stated earlier, in view of the sizeable employment opportunities in the informal sector and its capacity to provide a wide variety of goods and services and also to provide employment and income for the urban poor, the position of unskilled and semi-skilled urban workers of this sector has to be studied in greater detail. Further, the most important problem to be reckoned with in undertaking such a study is that very little has come to be known about the various aspects of the functioning of the informal sector, and especially with respect to the women workers. Data for such a particular study can be collected only by an empirical study designed specifically for this purpose. Such a study will enable proper analysis of potential of the unorganised workers as an instrument of growth, besides being useful in evolving an appropriate rehabilitation policy for informal sector workers.

Workers engaged in informal sector offer an ample scope for research. However, information on various aspects is not yet known. For instance,

- What are the major activities that are being carried out by unorganised women workers?
- What is the socio-economic environment that such women workers are facing? and
- What kinds of policy measures are required for their socio-economic development?

These aspects, though important they are, have not been examined comprehensively as yet. Considering the significance of these aspects, the present study makes a modest attempt to understand the various aspects related to employment, working conditions, availability of social security benefits and their status regarding Health Insurance Programmes.
1.9 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To know the socio-economic status of the sample respondents,
2. To analyse the nature of employment and migration status of unorganised women workers in selected industries,
3. To examine the working conditions and availability of social security benefits to the unorganised women workers, and
4. To study the awareness, enrolment and willingness of the unorganised women workers to participate in the Health Insurance Schemes.

1.10 Data Sources and Methodology

In the present study, the methodology consists of area of the study, Sampling frame and sampling size, preparation of instruments and data collection procedures. The unorganised sector is an enterprise-based concept and does not reflect the characteristics of the jobs or employment relationships. It is possible that some workers in the organised sector do not enjoy any job security, work security or social security. In order to identify such categories of workers, it is necessary to complement the definition of unorganised sector with a definition of unorganised/informal employment. All the casual workers and unpaid family workers in all enterprises, irrespective of the sector, are being considered as unorganised workers.

(i) Area of the Study

The study was confined to Coimbatore City of Tamil Nadu, the second largest city of the State. Coimbatore is one of the most industrialized cities in Tamil Nadu and is known as the textile capital of South India or the Manchester of the South. Among all the districts of Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore district is one of the most affluent and industrially advanced districts of the State. It has more than 40,000 small, medium and large-scale industries, which serve the engineering needs of the major parts of the country. The city is known for its dynamic people and excellent infrastructure. The entrepreneurial spirit of the business community here is renowned across the country. Besides Textiles, the city today has evolved itself into a diversified economy with Engineering, Auto Components,
Pumps and Motors (Out of every two water pumps produced in the country one is from Coimbatore), Foundries (One among the six major centres in India) and the educational institutions (the highest density in the country: 84 in 75 Square Km) which produce about 40,000 graduates of various disciplines a year. Coimbatore is well known for its textile and engineering industry, which consists of units turning out a variety of products needed by different types of industries, as inputs. Apart from supplying components to major units, many engineering units are engaged in producing consumer durables too. The unorganized women workers of these units are prone to unhealthy working and living conditions.

(ii) Sampling Frame and Size

The universe of informal workers now constitutes 92 percent of the total work force. The employees with informal jobs generally do not enjoy employment security (no protection against arbitrary dismissal) work security (no protection against accidents and illness at the work place) and social security (maternity and health care benefits, pension, etc.) and therefore, any one or more of these characteristics can be used for identifying informal employment in the present study. In the present study, the researcher defines unorganised or informal employment as given by The National Commission of Enterprise for Unorganised Sector (2007).

"Unorganised workers consist of those working in the unorganised enterprises or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits, and the workers in the formal sector without any employment/social security benefits provided by the employers".

In the study area, the sample unprotected women workers in the organised sector are mainly in the categories of regular, casual and contract workers who remain unprotected because of non-compliance of the provisions of the existing laws. This is a growing segment in the organised sector and this forms the universe of the present study. The study of unorganized women workers with special reference to foundry and textile units in Coimbatore is an empirical one. The study is based on survey research technique. The information on female workers in the informal sector has been gathered from extensive survey of field investigation. As working women in informal sector of Coimbatore city constitute a heterogeneous group, stratified disproportionate sampling has been undertaken while collecting the sample workers.
In the first stage, a survey of the foundry and textile industries was carried out to find the types of industries and the number of units in each industry. The data available from District Industrial Centre (DIC), South Indian Engineering Manufacturers’ Association (SEIMA), Indian Institute of Foundry Men (IIFM) and Coimbatore District Small Scale Industries Association (CODISSIA) revealed that there were nine major engineering industries, viz., foundry industry (755 units), pump industry (497 units), textile machinery manufacturing industry (524 units), auto component manufacturing industry (484 units), furniture manufacturing industry (170 units), gear industry (140 units), jewellery manufacturing industry (1200 units), sheet metal and structural fabrication industry (235 units) and engineering outsourcing industry (7000 units) in Coimbatore District.

In the second stage, two types of industries – foundry industrial units (Engineering industry) and textile industry – were chosen for the study based on the number of units and also workers employed in those industries. Details collected from Indian Institute of Foundry Men (IIFM), South Indian Engineering Manufacturers’ Association (SIEMA), Coimbatore District Small Scale Industries Association (CODISSIA), Coimbatore Foundry Industry Owners Association (COFIOA), Coimbatore Tiny, Small and Medium Foundry Owners Association (COSMAFEN) Coimbatore, revealed that are 490 units in the foundry industry within the limits of Coimbatore Corporation. Information collected from Coimbatore District Small Scale Industries Association (CODISSIA), The Southern Indian Mills Association (SIMA) and South Indian Textile Research Association (SITRA) Coimbatore, disclosed that there are 550 small scale units of textile industry in Coimbatore Corporation area. The foundry industry employed 17,910 workers while the textile industry had a work force of 17,592 labourers. In order to have a sufficient sample of industrial units and thereby, women workers at the later stage, out of the total 755 units of foundry and 550 units of textile industry, adopting stratified disproportionate sampling method, 10 percent and 30 percent, respectively have been selected from the two categories of industries under consideration. In the second stage, from these selected units, 30 percent of the workers have been selected from the total workers, based on simple random sampling.

Thus, in all, 49 units of engineering and 55 units of textile industrial units were selected for the study. In these units, there were 4320 and 3696 workers of which 30 percent
each constitute the sample. Thus, the number of workers who constitute the sample frame was 1296 in foundry industrial units (778 male workers and 518 female workers) and 1109 workers in textile industrial units (425 male workers and 684 female workers). However, as the study intends to cover only women workers, all those women workers were covered from these selected units as the sample respondents (518 + 684 = 1202). Data was collected through personal interviews with the help of a questionnaire (See Appendix 1).

(iii). Preparation of Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

a) Tools used for Data Collection

It was felt appropriate to make use of Survey Method for this research with data collection from selected women workers of textile and foundry units. For the purpose of data collection, an interview schedule was prepared in line with the objectives and conceptual framework. Most of the items in the interview schedule were structured and close-ended questions. The interview schedule consisted of five sections dealing with the following:

1. Respondents’ background characteristics,
2. Nature of employment, migration and working conditions of unorganized women workers,
3. Type of social security benefits available,
4. Awareness and enrolment of health insurance schemes, and
5. Willingness to participate in health insurance schemes.

b) Pre-test

To prevent the schedule containing any inconsistent and ambiguous questions and also to check the comprehensiveness of aspects covered, a pilot study was taken up. Several modifications had to be made in the questions, based on the difficulties encountered during pilot study. Hence, the interview schedule was pre-tested with 10 sample workers with five from textile and five from foundry units. Then, the interview was finalized and information was obtained by personal interviews. The interview schedule was developed in Tamil, the language spoken by the majority of the people in the sample area (and the whole state of Tamil Nadu). The schedule was further fine-tuned, based on the suggestions of workers, trade unions leaders and subject experts, with whom separate discussions were
held at length with a focus to improve the structure of the schedule, so that the information obtained through the instrument could be extensively used for the purpose of drawing meaningful and reliable inference. Special efforts were also made to hold discussions with women workers so that questions on women-centric problems could also be raised in the schedule, thus making the instrument free from gender bias. Data collected through such a carefully developed instrument were suitably supplemented with information obtained through deliberations held with workers, trade union leaders, supervisors, managers and proprietors. The survey was conducted during the period July 2009 to December 2009.

c) Data Collection Process

The researcher, on the basis of interview schedule, interviewed the selected women respondents personally. Working place of the sample women workers were visited at least twice to check the information provided. The interview started with general questions to put the women respondents at ease. They have no time for this type of interaction. Of course, they believe that they have no benefit from this and also they suspect some danger in it. But after a series of interactions, they become ready to open up their minds. Initially, they were hesitant but generally they opened up and gave all the relevant information.

d) Difficulties Faced During Data Collection

It took about 30-45 minutes, on an average, to collect the information from each respondent. Therefore, some lost their tempo in giving information during the later part of the interview. After a day or two, a few respondents were reluctant to answer, as they knew from other workers that it took more than 30-45 minutes. At times, some workers refused to participate. Hence, the researcher had to make multiple visits to collect the information from them and at times they were interviewed at their homes. Before starting the interview, most of the respondents were curious to know about the benefits they would gain from the interview. The investigator had to explain the purpose of the research to the respondents and persuade them to spare some time. In order to follow the ethical issues, informed consent from the respondents had been obtained and also assured them for keeping the information (whatever provided by them) confidential by the researcher. Considerable problems were faced in answering questions relating to age,
employment, working conditions, social security, enrolment of health insurance, income, health and sexual harassment. The women were not willing to give information about their family or husband's bad behaviour. The employers were also interviewed wherever possible. Though formal interviewing was sometimes very difficult, observations were easier to make.

e) Analysis of Data

The surveyed data were manually edited, coded and then, entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) spread sheets. After verification, the preliminary analysis of data was carried out on the basis of frequency distributions and cross-tabulations, and the statistics such as the percentage, Chi-square test of significance and Logistic Regression Techniques were used. In order to find out the principal determinants of respondents’ knowledge about the existing social security measures and their enrolment of health insurance logistic analysis is adopted. This technique is more apt for such analyses because both the dependent variables were dichotomous in nature i.e., whether respondents have awareness about the existing social security increases or not and whether respondents willingness to pay for health insurance or not. A score of ‘1’ if yes and ‘0’ if not, respectively are assigned for both the categories of the variables.

1.11 Scope and Limitations of the Study

In a semi-industrialized country like India, the working class is destined to be one of the weaker sections of society. Society being male-dominated, female labour receives very poor recognition or value. It is not that there are no statutory provisions. In fact the Constitution of India provides equal rights and opportunities to both the genders. In addition, there are specific provisions for protection and welfare of working women in many of the labour laws. But most of these statutes do not cover the units in small and informal sectors which are the predominant work places of women. Though India has created protective legislation for women, the enactments have not been easy to implement. The very vastness of the country, the scattered nature of women workers, their lack of education and legal literacy and the general status of women in society caused vulnerability in women. If we are serious about substantially improving the economic status of poor women working in the informal sector of the economy, concrete strategies, which can help to improve their working environment have to be devised.
Perhaps it will be the single most important intervention towards both their empowerment and economic well being (Veena Gandotra and Sarjoo Patel, 2009).

The results of the present study would be of much interest and relevance to those who are serious about transferring the working environment of unorganized women workers engaged in the production process of the selected industries. No doubt, the government would be major beneficiary of the outcome of the present study. It would be able to understand the difficulties faced by workers, many of whom are engaged in hazardous work spots. Policy making bodies of the Government machinery are sure to gain inputs when they think about schemes that would lessen the problems faced by the workers.

The stock of knowledge possessed by the employers, on the work behaviour of the mass of people engaged by them would definitely get enlarged if they were to go through the findings of the study. Specifically they would be able to know why workers frequently hop from one firm to the other and from one type of job to another. Accordingly, the employers can device measures so that the talent does not leave their organization. This would in a way, restrict the brain drain, which if not checked would adversely affect the efficiency of a firm. Workers, the centre core of the study would also be benefited through the results. They will be able to understand the ways and means for enhancing the level of their earnings. Further, they would also come to know the importance of health and take adequate steps to join under a recognized insurance plan, just to ensure the continuity of earnings for their families.

This study, however, is not free from its limitations.

- As far the reach of study, it should be mentioned that the study confined to the workers engaged in major industries that are in operation in Coimbatore Corporation area. Ancillary units, though large in number and significantly support the development of units under study, were kept outside the purview of the survey. Only women workers were included in the study, though child labour was found to be widely prevalent in many of the units which are approached deny data collection,

- The data is based on the respondents’ estimates and memory recall,
- As most of the unorganized women workers are illiterate, their inability to provide precise information led to generalizing the case,

- Some respondents were unwilling to disclose their exact earnings and they had no idea regarding their expenditure patterns. These limitations may have affected the survey result to some extent. Despite these limitations, the researcher has taken utmost care in analyzing the problems, and

- Health Department officials claim that they have no information on workplace accidents because employers, attempting to avoid media attention or enquiry by the police, seek treatment for most injured workers at private hospitals. Mainly due to this reason, the researcher is not very successful in documenting specific cases of work-related accidents in the selected industries.

1.12 Organization of the Thesis

The entire report of the research work is presented in eight chapters:-

**Chapter I** Is devoted to explain the compelling need for carrying out the study.

**Chapter II** Brings out the concepts, theoretical framework and results of earlier research studies on Review of Literature.

**Chapter III** Is an attempt to explain the Structure/Profile of the Study Area.

**Chapter IV** Brings out the socio-economic status of the sample respondents

**Chapter V** Reveals the nature of employment and migration status of unorganised women workers in selected industries.

**Chapter VI** Analyses the working conditions and availability of social security benefits to the unorganised women workers.

**Chapter VII** Explains the awareness, enrolment and willingness to participate in the Health Insurance Schemes among sample workers.

**Chapter VIII** Summarises the findings and conclusions of the study.