Introduction

It is always been fascinating to write about women and their roles. But significantly most of the writings on women were less serious about their problems and sufferings. As a result, it became one of the most unexplored areas of research. A rigorous analysis is still to be required to explain how and why half of the human race is distinct and downgraded in the socio-economic and cultural arena of the society in comparison to the other.

Except few, the studies so far conducted on women were either piecemeal in nature or less comprehensive in analysis. Most of the studies on women, however concerned to middle class women or women in white-collar sections of the society. Very little is known about the rural women or women in urban unorganised sector.

The present study, though cannot be claimed to be a pioneering one in the field, still makes a humble beginning to highlight the problems of women working in urban unorganised sector. Besides examining the general socio-economic status of Indian women, the study includes an analysis of the socio-economic conditions of six categories of women workers in urban unorganised sector, i.e., servant maids, sanitary
women workers, beedi workers, construction women, women petty traders and tribal migrant women workers. The socio-economic conditions and their problems of the above categories of women working in Tirupati Town are examined in the present study.

The Problem

India pledged to attain a socialistic pattern of society implying both economic and social equality. This became particularly important in view of the concentration of economic power and the lack of productive opportunities for the poorer sections of the society. Consequently the rich have become richer and the poor remain poorer.

The era of planning for economic development was started in the year 1951 with a perspective plan for the development of the Indian economy. Different plans were formulated with different objectives of economic policy with the broader perspective of economic development with social justice. One thing that is found as a common phenomenon in all these plans is the stress given to rural development and welfare of the poorer sections of the community. For example, the Seventh Plan pointed out that, "An increase in the production potential of the rural economy is an essential condition for finding effective solution to the problem of rural poverty. Production especially simple consumer goods, increased employment, provides
greater scope for raising the production of precisely those goods and services required to meet the needs of the low income groups”.

In a pioneering study, Dandekar and Rath established an empirical evidence saying that the present planned economic development had benefitted the upper than the middle and poorer sections. Consequently inequality has increased further and further.

According to the estimates, 53 per cent of the rural population and 47 per cent of the urban population fall under poverty line. Both Dandekar and Rath and the Eighth Finance Commission attribute the continuing poverty due to: (a) growing population; (b) concentration of economic power in the hands of a few; and (c) unemployment.

The factors given together would explain the vicious circle of poverty on which most of the developing countries are struck up and capital deficiency has been the major problem confronted by these countries. A country is poor because it is poor; poverty breeds poverty and capital deficiency is both a cause and consequence of the problem.

"Largest number of women are employed in non-agricultural occupations both in rural and urban areas. The construction industry, beedi industry, match industry, traditional professions, food processing, tailoring and readymade garments,
sweepers and scavengers, domestic servants, petty traders, casual/daily wage earners come in order of preference next only to agricultural occupation.

Low-cost-low-class dimension, involvement of family members in the work, illiteracy, acquisition of skills through experience, long hours of work with no stipulated timings, requirements of petty capital investment, problem of space, displacement and movements concerning the business operations, harassment and exploitation by police, municipal officials, monopolistic traders, anti-social elements and money lenders, refusal of official credit agencies to provide funds, problems of transport and marketing of products, etc., characterise the urban informal sector. Several studies indicate the declining volume of incomes and dismal trade aspects. The government programmes and schemes of women finance corporations, vocational guidance centres of Khadi Gramodyog Commission have done little to protect these women to stabilise their economic status.

The present study is a modest attempt to conduct investigation at micro level into the problems of women working in urban unorganised sector as maid servants, sanitary workers, beedi workers, construction workers, petty traders and working tribal migrants.

Study Area

The present study relates to Tirupati Town due to the following reasons:

1. Tirupati Town is rich in institutions as compared to other towns of Chittoor district in A.P. This is the best source place of employment for women in Tirupati Town.

2. Almost all the working women and upper class women in Tirupati Town employ maid servants in their houses.

3. In India more than 90 per cent of the sanitary workers are women and municipal corporations and municipalities offer larger share of its employment to women in their respective cities and towns.

4. Women construction workers in Tirupati Town constitute 24 per cent of the total work force.

5. Tirupati Town is a pilgrimage place, which gives much scope for petty trade activities for women.

6. Tribal migrants constitute nearly 10 per cent of the total women workers in Tirupati Town.

7. Most of the women are working in beedi manufacturing units in Tirupati Town.
Objectives

The main objectives of the present study are:

1. To examine the socio-economic status of women working in urban unorganised sector.
2. To examine the nature and problems of women construction workers.
3. To evaluate the socio-economic conditions, working conditions and the factors led them to take up the jobs of the maid servants.
4. The socio-economic background of sanitary women workers, their respective roles and problems involved in discharging their responsibilities as an employee of the municipality.
5. To highlight the socio-economic background of women beedi workers, their work situation and life patterns.
6. To analyse the socio-economic conditions of women petty traders.
7. To examine the socio-economic background and conditions of migrant women, exclusively belong to Lambadi tribe.

Hypotheses

1. No forward caste women are working in urban unorganised sector in Tirupati Town.
2. There are no social and legal problems to women workers in Tirupati Town.
3. The social and economic conditions of women working in urban unorganised sector are worst in nature.

4. The socio-economic conditions of women working in petty trade, beedi industry, construction work, maid servants, sanitary workers and tribal migrants are not satisfactory.

Keeping in mind the mentioned objectives and hypotheses, the work is distributed among nine major chapters. The first chapter concentrates on the role of women in economic development in general and their contribution to the Gross National Product. At the same time, the women in unorganised sector is also discussed. The second chapter deviates to the study area and various aspects related to it. The socio-economic status of women working as petty traders, construction workers, beedi industry, sanitary workers, maid servants and tribal migrants are studied elaborately in six independent chapters, i.e., third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth chapters respectively and the summary and conclusions are made in the last chapter.

Methodology

The study makes use of secondary data to the possible extent and mainly concentrates on the primary data collected through personal survey and questionnaire method. The main sources of secondary data are the publications such as text books, reference books, reports, magazines, journals of national
and international categories, seminar papers on status of women and various pamphlets published by All India Women's Conference, Indian Council of Social Science Research, International Labour Conference, half yearly, quarterly, monthly, fortnightly, weekly and daily reports from various departments, etc.

Important Ph.D. dissertations were also verified for the work. A detailed questionnaire containing various types of questions concerned with different social and economic problems of women and data is collected through personal interview. Some of the questions which are not included in the questionnaire are also discussed with respondents and various psychological issues of women are noted down in the analysis. In each category 100 samples have been taken except for tribal migrants (50) to collect the information from the respondents on a perspective basis. The results have been calculated and interpreted in general on the basis of the results of 100 samples data.

Statistical Techniques Used

As this study is mainly based on survey work, after the collection of data different statistical techniques have been used to test the hypotheses and made conclusions suit to the objectives chosen to the present study. Even though this is a micro level study, it studies the critical issues of women
and made suggestions for improvement for necessary policy decisions to uplift the living standards of the downtrodden of the neglected group at the grass root level. Therefore this type of study may have good impact on the family budget of the poor people and the crucial problems of unemployment can be solved to some extent and we will be in a position to satisfy the ideals of the Gandhian teachings to an under-developed economy like India.

**Significance of the Study**

There are only limited studies of this type in India, mainly on the issues of women working in urban unorganised sector. Even though women share 50 per cent of the total population, proper attention and care has not been given to them. (Studies of this category should enlist various socio-economic, political and psychological issues of different groups of downtrodden women working in urban unorganised sector. The socio-economic status of these women should be upgraded in due course, the familial and societal conditions of the women may change, which should become the base for the development of the society and the country.)