Chapter - V

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– An Evaluation

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Introduction

Un-organized sector which is also called informal sector is playing an important role in the Indian economy. The fact that this sector has provided employment opportunities to about 90% of India's work-force and contributed nearly 65.5% to the national product signifies its importance. Inspite of its major role in the development of the economy, no serious attempts have been made by the governments to develop this sector systematically including the protection of interest of (contract) labourers like beedi workers. In this regard, the remarks of National Commission (1987), beedi workers are unprotected by Law narrate the entire sorry state of affairs of beedi workers.

Nature of Work of Beedi Workers

Beedi rolling is a home-based production activity which is acting as a source of income to the urban and rural poor. Further, major parts of the works of beedi industry are done in homes. Further, the persons who are engaged in beedi rolling are rewarded/remunerated under Piece Rate System. The acute poverty from which the families are suffering is often driving/forcing the people to take up this activity for additional help and income (to the family). Women are also involved in beedi rolling. This is because of a number of economic factors such as necessity that often springs up because of the unemployment problem of the male members of the family and/or because of migration of male members. The use of female members through the putting out system is seen in beedi making.
The putting out process is basically through the contract system. The other two are through the factory system wherein a firm directly employs people to make its product. Another is the manufacture of a certain product by men and women in a prescribed shed with a contractor acting as the intermediary of the firm. The contract system is, by far, the most widely followed method. Most of the times, the contractor deals unfairly with workers. For instance, beedi workers often get leaves for 800 beedies from the contractor though he (i.e., contractor) demands 1,000 beedies. In this type of situation, the contractors deduct money on the ground of workers making 200 beedies (each) less than demanded/required. In this type of system, it is the contractor who makes the net gain.

The current situation of beedi workers presents a very deplorable situation. Even with the untiring efforts of beedi workers, social activists and writers, there has been very little or no effort to improve the deplorable condition of beedi workers by the policy makers. Though there has been a continuous reduction in the %age of population living below poverty line (BPL), one can find a substantial increase in the number of persons living below poverty line leading to a parallel growth in the unemployment. As a result, a large number of unemployed persons are available to work even for low wages under any circumstance. Hence, the contract system is being followed by the beedi manufacturers and/or contractors to make use of these circumstances for their benefit. The system pays badly and gives no or less protection to beedi workers. Because, the wages are paid to the beedi workers under Piece Rate System with
no guaranteed periodical wages. If there are any instances of workers making
the slightest of complaints or expressing disapproval against the contractor's
method of functioning, the contractor rejects or gives up that village to go to
another. As a result, it is the workers who are at the losing end rather than the
contractor. Beedi making is, perhaps, the most widely spread home-based work
for women in India. As beedi production does not require much skill, even
illiterate people in rural areas are taking up this work. Of course, the main reason
is to earn means of living. This industry covers large parts of Uttar Pradesh,
Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Karnataka. As the selling price of beedi
is comparatively very low (when compared to cigarettes), this product is used
(smoked) widely by the poor in towns and rural areas of India.

Most women in villages have limited mobility and therefore, home-based work
proves helpful for them. It is helpful because they get some economic security
as against unemployment or erratic employment of male members of the family.
However, if one looks deeper into this phenomenon, it is found that women are
always regarded as supplementary workers and their work hardly gets any
recognition.

It is believed that the technological changes are leading to automation in the
industry in the developed countries resulting in production shifting to the centre.
But in India, this can never happen. Because, the nature of work done by beedi
workers enables the contractor to earn higher profits and no worker is dare to
give up this work as there is no guarantee of getting an alternative job. This is a
vicious circle and with increasing poverty and population on the one hand, and
the international competition on the other, more and more men, women and
children are likely to be drawn into the beedi production.

In the context of beedi workers, a very important point that must be noted is the
unsatisfactory implementation of Labour Laws. Different laws should be
enforced to protect the interest and ensure welfare of rural beedi workers. On
the other hand, the beedi workers in urban area often live in the same vicinity of
the contractor. Moreover, they are the citizens of urban metropolis which are
subjected to municipality and civic laws and restrictions. Of course, they are
also suffering from similar crises of not getting their daily needs of water,
electricity, kerosene, food and other necessities. This is not to say that rural
home-based workers suffer fewer hardships. Their hardship is of a different
kind and the irony of home-based industry, commonly shared by both urban and
rural workers, is that they cling on to this system for fear of losing their income.
This is because, a contractor can shift his orders from one worker to another or
from one village to another, as the situation demands.

The government did introduce a special Labour Legislation i.e., The Beedi and
Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 which appears to be
encouraging as there were Provisions for daily hours of work, leave, maternity
leave, etc. Subsequently, another supporting Act called, The Beedi Workers
Welfare Fund and Cess Act was enacted in 1976. Still, there has been no change in the condition of home-based beedi workers. The problem is that, Factory Laws cannot fully be enforced within the home-based system because people work with their routine. There is no employer-employee relationship and no fixed allocation of work. However, it is definitely a labour intensive activity and the remuneration is not enough for the kind of hard labour that home-based workers put in.

Though there were instances of trade union formation within the beedi making factories, they were not too effective. Because, beedi factories (get around the law) sell tobacco to the contractors who in turn supply the same to the workers. The contractors then collect back the manufactured beedies from the workers and deliver them to the beedi factories. There are also evidences of several beedi (factory) workers becoming contractors and operating in rural area encouraging the contract system for beedi making.

**Beedi Rolling Work – Analysis of Reasons and Effects**

There are a number of reasons as to why the poor people prefer to take up the beedi rolling work. Some of them, which are important, are identified below followed by a brief evaluation of the same.
01. Illiteracy and Ignorance

Beedi workers are generally illiterate and a very few are literates. They have no formal education and therefore, most of the beedi workers are not in a position to
read the contents of the contract/agreement. They are unable to put their signature. There is also little awareness about their rights. These factors clearly impede access to justice. They are not equipped to lobby for their rights. Most domestics are migrated workers who have moved from rural area to towns/cities in order to improve their economic living condition. They are, therefore, (a) often dislocated from their families, (b) unfamiliar with the customs and languages of their urban counterparts, and (c) they have no network to turn to in case they need any protection, advice or support.

Most of them are unorganized workers and are living in the countryside where no basic educational facilities are available. Due to the lack of education, they are not aware of their rights. With their illiteracy or low literacy and limited exposure to the mainstream economy, these beedi workers find it very difficult to adjust themselves to the changed environment. This illiteracy is compelling them to take up beedi rolling so that they can earn whatever little they can to meet their day-to-day domestic expenses.

Besides, in the study area of Davangere district, majority of the lower socio-economic groups of population are illiterate. They think only about the present which is their sole concern and worthy, without thinking about the future. Because, they are concerned about earning some income to buy the groceries and other essentials to cook and eat. And they are ignorant about the importance
of educating their children, health, etc. Consequently, they are converting their children into labourers of low wages for all their lives.

As already presented, the %age of illiteracy is very high among beedi workers. The survey of 200 beedi workers selected from five taluks of Davangere district reveals that 55% of them are illiterates. And the remaining 45% had only primary education (i.e., first standard to 10th standard). And no one (of the respondents) had higher education viz., college education. These illiterate and the ignorant beedi workers cite their karmaphala (i.e., retribution of the past deeds) as the sole factor responsible for their current pathetic living condition. They believe that due to the sins committed by them in their previous birth, they are poor and put to hardships in the present birth.

Ignorance about their rights, privileges and other statutory benefits is very high among beedi workers and this is, to a greater extent, responsible for their poor economic condition. As a result of this, beedi workers are deprived of many a number of benefits for which they legally are entitled and of the benefits made available to them by the governments.

02. Poverty

In India, nearly 80% of the total population still lives in rural area and about 50% of that population subsists below poverty line. Unorganized labour is rooted in poverty. Unorganized labourers have to work against their will or wish for their own survival and for the survival of their family. This way, they are
supporting their families by earning whatever little they can from beedi rolling. In most of the cases, even this meagre income (from beedi rolling) plays a crucial role in saving the family from virtual starvation. Poverty is a complex phenomenon as a host of factors such as age, sex, education, employment characteristics, wage rate, etc are at work as its causes. It is very well known that the less educated, young, old, households headed by women, unemployed and under-employed, fully employed but in low paid jobs, etc have high poverty rate. In the case of some households, a single factor might account for low income and in other cases, more than one factor may be responsible for low income and poverty.

- **Education and Poverty:** One of the prominent reasons for poverty is the lack of education. But it should be noted here that all expenses incurred on, and for, education should be considered as investment in human being. More schooling opens up opportunities for better paid and more skilled jobs and hence, the (inverse) relationship between education and poverty is very strong. However, the poor are caught up in a vicious circle. Education involves money outlay. People are so poor that they have no money to incur even the nominal expenses for sending the children for studies. Therefore, the people remain illiterate, and do not acquire and possess the requisite skills to take up high paid jobs. This results in low earnings. And even the substantial investment made by the governments for the educational programmes has not made much headway in breaking this vicious circle. As a result, the people are illiterate and therefore, they are poor.
• **Dependence on Wage Income and Poverty**: Majority of the beedi workers do not have any other means and they have to depend only on the trivial income from beedi rolling for their day-to-day expenses including their livelihood. Virtual lack of investment in human capital and lack of other productive assets force the beedi workers to depend only on income from their physical labour (beedi rolling) for sustenance. Consequently, they are continuing to live below poverty line.

• **Poverty and Under-employment**: Another prominent attribute to poverty is that many beedi workers are involuntarily part-timers and work for only a part of the day/week/month/year - not out of their choice but because of lack of opportunities to work continuously. This is due to a number of reasons including non-availability of adequate beedi rolling work throughout the year, lack of alternative works, etc. As a result, these workers are under-employed. Of course, there are some beedi workers, who, more or less, get work round the year. Even in the case of agricultural labourers who get the work only among the agricultural season, they do not get adequate beedi rolling work for the off-season. In the study area which is backward, it was found that there is hardly any other activity for them to fall back upon during lean season with the result that they have to be contended with under-employed and/or a few days of employment.
03. Indebtedness

In the ancient society, the persons belonging to the poor families were suffering a lot throughout their life, despite several remedial measures initiated by the appropriate authorities. There cannot be a more severe indictment of the country’s planned development than what is stated in the Five Year Plan document which reads, *the most cherished goals of full employment and eradication of poverty seem to be as distant today as when we set out on the road to planned development.*

The persons belonging to the rich class are the major beneficiaries of economic growth including the expansion of banking, insurance and commerce. There persists a concentration of assets/wealth in the hands of few people even after 60 years of Independence. Even with various land reform measures, majority of the population (of rural India) has nil or marginal assets in their hands. Further, in the absence of adequate margin of income over expenditure, the possibility of borrowing money by the beedi workers becomes stronger and inevitable. The unorganized labourers are facing the problem of indebtedness which is more or less a common thing even among beedi workers. This has reached to an alarming situation wherein the beedi workers are unable, out of the small earnings, to pay even the interest which is normally at very high rate.

Indebtedness is a widely prevalent problem of the poor masses of India particularly in rural area. It is always associated with income, assets and
housing. The rural poor in India always run into debts to meet their agricultural needs, domestic expenses, sickness, or (sometimes) to sustain themselves during seasonal spells of unemployment. And all these are true with respect to the respondent-workers of the present study. Some of the reasons as to why the beedi workers resort to borrowing are presented below. These details are collected from the respondent-workers during the survey.

Table - 5.1: Reasons for Borrowing Loans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Reasons for Borrowing Loans</th>
<th>Number of Workers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Daily Expenses</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Sickness</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Maternity</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Festivals</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Purchasing Sites/Plots</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Education of Children</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data

It can be seen from the table that 10 per cent of the respondents took loans for meeting their daily expenses, 40 per cent for meeting the expenses relating marriages of the members of their family, 22 per cent for meeting health care expenses, 8 per cent for maternity expenses and that of, festivals each, 2 per cent for purchasing of sites/plots, and the remaining 10 per cent for meeting expenses of education of their children. The analysis only shows that the earnings from the
beedi rolling are not adequate to meet their legitimate expenses such as livelihood, health care, education, etc. And this is compelling them to resort to borrowing.

Majority of the beedi workers, for various reasons, are not having access to banking facility. And a very few have transactions with saving schemes of post offices. Consequently, these poor beedi workers are forced to borrow from private sources such as village landlords, contractors, employers, etc by paying interest at higher rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Loan Borrowed (Rs)</th>
<th>Number of Respondent-workers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upto 500</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 - 1,000</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 - 2,000</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 - 5,000</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 - 10,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data

The data in the table reveals that 75 per cent of the respondent-workers have borrowed loan from their employers. That means, majority of the respondent-workers have borrowed from private money lenders. 40 workers borrowed up to
Rs.500 each, 30 borrowed Rs.500 to Rs.1,000 each, and another 40 workers raised loan from Rs.1,000 to Rs.2,000 each. Of the remaining, 30 workers borrowed Rs.2,000 to Rs.5,000 each, and the last 10 respondents raised loan ranging from Rs.5,000 to Rs.10,000 each.

It may be noted here that the beedi workers take loans on interest basis which is normally very high. Due to their limited income levels, they fail to pay the interest regularly (and to clear the loans). As a result, the interest amount goes on accumulating and adds to the principal loan amount, and becomes a greater burden to the borrower-workers. It is, therefore, common to find the borrower-workers paying more interest than the principal loan amount. All these clearly bring the point to the fore that the poor beedi workers are suffering a lot on account of low wage rate and higher expenses, therefore, they need to borrow at higher rate of interest. The gravity of the problem can be understood if one realizes the fact that in some cases, the children are working for the same employer (i.e., employer of their parents) for the loan raised by their parents.

04. Unemployment of Adults

Another important problem of families of beedi workers is the unemployment and/or under-employment of their adult members. That means, the adults who are capable of working and earning do not have either any employment or full employment for the entire day and for all the days throughout the year. Therefore, they are either unemployed or under-employed. Hence, their
economic status is very low. And this is one of the reasons as to why the children (of their families) are compelled to go to the rescue of their families (beedi workers) whenever the family is deprived of adult earning due to adult unemployment or inadequate income due to under-employment or intermittent income due to seasonal employment of adult earners.

05. Lower Rates of Wages

In the case of beedi workers, the employers are openly violating the Provisions of Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and making payment of wages at lower rates than the minimum wages. In order to protect their employment, the workers have absolutely no option but to accept the low wages without any protest. In these circumstances, even the children cannot escape from the clutches of the employers. Because, they take up beedi rolling activity to supplement the family income. Hence, they (child workers) receive less than what is prescribed. Hence, they are exposed to more exploitation. This is another feature of Beedi Industry. And therefore, the economic status of beedi workers has not improved.

06. Inadequate Social Security

Generally, family structure in the villages in the country is of joint family. But with the gradual breakdown of the joint family structure, rapid industrialization and urbanization, social security has become inevitable and a necessity. Hence, the country has enacted a number of social security measures by legislation. But all these legislations, except the Workmen’s Compensation Act, 1923, are
not applicable to the beedi workers in unorganized/informal sector. Under these circumstances and in the case of death or disablement on account of accident or disease or unemployment of the adult, they (i.e., beedi workers) are not protected properly. Since their interest is not protected and since they do not have the necessary strength to protect their interest and fight, there is no way out for the beedi workers to improve their economic status. This is also forcing the families to send their children for employment even if they get very less than minimum wages.

Further, for a number of reasons, employers prefer children to adults. Responses received (from employers, workers, government, and political leaders by the Committee on Child Labour to the question ‘why child labour is preferred’) show that child labour is cheap, hard working, faithful and obedient. They create no (or less) trouble. They work for long hours and they have no membership of trade unions. This only shows that both the parents (due to their helplessness) and the employers (with the objective of obtaining trouble-free and cheap labour) are exploiting the children denying their education and other opportunities.

07. Suitability for Specific Jobs

There are certain jobs (such as glass and bangle industry, match and fireworks manufacture, carpet-weaving, beedi rolling, etc) which are more suitable for children (than adults) due to their childhood characteristics vis-a-vis nature of
the work. The reason given by the entrepreneurs is that they have soft and nimble fingers and therefore, they are able to do the job better than adults. This is more so in the case of beedi rolling. Though the root cause for the persistence of child labour is economical backwardness, yet in a tradition ridden society like India, there are socio-cultural compulsions like the agrarian pattern, educational system, values and attitudes towards children, etc influencing the incidence of child labour which is often accepted as a part of the normal state of things.

08. Agrarian Social Structure

Indian society continues to be essentially agrarian in character and a recognized feature of rural employment is its seasonality. During the peak sowing and harvesting season, one can find more demand for labour. And during the off-season, there is less work for the members of the family. In order to earn the maximum possible income, almost all beedi workers in rural area mobilize the entire (family) labour force (including children) to contribute, howsoever insignificantly, towards family income. Increasing number of landless people among the rural households is also responsible for the child labour in the beedi rolling.

09. Industrialization and Urbanization

India is among the first ten in terms of industrialization. However, it is among the poorest in terms of per capita income. Expensive urban living and low wages compel the children to take up industrial employment in order to support
meagre family income. Due to these compelled circumstances, they have to work even for less than minimum wages so that they may avoid the situation of starvation in their family.

10. Unsuitable System of Education

In most of the cases, children are not finding proper environment for pursing their school education during their initial stage, and therefore, they want to seek some job as an alternative. The orthodox poor parents feel that educating the children will not help to feed them: whereas a working child brings money into the home to take care of certain basic needs. Moreover, beedi workers in the unorganized sector are being neglected not only by the governments but also by the non-governmental organizations by not taking into consideration their actual requirements in the daily life. If the education system is non-formal with more emphasis on vocational training, then it would have been of greater use to the children. There is no adjustment of timing and periodicity of the school system, and agricultural operations. In the unorganized sector such as beedi units, workers are needed when there is pressure of work on account of agricultural activities. As a result, it is impossible to spare the time for education without which they are completely ignorant about their rights. In many cases, this temporary withdrawal from school results in permanent drop out from the school. In the absence of any statutory obligation, employer is also reluctant to provide informal educational facility to the working children in beedi units voluntarily.
The above analysis clearly shows the reasons as to why the poor people are taking up beedi rolling and as to why these beedi workers have not been able to improve their economic status. This also shows that the beedi rolling activity has not enabled the beedi workers to improve their economic condition/status.

Social Status of Beedi Workers

As already pointed out, majority of beedi workers are in the unorganized sector and unfortunately, the term “unorganized sector” has not been defined properly in its exact meaning in the Labour Legislations. But it does not mean that this system of unorganized labour is new to Indian society/economy. History shows that unorganized labour system has been in existence in the country from the time immemorial in one form or the other. Its origin could be traced back to ancient tribal period during which socially and economically powerful persons dominated the scene by exploiting the less privileged and helpless persons by holding them in slavery and bondage. In the early days, beedi workers used to enter into an oral agreement with their employers in the form of personal service to the employer for a very nominal remuneration or without remuneration in lieu of debt. Such agreements remained in force as long as the debt was not repaid by the beedi workers to their employers. Over the years, the system of unorganized labour has changed slightly. However, the gravity of the situation led to the promulgation of an ordinance abolishing the system of slavery and
bondage (which are the crude forms of unorganized labour) in 1975. This was replaced a year later by the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976.

Various social security legislations like Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976; Contract Labour (Abolition and Regulation) Act, 1970; Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986; Dangerous Machines Act, 1986; Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923; ESI Act, 1948; etc have been passed with the objective of ensuring social justice guaranteed in the preamble of the Constitution. However, the social security legislations have not been able to control the social evils like bondage, slavery, and contract labour system. The fact is that the abuse of workers in unorganized sector is still rampant in the country. Surprisingly enough, many labourers are living in perpetual degradation and many more still awaiting rehabilitation even after their release from the grip of bondage. Freeing them from the shackles of bondage is not the solution to the problem. The appropriate answer is that they must act freely at socio-economic plans and live with human dignity and respect in Socialist Democratic Republic.

Despite various social security legislations, beedi workers are being exploited by the powerful employers at various levels. They are not provided with medical aid, proper wages, educational opportunities and facilities, maternity, safety and welfare facilities. They have to tow the line marked by their employers and bow
their heads before their employers in order to make them happy. They are not free to enjoy even their fundamental rights provided by the Constitution of India.

01. Caste System

In India, caste system and social stratification helped a lot for the flourishing of beedi rolling activities. Though originally, the social groups performing the most menial jobs of the society were categorized into the lowest caste, the economic character of this classification was quite revealing. Beedi rolling is one activity which can be structurally identified more with the Muslim community. The rest of the beedi workers belong to scheduled tribes and other economically weaker sections. In the rural areas, the caste structure is more rigid and even today, one can find most people in the villages living by their traditional caste occupations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Caste/Religion</th>
<th>Number of Workers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribe (ST)</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data

It is obvious from the above that as many as 110 respondents (out of 200 respondent-workers accounting 55 per cent) are Muslims, while the remaining
90 (45 per cent) are Hindus. Of these 90 Hindus, 8 are from scheduled tribe accounting for 4% of the respondent-workers. The remaining are from other castes of Hindu religion. The reason for higher percentage of Muslims engaged in beedi rolling activities, in the study area, is because of polygamy which is resulting in insecurity for the married women.

During the field survey, it was found that due to more industrial activities in Davangere city, more Muslim workers have migrated from other places to Davangere city. The industrialization has had its impact on the traditional caste occupation and thereby on the very caste structure of the rural society. Thus, there is a significant correlation between the occupation and their caste. There is also a correlation between the occupation, and the social and economic status of women.

02. Size of the Family

Size of the family refers to the number of members in the family including children. Normally, the families comprising of less than five members each are considered as small families and five members or more as big/large families. Inspite of concerted efforts made by the governments to bring down the family size in conformity with the much publicized slogan *Hum do, Hamare do, Hum do, Hamara Ek*, the family size is still, by and large, very large specially in middle class and lower class families. Despite the adverse effects of industrialization and urbanization, and big jolt given by the modern education
advocating the values of individualism and materialism, the large family system has continued to exist in the country. Poverty, illiteracy, superstition, lack of modern knowledge about sex and family planning, etc. have contributed to the large number of unwanted children in such poverty-stricken families. Such families with comparatively less income cannot have the happy families/nation in their mind. On the other hand, if a family is limited and well planned, there will be less scope for sending the children to the labour market and the children can be carefully educated. But for the impoverished and illiterate parents, extra children mean extra income.

This is true even in the case of respondent-workers selected for the present study. Of course, 33 per cent of the respondent beedi workers have small families with 1 - 4 members each, whereas another 62 per cent belong to big/large families with 5 - 8 members each. The remaining 5 per cent of the respondent-workers belong to very large families with 8 or more than 8 members in each family. It can be noted here that almost all the families (wherein at least one member is a beedi worker) are economically very poor. They do not have regular source of income which is adequate to meet their minimum livelihood expenses. Adding to this problem, these families have more number of members to feed which is very difficult. Hence, all these make their life miserable.
03. Unemployment

One of the common things with many a number of families which are economically very poor is that their members are not (much) educated. Hence, they find it very difficult to get employment opportunity in organized sector. For these persons, the employment opportunities in the informal sector come as a boon. This is more so in the case of beedi rolling. The beedi rolling not only enables the persons to do the work in their homes during their leisure time but also flexibility in the time of work. Moreover, it is not a highly skilled or technical job. Any person is able to attain a fair degree of skill within a span of few days of working. As a matter of fact, beedi rolling has provided good employment opportunities to women, children and men who would not get jobs in other sectors. Usually, more number of women are taking up this job with a view to supplementing the income of their families due to unemployment problem.

Table - 5.4: Respondent-workers’ Occupation other than Beedi Rolling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Other Occupation</th>
<th>Number of Workers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>No other Work</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Coolie</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Petty Business</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data
As far the beedi workers in Davangere district are concerned, many have taken up this job to earn their livelihood and satisfy their basic needs. As much as 80 per cent of the respondent-workers have no other work other than beedi rolling to earn a livelihood for their families. That means, 160 workers are depending only on the earnings from beedi rolling activity for their livelihood. And the remaining 20% of the respondent-workers are taking up beedi rolling or part-time basis as they have some other activities to attend such as agriculture, small business, coolie, etc. Irrespective of male or female workers, beedi rolling is taken up primarily for earning livelihood. However, a large percentage of the female workers have taken up beedi rolling for earning income for their families. The greater family responsibilities, low income of the family and families with one or few earning members have compelled their members to take up beedi rolling a source of earning some income.

04. Education

Beedi rolling does not require the skilled and educated persons. Therefore, it is the illiterates or less educated who have been in this employment for longer period than others. Hence, one can find more number of illiterates and less educated engaged in beedi rolling activities than more educated persons.

This is evident from the fact that 55 per cent of the respondents have no formal education and they are illiterates. 39 per cent of the workers have attended only primary schools, and the remaining 6 per cent have attended middle schools.
And none of the respondents attended the high school. This only shows either the illiteracy or low level of education. Of course, for taking up beedi rolling activity, no formal education is required. But it shows, to some extent, the ignorance of the people about the external world and opportunities. This ignorance is the root cause for the poor families to send their children to work.

Till 2002, in the absence of any provision for compulsory education in the country and without realizing the importance of education, the people were compelling their children to seek some job as an alternative. Of course, the poor people have not realized the importance of education and do not have faith in the existing system of education. Most parents themselves being illiterate make a definite choice between education and job.

The National Commission on Labour (1969) in its report has indicated the main obstacle in the way of making education compulsory to all children up to a prescribed age in the following words: an artisan cannot afford to educate his wards though education is free. For him, an uneducated child is an asset; desire to be educated becomes a double liability because of (a) loss of earnings if the child does not work, and (b) expenditure on education, however small. Education causes high ambitions in children too and they would think twice before taking up small jobs.

A similar view was expressed in a seminar organized by the National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development in November 1975, since the
books and stationery are expensive, will the parent choose between food and clothing (the primary needs) or purchase books for the children? For all poor families, the question is immediate supplementary income and to use the children and other family members as sources rather than postpone this prospect to an uncertain date when they will pass their metric and may or may not get a job in an economy when millions are still unemployed.

Beedi workers make a major contribution to the family income due to their low formal education, the traditional allocation of roles and limitations of formal labour market. Further, the informal sector gives some type of relief in the form of ready-made jobs to the people thereby help a greater extent in removing the seasonal unemployment among agricultural workers, marginal and poor farmers.

05. Migration of Workers

Beedi workers are living in both rural and urban areas, and generally working in the unorganized sector. A large number of women and children are engaged in beedi rolling. Beedi workers in unorganized sector are living in very miserable conditions and facing various problems in their day-to-day life. Due to failure in agriculture, unemployment, famine, and other reasons, most of the families have migrated from rural area to urban area. Generally, a person is considered as migrant on the basis of his place of birth or his last residence. According to the Census of India, a person is treated as migrant if he was born outside the place of
remuneration or his place of remuneration was other than his place of immediate last residence. In the context of present study, the migrants are identified with respect to their place of birth or their place of immediate last residence.

A large proportion of migrants have derived benefits in their social as well as economic conditions as a result of taking the initiatives of migration. Of course, at the initial stages of arrival in the city, all migrants could not derive similar amount of benefits because of the differentials in their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Such disadvantaged migrants could be among those arriving from rural backgrounds and backward areas. Beedi workers arriving at the cities with their children are usually accommodated by families who themselves are confronted with urban employment. Putting these unproductive and costly individuals to work is thus a primary object of the family with whom they live. This is seen from the context of urban poverty which itself is a product of accelerated rural-urban population drift.
It can be seen from the above that majority of the workers (120 workers accounting for 60% of the respondent-workers) have migrated from other place to the present place of work long back. And another 40 workers have migrated during the last 1 to 15 years. The remaining 40 workers have settled in the present place for 16 years or more after migrating from other places. When a rural family migrates to town, the adults face a new and unknown environment and labour situation. As a result of the instability and insecurity that this causes, the migrant beedi workers are set to work so that the families survive. The employment of children of these migrants in a firm is proof of economic helplessness and poverty.
Non-availability of work, drought and poverty in the native place are the important reasons for migrating from one place to another. Thus, it appeared that the migration into city is mainly motivated by economic considerations.

**Economic Status of Beedi Workers**

Beedi workers are working in a system of forced labour which is more an economic than social issue. Indebtedness is the mother of all problems of beedi workers which arises due to economic inequality. Once a beedi worker is involved in debt, he gets always immersed in it. There are several factors which make the beedi workers to take loan. They are absence of any agriculture work for nearly nine months in a year and consequent need to fulfill man’s needs such as social obligations of marriage or for performing the last rituals of family members died. Since beedi workers do not have enough land to cultivate and
lead their lives, they have to depend upon beedi rolling and other jobs which do not ensure adequate income. They need money for fulfillment of social obligations besides satisfaction of their psychological needs.

Inspite of social and economic reasons, psychologically these people have been brainwashed by the dominating classes. The beedi workers consider refusal to payment of debt as a sin. They feel that their salvation depends on how well they served their employer. Moreover, psychologically they think that by working as beedi workers, their need is satisfied and their problem is solved because they get food from the employers. They even cannot imagine that their labour costs more than what they are receiving. This systematic brainwashing does not allow them to think to seek legal protections.

Besides the above analysis which sheds light on the economic condition of beedi workers, the following analysis helps to obtain an idea about the precarious economic condition and status of respondent-workers.

01. Nature of Employment of Respondent-workers

Normally, the work place in industrial units is the factories. But in the case of beedi units, workers work both in the factories and at their homes. This situation is further influenced by the organized and un-organised, and rural and urban dichotomy. Hence, this is an important variable. In this regard the details about whether they are attending to beedi rolling activity on full time basis exclusively
or on part-time basis are obtained from the respondents and the same are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Nature of Employment</th>
<th>Number of workers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data.

The above table shows that 80 per cent of the respondent-workers are working on full time basis and the remaining on part-time basis in beedi rolling. The part-time workers are less than the number of full time workers. However, the relative percentages of part-time workers and full time workers vary from one place to another. But what is important is that 80 per cent of workers are depending only on beedi rolling and the monthly income from this work is very low. This only shows the pathetic economic status of workers.

02. Inadequate Income from Beedi Rolling Work

Beedi rolling is generally taken up in some families with a view to supplement the family income. But in these days of unemployment problem, it is increasingly becoming the main source of income and livelihood for many a number of families. It may be noted that an individual’s social status in the Indian society is decided not only by their caste and education but also by the income of that individual. In this regard, the economic condition of beedi
workers is, unfortunately, very precarious. A few details pertaining to the amount of monthly earnings from beedi rolling (collected from respondent beedi workers) are analysed below.

It may be noted here that for 80% of the respondent-workers, beedi rolling is the sole source of income. And the maximum monthly income is Rs.2,000 or more per person and this only in the case of 2 workers. In all other cases, it is less than Rs.2,000 per month per worker. Of these 200 respondent-workers, 18 workers (9%) are earning a monthly income of just less than Rs.300 each. Majority of the respondents (numbering 114 accounting by 57%) have a monthly income of Rs.300 to Rs.500 each. The monthly earnings from beedi rolling vary between Rs.500 and Rs.700 each in the case of another 28 respondents. Another 20 workers are earning a monthly income of Rs.700 to Rs.900 each. The remaining workers are earning Rs.900 or more each per month.

The families which are earning less-than Rs.500 per month are living in extremely poor conditions. This shows that the female workers of the families are earning additional income through beedi rolling to support their families. Since majority of beedi workers are female, illiterate and married, they cannot go out (because of the environment/constraints/tradition). This is more so in the case of Muslims. For these, beedi rolling is providing an opportunity to earn additional sum.
Further, the inadequacy of income of these families compels them to send even their children to work for some wage either in cash or kind. The employer also takes the benefit of this weakness by providing work to the children on low wages in spite of various protective laws. The report of ILO also indicates that the problem of child labour is not the problem in itself but it is the problem of the maintenance of child and the living wage of the adult wage earner so that they should maintain their family at adequate standard.

Economic compulsions weigh so heavily on the conscience of the poor parents that they do not mind colluding with the employers in violating law and putting the beedi workers under risks of in-human exploitation. Poverty and child labour thus always beget each other and tend to reinforce themselves. It is widely perceived that the availability of beedi rolling work has come down in recent years due to increase in number of branches of beedi companies. This is also having adverse impact on the monthly earnings of beedi workers.

Earnings from beedi rolling are also analysed, in the following paragraphs, in a different way i.e., on daily earnings basis.
Table 5.8: Daily Wage Earnings of Respondent-workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Daily Wage Earnings (Rs)</th>
<th>Number of Workers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>50-70</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data

It may be noted from the above that the daily wage income is very low at Rs.30 - Rs.35 each in the case of 30 workers and Rs.35 - Rs.40 in the case of another 122 workers. That means, 76 per cent of the respondent-workers are earning less than Rs.40 a day each. The remaining 48 workers (24 per cent) are earning Rs.40 – Rs.70 a day each from beedi rolling. What is important is that even the highest wage income is very low and this highest income is inadequate to have three meals a day per person.

Earnings from beedi rolling are also analysed annually as presented below.

In the recent years, the registered companies have been forced to reduce the scale of production as large production meant more taxes to be paid at the higher rate to the government. This has resulted in some of the registered companies winding up their operation in few towns. Therefore, the availability of work has come down considerably. In other towns, the availability of work may, in fact, have gone up because of the entry of new companies and self-employed persons.
entering into the market due to the withdrawal of registered companies. Still the economic condition of beedi workers has not improved.

It may be noted here that the annual income of beedi workers depends upon the quantity of output, quality and availability of raw material, rejection rate of beedies by the contractor/employer on the ground of poor quality. As a result, the poor beedi workers are getting lower amount of wages than the amount of wages they have earned. And this is affecting not only their economic status but also their social status as an individual’s social status is decided not only by caste and education but also by income of that individual.
The above table shows the annual income of respondent-workers from beedi rolling. 9% of the respondents earn below Rs 3,000 annually, 57 per cent earn between Rs.3,000 – Rs.5,000, 14 per cent from Rs.5,000 – Rs.7,000, 10 per cent earn from Rs.7,000 – Rs.9,000, 4 per cent earn between Rs.9,000 – Rs.11,000, 2 per cent earn from Rs.11,000 – Rs.13,000, one per cent earn from Rs.13,000 – Rs.15,000, 2 per cent earn from Rs.15,000 – Rs.17,000 and one per cent from Rs.17,000 – Rs.19,000 and none is earning Rs.19,000 per annum.
Besides, the enquiry with the respondents revealed that the workers are paid even less than the agreed wages. Because, the workers are subjected to various unauthorised deductions from their wage earnings as presented below.

- The quality of leaves (one of the basic raw materials) is very poor. Even the quantity supplied is not only inadequate but also the size of the leaves is small. Hence, the beedi workers have to buy additional leaves from the contractors by paying the open market rates. Normally, the workers do not purchase the leaves in large quantity due to their financial conditions.

- The quality of tobacco supplied is also not good to roll specified number of beedies.

- The workers are forced to buy the thread at a cost of about Rs.2 to Rs.3 per reel (sufficient for 2,000 beedies) depending upon the colour and quality of the material.

- Every employer rejects about 50 - 70 beedies on the grounds of poor quality, required quantity of tobacco not put, etc. Hence, the wages are proportionately reduced.

- If a person is working under a middleman, he (i.e., beedi worker) has to pay a commission to him (i.e., middleman). The commission of the middleman depends upon where the raw materials are delivered (by the agent to the beedi workers) and the rolled beedies are delivered (by the beedi workers to the agent).

The wages of beedi workers are fixed by the state government under the Provisions of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. Normally, the state government fixes the wage rates (piece rate) taking into account the cost of living also. These
rates are related to 1,000 beedies rolled and are revised every five years or earlier. The Government of Karnataka notified the minimum wages for beedi workers in 1975 which were revised subsequently in 1978, 1981, 1984, 1994, and in 2006. The wage rates for beedi rolling and other related activities, as notified in the Official Gazette in October 2006, are as follows. These rates are fixed after taking into account even the costs of living index.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Class of Employment</th>
<th>Minimum Wage Rates (Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Beedi Rollers (per 1,000 beedies rolled per day)</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Beedi Wrappers (* for wrapping 1,00,000 beedies)</td>
<td>101.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Tari Walls, Battiwalla and Tabacco Mixer (per month)</td>
<td>2,198.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Truck, Van and Car Drivers and Clerks, Grade - II (Under-Graduate) (per month per person)</td>
<td>2,490.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Clerks, Grade - I (Graduates) (per month)</td>
<td>2,629.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Loaders and Un-loaders (per day per person)</td>
<td>82.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: VDA: All categories of Employees: 1 paise per point per day over and above 2822 points. Total wages come to around Rs.43.32.

The uncalled for expenditure on raw materials and the commission to be paid to the middlemen reduce the wages of the workers to a considerably low level. On the other hand, if a worker is employed by the principal manufacturer, the deductions are less. However, the total earnings of the workers are low. This only shows that the workers are not getting even minimum wages.
03. Assets Owned by the Respondent-workers

One of the reasons for the poverty is the lack of income generating assets. This becomes very obvious from the fact that only 15% of the respondent-workers posses some agriculture land and the remaining do not have any agriculture land. Further, only 10% of the respondents posses their own house and the remaining are residing in rented houses. This 90% of workers have to pay rent every month besides meeting the expenses of their livelihood. Because of non-possession of such assets, the unskilled and poor beedi workers are depending only on physical labour. Physical labour yields inadequate income keeping them in vicious circle of poverty. Low and irregular income cause misery to the poverty stricken beedi workers.

In the study area, the survey revealed that the availability of agricultural wage work became uneven and the agricultural wages have remained stagnant because of decline in the prices of agricultural produces. Further, the branches of beedi factories/units have increased in Davangere city and Harihar taluk by about two times. Besides, the number of beedi factories/units in the unorganized sector and the number of contractors have also increased. Inspite of all these increases and developments, the economic condition and status of beedi workers has remained the same.
Table - 5.11: Assets Owned by Respondent-workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Kind of Assets</th>
<th>Number of Workers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Agricultural Land</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>House (own)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>No Asset</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>TVs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Since a few beedi workers possess more than one kind of Asset, the total number of respondent-workers is exceeding 200.

Source: Survey Data

Income is naturally related to property and assets. It is the poorer sections of the society that are mainly engaged in beedi rolling. Therefore, majority of the respondent-workers continue to be poverty stricken as their income is very meager.

04. Marital Status of Respondent-workers

This is another variable considered to understand the socio-economic background of beedi workers. It is a known fact that in Indian society, marriage has become a problem because of the evil of dowry system. Thus, marriage and economic status are mutually influenced. Further, in Davangere district, dominance of Muslims in beedi rolling and their personal law allowed to have more than one wife which will have its impact on economic status.
The above table indicates that 70 per cent of the respondents are married, 15 per cent are unmarried, 6 per cent are widows and 9 per cent are divorcees. During the survey, when enquired into the age of marriage, it was revealed that the marriages are performed at an early age and in case the husband was engaged in agriculture, the girl would prefer to seek divorce as it would become necessary and compulsory for her to engage in the works of agriculture. Thus, they were forced to divorce due to this reason or for lack of understanding due to their illiteracy and ignorance.

05. Children of Respondent-workers
An important aspect relating to the marital status of a person is the number of children. Because, it is his responsibility to bring up children. Hence, details about the number of children each beedi worker is having were also considered to understand their socio-economic status.
The table shows that 30 per cent of the respondents have one child or two children each. 50 per cent of the respondent-workers have more than two but less than five children each, and 5 per cent of the respondents have no children at all. This shows that majority of the respondents have inclination to have more children.

It was observed during the survey that normally the beedi workers send their children to school. While they are still going to school, the children are made to help their mothers in wetting the tendu leaf, winding the yarn to the beedies and in cutting the leaf. Thus, they gradually learn to roll the beedies. After having two to three years of schooling, they discontinue their studies and become full time beedi rollers. This is another instance to say that the beedi workers give more importance to short-term earnings than to education.
Schemes and Programmes for Beedi Workers

A number of schemes have been formulated and programmes have been undertaken by the governments and their agencies in the areas of education, health, nutrition, anti-poverty programmes, etc for the benefit of people including (beedi) workers. An analysis of these schemes/programmes is made in the following paragraphs.

01. Education

The National Policy on Education, 1986 aims at universalizing basic education by the year 2000 through the expansion of formal and non-formal education sectors. The non-formal education centres will supplement the formal educational system. Since the central feature of the implementation of the strategy for non-formal education is based on micro level, area specific and population-specific planning, non-formal education centres for beedi workers will be set up with the involvement of voluntary agencies and Panchayat Raj Institutions. Because, these agencies/institutions are capable of running such informal education centres wherever possible/necessary to cater to the needs of beedi workers who after work or during holidays can present themselves at the non-formal education centres. Such centres are expected to play an important role in ensuring at least minimum education to beedi workers particularly children and girls. In urban area also, especially in slums, non-formal education programmes (by both the state governments and voluntary agencies) are planned to promote and enhance the literacy rate. These educational programmes aim at
diversity in learning activity with provision for games for children to make the education useful and attractive.

02. Housing Facilities

The central government made provision for housing facilities to beedi workers under two schemes viz., (1) Construct your house yourself, and (2) Construction of houses for economically poor beedi workers. Under the project, construct your house yourself, the Central Welfare Commissioner of the Labour Welfare Board execute this project by sanctioning the loan directly to the beneficiaries. Under the second scheme of construction of houses for economically backward beedi workers, 50% of the total expenditure for construction of each house or Rs.20,000 whichever is lower will be provided as subsidy.

Rajiv Gandhi Rural Housing Corporation Limited is constructing the houses for beedi workers by using the central subsidy. This corporation is a Government of Karnataka Enterprise and it is providing the loan facility upto a maximum of Rs.50,000 (including loan and subsidy) under the name of Ashraya Yojana. This facility is only for beedi workers in rural area and it is sponsored by both the Central and Karnataka Governments in the proportion of 75 : 25 respectively at the interest rate of 11% per annum. The maximum repayment period is 180 equal monthly installments. Before availing the housing construction loan benefits, the beedi worker is required to fulfill the following conditions.

01. The beneficiaries must be residents of rural areas,
02. The annual income must be below Rs.32,000 and priority will be given for below poverty line beedi workers,

03. The area limit is 20 kms away from corporations and towns, and in case of small and middle class, towns away by a minimum of 5 kms,

04. House/vacant site sale deed is to be issued in the name of wife in case of married person, and in the case of bachelor, it is to be issued in his own name,

05. He should not have availed of this type of benefit under any other scheme/project,

06. He must be ready to repay loan in 180 equal monthly installments,

07. The savings bank account should be opened in the specified bank for repayment of loan, and

08. Until the complete repayment of the loan, only the possession and enjoyment of the house will be given, and after the complete repayment of the loan amount, ownership will be transferred as per the conditions of the scheme/project.

03. Scholarships

The Labour Welfare Board is providing the scholarships for children of beedi workers studying in schools and colleges.

Outcome of Government Policies and Schemes for Beedi Workers

From the study of various aspects hitherto, it is obvious that the basic causes for the problems of beedi workers are poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and unemployment. The governments had a complete administrative set-up since
long for the implementation of the general developmental programmes in the areas of education, health and anti-poverty programmes. But unfortunately, they are not executed properly and for the benefit of the target groups.

The Government of India sanctioned several housing projects to beedi workers in the name of ‘Ashraya Yojana’ and construction through Rajiv Gandhi Rural Housing Corporation limited. If the government sponsored housing projects were properly implemented, then the income of the respondent of the beedi workers would have gone up and the need for sending their children for beedi rolling would not have existed. In the study area, it was found that the housing projects have not been implemented properly because of paucity of funds. Further, the benefits of government housing projects have not been availed of by the beedi workers and this is on account of lack of awareness about these projects. While considering the present cost of construction, it is doubtful whether the scale of assistance provided is adequate.

The programmes for medical care have been assigned to the states as health is a state subject. Right to health is a fundamental right under Part –III of the Indian Constitution. Moreover, Right to Life is a fundamental Right under Article 21 of the Constitution, but Right to Die is not a fundamental right. In the light of this Provision, the state government established an ESI hospital in Davangere urban area where more number of beedi workers are staying. Unfortunately, required facilities are not been provided, and available.
The beedi rolling is a major area of employment for women which however remains low paid, insecure and hazardous for health. The risks to health are not confined to those who work, but extend to children playing around tobacco and to others who often live in unventilated houses in which work goes on. Globalization has affected this industry since the beedies are finding new international markets. The main challenges here are to implement the existing legislation for protection and welfare of beedi workers as well as to training for new skills to protect their health.

Most of the beedi workers do not have identity cards. The Labour Department in Davangere district is having this programme of issuing of Identity Cards to beedi workers, but this Department has not issued Identity Cards for all beedi workers in the study area. The beedi workers are not able to avail of the facility of Identity Cards because of their ignorance, poverty and illiteracy. Each worker, on registration, will be given a registration number and a permanent identification number and a permanent Identity Card or Work Card on payment of a registration fee. It shall have details of the person.

The assistance and facilities provided for medical care, reimbursement of actual expenditure for treatments are not sufficient. Barring medical care, the welfare funds set up by Central Government for beedi workers have no provisions for meeting expenditure on any of the well recognized branches of social security,
such as occupational injury benefit, survivor benefit, old age benefit, invalidity benefit or unemployment benefit. Sickness benefit is given for the whole family, but no cash allowance is given in sickness. Yet, these welfare funds have the scope and the potential to become instruments of the social security if suitable amendments are made to existing Laws to give effect to various and relevant Provisions for their effective implementation.

Conclusion

Analysis of socio-economic status of beedi workers revealed that the beedi workers in this unorganized sector are invariably drawn from low castes like scheduled tribes, more from Muslims and a very small percentage of poorer sections from the general castes. Further, they are found to be illiterate. Though beedi industry provided employment to a large number of people, they are suffering from poverty and this work has not provided means for livelihood. It is evident that the beedi workers have not visualized any substantial change in the standard of living over the years. The percentage of illiteracy and ignorance about their rights, privileges and statutory benefits is very high among beedi workers, and this is, to a greater extent, responsible for their poor economic condition. The inadequate income, various unauthorized deductions, less payment than the agreed wages, etc degraded the socio-economic status of beedi workers.