CHAPTER – IV

Women Workers in the Unorganised Sector

4.1. Conceptualizing Women and Work:

All over the world, the female workers are mostly found at the bottom of three hierarchies of class, gender and ethnicity or caste. The interaction of class exploitation, patriarchal domination, ethnic oppression and discrimination constitutes the core of their chronic disadvantages (Widge 1995).

The status of women was higher than that of men in primitive societies. Women were assigned both household and food production functions, while men roamed in forest in search of game. With the emergence of new productive forces social relationship also gradually changed. In the process, the concept of private property gave birth to new social classes – the employer and the employee. This, in turn, created demand for labour as a factor of production to cater the needs of the new productive forces. In due course of time men took the dominant and primary position in the production as well as society and women were driven to a secondary position, being confined to doing household work and child rearing (Chandola 1995).

Women labour and their exploitation were found since historical times in our country. Women were employed to work as wine servers and as spies to get the secret of the drunkards without arising any doubts in their minds. Women in ancient Indian were also engaged as ‘Ganika’. The writings of ancient
writers like Kalidas and Sudraka testify to the existence of such female in ancient India. The system of employing women as Deva-Dasis, which is still found in South India temple, was widely prevalent in ancient India. References to the employment of such Deva-Dasis at the temple of Mahakal in Ujjayani are found in Kalidas's Meghadoot, such Dasies were also kept in temple of Sun God when Huien Tsang visited India (C.P. Rai).

As the time passes and the society as well as the economy rises in the path of development, the status of women also rises. But the impact of social change and developmental effort benefit the women much less than man. Illiteracy, ignorance, superstition still persists in our country resulting in unorganized low-paid exploited women labourers. Through the centuries, women have been working for their families as long as long as sixteen hours or more right from day break till late into the night. They manage the household work on the farm, fetch water, look after the cattle, feed the children as well as the adults in the family, clothe and educate the family.

Horizontal segregation or concentration is often observed in the female labour market. This implies clustering of women in certain occupations and in a limited number of activities within them. Women are generally employed in services, especially the personal and care services. Women's participation in the industrial sector is generally lower than men's and the women in industries are concentrated in a relatively narrow range of labour-intensive light industries. Even in the same industry where male and female workers work together, women are found in light and unskilled job and men are employed in heavy and skilled jobs.
In agriculture also it is found that men are associated with cash crops where as farming women are associated with subsistence farming.

Even where an occupation is to some extent mixed both men and women, women are usually worked in the less responsible, less secure and less well paid jobs. This is vertical segregation of labour market. Where an occupation is predominantly female, male are still often found in the management positions; the head of a primary school, for example, or the shop manager. Worldwide, the proportion of women in the managerial and decision-making position is low (Bullock 1994). Both from the horizontal and vertical segregation views, it is found all over the world that women workers are concentrated in the informal sector. For that reason, informal sector is also sometimes regarded as ‘female’ sector. It has been suggested that for men the informal sector is a stopgap until they find formal employment, whilst women tend to stay within it. Empirically, in the course of the 1980s, as more and more men lost their jobs, or falling wages and rising prices made their incomes inadequate, or families split up through migration or divorces, women were drawn into own account work or wage labour on whatever terms they could get.

Sexual division of labour is visible within the informal sector. Within this sector women are often found as self-employed. They work in this status with their already acquired skill and experience. So, low paid activities like food processing and trading, sewing, spinning, weaving, domestic and personal services etc. are performed by women. Women’s domestic responsibilities force them to turn either their homes into a workplace or their workplace into a home:
small children may spend more time under their mother’s market stall than in their homes, slightly older children become part of the labour force. The range of jobs women perform is as limited in the informal sector as it is everywhere (Bullock 1994).

4.1.1 Labour Market Theory and Women Workers in Unorganised Sector:

People whom society holds in an inferior status are denied an equal opportunity to develop their potential capability, to use that capability in its most advantageous employment, and to earn a wage that is equal to what others of the same capability are paid. More or less in every society, women hold such inferior status and they are considered as minority group. The lack of equal opportunity especially affects members of this minority group, that is, women, to whom certain market opportunities are denied that are open to men. So, women often face ‘discrimination’. Women face both premarket and market discrimination. Premarket discrimination denies to those who are discriminated against an equal opportunity to develop their natural abilities and talents during their formative, pre-employment years. Women face such discrimination as they are provided inferior schooling or poorer health services compared to men. Market discrimination takes place when people of equal capabilities who are competing on the labour market are given unequal job assignments, promotions, or rates of pay solely on the basis of some characteristic unrelated to their performance. Women in the labour market face such market discrimination. Thus, discrimination affects women at two separate points: in the premarket acquisition of income-generating
characteristics, such as education and good health, and second, in the rewards given to these characteristics within the market itself (Kaufman et al 2003).

There are three general theoretical approaches which seek to explain the causal relationships for the disadvantageous position of women in the labour market. These theories are –

(a) The neo-classical theory.

(b) The Institutional theories of segmentation; and

(c) The gender or feminist theories.

(a) Neo-classical Theory:

Neo-classical theory (which is also known as human capital theory) explains the sex inequalities in terms of differences in human capital. Differences in human capital, like domestic responsibility, differences in physical endurance, education and training, hours of work and turn-over etc. influence productivity and labour supply conditions which lead to inequalities in sex. Thus, the lower level of earnings of women is due to the lower level of human capital, which in turn leads to lower level of productivity. Thus, the earning differentials between male and female is explained by neo-classical theory. Though the productivity differentials may only partially explained in terms of male-female differences in human capital as far as the capitalist countries are concerned, this factor assumes greater importance in case of developing countries. A number of country case studies reveal that in those developing countries where the educational levels of women are lower than those of men, earning differentials between the two sexes have been observed. Marginal earning differentials have also been noticed at identical levels
of education of men and women (Anker et al 1986). It is also found from empirical literature that formal education is a prerequisite for modern sector employment. In countries where educational level of women is on an average low, the chances of securing jobs in the modern or formal or organized sector by them have very low (Chandola 1995).

(b) Institutional Theories:

The institutional theories of labour market segmentation relate sex differences in the labour market to the structure of the labour market. The institutional theories relating to female labour market developed by Piore and Doeringer state that labour market consists of two main sectors, namely, primary and secondary. The segmented labour market theory focuses on discrimination based on sex in the labour market. Segmented labour market theorists have argued that the minority groups which include women are concentrated in the low paying secondary sector.

According to the institutional theories labour market is stratified by institutional barriers. The different segments function as independent market having their own demand and supply schedules, indicating the imperfections of their market, differing consumer tastes and preferences and varying responses to changes in price. It means the supplier faces an imperfect market rather than the perfectly competitive market, as visualized in the neo-classical models. The wage rates are determined not by the overall demand and supply functions, but on the basis of demand and supply functions prevalent in the sub-markets or within the specific segments of the labour markets.
Dual Labour Market Theory:

The dual labour market theory is extremely useful for the analysis of sexual division of labour. The basic premises of this theory is that it assume the labour market as segmented into two sectors, namely, primary and secondary. The dual labour market theory presented by Piore and Doeringer (1971) provides a sound theoretical base to the theories of labour market segmentation. Piore and Doeringer stated that labour market consists of two main sectors: primary and secondary. The primary sector consists of large firms all displaying a degree of market power. Employees in this sector enjoy relatively high quality of working conditions; including high wage, stable employment, established promotion opportunities and participation in establishing the administrative rules governing their work environment.

The secondary sector generally consists of small peripheral firms that typically perform lowly skilled works and are constantly threatened by potential competitors. Low wage, less security and little scope for advancement are the features of jobs in secondary sector. These features of primary and secondary sector are clearly distinct in the organized and unorganized sector of the developing countries. Since men are perceived as more stable, they find their employment in primary sector and women in secondary sector. So, the dual labour market theoretical approach can very well be applied to the organized and unorganized sector of the developing economies (David 1996).

The segmented labour market approach argues that minority groups, black and women are proportionally distributed into secondary jobs at the
beginning of their careers. This is not due to lack of demand for labour and deficiencies in skills or motivation but due to such institutional processes as systematic discrimination by employers and labour unions.

Marxian economists use historical approach to explain labour market discrimination. They relate this discrimination to the “power and domination theory” and view this discrimination as the result of capitalist mode of production. It emphasizes the role of women as producer in partnership with men on equitable and non-exploitative basis during the pre-capitalist form of production. This relationship vanished with the emergence of the capitalist form of production governed by men and women were relegated to constitute the ‘Industrial Reserve Army’. In this process, the labour market got segmented into two relatively separate markets for men and women. Women thus got crowded into those occupations with-low income, insecure and less stable jobs. According to the overcrowding approach, women have to compete for limited ‘women specific’ jobs within themselves in the overcrowded segment of the labour market. This depresses their wages. On the other hand, women have no competition with men in a large number of ‘male specific’ jobs. This helps in maintaining higher level of wages for men. Even if there are no restrictions to the entry of women to certain jobs, they unconsciously feel that only certain specific jobs are meant for them. Thus, on the one hand, because of women’s belief that their choices are restricted, and, on the other hand, discriminatory practices of the employers, women are thrown to the peripheral jobs (Papola 1982 et al).
According to the Marxists, capitalism needs an oppressed group of labourers to perform its menial, low paying tasks and women are considered such an oppressed group. So, using ‘occupation’ as the unit of analysis, some economists assumed that markets are segmented along occupational lines. The segmented labour market theory offers a better explanation of poverty and women. The poor women are confined to the secondary labour market. So, elimination of poverty requires that they gain access to primary employment.

Labour market segmentation theory held the view that increase in IQ or educational attainment does not reduce the inequality of income between various groups. Evidence from developed and developing countries also suggests that the equal access of education of men and women takes no cognizance of the sex segmentation of the labour market (which in one of the assumption of human capital theory). Segmented labour market theorists have argued that education and training programmes had failed to deliver their promised cure of economic inequality. Sustained discrimination against minorities is viewed in segmented labour market theories as evidence against the neo-classical theory of competition. The large and persisting differentials in earning between two groups (males and females, white and black) challenge the orthodox theory of competition (Cain 1976, Widge 1995 & Chandola 1995).

(c) The Gender or Feminist Theories:

According to the gender or feminist theories cultural factors are basically responsible for the discrimination of women in the labour market. The position of women in relation to their familial roles has been discussed for long by
many scholars. Boserup (1970) first questioned about the sex specificity of jobs based on empirical evidence. The responsibility of domestic work, particularly child care attributed women subordinate position in the labour market. The characteristics of the occupations women tend to perform are also shaped by their domestic roles. The problem is accentuated when one considers the long-term effect of women’s double burden on their psychological built and physique, resulting in loss of productivity. Therefore, the changes in the structure of the labour market will not ipso-facto bring about an improvement in the position of women unless it is accompanied by a shift in their position in the households; otherwise, women will continue to be crowded in the secondary sector (Jelin 1982).

Feminist theories also stress that women’s occupations tend to be extensions of domestics roles (e.g. teaching children, cleaning, servicing). Moreover, just as women’s domestics work is devalued within most societies so are these occupations and skills.

Thus, it is observed that for the neo-classical theorists the crucial factor responsible for lower levels of earnings of women is the lower level of productivity. The labour market segmentation theories, on the other hand, view that labour market is stratified by institutional barriers and explain how men and women get slatted into separate segments. The different segments function as an independent market. As a result the wage rates are determined by the demand and supply functions prevalent in the sub-markets or the specific segments of the
labour markets. The gender theorists find that cultural factors are mainly responsible for women’s discrimination in the labour market.

4.1.2 Marx’s Analysis of the Labour Process:

Marx believed that there is division of labour among workers and the different functions are arranged according to a hierarchy. At the bottom of this hierarchy are unskilled labourers. With the advancement of technology, technical division of labour took place and there emerged two groups of workers -- Skilled and unskilled. Modern industry substitute unskilled labour for skilled labour, female labours for male, young labour for mature. Modern industry also gives rise to intensified production outside factories in the domestic industry which employ women and children (Beachy 1978).

Women were considered as subsidiary workers. So, they were paid lower wages than male. Women are also paid less because of the assumptions that women are partly dependent on their husband’s wages. There is always a tendency to pay women wages below the value of their labour power.

4.1.3 Women as a Reserve Army of Labour:

The economic role (status) of women is traditionally determined by their dual role – their role in labour market and in home. That is, women’s work in the labour force and their work in the home determine their economic roles. According to Marx and Engels: “Factory production and the introduction of machinery draw women into production and this substitutes female labour for male labour. This substitution has effects on the family. Machinery provides the capitalist greater control over the labour process and by drawing all members of
the family irrespective of sex and age; it depreciates the value of male labour power. By transferring the expenditure of more and more motive power to the machine, transforms work itself and brings about changes both in the labour used and in wages. Capitalists could now employ labourers with slight muscular strength. Consequently, the labour of women and children was used.”

According to Marx's theory of capitalists' development, the growing organic composition of capital results in a greater quantity of labour being continuously set 'free' than is required for the expansion of capital into reserve. As total capital increases, the demand for labour falls. Thus, labourers are continuously being 'freed' either by actually losing their jobs or simply not being absorbed into the spheres.

Women as part of this reserve army of labour are paid very low wages that not only ensures a discounted rate of female labour power but also reproduces forms of dependence and subordination found within the family. It should be noted that Marx did not mention aspects of the reserve army of labour in a gender specific way. However, the specific position of women as part of the industrial reserve army can be explained in terms of their labour being paid for at a price below its value; of women's dependency within the family and the ideological assumptions which surrounds this, which enter into the determination of the value of female labour power (Beachy 1977). Whenever female labour power has a different value from that of male labour power, their distinctive position within production has to be understood with reference to the family and the role of women within it and in terms of patriarchal ideology (Widge 1995).
From Marxian theory it is derived that women serve as a ‘reserve army of labour’ for capital in advanced capitalist countries. Kalpagam (1994) believed that reserve army is a result of a process of capital accumulation. The development of capitalism releases labour in one sector but increases the demand for labour in other sectors. Capitalism’s demand for labour also type specific. Women as a group play a particular role in the reserve army in terms of availability, disposability and cheapness.

Kalpagam has taken the example of India where there has been a shift in the manufacturing sector from household to non-household production. The growth of non-household manufacturing sector is not accompanied by absorption of women displaced from the household manufacturing sector. The growth of the organized sector has been very sluggish especially that of female employment which led to the emergence of the urban informal sector. The urban informal sector constitutes a pool of stagnant labour reserve for the capitalist sectors of the economy. The formal capitalist sector uses a number of means for extracting surplus value from the informal sector through a set of linkages.

According to Kalpagam, the introduction of machinery was not female labour displacing in India because of its labour surplus. But women do constitute a cheap labour reserve. The tasks that women perform are generally unskilled and there have been instances where women have been pushed out from skilled tasks to unskilled ones. The process of informalisation or disorganisation of production unit is done with a view to exploit the cheap labour (female labour) that
is available. If the structure of wages is analysed it reflects the social attitudes prevailing (Kalpagam 1994).

The theory of women as a reserve army of labour is the single most popular explanation for women's subordinate status in the labour force. The descriptive strength of the reserve army concept as applied to women arises from the fact that women have been available as a reserve in a way that men have not. The theory provides explanation why women are concentrated in the informal sector jobs.

4.1.4 Sexual Division of Labour and Unorganised Women Labour:

"Gender division of labour or sexual division of labour, refers to the allocation of different roles, responsibilities, and tasks to women and men based on societal ideas of what men and women should do and are capable of doing. Different tasks and responsibilities are assigned to girls and boys, women and men according to their sex-gender roles, and not necessarily according to their individual preferences or capabilities" (Bhasin 2003). The division between production and reproduction – the bearing and care of children plus the general management of the household is the basis of what is known as the sexual division of labour. Reproduction may be considered to include the maintenance of community as well as family life. A division exists not only between domestic and productive work, but also within each category. Why women are concentrated in certain specific jobs such as cleaning, caring, teaching and food processing is explained by the fact women's primary role is reproduction (Bullock 1994). The integration of women's subsistence production into the process of commodity
production and capital accumulation would not have been possible if these processes had not been based on a particular division of labour between the sexes. Patriarchal man-woman relations have existed in the labour market for at least 3,000 years. Long before the advent of capitalism, brahmanical Hinduism had institutionalized the devaluation of women in general and of their work in particular. What is happening today under the impact of ‘modernisation’ is not a weakening of this patriarchal order but rather a strengthening of it. This is contrary to what most analysts had predicted who saw patriarchy as part of ‘backward’, ‘feudal’ relations which would disappear with the advent of market economy (Mies 1986)

Biological explanations treat sexual division of labour as a natural division rooted in reproductive functions. This result in women’s labour being undermined in the family and the wage sector because both are characterized by sex specific tasks and job allocation. Thus, tasks are considered ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ by direct reference to biology or making analogies between biologically determined activities. Social inequalities are considered ‘natural’ or ‘inborn’ and hence beyond the scope of social change. This concept has led to the dominance of male over female. Thus, a women’s work in giving birth and raising children as well as domestic work does not appear as work or labour. Women are often defined as housewives, or as non- workers.

Another explanation for sexual division of labour is that it is socially determined. Here, the concept ‘patriarchy’ is important. Patriarchy designates male- female relations as social relations who, among other things, organize
biological reproduction rather than being themselves determined by biology. Patriarchy as an analytical category inscribes the sexual division of labour as a social division and not a natural one. Thus, the unequal, hierarchical and exploitative relationships between men and women are due to social and not biological factors. The sexual division of labour is also an ideological representation of work distribution in society. It extends patriarchal relations into the non-familial labour process.

The sexual division of labour theory explains that the patriarchal exploitation of women by men is located within the family. The implication of domestic mode of work and task allocation lies in its emphasis on sex-differences rather than on human similarities and this provides logic behind hierarchical differences between men and women (Gamarmikow 1978, Widge 1995, et al). Women became confined to subsistence production and men became in charge of commodity production which was considered superior (Mies, et al, 1988).

Thus, the sexual division of labour considers all women as a separate category of workers and divides all ‘works’ into ‘male work’ and ‘female work’. The subordinate tasks are defined as ‘female’ (e.g. - secretarial work, nursing, low paid work in the formal and informal sector). As development proceeds, women are also integrated into the process but they are used as a cheap, docile and manipulable labour for the capitalist production process specially in the less developed and developing countries. This is especially true for the unorganized sector.
The sexual division of labour also applies to the organization of the household. Household is not a homogeneous unit but as Amartya Sen calls it a scene of 'Cooperative conflict', where there are different interests, expectations, contribution, needs, and degrees of control. The weaker bargaining position of women – wives and daughters – is demonstrated in many ways including the poorer health and nutrition of women and girls, and their lower levels of schooling. Most accounts of expenditure emphasize the very small amounts of cash that women can raise and therefore dispose of, and how little they spend on themselves, even if in need of, say, medical care (Bullock 1994).

The sexual division of labour confines women in domestic work. Familial patriarchal interests profoundly affect women’s access to education. As a result women face discrimination in the labour market and they have found their ‘appropriate’ jobs in the unorganized sector. Even for the literate/educated women such patriarchal belief is applicable. Because of the non-availability of desirable jobs, women may keep themselves away from labour market. But the poor women, who are not in a position to refrain themselves from working have to suffer from wage discrimination and occupational segregation with the structure of patriarchy (Lindberg 2001).

From the above theoretical analysis we can came to the conclusion that women are discriminated because of the social attitudes and the psychological and cultural climates of societies. For the same reasons they are basically concentrated in the informal jobs. Some theorists look women as a pure home worker. Keep them within the family network and ignore their role in the labour
force. The segmented labour market theory which distinguishes between occupations based on the concept of race and sex locates most working women at the bottom of the secondary job sector. According to Marxist, division of labour is based on the nature of occupation where unskilled labourers, namely, women, are at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy and are paid lower wages. Women, if considered as part of the reserve army of labour which is the result of the process of capital accumulation are paid very low wages and are disposed very easily. The sexual division of labour keeps women in family work and low paid jobs and also extends patriarchal relation in non-domestics sectors.

4.2: Women Workers in the Unorganised Sector in India:

All over the world women workers are mostly concentrated in the unorganised sector. India is no exception from this. From an analysis of the NSS data it is visible that with the increasing workforce in our country, the female workforce has also been showing a rising trend. The total female workforce (PS+SS) in 1999-2000 was 123.81 million which increased to 148.54 million in 2004-05. The size of total female workforce was declined to 129.49 million in 2009-10 (Table: 3.2 in Chapter - III). The female total workforce participation rate in different NSS round (since 1993-94 to 2009-10) never touched 30 per cent. The female work participation rate was about 29 per cent in both 1993-94 (50th round) and 2004-05 (61st round), about 26 per cent in 1999-2000 (55th round) and only nearly 23 per cent in 2009-10 (66th round).

The female work participation rate in India is not only very low but also much lower than that of male. The gender difference in participation rate has
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not been declined over time. Again, the rate has been showing a fluctuating trend. It was declined by 3 percentage points in 1999-2000 compared to 1993-94 which again rose by 3 percentage point in 2004-05, and again decline by 6 percentage points in 2009-10. The similar trend is observed in rural areas. In urban areas the female work participation rate was declined by 2 percentage points in 1999-2000 compared to 1993-94 then it was increased by 3 percentage points in 2004-05 but again declined by 3 percentage points in 2009-10. However the rate was much lower in urban areas than in rural areas. (Appendix Table: 3.2)

Another important feature of female work is that female principal status participation rate is much lower than usual status (PS+SS) in all the categories. This shows that women are mostly involved in subsidiary works. A quarter of women workers who are non-workers or unemployed by principal status but undertake work during part of the year. The increased number of women in subsidiary status especially in rural areas in the context of alarming agrarian crisis means that women do not have opportunities for long term regular employment (Neetha 2009).

The lower labour force and work force participation rates for female over the years is mainly due to known underestimation of women workers in the labour force surveys and population census. Several reasons are cited in the literature for such underestimation. Researchers have pointed out that the major data collecting agencies in the country, viz., the Decennial Population Census and the National Sample Survey (NSS) have suffered from serious biases which worked against netting on women. The concepts and definition of ‘work’ make
most women workers invisible. Many researchers and scholars (Standing 1999, Mehta 2000, Chen 2001) stated that women by and large were not seen, counted or recorded. Often, women, who are engaged in subsidiary activities, are recorded as non-worker (Saradamoni 1989).

However, one positive point for female is that the unemployment rate for female is lower (0.53 per cent) than that of male (1.12 per cent).

Indian labour market is characterized by gender inequality. A study about the male-female composition of India’s population in 2009-10 reveals that the number of working age male population (610.47 million) is slightly higher than female working age population (575.85 million). Out of total male population 99.12 per cent were working age population and out of the total female population 99.11 per cent were working age population. The situation is similar both in rural and urban areas. But gender inequality is prominent if one observes the labour force and workforce. Whereas male labour force was 341.01 million (55.69 per cent), only 132.55 million women (22.81 per cent) were in labour force in India. At the national level, whereas the proportion of non-workers for women was 76.30 per cent of total female population, the proportion of male non-workers was 43.43 per cent. In the rural areas the share of female non-workers was 72.55 per cent and of male non-workers was 43.47 per cent. The proportion of female non-workers was much higher in urban areas than in rural areas and the proportion of male non-workers was about the same in both rural and urban areas. The proportion of female non-workers in urban areas was 84.63 per cent and of male was 43.33 per cent.
In case of workforce also we see the same situation. The magnitude of female workforce is much lower than that of male. At all India level the magnitude of female workforce was 129.5 million and the number of male workforce was 336.12 million in 2009-10. That is, only 22.29 per cent of total female population was usually employed whereas the rate for male was 54.58 per cent. In the total workforce, the share of female was only 27.81 per cent. The rural-urban break up in this character shows that only 13.80 per cent of female in urban areas was usually employed whereas it was 26.10 per cent in rural areas. Out of total workforce in rural and urban areas the share of female was 31.16 per cent and 19.15 per cent respectively. Thus, it is clear that in the Indian labour market the women workers occupy a very low position (Table: 3.1 of Chapter - III).

It is not only the fact that the labour force and workforce participation rates for female in India are very low. It is also observed that these working women have concentrated in low paid jobs of informal sector. It is estimated that out of the total female workforce of 129.49 million in 2009-10, the unorganized sector absorbed 123.65 million. That is, only 5.84 million female workers were engaged in organized sector (Table: 3.2 in Chapter - III). In terms of percentage distribution, 95.49 per cent of female workers in India in 2009-10 was engaged in unorganized sector and only 4.51 per cent was engaged in organized sector (Table: 3.3 in Chapter - III). The share of female in the total unorganized employment was 28.30 per cent and in total organized employment was 20.64 per cent. (Table: 4.1)
Table: 4.1
Share of Male & Female Workers in Organized and Unorganized Sectors

(In percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organized</th>
<th></th>
<th>Unorganized</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>82.22</td>
<td>17.78</td>
<td>67.88</td>
<td>32.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>81.06</td>
<td>18.94</td>
<td>66.70</td>
<td>33.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>79.36</td>
<td>20.64</td>
<td>71.70</td>
<td>28.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Computed from Table: 3.2 in Chapter - III.

4.2.1 Trend of Women Workers in Unorganised Sector:

A close observation of the picture of women workers in India shows that the size of women workers has been increasing magnificently. The total number of female workers in India was about 123.81 million in 1999-00 which was increased to 148.54 million in 2004-05. But the size of female workers again declined to 129.49 million in 2009-10. During this period the size of female employment in organized sector has remained stagnant between about 26 million and 28 million. The size of informal female workers was 118.86 million in 1999-2000 which was increased to about 143.53 million in 2004-05 but its share again had fallen to about 123.65 million in 2009-10 (Table: 3.2 in Chapter - III)

However, although in absolute magnitude there has been sharp variation in the number of female workers in unorganized sector in between 1999-00 and 2009-10, in terms of percentage share, there was only little variation. In 1999-2000, 96 per cent of total female workers was engaged in unorganized sector
i.e., only 4 per cent was engaged in organized sector. The share of women workers
engaged in unorganized sector increased to about 97 per cent in 2004-05 and again
decreased to about 96 per cent in 2009-10 (Table: 3.3 in Chapter - III).

Table –4.2
Growth Rate of Workers (PS+SS) since 1999-2000 to 2009-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organised</th>
<th>Unorganised</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00 to 2004-05</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05 to 2009-10</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00 to 2009-10</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from Table: 3.2 in Chapter - III.

Various reasons may be accounted for the decline in the share of female employment in unorganized sector in 2009-10. The main factor behind this is the reduction in size of total female workforce in 2009-10 as compared to 2004-05. Female employment in agriculture was declined as 2009-10 was a drought affected year. Another major cause of this declining trend may be the introduction of different employment generation programmes including MNREGA. Because of the enhancement of female literacy also women can now find their livelihood in organized sector. So the share of female workers in organized sector has shown slight increase and its share in unorganized sector decreases. Another more important cause may be because of the invisibility of female work. Indian data collection system generally has left the work of women as unseen. Since women
are associated with more than one unorganized sector work at a time, often this type of works remain unrecognized. Most of the women’s paid work has been remained invisible to the data collecting agencies (Chen 2001).

Analysis of the growth of the women workers through various rounds of NSS data visualize that the annual average growth rate of female workers (3.99 per cent) was higher than all workers (3.00 per cent) during 1999-2000 to 2004-05. During this period the male employment was grown by 2.54 per cent annually (Table: 4.2). This period can be considered as favourable for the women workers. In the organized sector where as male shows negative annual average growth of (-1.26 per cent) the growth rate for female was positive, which was 0.24 per cent. The overall employment growth in organized sector during this period was negative (-0.99). In the unorganised sector also, growth rate of female workers was higher than male workers. Whereas the female workers in the unorganized sector were grown by 4.15 per cent annually, the male workers were grown by 2.89 per cent during 1999-2000 and 2004-05.

Between 2004-05 and 2009-10, the annual average growth rate of female workers is negative (-2.57 per cent) but for male it was positive (1.74 per cent). During this period, unorganized sector female workers show highest negative growth of -2.77 per cent. But male workers growth rate is positive i.e. 1.80 per cent. In the organized sector, however, annual average growth rate of female workers was highest (3.31 per cent) between 2004-05 and 2009-10. The growth rate for male worker in this category was only 0.89 per cent. In the ten years from 1999-2000 to 2009-10, the annual average growth for male workers
was 2.25 per cent and for female only 0.46 per cent. In the organized sector, the growth rate for male workers was -0.19 per cent and for female 1.80 per cent. In the unorganized sector the growth rate for male was 2.47 per cent and for female was 0.40 percent. Thus, during this ten year period, growth rate of female workers was higher than male in organized sector but lower than male in unorganized sector.

4.2.2 Composition of Unorganised Women Workers:

Unorganised women workers can be categorized as three major activity status, viz. self-employed, regular wage/salaried employees and casual labour in work other than public work. A major portion of unorganized women workers in India are engaged as self-employed. It is found from NSS data that in 2009-10, 77.5 per cent of all women workers in informal non-agriculture in rural areas and 64.9 per cent in urban areas was employed as self-employed. Only a negligible proportion informal non-agricultural women worker was employed as regular wage or salaried employees (4.9 per cent) in rural areas. In the urban areas, however, comparatively high (20.4 per cent) unorganized female workers were employed as regular wage/salaried employees. Again, 17.5 per cent informal women workers in rural areas was worked as casual labour and such figure for urban areas was 14.7 per cent (Appendix Table: 3.4). Self-employed women workers are again classified as own account workers, employers and unpaid family workers. Women were mainly work as own account workers in both rural (42.3 per cent) and urban (40.6 per cent) areas. Employers had a very little share 0.1 per cent in rural areas and 0.7 per cent urban areas. It is found that 35.1 per cent of all
informal women workers in rural areas and 23.7 per cent in urban areas were worked as unpaid family workers. The unpaid family workers are the most disadvantaged group of labour market. A larger proportion of women workers engaged in this category indicate their low economic status.

4.2.3 Industrial Distribution of Women Workers in organized and Unorganised Sector:

The most common pattern of structural change due to economic development follows a sequence of a shift from agriculture to industry and then other services. Collin Clark (1940) viewed that there is a close relationship between development of an economy on the one hand, and occupational structure on the other. He held the view that a high average level of real income per head is always associated with a high proportion of the working population engaged in tertiary industries and low real income per head is always associated with a low proportion of the working population engaged in tertiary production and high percentage in primary production. A.G.B. Fisher (1948) also reaches the same conclusion that “in every progressive economy there has been a steady shift of employment and investment from the essential primary activities and to secondary activities of all kinds and to a still greater extent into tertiary production.” We observe this tendency in Indian labour market as the share of employment in the agriculture has been gradually decreasing and on the contrary the share of non-agriculture has been rising. Female labour market has also been experiencing the similar trend. However, although the share of agriculture in the total employment of female has been decreasing, still it is the main sector where the largest number
of women workers is engaged. It is estimated that out of the total female workforce of 124.03 million in 1999-2000, 93.30 million were engaged in agriculture and 30.73 million were engaged in non-agriculture. In 2004-05, out of 148.67 million women workers, 107.25 million were engaged in agriculture and 41.42 million were engaged in non-agriculture. In 2009-10, out of the 129.49 million women workers, 86.53 million were engaged in agriculture and 42.96 million were engaged in non-agriculture.

A close look in to the trend of industry wise female workers in organized and unorganized sector shows that in the three NSS round, namely, 55th round (1999-2000), 61st round (2004-05), and 66th round (2009-10) the percentage share of unorganized sector was higher than organized sector. In case of agriculture about 99 per cent female workers were engaged in unorganized sector and only about 1 per cent was engaged in organized sector throughout this period. Again out of the total non-agricultural female workers the proportion engaged in unorganized sector was about 86 per cent in 1999-2000, about 89 per cent in 2004-05 and about 88 per cent in 2009-10.

Among the non-agricultural sector the sector where the largest number of female workers was engaged in unorganized sector was ‘trade, hotel and restaurant’. Nearly 99 per cent of female workers engaged in this category were engaged in unorganized sector in 1999-2000, 2004-05, and 2009-10 respectively. During this period, the share of organized female workers in this category was only about 1 per cent. ‘Construction’ is another important sector next to ‘trade’ where the number of female workers engaged in unorganized sector
was 97 per cent in 1999-2000, about 98 per cent in 2004-05 and about 99 per cent in 2009-10. That is, the share of unorganized sector has increased by 1 percentage point in each round in this industrial category. The industrial category which has occupied third place in terms of unorganized sector female workers was ‘manufacturing’ where the number of female workers engaged was about 92 per cent in 1999-2000, 95 per cent in 2004-05 and about 93 per cent in 2009-10. Thus, out of total female workers engaged in manufacturing sector the share of unorganized sector was increased by 3 percentage points between 1999-2000 and 2004-05. But their share declined by 2 percentage points during the period 2004-05 and 2009-10. In case of the ‘community and other services’ sector also, about 75 per cent female workers was engaged in unorganized sector. In this category the share of unorganized sector was increased by 7 percentage points during 1999-2000 and 2004-05 but again declined by 2 percentage points between 2004-05 and 2009-10. The share of unorganized sector female workers was increased by 7 percentage points in financial services also during 1999-2000 and 2004-05, which again sharply declined by 11 percentage points between 2004-05 and 2009-10. However, it is observed that out of the total women workers in each industrial category the share of unorganized sector was higher than organized sector except the sector ‘electricity, gas and water supply’ where the total number of female employment was also negligible. Only 0.04 million and 0.05 million women workers were engaged in this industrial category in 1999-2000 and 2004-05 respectively and all of them were engaged in organized sector. However, in 2009-10, out of the total female workforce of 0.10 million, 0.06 million (60 per cent)
were engaged in organized sector and 0.04 million (40 per cent) were involved in unorganized sector (Appendix Table: 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.14).

4.2.4 Trend of Sectoral Distribution of Informal Employment by Gender:

The sectoral distribution of informal workers (Appendix Table: 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13) shows that unorganised sector women workers are mainly dependent on agriculture sector for their employment. It is estimated that the proportion of informal women workers engaged in agriculture sector were 77.89 per cent in 1999-2000; 74.32 per cent in 2004-05 and 69.59 per cent in 2009-10. That is, the share of agriculture in the total informal women employment was declined by 4 percentage points during 1999-2000 and 2004-05. Its share again declined by 4 percentage points between 2004-05 and 2009-10. During the period 1999-2000 and 2009-10, the percentage share of informal women workers engaged in agriculture was declined by about 8 percentage points. On the other hand, the share of non-agriculture in the total informal women workers has been increasing from 22.11 per cent in 1999-2000 to 25.68 per cent in 2004-05 and again to 30.41 per cent in 2009-10.

As compared to female much less informal male workers are engaged in agriculture. The proportion of male informal sector workers engaged in agriculture was 57.86 per cent 1999-2000; 51.86 per cent in 2004-05 and 48.05 per cent in 2009-10. Again the proportion of male informal sector workers engaged in non-agriculture was 42.14 per cent, 48.14 per cent and 51.95 per cent in 1999-2000, 2004-05 and 2009-10 respectively. The trend of the workforce in these categories exhibits that although the agriculture sector absorbs a major portion of
informal workers (for both male and female) its share has been gradually declining. Oppositely, the share of non-agriculture sector has been increasing. But comparatively more female than male are engaged in agriculture.

Among the non-agriculture sector the most prominent sector which has employed highest number of female informal workers is manufacturing. In 1999-2000 out of 119.08 million informal female workers 11.4 million (9.57 per cent) was engaged in manufacturing. In 2004-05, out of 143.66 million total informal female workers 16.55 million (11.52 per cent) was in manufacturing and in 2009-10 out of total 123.65 million female informal workers 13.75 million (11.12 per cent) were employed in manufacturing. The share of informal female workers in manufacturing was increased by about 2 percentage points between 1999-2000 and 2004-05. But, between 2004-05 and 2009-10 its share declined by 1 percentage point (Appendix Table: 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13).

The community and other services sector has occupied second position in terms of providing employment to female informal workers. In 1999-2000, 6.87 million (5.77 per cent); in 2004-05, 10.10 million (7.03 per cent) and in 2009-10; 10 million (8.09 per cent) female informal workers have found work in this sector. It is notable that whereas the percentage share of informal women workers in all the non-agricultural sectors was decreased in 2009-10 compared to 2004-05, in this particular sector its share was increasing.

In 2009-10, the construction sector had occupied third rank in terms of employment of total informal female workers. Out of the 123.65 million unorganized women workers in 2009-10, construction sector employed 6.54
million workers. That is, construction sector had the share of 5.29 per cent in the total informal female workers. The sector also shows a sharp increase in its share as in 1999-2000 and 2004-05, its share in total informal employment were only 1.65 per cent and 1.91 per cent respectively. That is, between 2004-05 and 2009-10, its share was increased by 3 percentage points.

Another sector, which occupied about 5 per cent female informal workers over the years, is 'trade, hotel and restaurants'. Its share was 4.34 per cent in 1999-2000, 4.26 per cent in 2004-05 and 4.75 per cent in 2009-10.

4.3: Women Workers in Assam:

Women constitute nearly half (48.81 percent) of the total population of Assam. But the labour as well as workforce participation rate for female are still very low. The workforce participation rate for female (FWPR) in Assam according to 2011 Census is only 22.46 per cent. At the same period the overall work participation (WPR) in Assam is 38.86 per cent and for male (MWPR) is 55.59 per cent. However, the FWPR has been showing a rising trend in Assam. In 1971, only 5.58 per cent of total women in Assam were employed, the figure increased to 21.61 per cent in 1991 census. Then the FWPR slightly declined to 20.71 per cent in 2001 and then again increased to 22.53 per cent in 2011 census (Statistical Hand Book Assam, Census Reports).

It should be noted that since 1991 Census total workers are divided between main workers and marginal workers. So, FWPR includes here, both main and marginal workers. If only main workers are considered the FWPR of Assam was only 14.52 percent in 1991; 9.82 percent in 2001 and so, increase in the
FWPR is mainly due to increase in the number of female marginal workers in Assam.

The FWPR according to different NSS round are much lower than the Census FWPR. This is basically due to the difference between the definitions of ‘work’ in the two data collecting system. The FWPR for usual status (PS+SS) was found as 14.9 per cent in its 66th round quinquennial round survey (conducted in 2009-10). The female work participation rate was 15.8 per cent in rural areas and only 9.3 per cent in urban areas. This rate included both principal status and subsidiary status women workers together into account. If one consider only principal status workers, the rate becomes even lower, only 12.1 per cent. The work participation rate was 12.8 per cent in rural areas and 8.1 per cent in urban areas. The fact that most of the women workers are marginal according to Census and worked in subsidiary status according to NSS exhibit their secondary position in the labour market (Appendix Table: - 3.17).

4.3.1 Estimates of Women Workers in Unorganized Sector in Assam:

The labour force and workforce participation rates in both usual status (PS+SS) and usual principal status (PS) shows a gloomy picture of the labour market in Assam. It is estimated that the total female workforce in Assam in 1999-2000 was 18.59 lakh out of which 15.10 lakh were engaged in unorganized sector and 3.49 lakh were employed in organized sector. The total female workforce increased to 26.87 lakh in 2004-05 out of which 23.20 lakh were engaged in unorganized sector and 3.67 lakh were engaged in organized sector. It is found that during 1999-2000 and 2004-05 about 8 lakh female workers had
joined the workforce and since the size of organized sector had remained almost same during this period, about all the increased workers was employed in the unorganized sector. It is estimated that in 2009-10 out of the total female workforce of 22.37 lakh in Assam only 3.67 lakh were engaged in organized sector whereas 18.70 lakh were engaged in unorganized sector. During 2004-05 and 2009-10, the size of female workforce declined by about 5 lakh. It is also observed that the size of organised women workers had remained stable at 3.67 lakh, and all the 5 lakh women workers who had lost their jobs were belonged to the unorganized sector (Table: 3.6 in Chapter - III).

In terms of percentage share, 81.23 per cent of total female workers in Assam were employed in unorganized sector and 18.77 per cent was engaged in organized sector in 1999-2000. The share of unorganized sector in the total female employment increased to 86.34 per cent in 2004-05 and the share of organized sector decreased to 13.66 per cent. That is, the share of unorganized sector during 1999-2000 and 2004-05 was increased by about 5 percentage points and the share of organized sector during this period was decreased by about 5 percentage points. In 2009-10, 83.59 per cent of the total female workers in Assam were employed in unorganized sector and only 16.41 per cent was employed in the organized sector. The share of female workers in the unorganized sector was decreased by 2 percentage points during 2004-05 and 2009-10 and the share of organised sector was increased by 2 percentage points (Table: 3.7 in Chapter - III)

Unorganised sector women workers had shown a magnificent growth in Assam during 1999-2000 and 2004-05. The annual average growth rate
of the women workers in the unorganized sector was 10.73 per cent during this period. Their growth rate in the organized sector was only 1.03 per cent in this period. During this period, the female employment as a whole grew annually by 8.91 per cent. We observe negative annual average growth of female employment by (-) 3.35 per cent during 2004-05 and 2009-10. During this period there was zero growth of female employment in the organized sector. In the unorganized sector, there was negative growth of women employment by (-) 3.88 percent. During the whole period of 1999-2000 and 2009-10 the growth of women workers in unorganized sector was 2.38 per cent and in the organized sector was 0.52 per cent. However, the overall employment growth of female worker during this period was only 0.32 per cent. (Table: 3.8 in Chapter - III)

The industrial distribution of women workers in the unorganized sector shows that during 2009-10 (66th round NSS) 72.7 per cent of female workers in AGE GC are engaged in informal sector. In this category their share in the rural area was 73.3 per cent and in the urban areas was 40.0 per cent. All the female workers in rural areas who were engaged in mining and quarrying (C) and Hotel and Restaurant (H) were unorganized. That is, 100 per cent of all female workers in these two sectors were engaged in unorganized sector in rural areas. Then 97.3 per cent of all female workers in rural areas engaged in wholesale and retail trade (G) were in informal sector. In urban areas their share in this category was 87.1 per cent. In case of manufacturing sector female workers, 77 per cent in rural areas and 83.2 per cent in urban areas were engaged in unorganized sector. Another important sector where most women are engaged in informal sector was
'other community, social and personal service' activities. In rural areas 70.7 per cent of all women workers engaged in this activity status were in unorganized sector. However, in the urban areas their share was only 11.3 per cent. It is found that of all non-agricultural female workers in Assam, nearly 52.5 per cent in rural areas and 43.3 per cent in urban areas were employed in unorganized sector. Taking AGEGC and non-agriculture together it is found that 54.0 per cent were employed in unorganized sector in rural areas and 43.3 per cent were employed in unorganized sector in the urban areas. (Appendix Table: 3.18)

An observation of the activity status of women workers in Assam shows that out of all self-employed women workers in Assam in 2009-10, 81.7 per cent were engaged in unorganized sector. The share of unorganized sector in all the self-employed women workers was higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In rural areas 86.5 per cent and in urban areas 73.4 per cent of all self-employed women workers were engaged in unorganized sector.

Out of all regular wage/salaried women employees only 28.7 per cent were employed in unorganized sector. The percentage share of such employees in the rural areas was 37.6 per cent and in urban areas only 11.4 per cent. Again out of all casual female workers 35.3 per cent were found in informal sector. In the rural areas their share in this category was 35.8 per cent and in the urban areas was 32.7 per cent.

A comparison of the activity status of women workers in Assam with the all India level, shows that in the status of self-employed and casual labour more female workers were engaged in unorganized sector at all India level.
than in Assam. However, in case of regular wage/salaried women workers same proportions were employed in unorganized sector both in the state level and national level. (Appendix Table: 3.19)

Thus the gender composition of informal employment in India and Assam reflects that apart from agriculture, the important non-agriculture segments in terms of concentration of female informal workers are manufacturing, community and other services, construction and trade, hotel and restaurants respectively.

Informalisation of women’s work is one of the important features of developing nations today. This process can also be termed as feminization of informal works (Chen 2001, Satpathy 2004). This process is quite visible in India as 96 per cent of all female workers are engaged in informal sector compared to 93 per cent of such male workers in 2009-10. That is, the process of informalisation is more among females than among males and women are over represented in the informal sector.

Thus, from our discussion, we can come to the conclusion that-

i) Women are more dependent on unorganized sector especially on unorganized agriculture than men as a primary source of employment, and

ii) The proportion of women in the unorganised sector is more than that of men.
4.4 References:


Clark, Collin (1940), "The Conditions of Economic Progress".


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