CHAPTER – I

EXTENT AND GENERAL PATTERN OF EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

Women play an important role in the development of human society. Women in India from antiquity were accorded the most exalted and respectful place in the society. In Vedic age women occupied a high position in society. Their position however, deteriorated during the post Vedic period. After the Industrial Revolution, the social situation changed throughout the world and so in India. After independence of the Country the number of women to come out of their houses for work increased day by day. According to Census 2001, women workers constitute 25-68 percent of the total workforce in the Country. At present time women are engaged in various sectors: such as agriculture, plantation, mine, construction, beedi rolling, livestock, lock industry, hicks thermometers industry, brick factory, agarwati industry, handloom industry and various other service sectors. But unfortunately, there are various factors which affect the employment of women such as marriage, immobility, accommodation, education, discrimination, wage problem, sexual harassment etc. and have caused women lagging behind men in the world of work.

Therefore, in the present chapter, an attempt has been made to discuss position of women in India, nature and pattern of women employment, women labour in various sectors and also to highlight the factors, which is affecting the employment of women.

1. Position of Women in India

Women play an important role in the development of human society. According to opinion of Swedish Scholar Gustar Geigor, the dignity of women in society provides an exact measure of the development of society. Our late Prime Minister Honorable Jawaharlal Nehru has observed that to awaken the people it is the woman who must be awakened, once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves.¹
In the beginning of civilization women in India occupied a respectful place in the society. In Vedic age women occupied a high position in society and played a significant role in all fields including cultural, social, religious and political. She had equal rights with men and played a more active economic role. She performed numerous tasks as did men.

Women had more freedom in the choice of their partner. During that period, marriage was not compulsory for women. If women desired they could pursue higher studies. Unmarried women were not looked down upon. A number of learned bases or rishis existed even among women.

The position of women in the earlier Dravidian context was that women enjoyed even higher status than men and woman was regarded as the base of all power or “shakti.” Many traditions and customs which persist even today bear evidence of such exalted status of women in the past.

However, during the post Vedic period the position of women began to deteriorate. Even Manu\(^2\) was very harsh about them and stated that they are not entitled to independence. Women were deprived of their individual decisions and choices. They were brought under the full control of men. The condition of women deteriorated further during the medieval period. When their dependence on men became absolute and they became victims of the inhuman practice of Sati.\(^3\)

These customs, traditions and practices reduced women to the position of a liability and forced them to a life of unhealthy discrimination. During those days a writer on women’s issues, Shakuntala Narasimhan sums up the position of women that smothered or poisoned at birth, given away in marriage at a tender age, bargained over like some commodity by dowry hungry-in-laws, secluded in the name of chastity and religion and finally burnt for the exaltation of the family’s honour or shunned as in-auspicious widows.\(^4\)

Women were confined to the four walls of the house so that they performed household duties such as maintenance of home cooking and care of children. They helped their men folk in the agricultural work, in production and in marketing of handicrafts. They were, however not supposed to seek any gainful employment outside their homes.
Significant changes occurred in the social, economic and political status of women during the 19th century in India. 19th century was a century of liberalisation, freedom and equity for women. In 19th century all the important social reform movements focused on ameliorating the miserable plight of Indian women. The celebrated reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Gopal Krishan Gokhale and Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan were valiant champions of women’s social liberation. They raised their powerful voice against the inhuman and oppressive social customs. As a result education was promoted among women and all the regressive customs were either altogether abolished or a trend was set for their steady decline. With this inaugurated an era of women’s emancipation.

The most important and far-reaching efforts to emancipate women were made during the period of freedom movement in our Country. During this movement, women made their presence felt and by participating in the movement they positively demonstrated that they were in no way unequal to men. Many women played decisive roles in the freedom struggle. Moreover, the then male leaders of the freedom struggle were considerably enlightened to realise the women’s potential, and as a result, the Indian National Congress recognised equality of sexes as early as in 1931.

But the real breakthrough, at least in the policy formulation for the betterment of women, was made only after independence of the Country from the British Colonial Yoke in 1947. The Constitution of India in Article 14 states that the State shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of laws within the territory of India. Article 15 states that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. The incorporation of equality before the law in the Constitution enabled the passage of variety of laws and development of deliberate measures aimed at the improvement of the status of women in post independent India.5

Free India provided a basic framework for possible improvement of women’s status. There has been conscious effort to change the position of women from inequality to equality through different legislations and other programmes,
plans and schemes. Besides this many factors are responsible for improve the
condition of women such as industrialisation, urbanisation, higher female
education, evolution and revolution of new thinking etc. Inspite of various
attempts to improve the position of women, much more need to be done. While
condition of women, no doubt has been improved in middle class educated women
but in small towns or rural areas or in city slum, women still suffer social and
economic oppression. Thus, there is an urgent need to create awareness among
these women about their rights. Alongwith this change in the attitude of society is
also necessary for better condition of women.

2. **Nature and Pattern of Women Employment**

Women constitute 48.2 percent of the total population and the women
workers constitute 25.68 percent of the total workforce in the Country (*Census
2001*). According to *National Perspective Plan*, only 14 percent of women are in
full employment. Nearly 90 percent of these are in unorganised sector, of these 83
percent are in agriculture and construction work. Below 8 percent are in organised
sector. The number of working women as percentage of total working age group
has been declining and is more or less stagnant in the recent two decades. Even
within the organised sector, 90 percent of women are employed in unskilled or
semi-skilled jobs. The organised sector in India, which consists of public sector,
and non-agricultural private sector establishments absorbs a very small percent.
Recent *NSSO* data indicate the trend of slower growth in the organised sector
employment vis-à-vis unorganised sector employment.⁶

The present study is related to the rights of women as worker so it is
necessary to discuss first the concept of work.

The *Census of India* and the *National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO)*
are two main sources of data on women’s employment. But they have not
followed identical definitions of work. *The Census of India 1991* defined work as
participation in any economically productive activity, irrespective of whether the
participation is physical or mental. In addition to this, activities like cultivation for
“Self consumption’ and unpaid work for family enterprise were also included in
the definition of work.⁷ Yet even this definition is not capable of capturing the
unpaid domestic work performed by women that may not amount to ‘work’ as
defined above. *The Census of India, 1991* divided the working population into three broad categories: Main workers, Marginal workers and Non-workers. A person involved in any work for more than six months of the year preceding the survey, has been termed a main worker. Anyone whose work participation has been for less than six months in the year under reference has been termed a marginal worker. Those who have not worked at all during the previous year have been counted as non-workers.

The *NSSO* has a broader definition of work. It encompasses all activities pursued for pay, profit or family gain. While both market and non-market activities for the agricultural sector are included in the definition of work, only market activities are included for the non-agricultural sector. The production of food grains or any other crop for self-consumption has also been regarded as ‘gainful activity’. The *NSSO* employment surveys, conducted every five years, define three different levels of employment: usual status, current weekly status, and current daily status. The corresponding reference time periods are: one year, one week, and each day of the week. None of these definitions has fully captured the extent and degree of women’s participation in the workforce. The Census criteria are quite insensitive to most of the kinds of work performed by women. As we have observed, earlier the *NSSO* has a broader definition of work and, therefore, shows a higher participation of women in the labour force. It includes activities for self-consumption (except the processing of primary commodities for self-consumption), and the work of unpaid helpers in the farm, domestic work etc. The definitions used in *NSSO* estimates cover a large section of women labour engaged in the production of self consumption goods, and hence the difference between the *NSSO* and *Census* estimates is higher for women.

A. **Profile of women workers in India**

Labour Force Participation Rates

The labour force includes both the employed and the unemployed, and, therefore, measures the total available supply of labour. The participation of women in the labour force has always been lower than that of men, in the rural as well as urban areas. The difference has been greater in urban areas.
Table – 1.1

Labour Force Participation Rates

(Percent)

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Rural Males</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rural Females</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Urban Males</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Urban Females</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NSSO Rounds. Rates are based on UPSS criterian.

Data from the 55<sup>th</sup> Round seem to suggest a slight decline in the labour force participation since 1993-94 in all categories except that of urban males. But 61<sup>st</sup> Round shows labour force participation rates of women increased in 2004-2005 in comparison to 1999-2000 (Table 1.1)

**Work Force Participation**

The workforce participations rates for females are substantially lower than that for males, more so in the urban areas.

Table – 1.2

**Work Force Participation**

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</thead>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Rural Males</td>
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<td>55.3</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Rural Females</td>
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<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Urban Males</td>
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<td>52.0</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Urban Females</td>
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<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The work participation rates have fallen between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 in all the four categories but more sharply in respect of females. Work participation rates of women workers have increased in 2004-2005, not only in comparison with 1999-2000 when they had fallen sharply, but also in comparison to a decade earlier.
**Distribution of Male and Female Workers by Broad Industry Groups**

The primary sector is the dominant sector so far as the employment of women in the rural areas is concerned. It accounts for nearly 85% of women’s activity. The primary sector consists of agriculture, mining and quarrying, the secondary sector consists of manufacturing, electricity, water and construction, and the tertiary sector includes wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels, transport, storage and communication services, financial intermediation, insurance, real estate and business services, public administration, education, healthcare services and community services.

**Table – 1.3**

Changes in the Distribution of Male and Female Workers in Broad Industry Groups from 1983 to 2004-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>(Percent)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
<td><strong>NSS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-88</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>61</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>(Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
<td><strong>NSS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-88</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* NSS, various rounds.

Table 1.3 shows that in rural areas male and female are mostly engaged in primary sector, while in urban areas male and female are mostly engaged in tertiary sector. In rural areas the proportion of male and female had fallen in
primary sector during 2004-2005 in comparison to 1999-2000, but it showed a gradual increase in secondary and tertiary sector during this period. In urban areas the percentage of male had fallen in primary and tertiary sector during 2004-2005 in comparison to 1999-2000 while it is increased in secondary sector. On the other hand the percentage of female had fallen in tertiary sector, but it is increased in primary and secondary sector in 2004-2005, in comparison to 1999-2000.

**Percentage of Workers in various industrial categories**

**Table – 1.4**

**Percentage of Workers in various Industrial category (NSS round 1983 to 2004-2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad industry division</th>
<th>NSS round</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>38 (1983)</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43 (1987-88)</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>84.7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 (1993-94)</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>86.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 (1999-2000)</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>85.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>61 (2004-2005)</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
<td>38 (1983)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43 (1987-88)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 (1993-94)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 (1999-2000)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61 (2004-2005)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>38 (1983)</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43 (1987-88)</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 (1993-94)</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 (1999-2000)</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61 (2004-2005)</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity gas and water</td>
<td>38 (1983)</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43 (1987-88)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 (1993-94)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>55 (1999-2000)</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>61 (2004-2005)</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>38 (1983)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43 (1987-88)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 (1993-94)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 (1999-2000)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61 (2004-2005)</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade, hotel and restaurant</td>
<td>38 (1983)</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43 (1987-88)</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>50 (1993-94)</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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Table 1.4 shows that during 2004-2005 in rural India, among ‘all’ usually employed, about 67 percent of the male and 83 percent of the females were engaged in the agricultural sector. The proportion of males engaged in the agricultural activities gradually fell from 76 percent in 1983 to 71 percent in 1999-2000, and then to 67 percent in 2004-2005. On the other hand, in the case of female workers, the proportion engaged in the agricultural activities decreased from 88 percent in 1983 to 83 percent 2004-2005. It was 85 percent in 1999-2000. Over the years, in rural India, there has been an increase in the proportion of males engaged in ‘trade, hotel and restaurant,’ ‘transport, storage and communications’ and ‘construction.’

In urban India, the ‘trade, hotel and restaurant’ sector engaged about 28 percent of the male workers while ‘manufacturing’ and ‘services’ sectors accounted for nearly 24 and 21 percent respectively of the usually employed males. Next to these three sectors, transport storage and communications, ‘construction’ and ‘agriculture sectors’ provided employment to about 11, 9 and 6 percent respectively of the urban male workers. On the other hand, for urban females, ‘services’ sector accounted for the highest proportion (36 percent) of the total usually employed, followed by ‘manufacturing’ (28 percent) and ‘agriculture’ (18 percent). It is noted that the proportion of urban females employed in ‘manufacturing’ sector increased from 24 percent in 1999-2000 to 28 percent in

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<tr>
<td>Transport, storage</td>
<td>38 (1983)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and communication</td>
<td>43 (1987-88)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 (1993-94)</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
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<td>55 (1999-2000)</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>61 (2004-2005)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>38 (1983)</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>24.8</td>
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<td>43 (1987-88)</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 (1993-94)</td>
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<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 (1999-2000)</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>34.2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61 (2004-2005)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>35.9</td>
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</table>


Changes in Distribution of usually employed by Status of Employment

Table – 1.5

Changes in the Distribution of Employment Status Categories Overtime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>NSS round</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Casual</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>NSS round</td>
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<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>38th</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>35.3</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1987-88</td>
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<td>58.6</td>
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<td>38.7</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>39.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
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<th>Urban</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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<td>Regular</td>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Casual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>NSS round</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>38th</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-88</td>
<td>43rd</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>50th</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>55th</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>61st</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.5 shows that for rural males, the proportion of self-employed had fallen from 61 percent to 58 percent in 2004-2005. For females although the proportion of self-employed also showed a gradual fall, for a long period, from 62 percent in 1983 to 57 percent in 1999-2000, it showed a rise of 6 percentage points over 1999-2000 during 2004-2005. Interestingly compared to be self-employed, there has been a corresponding rise and fall in the proportion of casual labour over this period. During this period, though the proportion of regular employed among
urban males had fallen by about 3 percentage point, among urban females, there
had been an increase in this proportion by about 10 percentage points.

B. Profile of women workers in Aligarh and Agra

Women constitute a significant part of the workforce of Aligarh and Agra.

Work Participation Rate

Table – 1.6

Work Participation Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census of India 2001</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligarh</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agra</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.6 shows that total workers constitute 32.5 percent of the total
population at the state level in the Census 2001, in which proportion of male
workers is 46.8 percent and the proportion of female workers is 16.5 percent. In
Aligarh total workers constitute 30.6 percent of the total population in the Census
2001. The male work participation rate is 45.5 percent and the female work
participation rate is 13.3 percent during 2001 Census. In Agra, total workers
constitute 27.2 percent of the total population in the Census 2001, in which
proportion of male worker is 44.1 percent and proportion of female is 7.24
percent. The workforce participation rates for females are substantially lower than
that of males in Uttar Pradesh, Aligarh and Agra.

Percentage of Main and Marginal Workers to Total Workers

Table – 1.7

Percentage of Main and Marginal Workers to Total Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Census of India 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main workers</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M arginal workers</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.7 shows that the main workers accounts for 72.9 percent of total workers at the state level in the 2001 Census, in which proportion of male workers 83.3% and female workers are 38.5%. The percentage of marginal workers in Uttar Pradesh are 27.1 percent, in which proportion of male workers are 16.2 percent and female workers are 61.5 percent. In Aligarh main workers accounts for 76.1 percent of the total workers, in which proportion of male workers are 84.2 percent and female workers are 45.0 percent. The percentage of marginal workers in Aligarh is 23.9 percent in which proportion of male workers are 15.8 percent and female workers are 56.0 percent. In Agra main workers accounts for 82.7 percent of the total workers, in which proportion of male workers are 87.2 percent and female workers are 50.2 percent. The percentage of marginal workers in Agra are 17.3 percent, in which proportion of male workers are 12.8 percent and female workers are 49.7 percent. The percentage of female marginal workers are higher than male in Uttar Pradesh, Aligarh and Agra, while the percentage of female main workers are lower than male in Uttar Pradesh, Aligarh and Agra.

Categories of Total Workers

Table – 1.8

Categories of Total Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Categories of total workers</th>
<th>Census of India 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Household industry workers</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Other workers</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.8 shows that among total workers, the proportion of cultivators is 41.4 percent, agricultural labourers is 24.8 percent, the workers engaged in household industry are 5.6 percent and other workers account for 28.5 percent in 2001 Census at the state level. In which the percentage of male cultivators are
42.7, agricultural labourers are 20.1 percent, household industry workers are 4.7 percent and other workers are 32.5 percent. The percentage of female cultivators are 36.1, agricultural labourers are 39.6 percent, household industry workers are 8.3 percent and other workers are 16.0 percent.

In Aligarh, among total workers, the proportion of cultivators is 32.4 percent, agricultural labourers are 19.9 percent the workers engaged in household industry are 6.6 percent and other workers account for 41.0 percent. In which the percentage of male cultivators are 34.1 percent, agricultural labourers are 18.6 percent, household industry workers are 45.8 percent and other workers are 42.7 percent. The percentage of female cultivators are 25.7 percent, agricultural labourers are 25.2 percent, household industry workers are 14.7 percent and other workers are 34.4 percent.

In Agra, among total workers, the proportion of cultivators is 28.0 percent, agricultural labourers are 12.7 percent, the workers engaged in household industry are 6.6 percent and other workers account for 52.7 percent. In which the percentage of male cultivators are 29.1, agricultural labourers are 11.5 percent, household industry workers are 5.56 percent and other workers are 53.8 percent. The percentage of female cultivators is 20.4, agricultural labourers are 20.9 percent, household industry workers are 14.1 percent and other workers are 44.6 percent.

3. Women Labour in Various Sectors

Women are distinguished from all other industrial workers by distinctive attitudes and actions of the modern society including employers, male workers and women workers themselves. The female workers are generally regarded as a distinctive group in present day society. Women labour has got important bearing upon the employment conditions of other class of workers. At present time women are engaged in various sectors. They are employed in Agriculture, Plantation, Mine, Beedi rolling, Construction, Livestock, Crafts sector, Home based work, Food Processing, Textile and Garment Industry, Street Vending and Rag Picking, Lock Industry, Hicks Thermometers Industry, Agarbathi Industry, Handloom Industry and Various Service Sector. These are as follows:
Agriculture: Like other Asian countries, in India also the largest avenue for employment of women labour is Agriculture. Female agricultural labourers are semi-skilled. The work they do in the field do not require specific skills. Here they require only physical work ability. They have to work in open, thus seasonal changes do affect their work. There is a lack of specialisation in the female agricultural labourers. They do not perform same kind of work in the farm. Sometimes they cultivate, they feed and sometimes do the job of transportation. Female agricultural labourers are unorganised. They do not have any national, state or regional level organization or union. Thus, female labourers of organised sectors do get some more benefits than that of unorganised one. Workers from organised sectors with their unites power and collective efforts gets more liberal payment and works under better conditions. Because of unorganised working force female agricultural labourers do not get any of these benefits. Employment and wage rate of female agricultural labourers are unstable. If monsoon is good female agricultural labourers increases and they get good wage rate. But in case of drought or flood employment opportunities for female agricultural labourers declines.

Problems of female agricultural labourers are different and specific. Their position is very bad in comparison to other female workers in organised sector. Not only that female agricultural labourers face more problems than that of other unorganised sector labourers. They do get comparatively less employment and wages than organised sectors female labour. They have to work hard but they are not being paid well. There are inadequate employment opportunities for female agricultural labourers. They get seasonal employment. Health standard of female agricultural labourers is weak. Female agricultural labourers have to work for more hours. Female agricultural labourers have to work in adverse conditions. They are exploited. They are being paid less wage than marginal productivity. They have to work more at low wage rate. Their problems are not only economic related but also they suffer from social and family problems. Their conditions are pitiable. They require more attention from the government towards their problems. There is a need to provide training to the female agricultural workers. A setup should be thought upon where the number of employment days can be increased.
When they could not get employment in agriculture as an alternate cottage industry should be developed.⁹

2. **Plantations:** The plantation industries are the second largest employers of labour in India and comprise the three main industries, viz. tea, coffee and rubber. Among the organised industries, the plantations offer the largest employment to women workers. According to the Labour Investigation Committee, about 45% of the total labour force in tea estates were the adult women workers, while in coffee and rubber, they constituted about 40% and 25% respectively. As the recruitment in plantations is on family basis, in a large number the female workers get opportunities to work in the gardens. Furthermore, the nature of jobs on plantations requires little skill and women from the villages following agricultural pursuits can easily adapt themselves to the work. Plucking leaf in tea estates and picking ripe berries in coffee estates are the main jobs assigned to women and in these, they are said to excel. They are also employed in weeding on tea, coffee and rubber estates. A few women also do semi-skilled jobs such as pruning on tea estates and tapping on rubber estates. In plantations wages are different for male and female workers though the work which is carried by male and female workers is the same or having similar nature.¹⁰

The working conditions in plantation are highly unsatisfactory. Female has to work in open in rain, in heat or in cold. The problem in plantation was one of protection against vagaries of the weather rather than of ventilation, temperature or lighting. With the enactment of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 considerable improvement has resulted in working conditions in plantations. The Act empowers the State Government to make rules for providing umbrellas, plankets, raincoat or other like amenities for protection from rain or cold. But unfortunately there is no proper implementation of the said Act.

3. **Mine:** The next important group of industrial workers consists of those employed in the mines. In case of mining industry, the female workers are employed in the open workings and on the surface only. In coal mines, their employment is confined to wagon loading, ash cleaning, brick carrying and pallet making. Several employers feel that women are more suited for these jobs than men. In the manganese mines, women are employed on the loading of tubs and wagons and the dressing, sorting, picking, raising and in the selection of ore, while
in mica mines, the tasks performed by women are usually the removal of mulch from the pit. In the mines the earnings of the female workers are lower than those of the men. However, the piece rates in the coal mines are usually the same for male and female workers. Latrine and urinals in mines are not in sanitary condition and mines have no proper arrangements for supply of water and lacks sufficient room for their improvement. The conditions of life in mines have not improved to any great extent. The miners hardly bring their women to the mining areas, when their power to earn is gone. The disparity in the sex ratio has, therefore, increased resulting in absenteeism. The disparity in sex ratio has also led to demonstration in the coal fields. It has been suggested that steps should be taken to reserve, for the miners women, vacancies occurring among the surface workers. To provide employment opportunities to women, the establishment of auxiliary industries to utilise coal-tar and other by-products of coal has been suggested. Moreover, the management should make a systematic effort at improvement of housing and sanitary conditions, so that the miners may be induced to bring their families to the mining areas. The loss of earnings to the miners by the prohibition underground work for women workers should be fully compensated by a health and better family life for the miners.

**Beedi Industry:** Beedi is a crude cigarette in which tobacco is rolled in a small beedi leaf (‘tendu) and tied with a cotton thread. Beedi is made out of the materials supplied by the beedi contractor, viz., beedi leaves, tobacco and thread.

The four main steps involved in producing a beedi are rewinding the thread, cutting the beedi leaves, rolling the beedi, and folding the beedi head. Beedi industry 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 who play around tobacco and to others who often live in unventilated houses in which he work goes on. The main challenges here are, to implement the existing legislation for protection and welfare of beedi workers as well as to begin the search for new avenues of local employment and training for new skills.

**Construction Industry:** Construction Industry occupies a pivotal position in the nation’s development plans. It is the second largest contributor to the Gross
Domestic products after the agricultural sector. It covers a variety of work and operations. Its activities range from construction of dam and bridges, roads and tracks, factories and offices, schools, hospitals and ordinary residential buildings forming a major sector of employment in India. Nearly half of the workers in this industry are women. The employment pattern in this industry is seasonal and fluctuates largely due to climatic conditions. Building activity in general is at its peak during the winter months and is at a standstill in the rainy season. The socio-economic problems faced by the construction workers in this industry are numerous and their working conditions are hard and exploitative. They usually suffer from low wage rates, job discriminations, underemployment, and are overburdened with their family duties. Workers are exposed to scorching heat, rain, cold and dust molten materials etc. A large numbers of workers are exposed to risks of workplace accidents and occupational disease.

They live in huts or under canvas, where no sanitary facilities, and crèche facilities are available. The social protection is virtually non-existent due to lack of stable nexus between employee and employers, inability of employment, uncertain earning of workers and irregular duration of work. Wages in the industry are large at minimum or sub-minimum level. Women and children are paid wages at comparatively low rates as compare to men. The challenges in this sector are two fold: first, to improve the working conditions and the social security support to women construction workers, and second, to undertake rapid skills upgradation and policy measures, to accelerate employment opportunities for women workers in the scenario of changing technologies.

**Agarbathi Industry:** Emerging from the traditional modes of making and marketing, the Agarbathi industry has today become a major business enterprise in India. Originally it started as a family concern. The Government of India later declared it as a cottage industry. In the hands of a few innovative entrepreneurs, it has even attained the status of a small scale industry. It is a labour intensive industry providing employment to lakhs of people, among them, large number of women. A few decades ago, agrabathis were made out of natural products like bamboos, resinoids, balsams and essential oils. The traditional processes of manufacturing, which were laborious and time consuming have now been replaced
by new means of production. With the entry of synthetic perfumes, automatic chemicals and natural oils, the agarbathi manufacturer has changed his manufacturing methods. Thus, agarbathi manufacturing takes different forms. A large number of workers, both men and women, are employed to complete the various processes involved in the manufacture of agarbathis, but the units in which they work are widely scattered.

Women workers generally out-number the men in the agarbathi industry. The agarbathi enterprise, to a large extent, depends upon the labour of women. They belong to both categories of workers, viz. factory labour as well as piece-rate labour. In an agarbathi factory, women roll agarbathis, pack them in white paper, put these in covers and seal the covers and get them ready for dispatch. The number of women who work as piece rate workers is substantially larger than those who work in the factories.

Thus, both in factories and their homes, many women toil for a number of hours daily to augment the resources of their employers.

Considering the fact that women workers in the agarbathi industry form a sizeable chunk of the female labour force, and for that matter a labour force that is often severely underpaid and exploited, it is important that those who work for the welfare of women know their situation and understand their problems.

**Brick Industry:** Brick remains one of the most important building materials in India. However, Brick making is still a traditional industry and it is generally confined to rural and peri-urban areas. Almost all the brick making units in India are in the unorganised sector, employing traditional technology. Notably, the Indian brick industry is the second largest producer in the world, next only to china. It has more than 100,000 operating units, producing about 100 billion bricks annually.

Women employed in brick kilns are mostly the migrant labour brought from other areas either within or outside the state. These workers live in the huts or the quarters made for them by the employer in the vicinity of the brick kiln. Majority of the women workers were found engaged mainly in the jobs incidental to brick moulding. They worked as helpers to the moulders by making cakes out of the prepared mud mixture and passing these cakes to their male partners who
then shaped them in bricks with the help of a brick moulder. The women workers were not found employed in operations like earth digging and preparation of the mud mixture which were carried out by the male counterparts. In a few cases, however, the moulding operations were done by the women as well. The work of carrying the moulded bricks to the drying yards and arranging them in proper rows was being done generally by the women workers. The women also engaged in the operations related with the unloading of the trench. In the group of trench unloaders they carried the fired bricks to the storing yard with the help of hand driven carts and in some cases also on the head. The sorting and stacking operations required some skills and were performed generally by the males.  

Inspite of the pivotal role of this industry in the activities relating to the infrastructural development in the Country, the living conditions of the workers in this industry are far from satisfactory. These women are unprotected and suffer from economic exploitation due to ignorance and illiteracy. They do arduous work for long hours, generally in unhygienic conditions effecting their health. Protective legislation in the critical areas of wages, maternity benefit, childcare and social security have not benefited a great majority of them.

There is an urgent need of advocacy roles so that the government and policy makers take some concrete steps for ameliorating the socioeconomic conditions of these workers. It is suggested that the government should make an exhaustive and comprehensive legislation, which could streamline the employment procedures, the practice of advance money, working conditions, wages and other welfare facilities.  

**Handloom Industry:** Handloom industry is another area where majority of women workers engaged. In these industry women work as winders who winding the yarn on bobbins and perms with the help of hand driven charkhas. Some women work as finishers who were engaged in removing the unwanted threads and knots from the finished handloom cloth or fabric. The daily earnings of women workers are considerably low and are much less than the wages prescribed under the Minimum Wages Act. There are no fixed hours of work in the handloom units and the workers work at their convenience. Crèche facility, separate latrine and urinal facilities, maternity benefit, medical facility etc. are not provided in
most of the handloom units. The reason is employer does not make arrangements according to legislation. Most of the women workers are not aware of the beneficial provisions contained in important labour legislations. Thus, need of hour is to create awareness among women workers and properly implemented the provisions of labour legislations.

**Livestock:** Rearing cattle is largely a women’s activity. It is often combined with ‘housework’ or ‘non-productive activity.’ But livestock products are both monetised and non-monetised, the milk that is produced at home, being partly used for home consumption and partly for sale. As a result, reliable statistics on women’s contribution in the field of livestock are not available. About three-fourth of rural households own livestock. India’s livestock population is the largest in the world, and the prospects for larger markets for milk and milk products, both in India and abroad, seem bright. The main policy implication in this sector is the need to recognise the potential for women’s contribution, to increase their skills and knowledge, and, to ensure their ownership of both the livestock assets as well as partnership in institutional set-ups such as co-operatives.16

**Hicks Thermometers Industry:** Hicks thermometers industry is a labour-intensive industry providing employment to lakhs of people, among them, large numbers of women. The manufacture of thermometers takes different forms. A large number of workers, both men and women, are employed to complete the various processes involved in the manufacture of thermometers. The process which is involved in manufacture of thermometers are tube cutting, packing, temperature setting and three process. Women in this industry belong to both categories of worker factory worker as well as piece-rate labour. Women workers in thermometers industry, included, work for eight hours a day with a ½ hour lunch break. The work performed by the women workers in this industry are tube cutting, packing, temperature setting and three process. The working and living conditions in these industry are far from satisfactory. It is again suggested that Government should pay attention to improve the conditions of women workers in this industry.

**Lock Industry:** Lock industry is a labour intensive. It is a mixture of big organised units and unorganised household units. The different processes of lock
making are carried out in different units. Generally, cutting bending and grooves making works are done in relatively big units with the help of power presses and the processes like buffing, electroplating, spray painting assembling etc. are carried out in small workshop and household units. Mostly women workers are engaged in unorganised household units. The daily earnings of women workers are considerably low and were much less than the wages prescribed under the Minimum Wages Act. They work long hours and working and living conditions of women workers are not satisfactory. Labour laws are not properly implemented. There is a need to implement properly the labour laws.

Footwear Industry: Footwear industry in India occupies a place of prominence in the Indian economy in view of its massive potential for employment, growth and exports. The work is carried out in factory as well as unorganised household units. Women are engaged in sewing, packing, cutting etc. They usually suffer from low wage rates, job discrimination, underemployment and are overburdened with their family duties. It is important that those who work for the welfare of women should know their situation and understand their problems.

Crafts Sector: The crafts sector is closely linked with international markets. Today it earns over Rs. 8000 crores through exports. Women are concentrated in certain crafts like embroidery, weaving, cane, bamboo, and grass products, costume jewellery, pottery, coir products etc. However, in recent years they are entering male-dominated crafts like brassware. The market for craft products is expanding both in India and abroad, and artisans have already begun blending traditional skills with new technologies and designs. For women artisans in particular, there is a need to promote skill upgradation alongwith a more market – oriented approach to production.\textsuperscript{17}

Home Based Work: The study on industrial sub-contracting shows the extent to which major private sector and even public sector companies have resorted to outsourcing work, including home based work, in recent years. Although this has increased work opportunities for women, it is unfortunate that the earnings are very low, sometimes well below the minimum wage. The average monthly earnings in technical trades like electrical are reportedly Rs. 450 per month, strangely, no different from agarbathi making or leaf plate making. Nor do the
workers engaged by sub-contractors, have access to social security systems. Due to the low piece rates in home-based work, women take the help of their children, thus leading to a situation where the incidence of child labour seems to be increasing in the home-based trades. The ILO adopted a *Convention on Homework in 1996*. The Commission recommends that the Government formulate a National Policy on Home-based Work, in conformity with the provisions of the ILO convention.\(^{18}\)

**Food Processing:** Within the food processing sector, the last decade has seen increasing marginalisation of the small scale and unorganised sector. Women, using traditional skills in many primary food-processing areas, carry out a large proportion of food processing in the unorganised sector. Extensive technological modernisation in the organised sector is also displacing not only large numbers of unskilled workers among women, but also many skilled workers, whose skills have become obsolete for handling, new technologies. Whereas the Government is investing heavily in the organised food processing sector, there is practically, no attention being paid to the unorganised sector. This is one area where upgrading skills and bringing in modern technologies of food processing, preservation and packing can create many employment opportunities, particularly for women.

**Textiles and Garments Industry:** It is a major employer of women. In particular, the cotton, textile, handloom and to some extent power loom industry and the growing garments sector, both factory and home based, employ women. Unfortunately, employment in handlooms is declining because of lack of availability of cotton, yarn, competition from power looms and lack of skill training. Linking of handloom weavers to market requirements and skill upgradation of the weavers, will improve their employment prospects. The garment sector has become the fastest growing export sector in the Country. Women are employed here, both in the export factories as well as in home-based work. In the factories they earn more than home based workers, but require protection of the labour laws for social security. They also require continuous upgradation of skills for increased productivity and earnings.

**Street Vending and Rag Picking:** These are other major areas of employment for women in both urban and rural areas. In the last five years, there has been
considerable pressure on vendors, which can certainly be traced to globalisation. In the urban areas, there has been a tremendous increase of vehicular traffic due to the opening of the automobile markets. Indian cities too, are now being planned and built with multi-story complexes and separate commercial centres. This has placed great pressure on existing infrastructures, and necessitated large investments in rebuilding. The street vendor is now perceived as a nuisance in the way of the new infrastructure and is being removed wholesale. The Indian middle-class too now wants cities without street vendors. In the rural areas, there is an increasing pressure on the rural haats as the space that was traditionally reserved for them is now being privatised and used for other purposes. In order to preserve and expand this employment, it is necessary to make provisions for vendors at the stage of town planning and laying infrastructure. A similar additional change is needed in the case of rag pickers who derive their employment from collecting waste and at the same time provide a cleaning and recycling service to the city. They need to be recognised as contributors in the task of maintaining the environment of towns and cities.\textsuperscript{19}

**The service sector:** It is well known that the service sector is rapidly expanding in India. The informal or unorganised service sector is also expanding with the large scale opening or opportunities for women. The largest increase in employment opportunities comes from domestic service, education, child care and health services. Unfortunately, women workers in this sector have received very little attention, with the result that their earnings remain low and their employment insecure. The health sector is also expanding. There are between 2 to 3 million midwives in the Country and most of the births in the rural areas are still attended by them. Unfortunately, not enough attention has been paid to integrating these practitioners within the growing health system, increasing their skills and helping them to attain the status of professional health providers. Wherever this has done, it has been found that it has significantly increased the earnings of the midwives, and has resulted in better maternal and child health services.

There are approximately 5 lakh nurses of various categories in the Country. Although there is a perceived shortage of nurses, the incomes received by qualified nurses remain low at an average of Rs. 60 per day in the rural areas, Rs.
84 in the urban areas. At the same time, they have long working hours, run the risk of sexual exploitation, and lack upward career options. Many nurses are looking for opportunities to emigrate, particularly to western countries. There was considerable demand for Indian nurses in the Gulf countries, but now nurses from the Philippines seem to be in greater demand. Stringent visa rules and educational requirements have made it difficult for many nurses to go to the more attractive western countries. With more investment in career training for nurses and midwives, and better working and earning conditions, there is great potential for employment, both for fully qualified nurses and auxiliary nurses and other paramedicals.20

In recent time, women are engaged in various sectors, but unfortunately the working and living conditions of working women are not satisfactory. Therefore, understanding of the problems of women workers is essential for formulation of suitable ameliorative measures for welfare.

4. Factor Affecting Employment of Women

The factors affecting employment of women, given below are, however not exhaustive rather indicative and suggestive in nature.

A. Social Factors

Social Attitude

Social attitude is the most important factor and also responsible for low level of women’s employment. Such an attitude which does not encourage women for employment has its roots in the patriarchy existing in the society since ages. It also relegated women to a secondary position and confined them to play the role of home-maker. Society in India does not favour employment of women as they are still looked upon as reproductive and not productive actors. Social ethos and perception control and essentially constrict women’s work. There are different standards of behaviour for men and women in social sphere and this is also carried on and reflected in their working world. Women’s participation in employment outside of home is viewed as inappropriate, undesirable and potentially dangerous to their chastity and womanly virtue. They are first and foremost daughter, wife and mother – all roles being interrelated and interwoven – and any new addition to the primary role must come second, thus secondary.21 Though matriarchal
system prevails in some parts of India, especially in tribal belts, such examples may not be generalized to overrule patriarchy and hence men’s dominance in the Country at large. Working women is still an urban phenomenon due to changed attitude of urban society towards employment of women. The attitude of society is changing mainly because of economic compulsions but has not changed enough to drastically affect the employment structure in the Country.

**Traditions, Customs and Taboo**

Indian society values its traditions in the context of ancient civilization. Families still believe not to allow girls to work for income. If they are allowed to work their income is not meant to run the house. Fathers are reluctant for their girls’ employment in the first instance, and against utilizing their money for household expenses.

Customarily female children are discouraged to go out of town for education and particularly for employment. Again, economic compulsions are weakening such traditions and customs but not enough to mend them.

Certain occupations and jobs are considered favorably for women’s employment. These are teaching, nursing and medical jobs. On the contrary a number of jobs are just like taboo in our society and women either discouraged or legally barred from – employment. For example, taxi, truck or auto driving is no meant for women in India as these jobs are considered not safe. This protective umbrella rules out employment of women in a number of occupations and professions. Women are movers in the society but earth moving jobs are denied to them.

**Marriage**

In our society marriage seriously undermines employment of a female. Consequently she enters late in the job market or makes re-entry because they have to, sometimes, discontinue their employment on account of marriage. This particular customs has priority over every other thing and marriage comes first in case of females. The prime age that is around twenty five is important for males to find employment but females are to marry at this juncture. Hence they loose employment opportunity in their prime age. Consequently women face the problem of re-entry or late entry into labour market. Therefore, women’s
employment or prospects are compromised on account of marriage which is always on high agenda of every girl’s parents.

**Domestic Chores**

Since ancient time women’s prime responsibility has been domestic chores as if they are meant for it. It adversely affects their employment prospects. They have to do only those jobs which would give them enough time for domestic chores. Casualisation of women’s employment is also because of their duty to perform domestic chores. Working women are not supposed to dispense with domestic chores and it seriously hampers their advancement. Those women who have nuclear family have to balance between domestic chores and job responsibilities. The same dilemma is faced by working women living with joint family. Women try to avoid those assignments in job which jeopardize their domestic activity and schedule. A compromise with their jobs due to unavoidable domestic chores affect their options in employment and promotions as well.  

**Immobility**

Lake of mobility either because of household chores or due to inadequacy of arrangement for care of children does restrict employment of women. For men occupational diversification and mobility are not very difficult proposition. But for women it is greatly galling. Women cannot easily move to other places because of family obligation, low skill etc. When men, migrate all family responsibilities invariably come to the shoulder of women. Thus, they have to contend with whatever employment opportunity is available in and around their residential area. Women have immobility in terms of space, time and energy. They are generally reluctant or have barriers to their movement from one place to another. It is either their own sense of insecurity of familial ties which bar their mobility in terms of space. Similarly their mobility in terms of time also gets affected during pregnancy and few month after delivery of baby. It makes them not very suitable for employment in those occupations requiring field work or traveling frequently. Hence immobility of women is considered an obstacle in their employment or they have to forego such jobs where mobility is pre-requisite. It curtails their employment opportunities and options, and also acts as deterrent to their promotion in employment.
**Child Care**

Indian society has tradition of assigning responsibility, partially if not fully, to female children to look after young siblings in the family since female children are asked to take care of their young brothers and sisters, even in their childhood. Women have to devote a lot of time in taking care of their children as child care is taken as their sole responsibility in our society. Bearing and rearing children compels them to compromise with their employment. It acts as one of the main hurdles in the employment of women.

**Dependency**

The way female children are brought up in our society, especially in villages and towns that they become dependent on male persons. When they travel even as grown up, females depend on some male member of the family. It is observed that female applicants appearing for interview are usually accompanied by some family member. Such dependency discourages them to go for employment, particularly out of town. It makes them to remain confined to their place and hence restricts their employment opportunities and options. Dependency of women thus hinders their employment.24

**Accommodation**

Women who get jobs or employment out of their town face the problem of accommodation from the point of view of safety and security. Those who are in employment and have transferable job find it difficult to move so far away places or rural area due to fear that they may not get a suitable accommodation. Therefore, women workers try to avert this situation, sometimes at the cost of their employment. The problem of safe accommodation for women, especially working women is so grave that various committees have been formed to find a solution. Since working women hostels are extremely limited in number, women avoid such jobs where they have to move out from their town. Beside this, the guardians of women consider it unsafe to send their women wards away from their homes to take up work. They prefer work locally available.25 Hence accommodation poses a big problem for working women and becomes a hindrance in employment, particularly out station employment in the interior places and rural area.
B. Economic Factors

Education

In general, Indian still tend to think of the education and careers of boys as more important than those of girls, for the simple reason that boys inevitably become the primary breadwinners of their own families when they marry. For families with limited financial resources, the cost of uniforms, books, and transportation to schools is an additional burden and a deterrent to the education of all children, even when the cost of schooling itself is borne by the government. The dropout rate is consequently high as girls may be taken out of school to help with domestic or other chores.\textsuperscript{26} Investment in education gets priority for male children in Indian society. Female children rarely get preference in the matter of education especially at tertiary level. However returns to education in case of female education are high enough and make a strong case for education of girls. Parents usually compromise for the quality of education and expenses in case of female children as they invest just to educate them and not from the viewpoint of employment. Prevailing perception espouses that girls are to be matured for marriage, incidence of education is only for increasing their value in the matrimonial market.\textsuperscript{27} On the contrary male children’s education primarily aims at their career and hence best possible education is provided to them. It is the reason for inequality in enrolment sex-ratio right from primary or tertiary level. Another off-shot of the domestic ethos is the lower level of educational attainment for the women, which consequently confines them to lower hierarchy and rung of occupation and employment. Thus, skill attainment which is imperative for modern and professional employment takes the backseat which in turn encloses girls and women to unskilled and manual works when they venture into job market. Not unnaturally therefore, they have to undergo the attested woes that all such low skilled and manual jobs essentially entail.

Training

Job-oriented courses of elementary nature are generally preferred for females rather than males. Women are largely in computer courses, boutique and fabric painting and similar elementary courses which lead them to low paid jobs and land them in the secondary segment of labour market. Moreover, participation
rate of women in training programmes to update knowledge and skills has been very low. Therefore, women’s advancement in employment is generally hampered. Exclusive women training programmes are very few at least in the private sector. It partly explains the reason for women being largely in the low-paid jobs.

**Unionism**

Unionism is traditionally a male bastion and women have not registered significance in this regard. Women generally lack unionism as they have dual responsibility. Consequently women’s unions are rare and as a member of common union they are occasionally active. In most of the organizations they are members as it is compulsive.

Lacking unionism among women workers make them relatively vulnerable and does not inspire to fight against sex based problems such as reservation in promotion and training programmes. As a result discriminate against women could not be eliminated in India.\(^2^8\)

**Infrastructure**

Lack of infrastructure and other facilities is hindrance in women’s employment. Women have relatively negligible access to facilities, especially in the matter of credit. Even collateral rule does not accept women as guarantors unless they have fixed assets in their names. A discriminatory approach to provide infrastructural facilities to women is commonly observed in India. It also hampers their employment prospects.

**Payment**

The assumption that women are not primary breadwinners and that they provide only supplemental income to their families has resulted in their extensive exploitation.\(^2^9\) Low payment offered to women has confined them to the lower cadre in employment. They usually accept discriminating wages and hence inequality has got perpetuated in rural and informal sectors. In addition, the contributions of women make to the running of the home and family businesses (for example, collecting and processing fuel, maintaining vegetable plots or poultry) are often rendered invisible, because this work in not formally paid and generally is taken for granted. Indeed, much of women’s work is not reflected in
the available statistics on women’s employment. Of all employed women, a
greater number work in public sector, where wage discrepancies tend to be far
more than in private sector. A comparison of all fields of employment, however,
indicates substantial variation in the extent of such wage discrepancies. In small
cities and towns women teachers, for example, get less remuneration than
minimum wages paid to menial workers. Their own attitude is also responsible to
some extent. They accept less remuneration rather than sitting idle at home. Wage
differentials discourage them to go for performance and hence their career
advancement gets blocked.\textsuperscript{30}

**Supplementing Income**

It is one of the objectives of most females seeking employment. Social
attitude has indicated in their minds that males are bread earners for the family and
their role is secondary. Girls waiting for marriage work to supplement family
income in large cases. This attitude is an obstacle for their career making.
Similarly a large number of women particularly in the informal sector work to
supplement family income.\textsuperscript{31}

In undertaking economic activities in terms of wage earning Indian women
have been compelled to and their works have been conditioned not by the
consideration to eke out own livelihood but to sustain or safeguard the family
‘fortune’. They join in employment when economic conditions of the family so
demand or warrant and they are withdrawn when solvency permits. Survival of the
poorest of poor household depends on the definite economic contribution of
women members. When family can survive without women’s contribution outside
employment is considered undesirable and often a taboo. Women work during
economic distress or duress of the family, they are asked to lend helping hand to
its survival. Women’s work is exclusively for the family rather for their own
sake and sustenance.

It would be safe assertion that most of the Indian women worker join in the
labour force only after their marriage, that is after they become wife, mother. This
singular factor poses contradictory pressure on them. They enter job market when
the male’s earning becomes inconsistent, inadequate or withheld. They are
withdrawn when male can win the bread. Women workers thus straightway
become flexible more for the family than for the employer. Recruitment option exercised by the family limits women’s flexibility in the labour market.\textsuperscript{32}

**Technological Development**

It is evident that modernization, industrialization and technological changes have directly and unmistakably pushed women workers to the periphery. Development endeavors have intensified inequality between sexes. Sophisticated machines have thrown women out because they do not have the assess to training and handling. Wherever mechanization has intruded thus making tasks easier men have taken over those activities which were conventionally performed by women, i.e. threshing, fodder cutting etc. Because of technological breakthrough men’s work has greatly been simplified and time spent on it has declined. All skilled jobs and those associated with machinery tend to be the close preserve of men.

Modernization process and technological invasion have evicted women from what is called women’s traditional jobs, have placed them in entirely new, very often awful, work environment and the technologies themselves have subverted women’s concerns. Women lack education, expertise or professional skill essential for modern industrial jobs and there is absolutely no doubt that women lag far behind in such skill attainment. As such women are being swept away from the skilled and professional occupations.

When a new technology is introduced to automate specific manual labour women tend to lose their jobs because they are confined to and are responsible for the manual duties. Studies have shown that technological change has eliminated many jobs traditionally performed by women and alternative job opportunities have not been created for women at the same rate as for men.

There are several instances, which illustrate the nature and extent of women’s displacement because of technological advent and advancement. When wheat grinding and weeding are replaced by wheat grinding machines, and other modern technologies women get evicted from the works. When bucket system of irrigation is replaced by tube well and canal water women are pushed out of traditional occupations. Women do not usually benefit from jobs created by the introduction of new technology.
Gender Based Division Labour

The division of labour market into ‘male’ and ‘female’ sectors have tended to control the distribution of women workers within the economy and restricted their employment opportunities.\(^{33}\)

The gender-based division which has extended from household work to work outside the home. Agriculture is the most important activity of women workforce in the rural areas, with women engaged as cultivators and labourers. Women are primarily involved in those activities which require less skill and more back breaking and low paying work.

In other sectors also women are concentrated in low skilled and low-paying jobs. For example, in the building and construction industry, women workers are engaged only in unskilled occupations. No women workers are engaged in skilled or semi-skilled occupations as masons, electricians, carpenters, foremen, fitters, bhistis, floors grinders, sinkers etc.

Even in industries in which women are employed in large numbers like textile and export-oriented industries like garments, hosiery, electronics and food processing gender based division of labour can be seen.

Though a gender-based division of labour is prevalent in both the organised and unorganised sector, labour laws are openly flouted in the unorganised sector. Women in the unorganised sector work under highly exploitative conditions. They enjoy none of the social security benefits due to them. Though, India has a large number of labour laws, they tend to ignore women’s experiences and their outlook tends to be paternalistic. While provisions of a number of these acts needs to be amended in order to make them gender sensitive, the enforcement of these acts also needs to be stepped up, particularly in the unorganised sector.\(^{34}\)

C. Biological Factors

Biological Differences

Women are discriminated against in employment on biological grounds. There are some fundamental biological differences which not only distinguish women from men but are also responsible for their secondary status and role in the society. Women, because of their child bearing function and lesser mobility, stayed closer to home and assumed domestic roles. Males, because of their greater
muscular strength assumed the arduous roles such as hunting and farming and seized power in the society over which they have maintained their control till the present time. Society continues to believe that men should have roles outside their homes where they interact with other people while women should work inside, closer to kitchen because of their child bearing and rearing functions.

Stressing the biological differences between men and women on the basis of the sexual division of labour in society, Murdock suggests that biological differences such as the greater physical strength of men and the fact that women bear children led to gender roles. Due to biological functions of child bearing a woman is tied to home. Because of her physique she is attached to less strenuous tasks. Jobs requiring physical strength are denied to them. Security jobs particularly in the private sector are restricted for women due to protective measures. Reproductive nature of women restricts their employment opportunities as it is presumed to increase the rate of labour turn-over. Women are sometimes not provided employment because they take long leave due to pregnancy and childbirth.

It has been observed and studied that young women are preferred in employment. Women beyond their prime age are discriminated against and those making re-entry find it difficult to get suitable employment. Age has become a deterrent for women above 40-45 age group as there are very few takers in the job market. Child Rearing

Mothers with infants avoid employment as child rearing is considered their “natural” prime responsibility. Though the provision of crèches has been made mandatory, informal sector rarely provides such facilities to women workers with infants. Therefore, child bearing and rearing are deterrent for women’s employment.

D. Psychological Factors

Insecurity

Women feel insecure and avoid employment in such places where their security is not up to the mark. The poor law and order conditions aggravate their
sense of insecurity. Consequently, working at not-so-familiar places and interior rural area is generally ruled out by them. In some cases feeling of insecurity is so strong that women prefer to remain home makers.

**Confidence**

Women’s confidence for jobs other than considered suitable for them is not so strong and therefore, they do not go for employment in a number of occupations like sales representative etc. They also lack confidence in case of employment requiring frequent travel by public transport. A majority of women is risk aversor by nature and avoid employment where risk element has high probability.

**Inward Looking**

Women born and brought up in traditional setting are generally inward looking and do not give much weight to employment. They prefer a settled married life. Hence a large number of women never try for employment and remain home makers. Inward looking attitude of Indian women, especially married women, deters them to go for employment. Their personal world revolve around their family.

**Sexual Harassment Fear**

Largely the fear of sexual harassment causes the fear of insecurity and lack of confidence among women. Sexual abuse, verbal and physical, always haunts in their mind, and guardians also feel uncomfortable, which daunts them to go for employment in those occupations and sectors considered not safe for women. Even women workers avoid those postings where they have apprehension of sexual abuse. Similarly night duty discourages them not only because of their family responsibility but also due to apprehension of sexual abuse.

Thus it is clear, that constitutional guarantee, ratification of the ILO Convention No. 100, and legal provisions have given protection to women workers but could not bring them at par with men. Professional attitude and consciousness for career has still not been inculcated among women in general and a majority of working women especially in low-paid jobs, in particular.
However, listings of various types of factors are indicative in nature and may be at variance in different cases. The plight of women in general and, working women in particular is well known in Indian society. There is a need of changing perception about women’s work and its importance hither to neglected at political, social and economic levels in India.
REFERENCES


3. Sati was an inhuman practice existed amongst Hindus. That means voluntary or coerced immolation of widow on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband.

4. Lest we forget, The Times of India, New Delhi, October 1, 1997, p. 4.


12. Ibid.


15. Ibid.
18. Ibid, 9.56.
25. Supra note, 23.
27. Aman Mandal, Women Workers in Brick Factory, p. 31.
31. Ibid, p. 82.
32. Supra note 27, pp. 3-5.