CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Beedi manufacturing industry is an agro-based and labour-intensive unorganised industry with the employment rate only next to agriculture and handloom industry. The industry employs ‘factory workers’ as well as ‘home based workers’ for the purpose of manufacturing beedi. About 94 per cent of workers in the industry are home workers and majority of them are women.

Beedi workers are socially, economically and physically very weak, as they have been experiencing exploitations, since the beginning of the process of industrialisation. The exploitation of the workers in beedi industry is mainly a socio-economic issue. They are not entitled to proper legal wages, bonus, maternity benefits, pension, housing facilities, health facilities, recreational facilities, etc. The problem of child labour is also a major social concern. Their economic condition presents a dismal picture and most of these workers live below the poverty line. Most of the problems in beedi rolling industry occur due to the contract system of employment. In this industry, there is no defined employer-employee relationship. Unlike visible relationship in factories, no such clear relationship exists in the cases of home-based beedi workers. Beedi rollers are facing a lot of problems like low wages, uncertain employment and unhealthy working conditions, health problems, low level of implementation of labour laws, anti-tobacco movement repercussions, wage differentials across states, problems of the availability of raw materials, competition, increasing consumption of gutka and other tobacco products, shifting of beedi industry, closing down of industry abruptly without notice, problem of rejection, nationalisation of tendu leaf etc. Beedi workers are found in both urban as well as rural areas but the conditions of the workers in rural areas are more miserable.

In the background of the above discussions, the present study deals mainly with the following objectives:

(i) To analyze the socio-economic profile of the workers engaged in beedi manufacturing industry in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.
Only some static-cum mobile hospitals/dispensaries are working for beedi workers. There is immediate need to set up more hospitals/dispensaries in beedi workers dominated districts; this will help a large number of beedi workers. Moreover, there is need to ensure that doctors and medicines are always available on time. More bed should be reserved in district hospital and medical aid should be increased.

During the visit I found several mobile points for the treatment of beedi workers but workers were not aware of the places and times of arrival of mobile dispensary. An identified area should be used for the mobile point. Maintenance allowance should be given regularly during medical treatment. All the medicines and injections prescribed by doctor should be provided by the dispensaries to the patients. The process of reimbursement of expenditure for the treatment in cases of heart, kidney and cancer should be provided after treatment. In the absence of reimbursement of expenditure, most of the beedi workers are unable to take treatment as they do not have enough money for taking treatment. Special officers should be appointed to listen to the complaints of beedi workers. Lady doctors should be appointed in sufficient number in all dispensaries. Dispensaries should remain open for twenty four hours and seven days. Beedi workers should also be made aware of different beedi welfare schemes.

Housing schemes is one of the most important schemes for beedi workers. Workers who do not own residential land should be provided residential “patta” by the government. The time for disbursement of instalment should be reduced. The present subsidy amount should be raised up to Rs. 50,000 per beneficiary.

Government should promote more microfinance institutions in the beedi rollers dominated areas. Concerted efforts may be made to involve NGOs/trade unions etc. to generate awareness among the workers and to organise and educate them. It will help them to take advantage of various schemes in operation for their benefit, thereby raise their productivity, income and socio-economics status.

Trade unions and NGOs should work hard to give information about labour laws to beedi workers. A massive awareness generation programmes have to be launched by using mediums and organisations like; pamphlets, brochures, handbill, audio-visual media, newspapers, and organisations like local cultural group, trade
unions, educational institutions, SHGs, NGOs, educational institutes etc. Labour inspector should inspect place of contractor and he should also interact with beedi rollers. He should also be responsible and accountable to trade union leader and beedi workers. The level of unionisation among the workers appeared to be neither encouraging nor very effective.

Trained and experienced persons should be appointed as welfare officers so they should properly consider the problems confronting workers as human beings. They should be fit to take the right kind of approach and should be having personal knowledge of condition of workers and should have frequent contacts with them. The study found out that most workers are unaware of their legal rights and of the Beedi Workers' Welfare Schemes and that there is an urgent need to create awareness among them. Specific training programmes should be undertaken for the benefits of the workers.

Beedi workers do not have alternative opportunity so contractors easily exploit workers. There is thus need to establish small scale industries in M. P. and Chhattisgarh. It is hoped that eventually the aspirations of beedi workers for a better standard of living and education, coupled with improved economic conditions and employment opportunities will drive them to shift to better and more decent jobs.

The low cost of cigarettes and the fact that people perceive them as status symbols are reasons for the decrease in the number of beedi smokers. Earlier most labourers used to smoke beedi but now they smoke cigarettes. The increasing popularity of paan masala has also contributed to the decline in beedi production. According to industry sources, many people prefer chewing paan masala to smoking these days. To promote beedi industry some type of restrictions should be implemented against paan masala and cigarettes. Beedi industry needs financial support from the government banks. Lakhs of beedi workers were depending upon the industry for their livelihood and the statutory warning on beedi bundles should be restricted to the minimum.

Moreover, shifting of beedi industry and 'anti-tobacco movement' might decrease the production of beedi. Simultaneously, that would affect the industry, workers and government revenue at large. Hence, it is required that the government should adopt better comprehensive policies for the workers of the industry and it
should be more focused for those who become unemployed after closing down and shifting of the beedi industry, however they may be small in numbers. NGOs and other private bodies should also provide support to the unemployed due to shifting and closing of the industry. So that the worker belongs to the industry have some alternatives after losing their jobs.

To increase production government needs to reduce excise duty from beedi. Presently, it is Rs. 11 per thousand beedi; earlier it was Rs. 7 per thousand beedies. The excise duty should be reduced from Rs. 11 per thousand beedies to Rs. 5 per thousand beedies. It will encourage producers to produce more and there will be growth in the consumption of beedies. There is an exemption from excise duty for unbranded beedies up to 20 lakh beedies in a year but that is subject to declaration with Department of Central Excise and regular monitoring. There is need to give more exemption from excise duty for unbranded beedies up to 50 lakh beedies in a year.

The real solution of the problems of the beedi workers in the present context is that they should organise themselves on a cooperative basis in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Co-operative system can be developed with the help of Kerala Dinesh Beedi. In the light of deplorable socio-economic conditions the choice between two alternatives merits special attention: (i) to ensure continuity in employment with due protection of statutory minimum wages or (ii) encouraging beedi workers to be self-reliant by becoming self employed rather than being prey to the dictates of the employers.

It is required that the socio-economic condition of beedi rollers must be improved. Separate working place is needed for workers. Their houses are their working places; these houses should be cleaned regularly. Those workers who have completed six months in this industry should get all benefits of various schemes according to law, and should be ensured that all beedi workers get identity cards without any hurdle, optimum quantity and quality of tendu leaf and tobacco should be issued to the beedi rollers. Uniform norms of distribution of raw material to workers should be worked out and ‘contract system’ should be banned. Working conditions of women are miserable in this industry. Therefore, it essential to create more employment opportunity for women workers. Further, child labour must be removed from the beedi industry. Government should promote more microfinance institutions, NGOs and Trade Unions in the beedi rollers dominated areas. Beedi workers do not
have alternative opportunity so contractors easily exploit workers. There is need to establish small scale industry in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. It can be further emphasised that the solution of problems faced by beedi workers and beedi industries lies in organising on cooperative basis in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.