PREFACE

The workforce of the beedi rolling industry comes mostly from unemployed, illiterate or inadequately educated, and disadvantaged sections of the society. This occupation for them is an easiest way of employment as it demands minimal skill and virtually no qualifications. These teeming millions come under the category of unorganised sector occupying more than 93 per cent of the total workforce of this country.

Beedi manufacturing industry is one of the oldest industries in India. Beedi rolling industry is characterized by high labour intake and less technology involvement. In most of the cases the beedi rolling activities are carried out in the houses itself and hence the rough estimations show that out of the total workers involved in this industry, only 6 per cent are organised workers and the rest, that is 94 per cent are unorganized home based workers. Beedi rolling is one of the major informal sector activities in India that employs a large number of women and children. The Government of India estimates that there are about 50.53 million workers in this industry. Of these, the majority are home-based female workers who live below the poverty line. Beedi workers constitute one of the most vulnerable sections of the country’s workforce. Spread over several states of India, their number has been increasing ever since the beginning of the practice of beedi smoking as we understand today. By state-wise estimate of beedi workers, the largest number of workers is concentrated in Madhya Pradesh (16.99 per cent) followed by West Bengal (15.45 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (15.09 per cent), Tamil Nadu (12.84 per cent) Uttar Pradesh (9.24 per cent) and so on.

The beedi manufacturers tease out manufacturing process to the households through the middlemen/contractors by supplying the raw materials (Tendu leaves, tobacco and thread) to the middlemen who in turn give to the households for further processing. This process has increased involvement of women and child labour in beedi rolling activities. In order to promote the welfare of the beedi workers the Government of India enacted the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 and Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976. Different welfare measures that include educational, housing, medical, insurance and
recreational facilities are provided under this fund. To operate the fund the Government has setup Labour Welfare Organisation. The organization is administered by the Ministry of Labour.

This thesis examines the problems of the beedi rollers, their working and living conditions and situations in which they are placed. It overviews the operation of Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966; operation of welfare schemes and programmes at grass root level; the role of the trade unions and microfinance institutions in their life and work in general, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh states in particular.

**Chapter I** provides a brief profile of unorganised sector and its role in the Indian economy. The emphasis has been given on the reviews of existing literature on beedi workers and beedi industry. The chapter also discusses the areas that need further work and the theoretical concerns the present study seeks to address.

**Chapter II** begins with an overview of historical background of beedi industry in India, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh and then examines the concentration of beedi industry in the country. By looking at the degree of beedi industry in unorganised sector, it focuses on the growth of beedi industry in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in comparison with the country as a whole. Moreover, the Chapter also describes the functioning of beedi industry, the production process and techniques of beedi making and a number of problems faced by beedi rollers.

**Chapter III** begins with the profile of the study area. This section mainly focuses on demographic profile i.e. population, climate, area, rivers, minerals, agriculture, industry, banking, education, health services, and then goes on to discuss socio-economic conditions, living standard, working conditions and work environment of beedi rollers in field area with the help of primary data. It further examines the condition of women beedi rollers in their families and society, their participation in important decision making process which are important to their family. It also analyses the educational problems of children involved in beedi rolling which is one of the major reasons of child labour in the sector. In this regard an attempt made to analyse the interconnectivity between the educational and financial conditions of parents and its impact on child education. This has a direct implication
on child labour, educational standard and availability of educational facilities through Labour Welfare Department.

Chapter IV studies the concept of social welfare and social security with regard to beedi rollers. The Chapter also examines various provisions given in different social welfare schemes, programmes and welfare fund for beedi workers, especially housing, health, educational, recreational, sports, cultural activities and schemes. It further deals with various legislative provisions by the Government in this regard, which have a bearing on the beedi workers. These provisions includes Minimum Wages Act, 1948; Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act; 1966 and Beedi and Cigar Welfare Fund Act, 1976. The role of trade unions, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and micro finance institutions with regard to the beedi workers etc have also been discussed in this chapter. The Chapter underlines the fact that there are problems with the implementation of labour laws and welfare schemes.

The final chapter, besides summarising the study, also provides some suggestions and policy guidelines for the beedi industry and its workers.

This research work is significant in understanding and examining the unorganised beedi workers. It focuses on Indian beedi workers' socio-economic conditions and problems with special reference to beedi rolling industry in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Madhya Pradesh is quite relevant for the study as it has the highest number of beedi workers in India. The thesis modestly attempts to make a contribution to the understanding of the beedi workers' problems for academicians, researchers, administrators, planners, policy makers and trade unions. Further, an attempt made with the intention to influence policies to create better environment for beedi workers.