This chapter intends to discuss, in the first part, the conceptual and measurement issues associated with valuing women's work and contribution to the economy. While noting a gender division of labour and its implications, it highlights the significance of women's participation in paid work. The second part tries to identify the major trends on women's participation in paid work over the last three decades. Noting a global feminisation of the labour force, a discussion of its causes and consequences is also attempted in the third part. Given the regional focus of the study, the fourth part of the chapter also attempts to assess and locate the experience of India. The fifth part sums up the major arguments.

A. THE WORLD OF WORK: GENDER DIVISION

In any society, individuals carry out a diverse and complex range of activities. Those activities can be classified, in a minimalist way, by using two criteria: reward and orientation. First, certain activities reward monetarily (or in kind) the person who furnishes the labour. Some activities do not monetarily reward those who carry out them. Second, some of these activities, both paid and unpaid, are oriented primarily towards the market. Conversely, certain activities are not intended primarily for an exchange in the market, and hence the norms and rationale underlying market transactions may not be relevant for, or applicable to, them. These two criteria, which are mutually exclusive, would enable us to make the following four-fold classifications: 1) paid market centred activities, 2) paid non-market centred activities, 3) unpaid market centred activities and 4) unpaid non-market centred activities. These fourfold
classifications can be clubbed essentially into two: paid and unpaid activities. Box 2.1 furnishes such a simplified taxonomy of work.

Box 2.1: A Simple Taxonomy of Work

1. **Paid work**: activities that reward monetarily directly those who carry them out
   
   A. Market centred: activities carried out for a wage or payment in kind either at, or away from, home
   
   B. Non-market centred: activities that are not primarily oriented toward market but generate income like paid associational, political and religious activities.

2. **Unpaid work**: activities that do not directly monetarily reward those who carry them out
   
   A. Market centred: activities carried out as a part of family business units or plantations
   
   B. Non-market centred: activities falling under this group can be dissected into five categories
     
     a) **Subsistence related activities**: Production activities like dairying, livestock rearing, food preservation, making cow-dung cakes, cultivation of fruits and vegetable gardens for consumption, etc.
     
     b) **Domestic labour**: Household maintenance activities carried out daily like cooking, cleaning, ironing, and so on
     
     c) **Caring activities**: Activities like care and nurture of children, and nursing of the elderly and sick persons in the family
     
     d) **Voluntary activities** carried out as a part of philanthropic goals, charity or service
     
     e) **Leisure activities** like entertainment, reading, gardening (as a hobby), etc.

Source: Modified from Robeyns (2000)

It is fairly established that in the first type of activities (that is, paid work), participation of women has relatively been lower than that of men over time and space. Though women's participation in paid work, mainly in the market oriented activities (also to some extent in the paid associational activities such as Non-Governmental or Developmental Organisations in the Third World) has begun to grow over the years, as we shall see later, men continue to dominate. What leads to the dominance of men in paid work remains far from clear and
contested. Also, estimates on paid work depend, among other things, on how these activities are construed and measured. By and large, men have tended to dominate in paid work outside the homes including paid associational, political and religious activities. Conversely, in most societies across the world, women tend to bear the primary responsibility for carrying out most of the unpaid activities. This is especially so, if these activities are carried out within the household. These tend to create a division of labour by gender: that is, a division shaped largely by socially embedded, rather than mere biological, differences between women and men. This gender division suggests that certain activities (for instance, unpaid market, domestic and caring work) become — or at least have been — the primary sphere of women, whereas yet others (paid market work, for example) have been the primary domain of men.

Gender division of labour has been one of the central themes — both explicitly and by implication — of the domestic labour debate. Yet, what leads to the gender division of labour and what sustains it not only remains contested but also appears to be far from clear. It has been argued that gender division of labour is a dynamic aspect and it adapts to changing situations or the process of development, and reflects in varying forms across societies (Bereria 1979). For instance, in primitive societies, some form of functional differentiation or division was found at the household level. Such a functional form has evolved or transformed over time into separate gender domains within and outside the household.

1 Though unpaid voluntary and leisure activities are part of this category, we exclude them from the discussion, given the nature of, and motivation underlying, these activities.
2 See Molyneux (1979) and the references cited there in for the domestic labour debate. The seminal work of Boserup (1970) and the papers included in the edited volumes by Young et al (1984) and Tinker (1990) also relate to these issues in one way or other. For a restatement of the issues involved in the contemporary scenario, see Ogle (2000).
3 Notwithstanding the division based on gender, a hierarchy based on age also exists among women (and men as well) in many societies (Das Gupta 1996). In countries like India, the nature of division of labour would also depend on the caste and class identity of the household (Dixon 1982a, p. 377).
The gender division of labour is often considered as a natural corollary of the biological differences between women and men. Biological differences (like pregnancy, child-bearing, etc) may have a role in the evolution and continuance of the gender division of labour. However, biological differences alone cannot fully explain the gender division of labour. For instance, technical developments have minimised the importance of physical strength. Similarly, contraceptive technology reduces the disability or impact of frequent pregnancies. Also, a variety of other possible arrangements makes childcare a less binding constraint (Agarwal 1997, p. 39). Further, household equipment not only reduces the time needed for these activities, but also makes domestic maintenance less arduous. More than that, these activities do not require any inherent gender-specific attributes or skills (Himmelweif 1995, p. 4).

However, there is a fair measure of agreement that the implications of this gender division are manifold and complex. Further, this gender division of labour impinges on women and men unequally and mostly to the disadvantage of women in a variety of ways (Beneria 1979; Sen 1985; Kabeer 1995). The lower well-being of women is said to have also emanated from, or has deep roots in, this gender division of labour. A detailed enquiry into the genesis of the gender division of labour and its implications is beyond the scope of the study. It would suffice to note here that the gender division of labour is neither fixed nor inherently given in the nature of things or in evolution. Rather, ‘it is constructed by social traditions of privilege and subordination’ (Nussbaum 2002, p. 57). Studies identify and associate a number of problems with the gender division of labour having adverse effects on women’s well-being (Beneria 1979; Jackson 1999; Robeyns 2000). Given the focus of the thesis, two of them invite discussion here. They are 1) conceptual devaluation and statistical invisibility of women’s work and contribution, and 2) implications of gender division of labour for women’s well-being.

4 It seems that even the educational and religious systems often propagate, rather than correct, such (mis)perception (Sen and Grown 1987, p. 26; Moser 1989, p. 1800).
1. Women's Work: Devaluation and Invisibility

Conventionally, the production of commodities having an exchange value is treated as economic activity. The production of use value commodities is not necessarily considered so. Since exchange value takes its concrete form through the market, marketability becomes the basis for measuring societies' output. Therefore, activities falling outside the market mainstream are considered peripheral to the economic system, and hence are treated as non-economic (Beneria 1982, p. 128). Since most of the use value activities — for instance, domestic maintenance and caring activities — do not tend to have an exchange value or do not enter the market, as they are not mainly intended for market, they are considered as non-work (Beneria 1982). As noted already, since women perform most of the domestic maintenance and caring work, the absence of an exchange value or marketability would thereby render their activities as non-work. The conceptual devaluation of these activities paves a way for, and goes in tandem with, their statistical invisibility. The invisibility arises at several levels: underreporting of women workers through the use of restricted definitions of work in labour statistics and exclusion of those activities from calculating Gross Domestic Product and National Income.

Feminist and development economists have long been arguing that definitions of work used in labour statistics entail and legitimise a market centricity, and thereby render women's work invisible (Boserup 1970; Beneria 1982; Anker 1983; Agarwal 1985; Sen 1985). The market centricity appears to have originated from, and seems to impose, Western notions of what constitute work and non-work. In capitalist economies, it has been argued, much of the economic activities have always been oriented toward, and hence centred on, the market. The market, thus, became the locus of economic activity. Therefore, participation in the labour force and the inclusion of production in the national accounts have been defined in relation to their connection to the market or to the performance of some work for pay or profit (Beneria 1992, p. 1548). This market centricity has
at least two implications. It both treats the activities involving the production of non-market goods and services as economically insignificant or less significant, and persons involved in these activities as not actively in labour force. As noted already, in most of the societies women perform much of the non-market oriented activities. It, thus, renders the multitude and continuum of tasks performed by women, mainly in rural, agrarian economies, as non-work. Hence, both their vibrant labour and contribution get unrecognised and they are treated as not in the labour force.

It was only in the late 1960s that attempts were made to correct this by expanding the definition of labour force. This expanded definition — ‘all persons of either sex who furnish the supply of labour for the production of economic goods and services’ (ILO 1976, p. 32 cited in Beneria 2002, p. 87) — has indeed enabled the netting in of more women as active workers. However, the definition, as we can see, still revolves around the notion of ‘economic’ (the production of economic goods and services); it may therefore not help capture a range of activities, especially non-market oriented productive activities, performed by women within their homes. This is because, in the non-market sector the distinction between economic and non-economic is seldom clear, since women perform both the household and non-household activities simultaneously or intermittently (Nayyar 1987). For instance, Duvvury (1989) notes that many peasant women in India do a significant proportion of the work involved in pre- and post-harvest agricultural activities in the home compound rather than in the field, along with household maintenance and caring work.

A number of other factors also complement the above in making women’s work invisible. Anker (1983) identifies at least six such factors that would potentially underestimate women’s work: enumerator bias, respondent bias, social norm, key words, phrases and wordings, reference period, and timing of the
The attempt by Anker, Khan and Gupta (1987) in Uttar Pradesh, India reveals how underestimated is women's work: the female work participation rate increases from 12.7 to 90 per cent depending on the expanded definitions used. Though growing recognition of these issues has lead to the initiation of progressive efforts to minimise the influence of these factors; it may take a long time to capture the entire spectrum of work performed by women and accord them due social recognition and respect. Similar is the case in measuring women's contribution to the national income.

The Systems of National Accounts (SNA) tend to exclude a part of the subsistence production and almost all of the domestic maintenance and caring activities. Boserup (1970) is one of the authors, followed by other feminist and development economists, to note early that the production boundary of SNA excludes, and thus renders invisible, the activities associated with the subsistence production and household services. Since women carry out most of these activities, 'activities usually omitted in the statistics of production and income are largely women's work' (Boserup 1970, p. 163). The exclusion of these activities from the production boundary of SNA (that delineates the goods and services to be included for calculating Gross Domestic Product and National Income) is based mainly on three reasons.

First, production of such services within the households is a self-contained activity with limited repercussion on the rest of the economy. Second, there are typically no prices that can be satisfactorily used to value such services, and the

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5 'Enumerator bias' occurs when the enumerator happens to be a male from a higher social class than the respondent. The enumerator may sometimes steer the respondent towards what he considers as the correct answer, which may affect the results. The 'enumerator and respondent bias' occurs when both the enumerator and respondents happen to be males who may hold the perception that women are housewives, which may lower the results. Third, in societies where women's work is considered as loss of status, there is an incentive to deny women's work participation even if women are actually involved in outside work. Fourth, wordings of the question's, for example questions that give undue importance to key words or phrases like work, job, main activity, and the improper sequencing of questions may lessen the results. Fifth, the shorter reference period used in the survey may undermine women's work. Last, if the enumeration is untimely, for instance enumeration carried out in drought or slack periods, it may depress the results.

6 See Krishnaraj (1990) for details on the efforts taken and progress made in Indian Census.
estimated values would not be equivalent to monetary values for analytical or policy purposes. Third, if personal and domestic services by members of households for own final consumption are included, all persons engaged in such activities would become self-employed, making unemployment virtually impossible by definition (Kulshreshtha and Singh 1999, p. 6). These three reasons raise a number of important questions. For instance, are these activities being carried out just for their own sake? Don’t they have any inherent interconnection with other activities, mainly market oriented activities? Does the absence of appropriate value for these activities and services preclude them from being a part of SNA? Or, does the adoption of a market centric approach create difficulties in imputing appropriate values for them? These issues are discussed below.

As noted already, women shoulder primary responsibility for carrying out these unpaid activities in almost all societies. Though these activities do not fetch a direct income, they are no less productive than other activities, since the latter are parasitic on the former (Sen 1990b, p. 70). These activities reproduce, on a daily and intergenerational basis, the labour force that performs paid activities (Elson 1999, p. 612). There is no disagreement that the sustenance, survival and reproduction of workers are obviously essential for such workers being available. Yet, the activities that produce or support that sustenance, survival or reproduction are typically regarded as not contributing to output (Sen 1985, p. 197). Thus, the logic of exclusion of these activities from the production boundary of SNA appears to be arbitrary and unconvincing.

These activities, through their critical contribution towards the daily sustenance and intergenerational reproduction of the labour force, transcend the market value (UNDP 1995). These activities are estimated to contribute around US$11 trillion worth of global output (UNDP 1995). This begs yet another issue: how are they to be measured? Two different approaches — input and output based
measurement — are put forward towards measuring these activities. The output based approach attempts to measure the output generated from these activities in terms of physical quantities. For instance, number and kind of meals prepared, number of children taken care of, kilograms of clothes washed, etc. Value for these activities is obtained by imputing the prices of equivalent market products. The net value is arrived at after subtracting the value of intermediate inputs and fixed capital consumption (Goldschmidt-Clermont 1993; Goldschmidt-Clermont and Pagnossin-Aligisakis 1999).

This approach tends to provide a reasonably clear basis for calculating the contribution of these activities in terms of their output. However, it is marred by a number of difficulties, especially at the empirical level. It requires some methods, as stated above, for imputing value to domestic production and deducting the costs of inputs from it. But, it may be difficult to impute prices for household products which may not be available in the market and raw materials that were not purchased from the market and to differentiate the high quality output from less quality ones (Beneria 2002, p. 96). More importantly, to impute values for the output and input, detailed information on volumes and kinds of various outputs produced in the household, details of various inputs, and their market values is required. Since it is difficult to get an adequate measure of household output and other information on inputs, the data demanding character tends to constrain its usability.

The input based approach, on the contrary, attempts to measure the labour inputs in time units: how much time is spent on these activities. A value is arrived at for the time spent by imputing a market wage. Two approaches are used to impute a market wage for the time spent. In the opportunity cost approach, labour inputs are assigned a value, which is the wage a woman would have earned if she had worked in the market instead of working in the household. The replacement cost approach tends to impute a value by taking a wage to be paid to some one, if she performs the labour. To imputing a wage,
two criteria are adopted: wages of specialised workers performing equivalent functions in market enterprises and wages of substitute household workers.

The input based approach raises a couple of important issues. One, the working environment in the market is different from that prevailing in the household. In the market, for instance, capital investment may be higher and production may be regulated in terms of streamlining and delegation or specialisation of tasks. These may enhance productivity and would make it possible for the enterprises to pay a higher wage (Goldschmidt-Clermont and Pagnossin-Aligisakis 1999). Two, in households, work may be performed in a leisurely manner, and there is a likelihood of doing two activities simultaneously. Further, some of these activities — mainly caring work — may involve strong inter-personal, emotional aspects. For instance, the quality of service provided to a frail parent by a hired professional may be qualitatively different than that offered by a child as their motivations are different. Also, the parent may prefer to be comforted by a person she knows than an outsider (Robeyns 2000).

Further, estimates are likely to differ substantially depending on which method is used. In the opportunity cost method, a meal prepared by a doctor will be imputed a higher value than an identical meal prepared by an low-skilled worker, even if the latter may be a better cook. Moreover, if the cook is the full-time housewife, her opportunity cost itself is correlated to her condition as a fulltime housewife (Beneria 2002, p. 96). In the replacement cost approach, estimates based on substitute workers are likely to give low estimates since they are at the bottom of the wage hierarchy. On the contrary, specialised substitute method may generate very high estimates, as they are paid higher wages in the market (Beneria 2002, p. 96). These varying approaches and methods are, thus, likely to generate varying estimates. Therefore, using the market as a yardstick to measure the contribution of these activities is bound to be both inaccurate and misleading as to the labour processes which they purport to reflect (Ogle 2000).
However, inclusion of these activities into production boundary is not free from criticisms. For instance, based on the theoretical premises underlying the concept of value, Shivakumar (2000) argues that treating domestic maintenance and caring work essentially as economic activities and imputing monetary values to them is not only weakly supported by, but also appears to be contrary to, the concept of value understood in economic theory. Also, the approach would treat, it has been argued, all persons except children, the sick and elderly as workers with no temporal or spatial variation (Bagchi and Raju 1993, p. 240; Dixon 1982b, p. 542). Though SNA 1993 allowed an estimation of these activities by using separate satellite accounts referred to as Extended SNA and Non-SNA, they may not end the devaluation of women’s contribution in its entirety. Satellite accounts by definition are separate from, hence peripheral to, the production boundaries of SNA. The main accounts (activities coming within the production boundary) would remain intact and central to the management of the economy. Thus, though such efforts may reduce the exclusion of women’s work and contribution, the marginalisation of women’s work would continue to exist (Ogle 2000, ch. 2). This, in a sense, underlines the significance of women’s entry into paid work that would not only make their work visible but also may have an impact on their well-being.

2. GENDER DIVISION AND HOUSEHOLD HIERARCHY

The gender division of labour and the devaluation of women’s work and contribution tend to have an implication for a couple of aspects, which are relevant to our study. The gender division of labour tends to create a social norm, and go in tandem with a household hierarchy. While the social norms underlying the division seem to treat men as breadwinners and women as dependents and caregivers, the hierarchy associated with, or arising out of, that division adversely affects women’s well-being. As we will see soon, women’s

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7 Beneria (2002) not only provides a synthesis of the developments so far in these aspects but also scrutinises the validity of the major criticisms against such efforts.
8 See Hirway (1999) for the list of activities falling under each of these categories.
participation in economic activities has been growing over the years in most of the developing countries, including India. However, time use studies from India and other countries also indicate that women continue to spend relatively longer hours than men in general and substantially longer hours than men in domestic maintenance and caring activities. Women’s disproportionate involvement in domestic responsibilities penalises them in the labour market and is a key factor in women’s weak position in terms of earnings and occupations (Elson 1999, p. 612). This is in addition to their adverse effects on women’s well-being.

For instance, time use studies from India9 carried out during 1998-99 reveal that overall (that is, taking SNA and extended SNA activities together) men spend, on average, 46.05 hours per week, whereas women spend 56.48 hours in rural India. In urban India, the difference, however, is quite marginal: 45.60 hours by women as against 44.50 hours by men. Further, on average women spend 34.6 hours per week in domestic maintenance and caring work. By contrast, men spend an abysmally lower 3.6 hours in these activities. This means that women spend almost ten times more time than men in domestic maintenance and caring work, which are referred to here as extended SNA activities. It is also important to add here that in SNA activities men spend more time than women: 42 hours by men and 19 hours by women in a week. Further, the time use studies also indicate that in the Non-SNA activities (which pertain to learning, leisure and personal care) men spend eight hours more than women on average in a week (Hirway 1999; Narasimhan and Pandey 1999).

Thus, not only do women spend more time in general or overall, but also spend disproportionately higher time than men in carrying out the domestic maintenance and caring labour in particular. By contrast, men spend more than double the time of women in paid market oriented activities, referred to here as SNA. This is likely to have at least two implications. One, both the substantially

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9 The time use studies were carried out only in six Indian states, namely Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya. The results referred to here as for India are the 'combined results of these six states.'
larger and abysmally lower time spent by men in SNA and extended SNA activities respectively seem to convey that paid market centred activities continue to be the main, but certainly not the sole, domain of men. On the contrary, despite women’s participation in paid market work, domestic maintenance and caring activities continue to be almost the sole, if not the primary, responsibility of women. Two, the relatively longer time spent by women in SNA and extended SNA activities taken together and also lower time in non-SNA activities indicate both an increase in women’s working hours and a concurrent decline in leisure. This is likely to create adverse effects on women’s well-being.

Further, this gender division tends to create a hierarchy in the household in terms of access to, and allocation of, resources, both economic and non-economic. The allocation of different tasks to men and women has implications for the organization of productive processes in that it involves issues of command and control (Whitehead 1984). Men by virtue of participating in income earning activities tend to have more access to and control over household resources and exercise more power in decision-making than women (Young 1982). We have already mentioned in the previous chapter that studies indicate that intrahousehold resource allocation depends, among other things, on who brings what and how much. Thus, the centrality of this division entails the allocation of the labour of the genders to activities and distribution of products of these activities.

This would imply that women’s participation in paid work might alter the unequal power relations within the household by both enabling an access to and some control over household resources and bestowing a decision-making power to women. Additionally, it would also impinge on, and thereby lead to, intrahousehold resources allocation favourably to women. Herein, as shown in the first chapter, the scholars from diverging approaches tend to converge in emphasising the significance of women’s paid work for their higher well-being. Against this backdrop, the next part of the chapter will, therefore, discuss the
trends regarding women's participation in paid work and their likely causes and consequences on their well-being.

B. WOMEN AND PAID WORK: GLOBAL FEMINISATION?

Studies examining the labour force participation of women (and also of men) identify three broad and mutually reinforcing trends. First, studies suggest that female labour force participation rates have been growing at the global level. For instance, female labour force participation rate increased globally by 3.5 per cent per annum during the last three to four decades (Tzannatos 1999, p. 552). Regionally, female labour force participation has risen in almost all regions of the world. However, two regions — Sub-Saharan Africa and East and Southeast Asia — registered a decline. In both of these regions, female labour force participation rates have already been very high (Mehra and Gammage 1999, p. 536).10 Nevertheless, the general trend seems to be unmistakably positive: during 1975-95, female labour force participation rates have increased in 74 per cent and 70 per cent of the developing and developed countries respectively (Standing 1999, p. 587).

Second, studies show that the gender gap in the labour force participation rates has been declining over time. The dwindling gender gap can be due either to increasing female labour force participation or to declining male participation rates. Along with an increased female labour force participation, studies also note either a concurrent decline or rather relatively low progress in men's labour force participation. For instance, during the last three to four decades male labour force participation rate increased globally by 2 per cent per annum as against 3.5 per cent for female (Tzannatos 1999, p. 552).11 Similarly, during 1975-95, male labour force participation rates have declined in 66 per cent and 95 per

10 Horton (1999, p. 579) finds a similar decline in North Africa and Middle East. It is relevant to mention here that different studies use different, often overlapping, regional groupings depending on their intent and availability of data. Overlapping of these regions may possibly mask the regional variations.
cent of the developing and developed countries respectively (Standing 1999, p. 587).

Two competing hypotheses — substitution and segmentation — are put forward to explain these broad but mutually reinforcing trends. Substitution hypothesis presumes that over time women tend to replace men by entering into jobs that were previously dominated by men. It has been observed, based on both an increase in female labour force participation and a decline in men’s labour force participation, that women are progressively making inroads into sectors of employment that were hitherto dominated by men (Standing 1989, 1999). Segmentation hypothesis presumes that labour markets are segmented by gender, in that women and men are concentrated overwhelmingly in certain sectors and occupations (Anker 2002). The growth of these sectors and occupations would lead to an increase in women’s or men’s participation in the labour force respectively. Elson (1996) argues that these trends need not necessarily imply women’s entry into men’s sectors of employment. Instead, they are compatible with the ‘disappearance of many jobs of the type traditionally dominated by men, and the expansion of jobs of the type traditionally dominated by women’ (Elson 1996, p. 38). Studies reveal that the sectors and occupations that registered relatively higher growth during this period are the ones that are dominated by, or considered to be having a niche for (or suitable typically to), women (Joekes 1999).12

Third, studies identify growing insecurity and flexibility in the labour market especially in the last three decades, during which we noticed an increase in female labour force participation rates. There has been a progressive erosion of labour rights and entitlements — embodied mainly through seven forms of security — in all parts of the world. The seven forms of securities are namely: 1) Labour market security, 2) Employment security, 3) Job security, 4) Work

12 We will have occasions to discuss the sectors that registered a spurt during this period and how they led to increase in women’s participation in labour force in the next part of this chapter.
security, 5) Skill reproduction security, 6) Income security, and 7) Representation security (Standing 1996, 2002). Similarly, studies also suggest that the new forms of employment created during this period tend to go with increasing flexibility in the labour market: referring to a firm's flexibility in both altering the size of the labour force by hiring and firing at will and as per external conditions, and informalising the production process through sub-contracting and out-sourcing (Standing 1999; United Nations 1999). Studies not only indicate that in both the existing and new employment, the extent of insecurity and precariousness tends to be relatively higher for women than men but also relate and attribute this labour market insecurity and precariousness as one of the potential reasons for the increase in women's labour force participation rates (Standing 1999; Beneria 2001; Ghosh 2004).

The simultaneity of these processes — increased participation of women in the labour force due to both expansion of jobs or sectors that are traditionally dominated by, or typically considered to be having a niche for, women along with women's entry into jobs that were hitherto dominated by men and growing insecurity and flexibility in the labour market — is referred to as feminisation of the labour force (Standing 1989, 1999; Elson 1996; United Nations 1999; Beneria 2001). However, notwithstanding such contested claims, the feminisation of labour force raises a couple of important questions, which are relevant to the present study. For instance, what are the major factors responsible for the feminisation of labour force? What are the implications of this feminisation on women's well-being? What is the Indian experience? These issues are pursued

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13 These refer respectively to 1) Adequate employment opportunities through state guaranteed full employment, 2) Protection against arbitrary dismissal, regulations on hiring and firing, imposition of costs on employers, etc., 3) Career and tolerance of demarcation practices, barriers to skill dilution, job qualification, restrictive practices and so on, 4) Protection against accidents and illness at work, limits on working time and unsociable hours, etc., 5) Opportunities to gain and retain skills through apprenticeship, employment training, etc., 6) Protection of income through minimum wage, social security, progressive taxation and so on, and 7) Protection of collective voice through trade unions, associations and related aspects (Standing 1996, pp. 8-9).

14 However, propounding alternatively, Elson (1999, p. 613) refers to this process as masculinisation since 'more and more work becomes directly subject to market forces in a way that in the past has been more characteristic of men's work'.

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below. Before proceeding onto them, a point merits a mention here. An enquiry into the process of feminisation would require an examination of those three inter-connected aspects. However, given the focus of the thesis, a detailed discussion of the decline in men's participation in labour force and the reasons for the growing insecurity and flexibility is beyond the scope of the study. Therefore, the emphasis will be on discussing the causes for, or the determinants of, the increase in female labour force participation and its potential impact on their well-being.

C. FEMINISATION OF LABOUR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

A number of possible reasons are provided for the increase in female labour force participation. They can be grouped broadly into four. First, economic development seems to have played a catalytic role in accelerating women's participation in the labour market. Second, increase in female literacy together with a decline in fertility also seems to have contributed towards this upward trend. Third, globalisation and the attendant changes in trade and labour policies tended to have enabled women in the developing countries to enter the labour market in large numbers. Fourth, more inclusive definitions and expanded concepts of work appeared to have captured certain aspects of women's work that were hitherto omitted from the labour statistics. These points are discussed below.

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN'S WORK

Studies examining the relationship between female labour force participation and economic development seem to suggest a unique $U$-shaped pattern. It seems that during the early course of development, women's participation in the labour market tends to be high. The participation tends to decline when the economy grows, and participation begins to rise with an increase in economic development. This pattern has been observed in a variety of country settings for different periods of time (Schultz 1990; Erturk and Cagatay 1995; Mammen and Paxson 2000). Empirical examination suggests that the level of economic
development tends to have a robust positive association with women's participation in the labour force across 96 countries (Cagatay and Ozler 1995).

The finding that economic development goes along with an increase (after an initial decline) in female labour force participation rates relates to, and has an implication for, a hypothesis referred to as 'marginalisation' put forward by Boserup (1970). She argued that, as shown in the first chapter, economic development progressively marginalised women both in terms of reducing their participation in the labour market and confining them into lower rungs of the labour hierarchy (Boserup 1970). The empirical examinations do not seem to find a marginalisation but rather a phenomenon contrary to the above (Scott 1986; Horton 1999). Indeed, it may be true, as argued by Horton (1999, p. 579), that the aggregate evidence for middle-income developing countries does not support the marginalisation hypothesis. However, a brief discussion on the policy regimes practiced before 1970s (based on which Boserup inferred) and thereafter and the changes necessitated by them may be necessary to validate the veracity of the hypothesis.

Till the 1970s, most of the developing countries followed an inward oriented economic policy with a focus on import substitution. By contrast, economic policy regime pursued since 1970s in most of the developing countries tend to be outward oriented with a thrust on export-led industrialisation. The import substitution industrial policy has tended to marginalise women due to the replacement of craft industry with modern technology employing predominantly men, as men tended to have greater access to the technology and extension services. This should be juxtaposed with the feminisation of labour force in the last two decades — the preference for, and an expansion of sectors that employ, women workers. The preference for women workers is not mainly due to women's access to new skills and techniques that are inaccessible to men. Instead, the preference is primarily to do with the availability of women as a cheap and flexible labour force (Beneria 2001; Ghosh 2002). Further, increased entry of women in the labour force continues to coexist with their subordinate
position within the labour hierarchy (Elson and Pearson 1984; Balakrishnan 2002). We will elaborate these points while discussing globalisation and women's work.

However, this U-shaped pattern implies that the poorer and richer countries would have a higher participation of women in the labour force and middle-income countries a lower share of female workers. The nature of the economy may have a role in this pattern. For instance, most of the countries that are agrarian in nature (like Sub-Saharan Africa) also tend to have both high incidence of poverty and female labour force participation rates. Similarly, most of the industrialised nations are not only economically rich, but also tend to experience a higher participation of women in the labour force. This pattern can be related at the household level as well. Women’s participation in the labour market is relatively higher among poorer and richer households, and lower among middle-income households (Mammen and Paxson 2000). Though women from both poor and rich households as well as from poor and rich countries may engage actively in the labour market in large numbers, the effects of such labour force participation on well-being would vary between poor and rich women. This obviously prompts us to probe the factors necessitating both poorer and richer women’s entry into labour market and the nature of women’s work between poor and rich countries and households.

It is likely that the new economic opportunities and incentives might pull women from rich countries and households to join the labour force, mainly in paid employment. On the contrary, as has been documented in a number of countries, it could be the worsening of real incomes and increased poverty in poor households and countries that tend to push women to take up jobs, often precarious ones. These differing motivations and varying jobs may have differing implications for women's well-being. It is likely, for instance, that the work participation of women from poor households in precarious jobs may not

\[^{15}\text{See the papers included in Balakrishnan (2002) for evidence in a number of Asian countries.}\]
significantly enhance their well-being. There is even a likelihood of deterioration of their well-being, for reasons discussed in the first chapter. Instead, the likelihood of and the scope for such deterioration are far less among women from richer households who may engage in moderately decent jobs, as they have — unlike women from poor households — the options to withdraw from the labour force, if they find such participation is detrimental to their well-being or does not provide opportunities for their personal, career development.

2. FEMALE LITERACY AND WORK PARTICIPATION

The period of increased female labour force participation has also been the period of increase in female literacy and decline in fertility. For instance, in almost all countries female literacy has increased significantly (UNIFEM 2000). Studies also suggest that not only did the gender gap in female literacy come down substantially during the last two decades, but also the rate of growth of female literacy exceeded the rate of growth of male literacy (Beneria 2001). Similarly, Total Fertility Rate has declined from 5.15 in 1970 to 3.84 in 1990 for 91 countries together for which data is available (Dixon-Mueller 2001). This, then, would prompt us to ask whether the increase in female literacy and decline in fertility contributes to the increase in female participation in the labour market.

Interestingly, studies examining female labour force participation and female literacy suggest a pattern similar to that observed between economic development and female participation in the labour market: a U-shaped pattern. They show that female labour force participation tends to be high among illiterate women, declines at the primary and middle education level and moves up at a higher level of education (Mathur 1994; Kingdon and Unni 2000). This means that both illiterate and higher educated women will be engaged in paid work more than women with little education. Similarly, female labour market participation would be higher in countries where female illiteracy is widespread and where women tend to have higher educational attainments. Also, decline in fertility would reduce the time expended on caring work, especially childcare,
which would allow women to prepare for and make entry into the labour force. Nevertheless, empirical examination suggests that, on the whole, female literacy and declining fertility are positively associated with female employment across 96 countries (Cagatay and Ozler 1995).

Notwithstanding this aggregate positive significant association, the fluctuating relation between women’s education and work participation (or the U shaped pattern) seems to have implications for their well-being as well. Though both illiterate and better educated women may be engaged in the labour market in large numbers, the type of work they are engaged in may differ substantially between these women. For instance, in rural regions illiterate women are most likely to engage in agricultural and other casual jobs. In the urban areas, illiterate women are likely to take up precarious and insecure jobs. On the contrary, women with higher, better education are most likely to be found in regular, higher earning employment. These jobs may impinge differently on women’s well-being. An employment with a regular, higher earning may make women’s economic contribution visible and high, as discussed in the first chapter, and thereby enhance their economic and social worth, and thereby enhance their well-being. Such an enhancement is least likely to happen among illiterate women with irregular employment and inadequate income.

3. GLOBALISATION AND WOMEN’S WORK

The period during which female labour force participation registered an increase also witnessed structural changes in economic policy. Specifically, since the 1980s many countries pursued structural adjustment programmes entailing a number of changes in the labour and trade policies. Studies indicate that since

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16 Studies also indicate a reverse causality in operation. They argue that women’s participation in labour force would give incentives in a variety of ways to reduce fertility, for instance, increase in age at marriage, increase in the cost of bearing and rearing larger number of children, women’s decline in their attachment to traditional norms of motherhood and receptivity to use birth control measures and modern healthcare, and so on. For a discussion of these aspects, see Mason (1993), Darmalingam and Morgan (1996) and Villareal (1996) among others.
the beginning of the 1980s women's participation in paid work has increased significantly, and the gap between male and female labour force participation rates has also decreased (ILO 2000, p. 2). As mentioned already, studies relate these structural changes in general and the attendant changes in the labour market in particular to the increase in female labour force participation, as these policies seemed to have created an enabling environment and facilitated women's entry into the labour force. For instance, studies claim that in those countries that have pursued an export-led industrialisation strategy as a part of structural adjustment programme, the female labour force participation has been high and risen (Standing 1999, p. 588). It, thus, seems likely that trade liberalisation appears to have played an important role in women's rising participation in the labour force.

This begs an important question: how does globalisation increase women's participation in the labour force? Though globalisation tends to impinge on female labour force participation in a variety of ways. At least two important aspects invite attention. First, as mentioned already, most of the countries that initiated structural adjustment programmes pursued an outward oriented economic policy with a thrust on export-led industrialisation as a dominant, unifying strategy. Second and creating an enabling environment for the first, countries attempted to make labour market as flexible as possible by reporting to address labour market rigidities. This was achieved through a number of interconnected measures. The weakening of both legislation and practices preserving the seven types of securities mentioned above, allowing the firms to reduce their cost of production by altering the size of the labour force and making the production processes informal are a few of such measures (Standing 1989, 1996, 1999).

These measures have led to strong, structural changes in the labour market. On the one hand, many countries cashed in on the huge demand prevalent in the Western, industrialised countries for a range of products and services and benefited from the incentives and preferential treatments of multilateral
organisations and richer countries. These enabled the growth of sectors that not only made use of the comparative advantages of these countries (mainly cheap labour) but also netted huge sum of foreign exchanges through export to advanced industrialised countries. On the other hand, by bringing in a number of structural changes, in most of the countries regular, full-time wage employment has given way to a more diverse pattern: outsourcing, contract labour, part-time labour, homeworking and other forms of contingent labour that are unprotected by standard labour legislations (United Nations 1999, p. xvii). Thus, many firms had increasingly tended to informalise their operations or rely on the informal sector. That is, increasing number of jobs were either informalised within formal enterprises by employing workers in the premises without a written contract, or outsourced and subcontracted by formal sector firms to small workshops, micro-enterprises and home-workers in the informal sector (ILO 2000, p. 4).

Studies reveal that export promotion of many of the developing countries tended to go mainly with an expansion of industries and sectors which are dominated by women such as garments, assembly-line electronics, leather, and more recently service sectors associated with information and communication technology such as data processing, call centres, and so on (Joekes 1999). Studies also indicate that firms have found it relatively easier not only to introduce flexible forms of employment, but also to recruit women for these jobs (Charmes 1998; Carr, Chen and Tate 2000; ILO 2000). Because, women were willing to accept low pay, longer working hours and inferior conditions of work. Also, women typically did not unionise or engage in other forms of collective bargaining to improve conditions and did not ask for permanent contracts. The firms, thus, found it relatively easier to hire and fire women at will and according to external demand conditions and also life cycle changes such as marriage and childbirth (United Nations 1999; Ghosh 2002).

While there is some consent that globalisation has increased female labour force participation, it is also important to note here two related aspects. First, studies
note the beginning of a process of de-feminisation: when economies restructure and upgrade their labour intensive exports by shifting towards skill- and capital-intensive products, the preference is more for male workers than for female workers (G.Sen 1999; Ghosh 2004). Noting a decline in female workforce participation rates in many Asian countries especially after 1995, Ghosh (2004, p. 23) observes that though feminisation of export employment peaked in the early 1990s, the process was not only less marked thereafter, but may have even begun to peter out.

Though competing arguments were advanced to explain the beginning of de-feminisation, the process behind it appears to be unclear and inconclusive (Razavi 2001, p. 31). For instance, Ghosh (2002) attributes gradual rise in female wages and the consequent decline in women's comparative advantage as cheap labour. This appears to conflict with the process noted by Standing (1999) of the growing rates of male unemployment in many regions in the last two decades and men's preparedness to compete on comparable terms for women's jobs (or erstwhile men's jobs). By contrast, Joekes (1999) claims the absence of a skilled female labour force for such de-feminisation. Second, studies also note that much of these employment opportunities associated with globalisation are confined mainly to young, unmarried and childless women. These opportunities are far less open to older women with dependants (Razavi 2001, p. 31).

The question relevant to the present study, however, is that what are the implications of this globalisation-led employment for women's well-being? Does it dissipate the gender division of labour and hierarchy or reinforce them? Does such employment enhance, or alternatively decrease, women's well-being? Studies suggest two countervailing effects: both beneficial and adverse. On the one hand, studies indicate that women's participation in paid employment in export-oriented factories tends to have certain beneficial effects. For poorer working women, it has been argued, factory employment offered relatively higher wages, better working conditions, and greater dignity than they had obtained from isolated and menial forms of employment previously available to
them (Lim 1990, p. 114; Kabeer 2000a, p. 189). For women who did not work before, a regular and somewhat higher income through that employment seemed to have made, to some extent, their economic contribution visible and brought them a sense of recognition and autonomy (Jayaweera 2002, pp. 76-7; Kabeer 2000a, p. 190; Unni and Bali 2002, p. 136).

By contrast, studies not only indicate a number of adverse effects of this employment on women, but also cast doubts on the potential of these jobs in enhancing women's well-being. As noted already, a majority of the new jobs are not only created in the informal economy but also associated with precariousness and insecurity. Moreover, these jobs, through outsourcing and homeworking, tend to intensify gender stereotypes and hierarchies. Thus, the precarious jobs and economic insecurity translate into precarious lives and make women secondary earners, reinforcing gender divisions of labour (United Nations 1999; Beneria 2001). It would, then, imply that the beneficial effects of these are not sufficient in bringing about a change in gender relations and ideologies (Khattak 2002, p. 47). In other words, these jobs tend to offer much less scope for challenging the basic structures of constraint and male authority (Kabeer 2000a, p. 189).

Studies also indicate that women often had little control over their income as they were forced to send their earnings to their parents for meeting a variety of expenses — for instance, meeting the educational expenses of male children — that may not be individually beneficial for them (Greenhalgh 1985; Pearson 1998). Women's participation in paid work may enhance their well-being little, if their income is appropriated by male heads of households and if the work is inside the home and invisible (Koggel 2003, p. 171). Moreover, these new forms of employment not only lack socio-economic security and welfare measures but also lack even the basic facilities such as good working environment, hygiene

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It seems the very factors that had made women as workers more attractive to employers—the flexibility of hiring and firing, and the more casual, non-unionised nature of labour contracts—are precisely the factors that disadvantage them (Ghosh 2002, p. 21).
and rest (Elson and Pearson 1984; Balakrishnan 2002). For instance, women work long hours in cramped, noisy and unsafe conditions, with few breaks, face sexual harassment and violence from male supervisors and co-workers, and are exposed to a range of hazards (G.Sen 1999, p. 9). Thus, though export oriented firms provide opportunities for work not otherwise available to women in specific contexts, the work conditions remain less than ideal (Koggel 2003, p. 168). The influence would also vary depending on the factors underlying their entry into the labour market. For instance, women who are forced to take up these forms of work by circumstances beyond their control — such as household poverty — are least likely to experience as it an expansion of their choices and a source of dignity (Kabeer 2000a, p. 188).

4. EXPANDED DEFINITIONS

It has been argued that an unknown percentage of the increase in female labour force participation rates is due to the expanded concepts and definitions of labour force (or work) adopted by the labour statistics (Elson 1999, p. 614; Standing 1999; Tzannatos 1999). It may be true that the expanded concepts and definitions used in labour statistics might have captured certain elements of women's work that remained invisible hitherto. These definitions and careful labour market surveys along with the improved perception of enumerators and respondents have the potential to capture more women workers and thereby produce varying labour force participation rates of women, as we have seen from the empirical attempt carried out in India noted in the first part of this chapter. But, how much of the rise in female labour force participation is the result of statistical artefact remains unknown.

Admittedly, as documented and discussed in Beneria (2002), a number of changes have been initiated at the global level with an attempt to capture more women workers. Arguably, the changes are quite minor in nature and are almost fixed, rather than regular or continuous from survey to survey. But, we have already found that the female labour force participation rates have been growing
steadily across regions over time. The experience of India, to which the next part of the chapter is devoted given the regional focus of the present study, provides an interesting case in point in this regard. For instance, the change in the labour force definition is attributed as one of the major reasons for the sudden, sharp dip in the female labour force participation in India in 1971 after 1961, as we can see from the graph 3.1 in the next part. A revised and expanded definition of worker was employed in the 1981 Census, which expectedly yielded a higher female labour force participation rate than the previous Census.

However, changes made in the remaining Censuses were relatively minor, as we could see from the detailed delineation in Krishnaraj (1990). But, the female labour force rate continued to rise steadily since 1981. The recent Census (2001) also registers an increase in female work force participation rate from the previous Census (1991), during which no definite changes were introduced either. Similarly, National Sample Survey Organisations employed rather similar definitions since 1980s in their quinquennial surveys on Employment and Unemployment in India. The estimates derived from these periodic surveys — especially from 1977-78 to 1993-94 — indicate a steady increase in the female labour force participation rates in India. However, the most recent survey (1999-2000) shows a marginal decline from the previous round. Taken together, the larger trend emerging from these different sources suggest that the increase in female labour force participation rates have been caused mainly by socio-economic factors rather than the changes in definitions and concepts, though they do influence the results.

D. INDIAN EXPERIENCE

As noted already, South Asia is one of the regions that experienced a marked increase in female labour force participation. The experience of India, one of the South Asian countries, also seems to go in line with the general global pattern of growing female work participation rates. Figure 2.2 shows female workforce
participation rates (FWPR)\textsuperscript{18} in India derived from the last five decadal Censuses: from 1951 to 2001. The figure reveals that the FWPR, which began to rise after a fall in 1971, continued to grow during the last three decades. It merits here a mention that FWPR increased from 19.8 per cent in 1981 to 22.3 per cent in 1991. On the contrary, male WPR declined from 52.6 per cent in 1981 to 51.6 per cent in 1991. Though male WPR increased marginally during 1991-2001 (from 51.6 to 51.9 percent), FWPR has increased relatively faster from 22.3 per cent to 25.7 per cent. These are well in line with the global phenomena noted earlier in section 3.2.

Figure 2.2: Female Workforce Participation Rates in India 1951-2001 (Figures in %)

Note: The FWPR includes both main and marginal workers. The 2001 figure is based on provisional estimates.

It is equally important, however, to mention here that estimates made by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) indicate that FWPR in India has come down from 28.3 per cent in 1993-94 to 25.4 per cent in 1999-2000. A disaggregation of NSSO estimates across regions also confirms the above. In

\textsuperscript{18} A distinction between the terms, such as labour force or work force and labour market participation may be necessary. Labour force (or referred to alternatively as work force) includes all types of employment status, whereas labour market participation excludes unpaid family workers who do not enter the market (Elson 1999, p. 614).
rural India, for instance, FWPR (both principal and subsidiary statuses combined) increased marginally from 32.3 per cent in 1987-88 to 32.8 per cent in 1993-94 and came down to 29.9 per cent in 1999-2000. Similarly, FWPR in urban India stood as 15.2, 15.4 and 13.9 per cents respectively for 1987-88, 1993-94 and 1999-2000. These competing estimates from two different sources pose difficulties in making a definite inference.

Why do these different sources provide varying estimates or what are the reasons for such difference remains far from clear. However, what is more important than mere increase or decrease in FWPR, given the focus of our thesis, is how they impact on women's well-being. In this respect, an examination of a couple of related aspects may be of relevance, which may give an indication on the likely impact. The NSSO estimates reveal that in rural India regular employment among women (usual principal status) has increased from 3.4 per cent in 1993-94 to 3.9 per cent in 1999-00. In urban India, regular employment has increased from 35.5 to 38.5 per cent during these periods. Though the percentage of women workers engaged in casual employment has come down from 27.3 to 23.1 per cent in urban India, it has increased marginally in rural India from 45.3 to 46.1 per cent between 1993-94 and 1999-00 (NSSO 2001, p. 73).

Further, the data shows that the proportion of illiterates among women workers has come down from 80 per cent in 1993-94 to 75 per cent in 1999-00 in rural India, and from 48 to 44 per cent in urban India. Moreover, proportion of women workers with educational qualification higher secondary and above has increased marginally from 1.2 to 1.4 per cent in rural India, whereas it has increased from 18 to 21 per cent in urban India between 1993-94 and 1999-00 (NSSO 2001, p. 72). These aspects taken together seem to signal rather indirectly that the impacts may be positive: female literacy and regularity in employment are expected to enhance women's well-being. However, careful and detailed analysis is necessary to assess the impacts of women's work on their well-being, which will be attempted in the next two chapters. But, before doing such
detailed analysis, it is important to delineate the meaning and constitutive elements of well-being which will be attempted in the next chapter.

E. SUMMING UP

This chapter discussed the issues, both conceptual and measurement, which undermine women’s work and contribution to the economy, and their likely implication for women’s well-being. The discussion points to the presence of a division of labour by gender, which disadvantages women both within and outside the household in various ways. At home, it creates a hierarchy in access to and control over economic resources and decision-making power; it tends to convey and reinforce the perception that women are secondary earners or dependents at the societal level. This underlines the need for women’s participation in paid work to alter both the social norm as well as the household power structure and thereby attain a better well-being.

The examination of women’s participation in the labour force, as a continuation, shows an increase, both over time and across regions, to an extent prompting to term it as ‘feminisation of labour.’ India also seems to share this global trend. Potential causes of such feminisation would include, but are by no means limited to, globalisation, economic development, increase in female literacy, expanded definitions, and so on. Discussion identified the countervailing effects of this increased participation of women in the labour force on their well-being. However, detailed examination is required to make a definite inference on the impact of women’s work on their well-being, which will be attempted in chapters four and five. Arguably, the association between women’s work and well-being would also depend on how well-being is construed and measured. In an attempt to identify an appropriate framework to measure well-being and examine the influence of paid work on those aspects of well-being, the next chapter discusses the varying meanings and measurements associated with differing approaches to well-being.