CHAPTER I

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Women constitute half of the world’s population, work two third of the world’s working hours, earn one tenth of the world’s income and own less than one tenth of the world’s property. Women play an important role in the development of human society. According to Census of India 2011, women constitute 48.7 percent of the total population and the women workers constitute 25.68 percent of the total workforce in the country. As per the National Perspective Plan, only 14 percent of women are in full employment, nearly 90 percent of these are in unorganized sector, of these 83 percent are in agriculture and construction work. Below 8 percent are in organized sector\(^1\). The history of women’s participation in gainful employment is a recent one. After the Industrial Revolution, the social situations changed throughout the world and so in India. The family no more remained a center of production. Due to industrialization and urbanization new social norms and values emerged. Job opportunities, economic hardship and favourable cultural and social situation encouraged women to seek employment outside the homes. After independence of the country the number of women to come out of their houses for work increased day by day. They also took education. In the beginning women were mostly engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations, as ayahs, nurses, midwives, water women, cooks, domestic servants, as labourers in the construction sites, in agricultural farms and on plantations. But now they are increasingly being employed in services, industries, shops, establishments, offices and professional / technical occupations. They are gradually entering into occupations and jobs, formerly considered to be almost exclusively for men. Old distinctions between men’s and women’s work are breaking down. Still there are many restrictions imposed by customs and other factors such as social, economic, biological, and psychological factors on women’s access to positions and occupations. Despite these restrictions women are and will continue to

remain in the labour force².

1.2 SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE EXISTING SCENARIO

The reality of women’s lives remains invisible to men and women alike and this invisibility persists at all levels beginning with the family to the nation. Although geographically men and women share the same space, they live in different worlds. The mere fact that “Women hold up half the sky”³ - does not appear to give them a position of dignity and equality. True that over the years, women have made great strides in many areas with notable progress in reducing some gender gaps. Yet, ‘the afflicted world in which we live is characterized by deeply unequal sharing of the burden of adversities between women and men’. Sprawling inequalities persist in their access to education, health care, physical and financial resources and opportunities in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. With regard to Global 70 percent of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty are female, Women do more than 67 percent of the hours of work done in the world, earn only 10 percent of the world’s income and own only 1 percent of the world’s property. The value of unremunerated work was estimated at about $16 billion, from which $11 billion represents the invisible contribution of women and paid 30-40 percent less than men for comparable work on an average, 60-80 percent of the food in most developing countries is produced by women, They hold between 10-20 percent managerial and administrative jobs, Women make up less than 5 percent of the world’s heads of state, 60 percent of the 130 million children in the age group of 6-11 years who do not go to school, are girls approximately 67 percent of the world’s 875 million illiterate adults are women, 3 out of 5 women in Southern Asia and an estimated 50 percent of all women in Africa and in the Arab region are still illiterate, Women account for 50 percent of all people living

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with HIV/AIDS globally, In the year 2000, there were 80 million unwanted pregnancies 20 million unsafe abortions 5 lakhs maternal deaths 99 percent of these cases were reported in developing countries, With regard to India Female share of non-agricultural wage employment is only 17 percent Participation of women in the workforce, 13.9 percent in the urban sector and 29.9 percent in the rural sector Women’s wage rates are, on an average only 75 percent of men’s wage rates and constitute only 25 percent of the family income In no Indian State do women and men earn equal wages in agriculture, Women occupy only 9 percent of parliamentary seats less than 4 percent seats in High Courts and Supreme Court less than 3 percent administrators and managers are women, Close to 245 million Indian women lack the basic capability to read and write Adult literacy rates for ages 15 and above for the year 2000 were female 46.4 percent male rate of 69 percent The average nutritional intake of women is 1400 calories daily. The necessary requirement is approximately 2200 calories 38 percent of all HIV positive people in India are women yet only 25 percent of beds in AIDS care centres in India are occupied by them 92 percent of women in India suffer from gynecological problems and 300 women die every day due to childbirth and pregnancy related causes.

1.3 ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN’S ROLE

Women play a key role in the family. The biological division of roles in the family assumes that generally men engage themselves in productive economic activities outside the household, and women are to be engaged in caring the health and home. Usually, any economic value is not attached to the multifarious jobs women perform in the family. In some of the families, women are the breadwinners who sustain the family by toiling whole day inside and outside the household. The history of rural women’s relationship to nature’s resources has been marked by a struggle to provide for family subsistence. Women are noted to have been the first farmers, potters and weavers. In hunting gathering societies, childe notes: “to accomplish the Neolithic revolution… womankind had not only to discover suitable
plants and appropriate methods for their cultivation but must also devise special implements for tilling the soil, reaping and storing the crop and converting it into foods.” Technologies such as the digging stick (used to dig out tubers and wild plants, and precursor to the plough), hoe, the saucer shaped stone for grinding grain, baskets and vessels for grain storage, jars, jugs, strainers and beakers for holding water and fermented liquor, the over for baking bread and the loom, are all attributed to women, as are techniques such as hoeing, winnowing, making bread, spinning and weaving, and the chemistry of pot making. “Food gathering itself demanded and elaborated knowledge of food and medicinal properties of plants, fruits and trees-including wild ‘reserve’ knowledge of edible plants not normally used but critical to tide over prolonged shortage of other foods during climatic disasters.” Women collected edible seeds of wild grass ancestral to our wheat and barley, and to them are attributed the decisive step of deliberately sowing such seeds on suitable soil and cultivating the sown land by weeding and other measure. “Indeed it is women’s daily activities that are assessed to have sustained the family, male hunting typically being supplementary, less dependable and more risky source of food supply.”

1.4 CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN

The history of this early period is also the systematic undermining of women’s autonomy as agricultural producers in many parts of the globe. The process by which the shift from autonomy to dependence took place was complex. With the advent of the plough cultivation and the emergence of private property, there was a shift of autonomy. “The diverse social structure and supporting ideologies created by men confine as well as define by restricting them (women) to roles and activities described as feminine.” The contributions of women however have not been acknowledged.

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quantitatively or qualitatively. Women’s work a producers is grossly neglected by economic statistics and analysis of labour and capital.\textsuperscript{5}

Women is growing number are spending and increasing proportion of their time for remunerative jobs; their lives continue to be significantly different from those of men and much of their time is spent in the non-economic sector. The ‘double burden’ of responsibility for home and market work has made it difficult for women to achieve substantial equality in the public sphere. “Neither the role of ‘housewife’ nor that of ‘working woman’ is without significant problems for women.” (Alka Sharama 2000) Men’s work in the public sphere has usually enjoyed higher status than women’s domestic work within the family circle. “But even when women have succeeded in entering the world beyond household to a greater or lesser extent, men have not shown much inclination to share in household work.” It is true that child-bearing absorbs an increasingly smaller proportion of a woman’s adult life and can, for the most part, be timed at will. “It is the unequal distribution of labour in the home, rather than women’s lesser ability to perform other types of work that is the main obstacle of equality.” (Alka Sharama 2000)\textsuperscript{6}

“However there have been some significant changes in women’s work scenario in the last two decades, especially during 1980s, both in the developed and developing countries. Women’s workforce participation has considerably increased in most countries of the world. At the same time, male participation rate has either stagnated or declined; the change in labour market conditions is so perceptible that instead of ‘marginalization’. The process of global ‘feminization’ is said to have been occurring. While this process of feminization has diversified the work opportunities of women, it also brought several adverse consequences for women workers in terms of earning and working conditions. It is important to understand the process of change concerning women’s work and its implications in a correct perspective for an

appropriate policy intervention as well as for giving input to the ongoing voluntary action and movement for the betterment of the work scenario of women.” (Morgan 2009)

1.5 WOMEN’S WORK AND WAGES

Labour legislation, as far as the workers are concerned is inadequate. It does not fully safeguard their interests wherever they are employed. The essential principle of labour legislation should be not only to prevent employers from taking advantage of workers’ helplessness and weaker position but also to compel them to adopt measures which ensure the rights of the workers especially women to overcome handicaps peculiar to them. But too many demands and restrictions on the employers are bound to affect the employment of women adversely by making it difficult from the point of view of the management. Women are usually employed in lighter occupations compared to men who are employed in heavier occupations. Even when they work in similar occupations, distinctions are made sometimes. There is no reason for women are not paid equal wages for equal work.

1.6 PROBLEMS OF WOMEN WORKERS

Certain problems are common to women workers. A study of the problems of women workers will indicate the need of welfare measures to be adopted along with proper lines of approach. Woman is physically weaker than man. In addition, she has to bear the child which requires her to take rest before and after delivery. Where there is no coverage of maternity benefits, it may sometimes become as occasional disability. Then she has the burden of the growing child; its care takes much of her time. She has also to function as a housewife with all household responsibilities. The family is a grave concern for the women in our country than her western sister. Her social and economic status is very low. There are several additional gender-specific dimensions which affect women’s work situation. The gender based inequalities in

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the family in the provision of basic necessities also create health problems for women. Further they are exposed to health hazards arising from the nature of their work.

From time immemorial women have been working – working everywhere - at home, in fields, factories and many other workplaces. However, women as a distinct segment of workers emerged and got recognition only with the emergence of industrial production. After the industrial revolution, the social situations changed throughout the world and so in India. The family no more remained a center for production. Due to industrialization and urbanization new social norms and values emerged. Job opportunities, economic hardship and favourable cultural and social situation encouraged women to seek employment outside the home. After independence the number of women to come out of their houses for work increased day by day. They also took to education. In the early period women were mostly engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations, as ayahs, nurses, midwives, water women, cooks, domestic servants, as labourers on construction sites, in agricultural farm and on plantations. But now they are increasingly being employed in services, industries, shops, establishments, offices and professional / technical occupations. This change enhanced the status of women on the one hand and Country prosperity on the other, but it gave rise to many problems and difficulties for them by way of exploitation, discrimination and dismal working conditions. They have to perform dual responsibilities respectively termed “reproductive” and productive. This is not an easy task for women to work at home and working place. The problems and difficulties got multiplied due to their peculiar social, biological and psychological conditions and due to their illiteracy and ignorance.

1.7 WOMEN WORKERS-SOME CONCEPTUAL ISSUES AND PROBLEMS OF MEASUREMENT

A closer look at the structure of women’s labour force participation in various regions of India throws light to the determinants as well as the consequences of their

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8 Mehrotra and Biggeri 2005: “Status of Indian Women”; Kanishka Publisher, New Delhi.
entry into the labour force. “The relatively low levels of work participation rates among women in India can be explained in relation to the conceptual and measurement related problems implicit in the identification of women within the labour force. In our subsistence economy, there is deliberate exclusion of a whole range of activities performed by women from the purview of gainful employment.” (Jose 1990) It should be emphasized that apart from their contributions in terms of earnings, there is ‘time contribution’ of poor rural women workers to a complex range of unpaid tasks-fetching, gathering, cooking, processing, conserving, ministering and building up of kin networks and intra-household relationships in the society. The large amounts of time and energy expended on these domestic chores, however, remain invisibles no productive economic value is attached to these tasks.

Moreover, there are cognitive problems in identifying women workers which arise from the cultural biases of traditional societies. Women are reckoned primarily as housewives and the economic activities they may perform along with their domestic chores tend to remain under-reported either by women themselves or more often by proxy respondents. The principal data input in the framing of development policies is the national level statistics. But the accuracy of it is severely impaired by biases which lead to an undercounting of women, both as workers and as those available for work. Hence many of the schemes which are instituted to help the poor are misdirected in their very conceptualization. A look at the methodology followed by the National Sample survey (NSS) and the census organization in India suggests that there are significant deviations from the standard international practice for the measurement of labour force.

“Moreover, neither the ‘pull factors’, which draw women for employment into non-agricultural sectors of the economy nor the ‘push factors’ which facilitate their release from the precincts of the household are adequately present in the Indian

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context. Hence female participation in economic activities has a pronounced tendency to remain clustered around agriculture and allied activities.” When compared to men, women are bumped in low paying or unpaid work. They are excluded from most skilled jobs. Rate of unemployment is also more among women than men. Indian evidence shows a manifestation of women in the process of development. Women are increasingly excluded from productive work, they are pushed into and concentrated in marginal occupations and they are increasingly casualised in terms of employment.

Hence the potentially significant role of public policies in facilitating an improved labour force participation of women is the need of the hour. In particular, public investment in the field of health, education and utilities have a vital role to play in setting the stage for the development of vigorous labour market for the women in the country. Then only the full potential of the reserve army of female labour in India can be harnessed without relegating as wasted assets or utilized only by half measure.

1.8 POOR LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN

Despite the fact that many labour legislations have been made applicable to the unorganised industry the living and working conditions of the workers in these industry are highly unsatisfactory and welfare amenities actually available to them are just negligible. Women workers are the worst sufferers as their employment is regarded as secondary to that of male workers. Special provisions regarding the protection and welfare of women workers are either not at all enforced or they do not exist in the labour laws applicable to the industry. Work is often unskilled or low skilled and low paid, availability of work is irregular. When work is available, they have to work for long hours. They have to work under very poor working and living conditions. Women workers have poor bargaining power that is why they cannot pressurize the employers for their rights, which leads to this exploitation. The living conditions of the workers are observed to be quite unsatisfactory. It is because besides bad conditions of their quarters, these workers have also not been provided with
proper facilities of drinking water, sanitation, health and education. The living arrangements for these workers can be classified to be of four types i.e., pakka quarters, kachcha quarters, huts and their own houses in nearby villages. Regrettably, the quarters do not have waterproof roofs, necessary doors, windows and ventilators as well as suitable, cooking and bathing facilities. They were thus prone to injuries and health hazards. No precautions have been taken by the employer to prevent inhalation of dust fumes etc. Women workers’ hands and feet in most of cases were found in pitiable condition having many scratches. No women workers have been provided with hand gloves or any other protective equipment for handling the building and leather material. It is also highlighted by Second National Commission on Labour, 2002 that working and living conditions of the women in leather industry are not satisfactory. Employment in leather is usually interspersed with periods of unemployment of varying duration, mainly due to fluctuating requirements of labour force on each worksite. Women engaged in leather work, are the most exploited. What is worse, the contractors remove sick and injured workers from sites and pay rolls without giving them adequate compensation. The existing labour laws applicable to leather workers are based on inspection, prosecution, fines, etc. However, legal processes are so time consuming that the aggrieved worker may be out of employment or employed elsewhere by the time redressal materializes. The existing laws do not give adequate protection to worker against victimization.

The earnings of most of the workers are very low and their working conditions are highly unsatisfactory. The women workers do not enjoy even the basic welfare amenities and the social security benefits available to them are just negligible. In the case of workers carrying on the manufacturing processes in their own houses conditions of work like working hours, weekly rest, holiday, etc., may not have much relevance, but even workers engaged in the common work sheds of handloom units do

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not enjoy much legislative protection. Although water was made available to all respondents for washing, drinking and bathing, there was no proper arrangement for it in most of the brick kilns. Besides this, there were no proper and essential devices provided to them for their safety. For instance, the women who carry the dried bricks to the trench need to be provided with hand gloves for protecting their hands and fingers from bruises and injuries. Similarly those women who work as unloaders of the trench require gas masks, goggles because they work in the extreme dust all the time. Thus, it cannot be wrong to say that the working and living conditions of workers are very worse. On the other hand, in organized sector where labour laws apply, the statutory provisions are not being strictly complied with. In many cases, it has been found that protective measures such as crèches, maternity benefits, separate toilets and washing facilities etc. are not either provided or are not adequately maintained. Other safety and welfare measures are also not being provided it seems that the present penal provisions of these enactments are not deterrent to prevent the employer from making violation of these provisions. It is said that pathetic and worse condition of women workers in unorganized and organized sector is depends upon the women workers themselves. Their ignorance and lack of awareness about their right is also responsible for the evasion of these beneficial legislations. Therefore, the need of hour is that women should get fully conscious about their rights and should get courageous enough to fight for their rights by participation in the trade union activities.

1.9 WOMEN WORKERS AND CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS

Although entering of women into work force raised their economic and social status yet it gave rise to many problems and difficulties to them. They have to face problems at home as well as at working places. They have to perform dual responsibilities termed “reproductive” and “productive”. The problems and difficulties got multiplied due to their peculiar social, biological and psychological conditions and due to their illiteracy and ignorance. They may have to accept jobs
which they do not like, they may have to work under unpleasant conditions and they may have to accept wages which are not enough for their average way of living. They were taken on labour jobs carrying lesser wages and there was no avenue of promotion to them, or protection or security of employment. The wages of women are usually fixed at rates lower than those for men for the same or similar occupations. They are not able to get any advantage of social security schemes. The working conditions of women worker in organised sector are also not good. The women workers of the public sector and private sector are all deprived of most of the benefits. Sexual harassment of women at the work place is a very complex problem, in the organisation either Government or private. It can happen with top executive, supervisor, clients, factory workers as well as with domestic servant. Due to fear of losing her confirmation of service, promotion and jobs many women have silently endured sexual harassment at the work place, considering it to a normal occupation hazards. In totality the conditions of women workers are very pathetic and disgusting.

To undo the aforesaid discrimination and exploitation, there arose a need to provide them some security and protection through law. The Constitution of India, inter alia made several provisions for the protection and security of women workers. These provisions besides the preamble are contained in Articles 14, 15, 16, 23, 39, 43 and 46 of the Constitution. The provisions of the Constitution which are called policy principles for providing protection and security to women workers are implemented through different protective legislations. The protective measures are not only provided through legislations but also being provided through different plans, programmes, policies and schemes of the Government. On the other hand the labour policy set out in the Five Year Plans since independence was based on the belief that the basic needs of the workers for food, clothing and shelter must be satisfied. Various

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measures for the welfare and benefit of women and women labour are undertaken during different plan periods starting from 1951. The main focus of Programmes, Schemes and Policies of the Government with regard to women labour has been to remove the handicaps under which they work, to strengthen their bargaining capacity, to improve their wages and working conditions, to enhance their skills and to open up better employment opportunities for them. Increasing attention is being focused at the international level on the problems of women workers. The United Nations Organization and The International Labour Organization, which are specialized agencies of United Nations have been devoting attention to subject of interest to women workers. In the light of different Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organization, the Government undertook various ameliorative legislative measures to provide safety and protection to women workers. Some of these labour legislations provide special provisions for women workers and other deal exclusively with them. These Labour Legislations are: The Factories Act 1948, The Mines Act, 1952, The Plantation Labour Act, 1951, Building and other Construction Workers’ (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996, The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, The Employees’ State Insurance Act, 1948, The Employees’ Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972, The Workmen’s Compensation Act, 1923, The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, The Payment of Wages Act, 1936 and The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. These legislations relate to regulation of employment in dangerous occupations / employments, prohibition of night work, restriction on carriage of heavy loads, wage protection, health safety, gratuity, maternity, relief, equal pay for equal work, social security, provision of crèches and other welfare facilities etc. The Judiciary in India under it policy for attainment of social justice has been very attendant to give effect the rights of women workers. The role of Judiciary has been
quite significant with respect to women. The Indian Judiciary to a certain extent has taken lead in securing socio-economic justice to women. An analysis of decided cases reveals that there is a new trend in the Judiciary to interpret law so as to provide better protection to women in respect of their rights. Despite the protective measures, national and international commitment, beneficial labour legislations and sympathetic judicial pronouncements, women workers are still made to suffer discrimination in social and economic spheres and continue to be the most exploited lot. Therefore, much more remains to be done. It is true that laws are made for the welfare and benefit of people but laws and Constitution do not by themselves solve all the problems.

1.10 SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES FOR WOMEN WORKERS

It is now axiomatic that society has the responsibility to relieve economic distress faced by individual members on account of contingencies beyond their control. In the employment front the state is expected to regulate the working ambience so that human dignity is endured and unforeseen eventuality in the lives of workers can both be averted and minimized. And such measures are tersely termed as social security. Social security still eludes most workers in the informal sector, especially women workers. In the unorganised the concept, more so its practice, is hardly applicable or observed consistently or categorically and the framework and thrust seldom satisfy the nature of work and plight of workers. For the women component those protective provisions may be most urgent but they are either not-existent or being flagrantly flouted. Recently, the *Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act 2008* has been passed. The Act contemplates the delivery of benefits to unorganised workers in instances of sickness, disability, maternity, unemployment, old age and the death of a family’s breadwinner. The Act has defined ‘Unorganised Workers’ in a wide and liberal manner so as to include those who are casually employed and receive daily or monthly wages as well as ‘home-based workers’ and

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even farmers who work on small land-holdings. Hence, the legislative intent is to expand the social safety net as widely as possible. Despite these laudable achievements, women workers have no social security benefits. Registration is necessary to get the benefits under this Act. There may also be difficulties in registering the workers on account of the suppression of facts by employers and contractors. It has been observed that the elements of job quality – job security, good working conditions, and remuneration commensurate with the work, adherence to workers’ rights, social protection and conductive human resource management – are missing in the informal sector. They toil for more than eight hours a day without the luxury of weekend holidays. They number in millions, yet they are not part of any organised system of work. They are not on any list, register or master roll. The problem is more acute for women workers. They play the triple role of a worker, housewife and mother. The lack of assets and capital, low and irregular income, aided by frequent accidents, sickness and other contingencies, poor working and living conditions, low bargaining power and lack of outside linkages and opportunities for skill upgradation – all these interlinked factors drag these women into deprivation, trapping them in the vicious circle of poverty. Child care provisions and maternity benefits are the crucial needs for the women worker. These provisions are missing in informal sector. The most productive years of a women’s life are also the reproductive years of her life. In the absence of any provision for maternity leave and child care, a women worker often has to leave her job to have a child and take care of the infant. On the other hand, the existing schemes of social security in the organised sector are basically income maintenance schemes as distinguished from income support schemes. In unorganised sector there is greater need for income support schemes. Unless a person has an employment or a source of income, the question of maintenance of his income cannot arise at all. In the unorganised sector, the workers are engaged either in wage employment or self-employment, which are basically irregular or seasonal and the income is very low.
Right from the inception the need for and provision of social security for women workers revolved around the special requirements of women and most of the provisions were consistently parried in most working places. Conditions of work such as hour of work, period of rest and maternity related issues were sought to be regulated in earlier times. The underlying conviction was that women workers have very special problems: they have to perform reproductive role as wife and mother, they are physically vulnerable and therefore, every kind of work is not suitable for them. And most of the amenities accrued not because of their demand of struggle as such but as ‘generous gesture’ extended or provided by the state. Gradually emphasis shifted to the necessity of overall minimum standard of labour condition such as working hour and other amenities in and around works. But still now women are being regarded as special kind of workers having their physical incapacity and reproductive responsibility.

How far the growing volume of welfare legislation has benefited women remains dubious. In making existing welfare measures available to women there has been overt resistance from the employers – one reason being sheer economic. Throughout women workers have been preferred as and when they are relatively cheap. But because of statutory compulsion to implement beneficiary schemes or permit leave with pay s in Maternity Act, employing women tends to entail more cost and inconveniences. Though the relationship between welfare provision and declined of women’s employment is not categorically clear, it is not illogical to expect that women will be discarded as and when employers have compulsorily to provide special amenities for women component. There may be no direct correlation in the public sector but for the private enterprises cost factor so involved will possibly deter management/employer to desist from recruiting women worker. When economic advantage of women workers will disappear they are expected to be shunned or abandoned. However, absence of open manifestation of decline of women’s empowerment with the advent of security provisions is not because factory
owners have acquiesced to the extra cost involved but because they have own strategy how to discard the welfare measures. When women are actually engaged they are mainly as casual workers so that enacted provision can be pushed aside. Even when women are technically working employers deliberately retreat from those facilities under this pretext or that and laxity on the part of enforcement officials makes such skipping not much difficult

1.11 NEED TO EMPOWER WOMEN WORKERS

What is needed is an ‘empowerment ‘of women so that they are able to absorb the benefits meant for them. The strong inter-linkage between the economic and social development variables is to be stressed. The decisive social benefits can be yielded if the planning process spans the spectre of needs in women’s life cycle. For an effective implementation of programmes for rural women three key elements must be identified. i.e., organization of producers/workers, support services and awareness generation. The qualitative improvement of the labour force releases more women for non agricultural employment. Hence it is worthwhile examining the quality of life indicators, mainly education and health related parameters of the rural women.

The female agricultural labour despite contributing to the rural economy on par with men encounter innumerable difficulties in the field in the existing socio-economic frame work of India society. Casual nature of employment, segregation of work, unequal wages, exploitative conditions of work, ignorance and less vocal nature of the workers, unemployment, lack of avenues, commercialization and mechanization of agriculture, sexual exploitation are some of the ‘dependent’ classes including women, they in practice helped the dominant classes of the society defeating the very purpose for which they were created.

1.12 CONSTRAINTS OF WOMEN WORKERS

As it has been mentioned above that Government undertook various ameliorative legislative measures to provide safety and protection to women workers but in practice it seems that labour legislations are observed more in breach than
in compliance. Employers are not complied with provisions of labour laws. In many cases it has been found that protective measures such as crèches, separate toilets and washing facilities, drinking waters, recreational facilities etc. are neither provided nor adequately maintained. Other welfare and safety measures are also not being provided. There are virtually no medical facilities and maternity benefits are provided. Labour laws are callously ignored by the employers. It seems that present penal provisions of these enactments are not deterrent to prevent the employer from making violation of these provisions. The machinery for inspection and enforcement is inadequate. Women in many occupations are still being paid less as compared to males. Some of the young women are even subjected to sexual exploitation. There are hardly any significant cases of complaint being successfully argued for the compliance of the Act. So far as the social and economic position of women workers in Aligarh and Agra districts is concerned, it is not different from women of other parts of the country. Women constitute a significant part of the workforce of Aligarh and Agra. According to Census of India 2001, female worker participation rate in Aligarh is 13.3 percent and in Agra is 7.24 percent. Within the districts there are various industries in which majority of women are engaged. Some women workers are engaged in home based industries and some are engaged in big industries, but unfortunately, the working and living conditions of the majority of the women workers are not satisfactory and they are not getting the benefits provided under different labour legislations. Men are preferred over women in employment. Women are considered inferior to men and are discriminated by the employers at the place of work. The life of women workers in lock industry, brick kilns industry, footwear industry and construction industry is very tough. Women workers in these industries are not getting any benefit worth the name. Their working hours are not fixed and in regard to wages they are getting less than

minimum wages. The wages too are not paid to them on time. Their working conditions are miserable. These women have to perform a dual role relating to production and reproduction. These women are unprotected and are suffering from economic exploitation. Their ignorance about the law, poverty and illiteracy have added to their woes all the more. Although there is organized machinery which envisages the protection of women workers under the provision of law yet employers have been exploiting them and women workers are subjected to discrimination and harassment. The working conditions of women in hick’s thermometers industry are quite better than other industries and they received most of the benefits provided under different labour legislations. In totality, the conditions of women working in Aligarh and Agra industries are not good. Moreover, the women workers are themselves responsible for the problems mentioned above due to their ignorance and lack of awareness about their rights and for evasion of mentioned beneficial labour legislations. The laws, policies and welfare system that are proposed for women workers cannot be effective unless they themselves are conscious of law and acquire the strength to ensure that laws are brought into force and implemented; unless here are effective means to implement, unless judiciary played its significant role, unless breachers of the law are punished with deterrent penalties and unless the organs of public opinion and movement and organizations mount vigil and intercede to ensure that the provisions of the laws and welfare system are acted upon. Today this problem requires a deep and pragmatic research which the proposed study is aimed for.

1.13 SELECTION AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The literature is characterized by the assertion that low wages, inadequate health and safety standards, and an absence of union representation are all defining features of export factories. The present study would propelled to understand the challenges the perspective on Women labour in leather factories, The structural cultural subordination of women in India strongly defame the quality of the women
and underestimate their labourious contribution either at the home and the working place, women are predominately constitutes in Agricultural labour after that they have been largely engaging in garment industries especially their proportion is high in the leather footwear industries, leather industries unleash lot of negative consequences on the workers in terms of health and other occupational hazardous in this context the study would propelled to assess the conditions of women in leather industries in terms of contribution in the production, incentives received, job stress, job involvement, engagement in the production process, with in the realm of gender dimension in Tamil Nadu, In the Tamil Nadu garments industry in the early 1990s, It found that women workers were not in fact generally able to establish and sustain independent unions in the industries, Thus, the study would propel to understand the contributions and conditions of Women in the leather foot wear industries at Tamil Nadu.

1.14 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women constitutes significant proportion of the workforce in the leather industries and plethora of the studies have advocated the research in leather industries within the framework of challenges and contribution of small scale industries on economic development, environmental related issues, health related issues. Very few studies were concentrated the workers issues in general and very few studies have concentrated on women issues in particular but not in holistic dimension by considering the lacuna in the existing literature the study would propel to concentrate on the challenges and contribution made by the women workers in the leather footwear industries in Tamil Nadu, women constitutes larger segment of the workforce in the leather footwear industries but none of the studies were focus on this core issue with more comprehensive manner, the present study an attempt to fill that gap and would like to ascertain the women workers conditions in leather footwear industries in terms of their contribution, remuneration, incentives, challenges in working place, oppression in the industry, health hazardous, equity and various similar kind of unnoticed dimensions would be interrogated in more comprehensive
way, since Tamil Nadu economy known for its urbanized and industrialized face it is worthwhile to introspect how did it address the issues of women and whether women workers get adequate recognition for the service they rendered to the leather footwear industries.

1.15 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the socio-economic conditions of women leather industries workers in the study area
- To examine the attainments of the women leather workers
- To map out the constraints and challenges faced by women leather industry workers in the study area
- To understand the strategies of the women leather industry workers to manage the dual role
- To ascertain gender discrimination in wages and other incentives in leather industries in the study area
- To highlight the causes and consequences of health deterioration of women leather industry workers due to work environment
- To formulate the suitable policy measures for women leather industry workers development
1.16 HYPOTHESES

- Ho: socio-cultural factors are not the determinant of wage and incentive of Women workers in leather footwear industries
- Ho: working environment have no influence on the women worker health deterioration
- Ho: No relation exists between protective measures and job involvement of women workers
- Ho: work environment variables have no influence on job satisfaction and job involvement of the women workers in leather industries
- Ho: Job, education and self-confidence are not the determinant of women empowerment

1.17 METHODOLOGY

Sources of Data: Both secondary and primary data are being used for this study purpose.

1.18 PRIMARY DATA

Primary Data was collected from the women leather industry workers across the Vellore district. Stratified random sampling method was adopted to select the sample for the study, leather industries location were classified into two segments like North and South, 150 samples from each region were selected for the study as number of workers in the each companies differs, thus the researcher adopted the region wise representation for the sample selection rather than company wise selection. For example each industries consists of 250 to 700 workers in accordance with the size of the company thus region wise selection is close to the proximity of the study.

1.19 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The questionnaire formulated in various sections in which first part of the schedule designed to collect the demographic information of the women leather workers, This is used to study the income. employment, asset, savings, indebtedness
the next section deals with the working time and the structure of the industries which would be helpful to understand the amenities made available for the workers in the study area. Next section of the schedule derive the information on the health conditions of the workers, section no three collect the information on the work environment and the job engagement practice of the industry which would enable to assess the job satisfaction and job involvement of the workers, final section would receive the opinions of the workers on various issues pertains to the work through which women workers perceptions at comprehensive manner in gender dimension.

1.20 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Statistical tools like percentage analysis, cross tabulation chart analysis, frequency distribution, and correlation ANOVA, Logit Regression, are applied to find out the major factors determines the socio economic status of women leather industry workers.

1.21 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study introspect the perception of the employee on health status but it didn’t carried clinical test to found the health status

Women employed from the industries from the recognized workers were interviewed it didn’t include the information of the un-organized workers who are working from the home.

1.22 CHAPTER PLAN

The first chapter contains the basic contextual background of the study importance of the women workers and various elements of Labour in India -An overview, Economic Significance of Women’s Role, Constraints of Women Workers, Gender Disparity and Institutional Economics, Women work situation, Women’s work and Wages, Empowerment of Women and work situation, Women Labour in Leather Industries, Selection and justification of the study, workers like significance and the features of the workers in India, changing role of women and significance of
the study, selection and justification of the study, methodology, objectives have been structured and illustrated in the introductory chapter.

The second chapter consists of literature review pertains to the women workers both Indian and international studies, at present gender issue is gaining prominence in Indian labour market. The women labour is characterized by low wages, tedious work environment etc. There are very few studies done on the alternative employment sources for women labourers during off-season and the impact of off season unemployment of women labour on their income, family status etc. Studies conducted on the employment, wages, non-farm employment etc have been reviewed. Till recently the theoretical and empirical literature on rural labour markets had completely ignored studies on women labourer. Still the plethora of the studies on the domain have been categorized to have better conceptual and theoretical understanding. Studies conducted on the employment, wages, non-farm employment etc have been reviewed under the following headings. Studies pertains to Women Labour force in the Economy, Studies pertains to the constraints faced by the Women workers, Studies pertains to the Gender based labour market discrimination, Studies pertains to Globalization and its impact on Women workers, Studies pertains to Women leather workers, This gives sound understanding about the theoretical nuances of the study.

The third chapter examined the various theoretical insights of the women and work, it begun with the feminist perspective and women labour position in the production function theory, Marxism and women, first wave feminist analyses, second wave feminist analyses, psychological theories of women and work, Women Labour force a conceptual development, Labour Market discrimination in India, Globalization and women workers, Women Labour and ILO norms.

Fourth chapter illustrates the Indian Leather industry and the contribution and growth of leather industries in various dimensions.
Fifth chapter describes the profile of the study area, it deals the historic significance of the Vellore, climatic conditions of the study area, tropical, demographic situation of the Vellore have been illustrated, details of the administrative set-up, Medical and educational infrastructure, rain fall, information on industries and marketing facilities have been illustrated in the chapter.

Sixth Chapter exemplifies the analyses of the primary data and the inferences derived from the analysis have been displayed.

Seventh chapter exemplifies the summary and conclusion, major findings of the study, policy recommendations, and scope for future research.