CHAPTER I

WOMEN IN THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR:
CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL CLARIFICATION
The growth of cities in India has been largely unplanned and haphazard. This process is not wholly the result of industrialization. As a World Bank Paper cited here observes: "Urbanization by itself is no cause for alarm. What is alarming are the gross inefficiencies and inequities that characterize urbanization in the developing world." 1 The demographic features of urbanization process namely, natural increment of population and rural to urban migrations, have resulted in a substantial increase in urban labour force. 2 A large part of the rapidly growing urban labour force remains unemployed and under employed, due to the excessive growth rate of urbanization over that of both industrial production and urban employment. 3 Urbanization process has opened up new opportunities for growing labour force. It is a matter of common knowledge now that a vast majority of urban population lacks the minimum necessities of life such as shelter, access to water, besides other basic needs like food and clothing. Because of push and pull factor, the urban population is likely to increase more and more which constitutes a large part of population of the informal sector.

The present study proposes to examine the women's work participation in the Urban Informal Sector. With the
expansion of urban informal sector, large scale job opportunities are available to women folk. It is in the informal sector that women are readily absorbed in jobs. The wage discrimination, and adverse working conditions restrict their employment career. This is also indicative of the subordinate position of women in our society. Keeping in view the gender factor involved in the employment and opportunities available in the urban informal sector, in the present study, we propose to examine the precarious positions of women in different interactive situations. The three segments or occupational groups in which women employment is conspicuous are—sweepers, maid servants and construction workers. In these three sectors women's work participation was found to be somewhat extensive.

Before we embark upon the details of the nature of female work participation in urban informal sector, it would be useful to examine the conceptual and theoretical aspect in relation to the growth of urban informal sector.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN'S POSITION:

The basic perspective of the structural and
functional point of view emerges in its prime emphasis on society, and on the interrelations of its institutions, rather than on the individual or groups such as the family. That way the structural and functional perspective justify the division of labour based on gender as well as differential; thereby clearly implying that this approach cannot be used to study the women's problems and wage structures. It is thus deemed fit to use conflict perspective which identifies that women are exploited being weaker in strength and structure. It is this exploited structure of society that needs to be changed to give equal opportunities of work and wages to women. Women in the unorganised sector are exploited to the maximum possible extent because of longer hours of work, low wages, hard work, no leave, lack of govt. protection, lack of unions etc. Since these aspects can be studied only through conflict perspective, we are interested in surveying various approaches to study the women workers in unorganised sectors.

It is the feminist approach only which confirms that the experience of a woman is real and important. It further states that woman lived experience as she has felt it, reflected upon it, voiced it and can be a major
corrective whose impact must lead to a major transformation in the world of ideas, knowledge, history, action and research.

Regarding the women's exploitation, there exists a variety of issues on which feminists have expressed their opinions. Gender, patriarchy and sex have been taken up as some of the important variables for theoretical examination. A brief survey of variety of feminist thoughts which deal with women's questions would further clarify their applications to those involved in the female work participation.

Feminist theory is not one theory but a group of theories or perceptive attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation. Feminist theorists are able to identify their approach as essentially liberal, marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, existentialist or post modern.

Liberal feminists, require us first to make the rules of the game fair and second to ensure that none of the runners in the race of society's goods and services is
systematically disadvantaged. The gender justice does not require us to give the losers as well as the winners a prize. Society has the false belief that women are by nature inferior, both intellectually as well as physically, to men. The female subordination, as such, is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints.

Marxist feminists think it impossible for anyone, and women in particular, to obtain genuine equal opportunities in a class society where the wealth produced by the many powerless people ends up in the hands of a few powerful ones.

Private ownership of the means of production by a few, predominantly male persons, is the cause of the class system which resulted in corporate capitalism and imperialism. This theory considers capitalism to be the cause of women's oppression. If all women are ever to be liberated, then, the capitalistic system has to be replaced by the socialistic system where means of production belong to every one.

Radical feminists believe that neither the liberal nor the marxist theory has gone far enough. According to them, it is the patriarchal system that oppresses women
which is characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy and competition. It calls for overturning of the patriarchal system in entirety i.e. complete with its social and cultural institutions.

Feminists do not focus on the biological origins of women's oppression. Most of them criticize the way in which gender and sexuality have been used to make women subordinate to men. Only the liberal feminists stress on the socialization of children. Society does owe girls the same education as boys since all persons deserve an equal chance to develop their rational and moral capacities so as to achieve personhood. Mill believed that women are equal to men and that they will fare quite well in all sorts of competitions with men. Society has set up double standards even on ethics which hurt women. The liberal feminists argue that patriarchal society considers women to be ideally suited only for certain occupations like teaching, nursing and clerking, men cannot do well in these occupations. Liberal feminist argue that the society remains structured in ways that favour men and disfavour women in the competitive race for goods with which the society rewards us: power, prestige and money. They
believe that after discriminatory laws and policies have been removed from the books; thus formally enabling women to compete equally with men, nothing more can be done about their miseries. They think that, with equal qualifications and other relevant factors, a male selector will always select a male candidate rather than a female candidate.

Psychoanalytic feminists find root cause of women’s oppression as embedded deep in her psyche. The psychoanalytic feminists presume the change in the behaviour of male and female in pre-oedipal stage and oedipus stage. This theory presumes that boy gives up his first love object mother to escape castration at the hands of father. As a result of submitting his id (or desires) to superego (collective social conscience), the boy is fully integrated into culture. Together with his father he will rule over nature and women, both of whom contain a similarly irrational power. In contrast to the boy the girls separate slowly from her first love object mother. As a result girl integration into culture is incomplete. She exists at the periphery or margin of culture as the one who does not rule but is ruled, largely because (as Dorothy Dinnerstein suggested) she fears her own power.
The socialist feminists, argue that women's condition is over determined by the structures of production (from marxist feminists, reproduction and sexuality (from radical feminists) and the socialization of children (from liberal feminists), Women's status and function in all these structures must change if she is to achieve anything approximating full liberation. Women's interior world (her psyche) must also be transformed (as emphasized by psychoanalytic feminists) for without such a change large improvements in her exterior world will not liberate her from the kind of patriarchal thoughts that undermine her confidence (as emphasized by existentialists). The emphasis of socialistic feminism is on unity and integration, both in the sense of integrating all aspects of women's lives and in the sense of producing a unified feminist theory.

Existentialist or Post modern feminists thought that women's experience differ across class, racial and cultural lines. For feminism to be able to ground claims for women, it has to have a standpoint.

It is a major challenge to the contemporary feminism to reconcile to the pressures for diversity and
difference with those for integration and commonality. But if we want to know every thing about women, we have to study women using all the perspectives because all theories are interdependent. We can not study women with one or two approaches.

Modern state represents the institutionalization of male power arising from a history of social struggles. Institutionalization of male dominance does not mean that state policies and practices reflect gender relations. This burden rests with society - out side the state.

Feminist consciousness in social science is not only the exposition of sexism but its correction and in the pursuit of this end it is essential to develop fresh modes of thinking about women with a new conceptual apparatus. Bias against women as people equal in stature to men, cannot therefore, be expunged piecemeal. A fundamental process of vision must be engaged in. Sexual harassment of women by men in employment can be understood as a product of alienating work conditions. These conditions incite men to harass. Sexual harassment is particularly endemic in industries characterized by alienating work conditions. Gender divisions of labour are reinforced by
gender divisions of authority and power. Both authority and power are expressed through organization of hierarchies and hierarchical organizational structures, in turn, construct hierarchical interpersonal relations between people including sexual relations. The sexual harassment of women by men in employment can be understood as a male intervention for the assertion of power. It shows that how male sexual banter and sexual innuendo act as means of control of women.

There has been a controversy around the concept of informal sector, since 1970. It is somewhat difficult to describe as to from where the formal sector ends and from where the informal sector begins. Urban living is usually considered to be associated with an industrial way of life. But in the context of developing countries which have experienced a pattern of urbanization, it is characterized by engagement of large part of labour force in the low production and low income activities outside the formal sector.

Most of the discussions centre around the concept of formal and informal sectors, in terms of contrasting characteristics of economics. For a proper understanding
of the concept of informal sector, it is necessary to look into the various approaches (of informal and formal sectors) by economists and social scientists at different points of time and in different contexts.

The concept of Informal Vs Formal, as applied to the developing countries, has been attributed various meanings by different social scientists ranging from social anthropologists to economists, depending on the particular aspect or aspects they chose for their study.

The two sub systems of production have been labelled in different terms that are not necessarily identical. Important among those who recognise a dualism in urban economy in a framework other than formal-informal classification are Santos, Geertz, McGee and others. Santos (1979) thinks that the city should be thought of as two-sub-systems. The "Upper" or modern circuits and the "Lower Circuits". The upper circuit is the direct result of technological progress and the monopolies are the leading representative elements. On the other hand, the lower circuit consists of small-scale activities and is almost exclusively for the poor.
FORMAL VS INFORMAL SECTORS:

Urban economy's two sectors have been labelled in different terms that are not necessarily identical. They are: rich and poor sector (Week 1977); protected and unprotected sector (Harberger, 1971). Some scholars (Lewis; 1979, Mazumdar 1973; Mukhopadhyay, 1985, Sen 1975) have brought dichotomy, not in urban economy as such, but in a labour market of an industry or in an area or in an economy as a whole. In India, the most commonly used classification is the one which divides the economy into organised and unorganised sectors (Bhardwaj, 1979, Harriss, 1978; Joshis' 1970). Though Heather and Vijay Joshi have used the size of the establishment for division in their study of Bombay, they highlight the distinguishing features of the organised and unorganised sectors under three heads: market structure, technology and relationship with the government.

Though Joshis' distinguishing features provide a reliable basis for classifying the labour market and workers, there are a few limitation in their dichotomy. The organised and unorganised sector has no special significance since features of the degree of organisation in the unit is not regarded as a basic distinguishing
features in the classification. Again, since the "unorganised" sector assumes considerable heterogeneity, the analytical value of this dichotomy is limited.5

In view of some limitations of the earlier classification, it is argued in favour of use of formal-informal sector as a convenient method of analysing the structure of urban economies. Some informal sector dichotomy has been put forward by some to seek an analytical terminology to describe a duality that avoids bias against low income sector which is otherwise inherent in traditional modern dichotomy.

This sector has been in existence in the past. More than a century ago, about the surplus population the plight of migrant workers — surplus people in latent form — engaged in begging, street-sweeping, collecting manure, pushing handcart, driving donkeys, etc; in the cities of England during the period of Industrial revolution had attracted the attention of the eminent scholars in the nineteenth century.6

Hart was the first who launched the term informal sector. He used the comments — formal and informal sector
in the study of one migrant group, in an urban area of Nima in Accra (Ghana).

"The distinction between formal and informal income opportunities is based essentially on that between wage-earning and self employment". He gives a typology of different opportunities in urban areas referring to activities or roles and "not" persons such as (1) formal income opportunities; and (2) informal income opportunities which may be (a) legitimate and (b) illegitimate.

The difference between the analysis of Hart and earlier micro dualistic models is in the identification of "new income generating activities" in the informal sector. For the first time, the heterogeneity of people who were earlier grouped together as a residual, was recognised. The existence of wage workers in the informal sector is also no criteria by which the self employment in one sector can be distinguished from that of the other sector. The terms, informal income generating activities, petty capitalism, urban subproletariat and unenumerated are used interchangeably by Hart. But the ILO Mission to Kenya studied in detail the specific characteristics of the two sectors to identify the target groups more distinctly
mainly for policy measures. The Mission defines:

"Informal activities are the way of doing things characterized by (a) ease of entry (b) reliance on indigenous resources, (c) family ownership of enterprises, (d) small-scale of operation, (e) skills acquired outside the formal sector system and (f) unregulated and competitive markets."

Though ILO reports seem to clarify in more details what some earlier scholars like Santos and McGee had implied in their writings, after this report, the formal-informal dichotomy got the official stamp urging a change of government attitude towards the informal sector. There was surprisingly a rapid diffusion of the concept since 1971 relating to appropriateness of time and place of its presentation. The role of leading institutions such as ILO, UNO, IBRD, IDS and others was quite significant in spreading this idea. More particularly, the concept of informal sector got an international recognition due to a series of country studies and city studies conducted by ILO under its world employment programme.
DIFFERENCE IN THE TWO SECTORS:

The vagueness and over generalised nature of the concept of informal sector was subsequently sought to be made clear by several scholars by describing its characteristics which distinguish it from the formal sector.

Most scholars make a distinction between the two sectors as follows: while there are relatively large scale operations, capital-intensive techniques, high wage rates and salary levels in formal sectors, the informal sector is characterized by small scale operations, labour intensive techniques, low income levels and indigenous ownership. Weeks introduces a new dimension to the distinction between formal and informal sector in so far as he bases it on the organisational characteristics of exchange relationship and the position of economic activity. Similar approach is followed as implied in ILO mission by Santos and Joshi's dichotomy, but they lack the precision, incisiveness and focus of Week's approach. By Breman, the concept is taken to cover everything that does not belong to the formal sectors. Heather and Vijay Joshi, while suggesting the distinguishing characteristics of two sectors have stated first that the organised sector contains large
manufacturing firms operating in oligopolistic markets, sheltered from foreign competition by high tariffs and quantitative restrictions, aiming their products mainly to middle and upper income groups.

The other one is the unorganised sector, which absorbs those workers who fail to find employment in organised sectors (for any reasons) and is characterized by small enterprises, low wages to employees, self employed or family workers. This sector is not able to provide workers, stable, regular, protected jobs or satisfactory incomes.

The difference between the organised and unorganised sectors in the opinion of the committee on the status of worker in India, is not functional but lies in the nature of production relations, the degree of penetration of public controls and regulations, by data collecting agencies and scientific investigators.

The unorganised sector contains a very large number of small producers operating on narrow margins in highly competitive product markets, selling a variety of goods and services, mainly to low income groups. Secondly, the
organised sector firms use capital intensive, imported technology in contrast to labour intensive indigenous technology used by unorganised sector products; labour productivity in the former is, therefore, much higher than in the later. Technology of the organised sector firms require routinisec and formalised work conditions, while the work situation in the unorganised sector is quite informal. Third the organised sector firms have access to and influence over the machinery of the government and, therefore, to official protection and benefits, which are not available to the unorganised sector. Majumdar has brought out the distinction sharply by focussing on the fact that entry into informal sector labour market is unrestricted while that in the formal sector labour markets is restricted by artificially raised hiring standards, norms and procedures.

The ILO (under employment Mission report on Kenya) in an effort to distinguish the informal sector from formal sector, suggested the following: The informal sector is one where free entry to new enterprises exists; enterprises in this sector rely on indigenous resources. They are family owned and small scale. They are labour intensive. These workers rely on non-formal source i.e. education
and skill, and finally they operate in un-regulated and competitive markets.

The empirical evidence from sample survey in Delhi also indicates over one-half of the informal sector entrants have been attracted to Delhi by opportunities in this sector itself. Actual and potential mobility from the informal sector to the formal sector was low.¹⁰

In India, T.S. Papola's empirical study shows the direct and immediate motivation for migration is the expected "current earnings differential".¹¹ The informal sector in Bangalore provides unrestricted employment mainly to the rural migrants.¹²

EMPIRICAL STUDIES:

A number of other empirical studies have been conducted on various aspects of urban informal sector in and outside India. In some of these empirical studies, and arduous efforts have been made to demarcate the informal sector from the formal and to estimate the size of the informal sector which faced both conceptual and statistical problems. Most of these studies followed one or other criteria such as type of working class (Breman 1947) types
of occupation (Birbeck, 1978; Bromley, 1978; Tokim, 1978) the size of the firm (Aziz, 1984; 1989; Bose, 1978; Dehsi and Wadhwa, 1980, ILO, 1980; Papola, 1981; Sethuraman, 1976; Sonza and Todman, 1976; Sreeramamurthy, 1986). The size criteria is used most often and except few (Bose, 1978; Mariss B, 1978, Souza and Todman, 1976) the cutoff point is ten, that is ten or less employees including part-time, casual and independent workers. Thus, usually, the size criteria is used to eliminate enterprises employing more than ten workers from the universe on various assumptions. First, it observed that an enterprise normally requires a significant amount of capital and managerial skills once it reaches the employment size of this level. Second, these units are unlikely to have the orientation of an informal sector enterprise. Moreover, it looked more appropriate from the context of Indian situation, where particularly in manufacturing sector, the registration of enterprises is obligatory under the Factories Act, as the size of employment reaches 10 workers with the use of power and 20 workers without use of power. But though this size criteria is used in most of the empirical studies, some think that it creates some problems in co-ordinating the theoretical notion of the concept of the informal sector.
with its empirical identification on certain economic counts, scale of production and turnover.

Raczynki (1977) distinguishes three broad approaches for defining the informal sector which concern themselves respectively with (I) the segmentation of the labour market; (ii) the differentiation of the level of income and welfare of the population and (iii) the categorisation of the productive capacity i.e.:

(i) Labour Market Approach: The informal sector is viewed as a labour Market segment (e.g.) Mazumdar (1976); Sonza and Todman 1976; Weeks 1975). The ease of entry is usually named as one of its main characteristics.

(ii) The Working Poor: The informal sector is taken to consist of urban house holds or individuals with low incomes.

(iii) Micro Enterprises: According to this approach, informal sector is defined through particular features of firms either in relation to productive unit itself or the way in which the firms are placed within the total income economic system. The informal sector is the sector regarded as being composed of workers who operate business
without a fixed workshop or store such as street-vendors, shoe-shiners, car washers, beggars, prostitutes and others. Some Indian statistics define the informal activities as those taking place in the open air or in structures without a roof. This view of the Urban informal sector has now largely been abandoned, as it is recognised that it also included a variety of activities which take place in firms operated within the house of owner, or even a proper workshop. Sethuraman defined the informal sector "to include (a) all unregistered commercial enterprises and (b) all non-commercial enterprises that have no formal structure in terms of organisation and operation". 14

ILO Bureau of Statistics : Journal report offers a broad definition of informal sector suggesting it to cover informal activities in both developing and developed countries.

Such activities are conceptually regarded to be small scale to operate, with low level of organisation and technology and to have as their primary objective the generation of employment and income for their participants. Informal sector consists of small scale units engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services with
the primary objective of generating employment and incomes to their participants notwithstanding the constraints on capital, both physical and human.

In my thesis, I would like to take an operational definition of informal sector; that consists the following characteristics (i) Informal sector is that which employs ten or less persons. (ii) It does not have any fixed hours of work (iii) It provides temporary or sometimes permanent employment (iv) It does not depend on formal financial institutions for its credit needs (v) No use of modern technology (vi) Easy entry (vii) Small scale operation.

FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEMS: WOMEN IN THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTORS:

Women all over the world and more so in India are a part and parcel of the labour market. Economic growth brings changes in the quality of life as well as interpersonal relations. Women, everywhere, are excluded from crucial economic activities. In the agricultural sector in India, women are employed in the production, processing and preservation of agricultural produces. They are less active in ploughing and some times in some parts
in harvesting but at the same time they are exclusively engaged in transplanting, weeding and several post harvest operations. In the urban sectors, they also contribute substantially but it is less visible because they are employed in works which sometimes do not have immediate exchange value, as in the case of domestic servants. It is rarely recognised that only because they are doing all the domestic chores including the nurturing of children, the old and the infirm that their male counterparts are in a position to go out for different occupations and professions. Further because of cultural compulsions, women in many places are not in a position to go out to work although they possess the necessary qualifications and training.

The Indian women have lots of self acquired knowledge for ego satisfaction service of society:

i. Economic compulsion; to live for life subsistence
ii. Betterment of standard of living
iii. Work as a way of life, as a habit

The inferior status given to them and the poor facilities offered to them vis-a-vis the males, accentuate further their pitiable conditions and push them into
unorganised sector. Because of all this, they are unable to enter in the formal sector and the professions as often as they would like to go or are qualified to enter. In the informal sector, they are employed as domestic servants, sweepers, construction workers, ragpickers, and as self employed workers in sewing knitting, crochet, settle embroidery, etc.

"World Economic profile of women shows that women represent 50 percent of the world population, make up 30 percent of the office labour force, perform 60 percent of working hours, 10 percent of world income and own even less than 1 percent of the world property. 15

The founding fathers of our constitution made certain provisions in the constitution for women, Article 16 of the Indian constitution provides equality of opportunities for all citizens of India in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state and in this regard prohibits ineligibility or discrimination on the basis of sex. According to directive principles of the Indian constitution all citizens, men and women, equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work.
In India, a review of economic role played by women reveals clearly distinct trends. In 1981 the labour of the women and children was, therefore the first thing sought for by capitalisation who used machinery. 16

Women are more vulnerable to exploitation and also earn lower wages than men, a generalisation that applies to nearly all countries. The status of women in India, as in other parts of the world, has been defined for women in the pattern of society as it exits now. Hence she is traditionally viewed in her role; the activity associated with her role is domesticity. As such, their status as workers has been evaluated in terms of marginality and secondary workers. The nature of the women's work is such that there does not in most instances, exist a clearly demarcated line as to where her occupation ends and work for the home begins. A major reason for the neglect of women's status in employment as worker is the invisibility of their economic contribution and traditional definitions and interpretations of concepts such as economic activity, productivity work and work force. 17

D. Vardharajan, has rightly emphasised the need to recognise women's signified contribution in every field
of the economy. A large majority of women in India are not and have never been supplementary or marginal earners. They have always been essential and integral members of the family and endeavouring to earn a living for the family. 18

It has been estimated that in 1972-73, more than 35 million female workers were unpaid helpers in family farms and non-farm enterprises.

The labour of the women and children was therefore the first things sought for by capitalisation which used machinery in India. The female work participation has, therefore, increased since 1901.

Among the industrialized European Countries, it has been noticed that female work participation rates are higher. But in Islamic countries, participation rates rarely seem to exceed 10 percent e.g. Iraq 2.1, Pakistan 8.8, Iran 8.0 etc. (1972 year book of Labour Statistics, ILO, Geneva 1972).

The old Islamic tradition of keeping the women behind the veils may still very well be a factor responsible for low level participation. In Haryana, in 1971 only 2.41 percent female workers existed, in 1981 it
increased to 4.69 percent. In 1991 it increased to 5.59 percent. Coming to the state under present study i.e. Haryana, we see that, in here 2.42 percent of female are in the household manufacturing, processing and services sectors (Census of India 1981, 1991 series India part IIIB (i)).

When we examine the data of 1981 and 1991 we find that (i) women's work participation rates in the country as a whole or in a particular state has been significantly lower than that of men.

(2) The relative gap between men and women, in this regard, has been increasing in such a way that women work participation rate has been markedly declining.

The Ministry of labour has pointed out that what-so-ever be the stage of economic and social development of a country, four factors prevail upon women to join work force. They are (a) the inadequate income of the principal earner which forces a women to work and supplement the family income (b) mishaps such as incapacitation of the bread winner (c) death of the bread winner and (d) a womens desire for economic independance.

According to a study by Girija Khanna and Mariamma A.Vargheese on women employment and their attitude towards
work namely A woman’s desire for economic independence or for securing a higher standard of living for the family (Girija Khanna and Mariamma. Varghese, 1978; 1987), it is found that women take up employment for the following reasons:

i. Permanent and growing inadequacy of the income of the principal bread winner.

ii. Temporary fall in the family income due to exceptional or accidental circumstances.

iii. The Death of the Bread winner.  

In the unorganised sector the proportion of women workers keeps swelling at a faster rate. Thus, there is a marked decline in work opportunities for women in larger cities for all the works pertaining to the organised sector. However, in the unorganised sector, there is more and more prevalence of invisible work. While the data relating to the employment in the unorganised sector is based on regular official records, the data pertaining to unorganised sector are crude estimates only because of the amorphous character of the unorganised sector. In the unorganised sector, the employment may take the form of
unpaid family workers, a combination of family labour and manual labour, a self-employed person or a worker by contractual obligation for repayment of an out-standing loan. In these cases, employment does not necessarily mean that the workers get a regular wage payment for work.

In spite of the laws, females are seldom paid wages at par with male workers. The employers give two reasons; one, women are less productive, two, less skilled. In addition to the discrimination shown against women in the unorganised sector, all the workers, in general, are not capable of building up a bargaining strength to question their employer and thus continue to work under deplorable working conditions.

The workers in this sector have to work in very poor surroundings. In most of the cases they either have to work in their own ill-equipped houses or in very poor surroundings which are far below minimal standards of hygiene, privacy, ventilation or protection against accidents. Moreover because of uncertainty of not knowing how much work would be available and when, they live in constant apprehension and insecurity.
Most of the workers in the unorganised sector like in bidi making, garments making, construction works, sweepers, piecerate workers and so on, have no minimum wages fixed or any stipulated number of working hours for them. In a study conducted by Nirmala Banerjee of women in unorganised sector, it is found that over 90 per cent of the women, worked for 42 or more hours per week.\textsuperscript{21} For 60 percent of the workers the monthly income was below Rs. 100. According to Maria Mies a woman worked 14 hrs. in a day.\textsuperscript{22}

The reasons for low wages are that 'Entrepreneur' do not have to invest in training and the fact that larger number of women with the necessary skills are available, helps in the maintenance of low wages. As and when necessary women are threatened with the withdrawal of work or removal from work. The fear of losing work makes women vulnerable. Women, working in ready-made garment industry have to put in long hours of work for a few rupees.\textsuperscript{23}

Garments cut as per design are hand sewn or machine stitched for rates as low as rupee one and one and half per dozen blouses, or rupees two per dozen frocks. Therefore, in order to make about 30 paise per hour, a woman has to
stitch about two and half blouses per hour or two frocks per hour. 23-A

The women in the unorganised sector are so vulnerable that they are exploited at the will and pleasure of the employer. The employer shows no consideration for the worker's needs. He employs them whenever and as frequently as he needs them and dismisses them off when he no longer requires their services. Therefore, employment is irregular and uncertain for workers. They may have to work sixteen hours a day during the peak season and sit idle for three months during lean seasons. 24

The self employed women of sewing, embroidery, knitting, crossstitch and lace makers trades are divided into two broad categories (i) those who buy all their raw materials themselves and earn their income by selling their finished goods independently, and (ii) those who are given the necessary raw material to take it home, process it and then return the finished goods to their employers. They are also paid according to the number, weight and size of the items and designs produced. The first category may also be termed as self-employed and the later as dependent women. 25
Sometimes women in addition to their exploitation with regard to wages, working hours, are also physically assaulted and sexually harassed. This is very true in case of construction workers and bidi workers in which the women are forced to yield to such evil pressures. Otherwise they are threatened with the loss of job. In a study on bidi workers on Nipani, it is found that those pounding tobacco in Godown, spent 18 hours a day in a state of virtual imprisonment under the absolute control of the boss. This provided the employer with the opportunity for sexual harassment.

These problems faced by women in the unorganised sector are similar to those faced by domestic workers. Domestic work has now become inevitable and more and more women continue to be employed in the domestic sector inspite of its many drawbacks. Domestic workers have no security of employment and can be dismissed without any prior notice. They are outside the perview of labour laws and regulations applicable to organised industry and services.

Domestic work is considered as unskilled. Though it involves skillful and meticulous labour yet it calls for no
special training. A large proportion of workers in the
domestic service were introduced at various ages to the
work by neighbours or relatives. None had received any
formal training for work. The wages are therefore very low,
on the ground that it is not a skilled work. 27 This tells
that how women are concentrated in this profession which is
grossly neglected and inadvertently looked down upon as
some manual labour.

Thus poverty and the growing population have
pressurized the people seeking employment and has resulted
in the growth of unorganised sector. Now-a-days rag-
picking is also a popular work among these poor women
workers. Whether it is the construction worker or the
ready made garment workers or the bidi or the rag pickers
or the domestic servants they all share the same malady of
the unorganised sector. Long hours of sustained work in
unhygienic conditions prove detrimental to their health in
the long run. High level of insecurity, deplorable wages,
long and unregulated working hours, health hazards are only
some of the problems faced by these women in the
unorganised sector.

The workers in the unorganised sector rarely own
capital or tools of production, they have no direct link with organised industry and services. They have no access to modern technology or facilities. All they own are the skills and knowledge of their trade and their own physical labour. They have none of labour law protections, rules and regulations applicable to the unorganised sector. Exploitation by middle men are rampant. Young women who cannot study further and who cannot go out and work are sucked into the vortex of home-based work. Many a times, due to unbearable poverty, even for meagre earnings, the family has to send out several, sometimes as many as five or six earners, and to them easily available opportunity, is, normally, in domestic work or some other job in the unorganised sector.

Organised sector still accounts for less than 33 percent of urban female employment. The women have not made any headway in the better paying jobs but are mainly concentrated in poorly paid, but easily taxing work in the unorganised sector.

The position of women in the unorganised sector remains as bad as it was years ago. The women in this sector, because of their lack of mental awarness, and
financial restraints, are unable to make use of the provision made for them through government programmes. We have confined our study to the lower segments of society; people who are engaged in low paid jobs.
Notes and References:


8. World employment programme, was launched by ILO in its 1969 session. The country studies were : The Colombo Mission 1972 Which were undertaken to evolve employment-oriented strategy of development."


23-A. See, ref. 23.


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