CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Indian society is largely a conservative with rigid social traditions and customs wherein certain occupations are still dominated by particular communities and considered as a social stigma. For example, weavers, rope makers, blacksmith, cobbler are some of the caste based occupations which are occupied by the so called lower caste artisans and these occupations are not yet open to other higher caste communities. It is a general notion that the traditional caste based occupations are carried out in the household premises and all the family members use to participate in the production activities and acquire the manufacturing skills. However, social mobility, modernization, introduction of mechanized production system, economic liberalization, government polices and so on have affected these household units. In spite of all these changes a few household industries which produces consumer goods are able to survive. Leather footwear is considered as one of the basic necessity for human need after food, shelter and cloth is growing its demand in the Indian Market. It was found that nearly 2000 million pairs of footwear (2001) is used in India annually. In this 800 million pairs comprises leather footwear. It is interesting to note that 70% of the total leather footwear is produced by the household artisans. However, the prices of the leather footwear produced by the household artisans are higher than the non leather footwear and consumers also prefer to buy the low cost footwear. Hence, unable to compete with the non leather footwear the house hold leather
footwear started disappearing from the Indian market and artisans including 
women who depends on the household leather footwear production work 
became jobless. Considering the vulnerability of the household leather 
footwear sector give away to organized sector on the one hand and 
threatening of further loosing of livelihood for large number of artisans 
particularly women on the other hand has awakened a few institutions to 
intervene in the leather footwear clusters to strengthen the skills of these 
traditional household footwear workers. Athani in Karnataka is one such 
leather footwear producing centre (cluster) where large number of (600) 
women are involved in the household leather footwear manufacturing work 
was selected by the institutions to implement women centered development 
programme.

The important objectives of the study are

i. To understand socio-economic background of the women 
   leather footwear workers

ii. To study the reasons for their participation and

iii. Type of institutional support to women leather footwear 
    workers and

iv. Analyze the institutional impact on women leather footwear 
    workers.

Athani is a small town in north Karnataka with the total population of 
39,200 and the Scheduled Caste population consisting of 6306. Out of 6306 
total Scheduled Caste populations, 23.4% comprises leather footwear workers
and half of them are females. Production of leather footwear (Kolhapuri footwear) at household level is the specialty of this small town. Since the present study focuses on women's participation in the household leather footwear work, it was found that women's participation in leather footwear work is inevitable as this occupation is carried out in the household premises on division of labour production system. Since this is a caste based occupation 94% of the women leather footwear workers belong to traditional Samagar community, and 6% belong to non-traditional caste i.e. they are not traditional leather footwear workers and changed their occupation to leather footwear work recently. The change of occupation among the non-traditional women leather footwear workers is due to inability to earn livelihood from their family occupation of rope making. It was found that 93% of the respondents participate in the household leather footwear work because they considered as primary occupation and 7% carry the footwear work as secondary occupation. One of the major findings of the study is that the force behind the continuation of leather footwear production work in Athani is without women's labour production of full footwear is not possible. The skills of women workers in the leather footwear production are special and these skills are not performed by the male artisans and considered learning women's leather footwear skills are below their dignity. The skill of preparation of leather footwear components requires more concentration and patience that woman alone can do. It shows that, by and large, the skill behind the continuation of leather footwear production work in Athani is in supplying critical leather footwear components and their participation.
The study found that women participation in leather footwear work in Athani is classified into four categories based on their nature of work.

i. Women working in the family based units (56%)

ii. Women job workers (22%)

iii. Wage workers working in the workshop (7%) and

iv. Women working for own and job work (15%).

It was found that majority (56%) women workers preferred to work in the family based units because of effective utilization of flexible working conditions in which they combine both leather footwear work and household management. Married women workers (67%) constitute majority in the total women workers and there was a considerable change in the family sizes and majority are (79%) living below 5 member’s family size which shows the declining trend of joint families in Athani. The study found that poor literacy rate (37%) among women leather footwear workers is a major stumbling block for the institutions to implement all the developmental programmes successfully. 63% of the respondents are found illiterates. It shows the lack of education among women leather footwear workers.

The study found that the process of empowerment among the women leather footwear workers in Athani was significant after the institutional intervention. Institutions like Charmalaya of KVIC, LIDKAR, CLRI and ASCENT have been working in the cluster of Athani to develop it as a model leather footwear cluster. These institutions with women centered programmes assisted in various skill improvement activities of footwear production.
One of the major findings of the study is that the earnings of women job workers have increased by 15-20% after the institutional training (CLRI) programme. Their daily earnings reported at Rs.30 against Rs.25 before the institutional training programme. Even school going children also attend the footwear work during their leisure time and enhanced their earnings by 15%. The wages are paid on piece rate basis.

The interesting findings of the study is that out of 284 total respondents, 82% live in their own houses and only 18% live in rented houses. More number of people come to own houses due to the allotment of free houses to the footwear workers by government agencies. Among the various agencies, 57% of the houses were distributed by LIDKAR and rest by other agencies.

It was found that under KVIC assisted programmes; new footwear designs were supplied to the women leather footwear workers. 90% of them used new footwear designs in their footwear manufacture. These new footwear designs also increased market demand for their footwear. The marketing support provided by KVIC is another crucial intervention programme extended to women leather footwear workers. 87% of respondents reported increased sale of their footwears and reduced the exploitation of the local traders. Establishment of leather footwear procuring center in Athani is considered one of the important institutional supports extended to the women leather footwear workers. Further, due to KVIC intervention it was noticed that 87% of the respondents got the bank loan. In other words KVIC in its approach towards sustainable footwear cluster development and women’s
empowerment have made a significant impact on women leather footwear workers and the intervention of KVIC is said to be a timely assistance for the sustainable development of the Kolhapuri footwear and livelihood of women leather footwear workers in Athani.

Under the training and assistance programmes initiated by LIDKAR to women leather footwear workers, phenomenal development was witnessed among women leather footwear workers in Athani. The raw material supply to women leather footwear workers by LIDKAR resulted increased family income savings as 84% of the respondents felt that they saved a sizeable amount on transportation because most of the footwear workers use to purchase their raw materials from outside the Athani before LIDKAR's initiative. It was a great relief to many footwear artisans as the raw materials supplied by LIDKAR is considered good quality with less price.

The market support provided by the LIDKAR has also boosted the sale of leather footwear. 90% of the women leather footwear workers indicated increased sales in their footwear after the LIDKAR intervention. The trade exhibition organized by the LIDKAR has increased the sale of leather footwear as well as helped the women leather footwear workers to learn the new footwear designs exhibited in the trade fairs. It was found that 83% of the women leather footwear workers have benefited from the trade exhibition in marketing their footwear and learning new footwear designs.

Among the institutional interventions CLRI has made significant impact on women leather footwear workers as it introduced innovative
programmes to train them. Introduction of toehold footwear (new name of Kolhapuri footwear) is a new brand name and intended to popularize it in the export market. Significant achievement of the programme is that 59% of the women leather footwear workers accepted as new brand name and they inclined to produce it. Since it is a new name introduced to replace the Kolhapuri footwear it may take some more time to capture the market share hence, presently the popularity of the toehold footwear restricted to 59% of the women workers.

The Common Facility Center established by CLRI is more helpful to the women leather footwear workers as 30% of them indicated improved their footwear production and 34% reported improved their quality of the footwear and another 36% indicated improved their skill/footwear designs after establishing the CFC in Athani.

Production of varieties of new designs of leather footwear has increased considerably among women leather footwear workers as 90% of them indicated that their new designed footwear has created more market demand. The designs created by CLRI were attractive and durable; hence after CLRI training programme the production of new designed leather footwear was phenomenal among these women leather footwear workers.

Before CLRI’s training programme use of footwear lasts among women leather footwear workers was almost nil; whereas 42% of the women workers opined that the use of footwear lasts is considered easy for them after
CLRI training. This has enhanced awareness and quality conscious among the women leather footwear workers.

Participation by women leather footwear workers in national/international leather fairs was nil before the institutional intervention, where as 66% of the women leather footwear workers participated in the leather fairs and expressed that the fairs has made a positive impact on them and they learned new designs. Participating in the fairs helped women workers to increase their products and quality of the footwear. This is clearly reflects the dimension of the impact made by CLRI on women leather footwear workers.

Formation of Women Self Help Groups was non existent among the women leather footwear workers in Athani. After the institutional support and motivation 12 women SHG’s were formed in Athani. It was found that there was a significant progress noticed among the women footwear workers after the formation of SHG’s as 76% of them expressed that they increased in their savings and learned leadership qualities. Apart from the footwear training programmes institutions organized training programmes on enhancement of leadership quality among the women leather footwear workers. It was interesting to note that the leadership quality training programme was more effective to women workers as 63% of them utilized the training to conduct the proceedings and meetings of SHG’s without the male members support. The SHG’s were more helpful to women leather footwear workers on economic earnings as women’s SHG group started collecting the job work collectively and distribute it among the members and enhanced their earnings.
Thus, the economic independence has increased their participation in family decision making (64%) process. This clearly indicates the important role played by the institutions in transforming women’s skill in ti by enhancing their earning capacity.

The institutional intervention and their support to the women leather footwear workers have yielded desirable results in Athani. It was interesting to note that the household asset formation among women leather workers has increased considerably as purchase of radio has increased from 14% to 29% after the institutional support and nearly 5% of the women got telephone connections whereas such facility availed by the women footwear workers was nil. 20% of them possessing TV’s after the institutional intervention whereas only 6% had TV in their homes.

Other household items such as furniture, scooter, bicycle are also reported phenomenal increase among the women leather footwear workers after the institutional support. 84% of the women workers now possessing any of the household items discussed above after the institutional intervention. 92% of the women workers expressed the satisfaction and improvement in their socio-economic conditions after the institutional intervention which indicates the significance of the institutional support to the women leather footwear workers.

These institutions apart from the skill enhancement programmes they motivated women on other useful activities such as use of safe drinking water, cleanliness, personal hygiene and awareness about socially harmful practices
like child marriage, unnecessary spending on non-remunerative activities. This campaign has brought good dividends in the cluster. Child marriages have come down; houses are cleanly maintained and habit of savings has increased.

The economic contribution of the women leather footwear workers made to the family has not been matched with their say in the decision-making matters in the household before institutional support. While some women were consulted on the above matters, their husbands/fathers or other elders ultimately took the decisions. Being confined to the house, with little or no education, they are unable to take decisions reflecting a deeply ingrained situation of male and female inequality before the institutional support. However, the institutions emphasized the importance of women’s participation in the decision making process which phenomenal increase (64%) was noticed among the women workers.

Empowerment of woman means a stage of change in her attitude. Such change sometimes may cause inequilibrium in the family life and male members may not accept the change easily. However, women artisans with positive attitude must determine for the change. The overall atmosphere in the cluster got a new look after the implementation of programmes by the institutions where the process of change amply demonstrated in the entire cluster.

Those institutes participated in this cluster development are aiming to bring change and improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the
leather footwear workers in Athani. The women specific programmes implemented by these institutions were crucial as women were considered a vital part of the society for change and development.

The confidence that has been created by the institutions among the women artisans has increased their desire for economic independence. This is a novel instance where institutions could bring changes in the lives of artisans by their scientific approach to cluster development and empowerment of women.

In this study, it was observed that there is an emerging trend of younger generation who want to continue the family occupation as they witnessed the empowerment of women artisans with the help of institutional support.

Why the institutes focus women centered programmes? What are the specific reasons for giving priority to women workers? The cause behind such decision was that the woman could act as an instrument for development and empowerment. Most of the institutional programmes have been framed keeping in mind the potentiality of women's enthusiasm and eagerness to empower themselves to gain economic independence. This was evident when LIDKAR and other housing agencies allotted the subsidized housing units in women's name. More over, woman as the central point in the family for better growth, they can be equipped with economic power to increase the tendency of savings will be increased. The change in the society is attributed by the change in the women's positive attitude exhibited by them. In other words,
the change and development of women is directly influencing the process of change in the society.

On the whole, this study highlights the economic theory that the human capital development has impact on their earnings. To illustrate further, that the human capital gets appreciated in value through the investment on the job earnings. It is always a reality that the job relevant human capital depreciates if there is an obsolescence of skills. So the human capital in the household production particularly of woman is the human capital that faces the problem. But the institutional intervenyin Athani have innovated an INSTITUTION-CENTERED APPROACH in priority rather than the individual centered approach to upgrade them with on the job learning or enskillment. The focus of the study is an analysis of such INSTITUTION-CENTERED APPROACH by adopting a special cluster in Athani, one among many. In this institution-centered approach, the women in the household leather footwear have been given priority; because of institution centered approach there is an integrated attempt through the training of the groups. Ultimately, the study has revealed that the women had not only empowered themselves but also have enhanced their livelihood patterns. The study has not used any control group for analysis. Instead it had relied on the perception of the women in this study about the change in them, about the attitude, empowerment and livelihood changes towards better level. Accordingly, the study highlights the need for institution-centered approach to bring about change and development.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the present study, the following recommendations are made for further research in the field of informal household sector as well as for policy makers in which women’s contributions are crucial for the social development.

1. The dalit factor of the women participation in the household labour process is yet another focus to be taken up in future.

2. The dalit women labour is an unexplored dimension particularly as a non-agricultural occupational dimension. It has to be studied.

3. The political economy of the dalit women in the household leather manufacture is a fertile field for a sociological enquiry.

4. Technical Training Institute for women artisans has to be established keeping in mind the potentiality of the women workers for the footwear cluster development.

5. Comparative study of women leather footwear workers with that of non-leather workers of Scheduled Castes should be initiated and find out the reasons for not participating in the leather footwear production work.

6. Women Self Help Groups are now emerging as most appropriate solution for the women empowerment is another area for in-depth study for the interested scholars.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

The whole study focused on women leather footwear workers and brought out their role, contribution in the leather footwear sector in Athani. The study has brought out very useful findings on institutional support and achievement of women’s empowerment. The new concept of formation of Women Self Help Group (SHG’s) in Athani is a positive direction for the social growth.

The women’s role in the community/social development is crucial and women leather footwear workers in Athani have shown as model artisans to other similar footwear clusters. The investigator adopted case study approach which will serve as a ready reference to planners, policy makers and research scholars.