CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

India's half of the population are women and among the working women, majority of them work in the field of agriculture as labourers and cultivators. They are also engaged in other activities like collection of forest products, animal husbandry activities (feeding and milking the cattle), construction industry, minefields and so on. In the urban areas, they are engaged as rag pickers, domestic servants and street vendors/hawkers. At their dwellings, they do income-generating works like beedi rolling, garments stitching, weaving, and spinning and in factories they work as contract labourers. Apart from the productive works, they do look after their household chores.

Of the total women in the country, 39% are living Below the Poverty Line (BPL) and another 20% live little above the poverty line. In this segment, the earnings of women is the prime source for the survival of their families. Women's housework and reproductive work are recognised but unfortunately their economic productive work is not matchingly acknowledged (Jhabwala and Tate, 2002). Women are seen as mothers, wives, home makers but they
are not seen as workers and producers and their contribution to the growth of the national economy and society is grossly under estimated.

The patriarchal social system in India evolved over centuries has restricted women's activities outside the home. Production of consumer items were confined to home itself in which women participate as helpers to the male members. It was a self-sustained activity in which division of labour was followed. Gradually production of consumer items at home has become family occupation and continued over generations. Today, this sector is an important component which contributes substantially to the social development process in terms of generating employment opportunities and enhancing economic growth. Women who work in this household sector have been playing an important role to sustain the domestic industry in India. They prefer to work at home because work is easily available at the house itself and they have flexibility in attending both the productive and household work.

It is the women workers who form the majority of home-based workers and they are known for their traditional form of working norms. Within the household sector, their work ranges from wage employment at one end to self-employed family labour and piece rate workers at the other. They experience acute subjugation and vulnerability which they have to cope up with all the attendant sufferings.

The importance and significance of the household industry has undergone changes due to emergence of mechanisation and industrialisation. Further, the products from the household sector slowly lost their market value
in view of changes in the consumer taste. Many substitute materials replaced the household products. For example, plastic footwear and furniture have affected the traditional manufactures of cobblers and carpenters irreparably. Women who work in these families for many years are unable to cope up with attending work outside their homes. However, due to poverty and economic compulsion they started working as agricultural labourers and low paid daily wage earners.

1.2 INFORMAL HOUSEHOLD SECTOR

Home based work in both developing and developed countries (including Europe and North America) may be considered “informal” by the economists in the sense that the workers are outside the protection of the law and their work is often not valued appropriately. Most of the products they produce are sold largely by the mainstream retailers. The similar pattern that is true for clothing, automobile, leather, electronics assembling and production in many other modern industries are all have the characteristics of informal household sector (Jhabwala and Tate, 2002)\(^2\). Thus describing informal household sector is a herculean task as it’s definition is unequivocal. However, a few researchers attempted to describe it in a comprehensive way. Among them, a study on informal and its size of economic contribution to the National Gross Domestic Productions (GDP) in developing countries. Charmes (2001-02)\(^3\) has described the main features of the informal household sector in a more realistic and comprehensive way. The main features of an informal household sector are small scale of the activity; self-
employment with a high proportion of family workers and apprentices; low capital and less equipment; labour intensive technologies; low skills; low level of organization.

Moreover, these informal units, though registered, do not pay the relevant taxes because of the government’s contradictory adoption of rules towards informal sectors. A home-based work is often seen as an old fashion and declining form of production associated with the early stages of the industrial revolution. Indeed, this home based work spans over continents and centuries (Jhabwala and Tate, 2002). Home based workers work in their homes or at places nearer to their homes that don’t belong to the employer. They may do piecework for an employer who can be a subcontractor, an agent or a middleman or they can be self-employed in family enterprises. They work in new economic avenues such as micro electronic assembling at houses or working in the traditional cottage industries like weaving, rope making, bamboo basket manufacturing, carpet weaving etc. These home-based workers are found in developed countries (Ireland, Netherlands, Italy) as well as in developing countries (India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Philippines, Indonesia etc). It is estimated that women’s participation in the informal household sector is more than 90 per cent in the developing countries.

1.3 TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD WORKERS

Basically, there are two types of household workers i.e. (1) piece rate workers and (2) own account workers. In the piece rate workers, category, there are other references for categories like domestic out workers and job
workers. Workers in this group get their raw materials from the employer, contractor or a firm and make them into finished goods at home and deliver them to the employer. Rarely do these workers have any direct contact with the owner of a factory or an employer. Their only link is the contractor who is responsible for getting orders, distributing the work to the piece rate workers and collecting back and delivering the finished goods to the employer.

In the second type of workers i.e. own account workers have direct contact with all linked persons. Procuring raw materials till marketing their finished products are the responsibilities that lie with them.

1.4 WOMEN AND HOUSEHOLD INDUSTRIES

Household industry is an industry run by the head of the family himself or herself and/or by the members of the household at home or within the village in rural areas and only within the premises of the house (where households are located) in case of urban area. The larger proportions of workers in a household industry consist of members of the household including the head. An household industry should relate to production, processing, servicing and repairing or making and selling (not merely selling) of goods. The goods produced should not be exclusively for consumption by the household itself, but should be wholly or partly for sale. Home workers are sometimes referred to as ‘outworkers’, ‘home-based workers’ or ‘piece-rate workers’. These terms emphasise the different aspects of homework and all terms referred are under informal sector.
For the last few decades, considerable efforts have been made to promote informal rural industries. Several studies were conducted and measures implemented to provide organisational support to cottage and village industries. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission and its State level Boards and All India Boards of Handlooms, Handicrafts etc. were established to support micro industries of artisan sectors in India. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 laid stress on the development of village and cottage industries within the broad spectrum of industrial development. Thus it is encouraging that this sector is assured of due recognition and rightful place in the economic development of the country, particularly in the rural areas. The occupations and organisations in which women could find work are limited. This relative lack of demand for female labour seems to be primarily the result of socio-historical factors. In the first place, tradition and social values stress the importance of men being in employment rather than women. Further, mobility of women workers in general is limited since they also have the responsibility for the household chores.

Women in India have different roles due to cultural reasons. Assigning low skilled work to women in Indian society has a long history. They constitute nearly 50% of the total population. Statistics on work participation rate for women workers in total continues to show low figures. For instance, only 22.27% of women in 1991 were recorded as workers and in 2001 census their participation rate has improved to 25.68% (Census of India, 1991 and 2001). However, still this seems to be low considering the higher ratio of women population. Feminist activists argued that National data collecting
agencies might not have considered the work of women who work in the houses on piece rate basis or seasonal petty vendors during the enumeration drive. National Sample Survey (NSS, 1997) calculated that as many as 17% of rural women and nearly 6% of urban women were incorrectly recorded as “non-workers”.

The Census figures for women’s participation in the productive work are unsatisfactory ever since uninterrupted population enumerations were conducted. As per the data generated through these enumerations, majority of the women were classified as non-workers. The 2001 census tabulates the work participation rate of men and women by taking the total number of male or female workers and calculating it as a percentage of the total male or female population. According to the census of 2001 the work participation rate (WPR) of women was 25.68% as compared to male WPR of 51.93%. However, State wise women work participation rates are different and the following table shows the women's work participation rates in selected states.
Table 1.1

Women’s Work Participation Rate in Selected States 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total WPR</th>
<th>Male WPR</th>
<th>Female WPR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>39.26</td>
<td>51.93</td>
<td>25.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>45.81</td>
<td>56.44</td>
<td>34.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>34.80</td>
<td>47.84</td>
<td>20.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>32.80</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>09.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>39.76</td>
<td>50.49</td>
<td>27.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>49.28</td>
<td>54.70</td>
<td>43.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>44.60</td>
<td>56.87</td>
<td>31.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>32.32</td>
<td>50.36</td>
<td>15.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>43.72</td>
<td>51.96</td>
<td>34.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>43.46</td>
<td>53.49</td>
<td>32.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>52.70</td>
<td>57.45</td>
<td>47.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>37.58</td>
<td>54.10</td>
<td>18.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>32.81</td>
<td>47.22</td>
<td>16.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001

Table 1.1 reveals that female work participation rates vary among the States. Mizoram in North Eastern Region has recorded highest WPR for female whereas agriculturally developed States like Punjab and Haryana recorded 18.68 and 27.31 per cent respectively. Further the female work participation rates vertically increased from 11.9% in 1971 to 25.68% in 2001 (Census of India, 1971 and 2001). This indicates that still majority of the
women are classified under non-workers category. Figure No1.1 shows Women’s Work Participation Rates in India: 1971-2001.

**Women's Work Participation Rates in India:**
1971-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>19.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>25.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census of India 1971-2001*

**Fig. No. 1.1**

Today women work in various fields to supplement their family income. They work for longer hours for meagre earnings. It is believed that most of the women labourers in informal sector are poor and migrants and are paid low wages. They do not have any organisations and political protection. Even in the big factories, the contract workers do not figure in the list of workers or labourer’s unions. In this category of casual workers, majority of them belong to women workers of economically and socially weaker section. It shows that the entire labour market is found to be discriminated against women in terms of job opportunities (Ela Bhat, 1987).
After 50 years of independence in India, there is a gap in building adequate data on traditionally engaged workers particularly women workers of household industries. A detailed survey identifying artisan families engaged in various traditional industries is yet to be conducted in majority of States. The Government of India established Khadi and Village Industries Commission in 1956 for the purpose of planning and implementing schemes for the promotion of enterprises in traditional household industries to improve the skills of the household artisans particularly women artisans.

The importance of traditional household sector in the economic life of a fast developing country like India is indeed very great. This industry contributes to the social development substantially and provides work to a large number of persons particularly the needy and downtrodden community of the society. The Kharve Committee appointed by the Planning Commission to lay down a programme for the proper development of village and small-scale industries has recommended women workers especially for the micro enterprises.

Hence, the traditional household industries have been given an important place in the development of rural areas and decentralised industrialization. The Directive Principles of the State Policy in the Indian Constitution explicitly lays down that “the state shall endeavour to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in the rural areas”. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 stated “cottage and small scale industries have a primary role in the national economy as the scope for a
household village industry would boost the micro industrial growth in India. Even after 54 years of this resolution, the growth of the micro household industries has not taken place at the expected level. In fact, a few rural artisan industries were closed down due to negligence in the Successive Five Year Plans. However, these industries are particularly suited for the better utilisation of local resources and for the achievement of the local self-sufficiency in respect of certain types of essential consumer goods. Reviewing micro household industrial growth is essential as women would be more beneficial group since their participation in the household production activities is recorded more than the male workers in the rural areas.

The Industrial Policy statement of June 1998 reiterates the role of the informal household sector stressing the need for higher employment, correction of regional imbalance in development and promotion of economic federalism by integrating the functions of various small and cottage industries with that of the large-scale industries. Special attention is contemplated for the development of handicrafts, handlooms, and cottage and village industries where large number of women is working. Table 1.2 shows the distribution of women workers in different activities.
Table 1.2
Occupation wise Distribution of Women Workers in India – 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Total No. of women workers (In lakhs)</th>
<th>% Share of women workers in total work force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>412.99</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>500.93</td>
<td>39.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Household manufacturing</td>
<td>20.84</td>
<td>6.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Other workers</td>
<td>275.71</td>
<td>21.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trade Commerce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Livestock/Forestry etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transportation &amp; Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mining and Quarry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Service Workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1270.48</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table 1.2 shows that in the total labour force women agricultural labourers constitute 40% and cultivators 32%. Women working in household manufacturing reported 6% and 22% women are engaged in productive work in other sectors. Figure 1.2 depicts occupation wise distribution of women workers in India.
Women employment in agricultural activity is declining over the years as the rural non-agricultural activity has been growing steadily and more women are entering into this sector. Their participation rate as cultivators and agricultural labourers was 34.20% and 44.91% in 1991 and declined to 32.51% and 39.43% in 2001 (Census of India, 1991 and 2001). Women workers in the informal household sector represent a comparatively new domain of study in India. But during the last two decades, academicians and activists concerned with women’s issues have succeeded in bringing to light the critical but often-clouded aspects of women’s existence.
It is now recognised that there have been profound implications not only for women but also for the economy and society as a whole. The United Nations declaration of Women’s Decade (1975-85) sharpened the awareness of unequal status to women as a global phenomenon; the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India became a landmark in establishing the stark reality of the deprived situation of Indian women particularly in the informal household sector. The Government of India had ushered in the new Millennium by declaring the year 2001 as Women’s Empowerment Year to focus on ‘our vision to the new century of a nation’ where women are equal partners with men.

Lack of awareness on minimum wage acts and lack of effective representation for women at national level are the causes of the hindrance for their development. Insensitivity of government officials towards these women and invisibility of their labour have further pushed them towards poverty. Women participants in low paid urban informal sectors are in a better position than their counterparts in the villages. There is a need for more research in this sector to understand as to how the informal sector contributes to the wider urban economy. Continued negligence of this sector in the development policies may have an overall negative impact on women particularly on the downtrodden of the society. It is a fact that most of the home-based women workers who work hard are isolated from legislation and do not come under any of the labour acts though they are the prime contributors to their families and national economy (Kamala Ganesh, 1985)10.
Food processing, beedi, garment, textile, plantation, leather are some of the industries which prefer women workers due to low wages and non-unionism, more regularity in attending the work and less problematic. In Allahabad region, where nearly 90% of the total informal work force (2.5 million) is represented by women who were offered low skilled work and meagre wages. There is no collective bargaining power among them. Such exploitation by the employer is a common phenomenon (Kamala Ganesh, 1985).

Women's participation in formal sector has increased marginally over the last decade from 13.2 lakhs in 1990-91 to 16.5 lakhs in 2000-01. This positive change, which is shifting towards modern sections of the industrial sectors, must be interpreted with caution. The increase in women's employment in this formal sector does not necessarily mean decent working conditions, permanent employment opportunities or other benefits. This is because even though women work in formal sector, they often remain outside the group of core employees and are recruited in a more casual and informal way. It is a fact that those industries with a high share of women in their total work force produce higher volume of goods (Nirmala Banerjee, 1985). Many export oriented production units and Multi National Companies (MNCs) prefer to recruit young women as floor level workers and train them for 2 months on the production skills for the reason of their acceptance for low wages and easy availability of work force.
1.5 GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The main focus of the policies of the Government with regard to women labour has been to remove the handicaps under which they work and strengthen their bargaining capacity, improve their wages and working conditions, enhance their skills and open up better employment opportunities for them. A separate cell, namely, Women Labour Cell (WLC) is functioning in the Ministry of Labour to address these problems. The Maternity Benefit Act 1961 and Equal Remuneration Act 1976 are the protective and anti-exploitative legislations which have been enacted to protect and safeguard the interests of women workers at the workplace. The Equal Remuneration Act 1976 stipulates payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers for the same and similar nature of work.

The Equal Remuneration Act 1976 Act also prohibits any gender discrimination in recruitment and service conditions. A Committee has been set up at the Centre under the 1976 Act to advise the Government on providing increasing employment opportunities for women and generally reviewing the steps taken for effective implementation of the 1976 Act. The State Governments and Union Territory Administrations have also set up similar committees. The Central Advisory Committee (CAC) at the National level and the Advisory Committee at the State level along with competent authorities oversee the process of implementation of the Equal Remuneration Act 1976. In spite of this legislation, improvement in the living conditions of
the informal household sector by and large remains stagnant since many decades.

Women from poor families are more dependent on this household informal sector to meet the economic requirements of their families. Studies show that the poorer the family, the more it depends on the income of women. The informal household industries have been given a central place in the development of rural areas. The importance of informal household sector in the socio-economic development of the country is acutely felt. This industry contributes to the national income substantially and provides employment to about a million households. It is a fact that women are more heavily represented in household production than in non-household production and accounted for 63% of the unpaid family workers in the Indian leather footwear and weaving sectors (Shoba Sundaram and Seshagiri Rao, 1996).13

Although women’s contribution through their labour to the national economy is significant, their work is invisible to the policy makers and planners (Anne Witz, 1997).14 Gender discrimination is universal. In spite of competitive ability, the upward mobility for women is a difficult task in this patriarchal society.

Two-thirds of the added product value is generated in the informal household sector of Indian economy. Large and medium scale industries have begun to disperse production by adopting the "putting out" (job work) system to small unregulated firms and home-based piece rate workers to avoid legislative obligations. This trend is fast catching up in the country to avoid
harassment by officials and to minimise expenditure on social benefits to the employees.

Hence, most of the factories particularly the leather footwear production units introduced piece-rate and job work concept and supply the work to home-based women workers for partial/full finishing of footwear. This has spurred the growth of the informal sector in Agra where an estimated 84% of the women labour force is working. The majority of the work force (7%) is backward class and Muslim women (Knorringa, 1996)\textsuperscript{15}.

The findings of the studies on “Policies and Strategies for Working Women in the Context of Industrial Restructuring”, presented in a workshop at New Delhi by the Institute of Social Studies, the Hague and the Front for Rapid Economic Advancement, New Delhi have revealed that majority of the women workers particularly in the informal sector in India are not extended protective legislation. Only 12 per cent of the main workers are covered under the employment security provisions and incidence of casual labour is on the increase. Women are normally employed in the unskilled dead-end jobs and they form the major part of the unorganised sector. Woman’s employment is a determining factor as her employment brings direct impact on her status in the house. Further, her contribution to household income has significant effect on woman’s bargaining power within the family. It is a fact that participation in productive work is a key factor in her personality development and she can empower herself in the family’s decision making.
The National Perspective Plan for women asserts that women were treated discriminately for equal work and that they suffer from all kinds of exploitations. They work as subordinate to men and are paid less. In fact, the work opportunities for women are declining over the years. The main factors are decline of handicrafts units, high illiteracy rate among women, rise in modern mechanised industry and increased technological advancement. When woman takes on the working role, she not only finds a change in her status within the family and outside it, but also takes upon herself increasing pressure to reconcile the dual burden of the two roles i.e. at home and work place.

The National Commission for Women was set up in 1992 with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided to women and reviewing the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary. Apart from these legislations, there was no explicit employment policy for women workers particularly for the informal household sector. Studies have shown that women contribute extensively to the national economy by participating in all kinds of employment which are invisible (Rama Kumari, 2000). By focussing explicitly on women’s contribution to the national income, the true extent and characteristics of their employment can be brought to light and the contributions to the development process could be recognized.

Some of the labour studies discovered the differences in terms of the labour categories under which women participate in employment. They are
extensively recruited for the casual labour in all types of informal household production units and majority of them constitute as unpaid family workers. If these categories of labour are not explicitly recognized, the danger exists that the true extent of women's productive work is not accounted. It is a common feature that women's employment has been found to be concentrated in particular types of industry that are very labour intensive. This includes those types of industries in which products are assembled; a major category of such products are textiles, clothing, food processing, footwear manufacture and leather products. In many developing countries, these sectors are major players in terms of employment and national earnings. The lack of recognition of women's employment and knowledge concerning the categories of labour under which they are recruited have a quite serious effect on the qualitative development planning. If the essential contributions made by them may lead to displacement of women from their employment and their source of income for the household, or to increase their work burden which is injurious to their own well being and that of their family.

The mechanization process usually takes place to a greater extent in large-scale production and in the modern type of small-scale production units as well. The splitting up of functions or the combining of functions may occur both within large-scale and small scale production units. Subcontracting of certain functions within the production process usually takes place from large-scale to small-scale.
1.6 FIVE YEAR PLANS AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

The Planning Commission was established in 1951 with the responsibility of formulating successive Five Year Plans.

1.6.1 I to V Five Year Plans

During the First Plan, the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was set up in 1953 to support the activities of voluntary organisations in the field of welfare for women, children and handicapped. Under the Community Development Programme (CDP), 'Mahila Mandals' or Women's Groups were formed and promoted. In the Second and Third Plans, priorities were given to the women workers of agricultural sector and poverty alleviation programmes and were implemented in selected States including Karnataka. Majority of the women workers or labourers in agricultural sector belong to weaker sections of the society. Fourth and Fifth Plans laid emphasis on education of women and measures to improve maternal and child health services. Sixth Plan supported economic development, employment and training for women as the important factors to improve their socio-economic conditions.

1.6.2 Sixth Plan

The apparent change in the approach of the Sixth Five Year Plan was initiated based on the Report on the Status of Women in India published in 1974 by the National Committee on the Status of Women. It indicated clearly the important economic role played by the majority of non-elite women in
India as well as their needs for recognition and protection of their status in addition to the traditional support for their family roles. The creation of a separate Bureau of Women's Development with the Prime Minister as its President, was intended to provide strong administrative support to women's development. Legislative measures were taken to provide protection to women against discrimination practiced in wage distribution in informal household sector. The Sixth Plan emphasised economic independence for women along with access to health care and family planning services. A series of policies with regard to women's employment mentioned in the plan are:

- Increased employment opportunities to rural women.

- Vocational training: A scheme was introduced under this policy called DWCRA (Development of Women & Children in Rural Areas) as a sub-component plan of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).

These policy aspects gained significance as the majority of women workers were engaged in the non-agricultural and informal household sectors.

1.6.3 Seventh Plan

In the Seventh Plan, the National Commission on self-employed women and women in informal sector submitted a comprehensive report titled "Shram Shakti", analysing the problems affecting large number of women in the informal sector and the steps needed to give them a better deal. The Corporation for Development of Women was set up in 1983 with the main
objective of creating more employment opportunities in informal sector and educational improvement of women. During this Plan, the programme was aimed to reach the poorest women in the rural areas of informal sector as they were not covered properly under the existing programmes. Besides, providing financial support (credit under micro finance) for income generating activities, this programme aimed to increase women's economic activities for self-sustainability. However, this programme was effective only in a few States where it had been implemented properly.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) and Small Industries Development Organizations (SIDO) took up measures to improve the employment and earnings of women. A separate entrepreneur cell has been set up in the office of the Development Commissioner, Small Scale Industries to provide counselling to women entrepreneurs to start micro level production units at their homes. Under these schemes, large number of women particularly in urban areas have not only rendered assistance in family industrial enterprises or business, but also entered business and industry on their own.

1.6.4 Eighth Plan

In the eighth plan period emphasis was given to household women workers as target group to promote their skills. The employment strategy for women was integrated in respective sectoral traditional skills improvement planning. It was based on promotion of opportunities for self-employment and creation of wage employment for better deal for the women workforce in the
informal sector and this requires encouragement to the formation of producer's groups and cooperatives. This has helped them to improve their bargaining power and access to various competitive fields. District Federations and Associations of women's group were set up and encouraged to train women in household informal sector and help them to secure technical support, credit and marketing facilities. Attempts were made to expand women's employment in the informal sector by providing adequate support in the areas of technology upgradation, training, financial credits, creation of raw materials bank and marketing support. A decentralized approach was followed for providing these facilities to help considerably in the expansion of women's employment in these sectors.

The existing poverty alleviation programmes like IRDP, TRYSEM and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana were ensured to benefit needy workers in the rural area. Measures were also initiated to distribute surplus land to women headed households and allotment of house sites and dwelling units registered in the name of women producer. Number of programmes for self-employment and income generation activities of women were extended to all household production units. The Central Social Welfare Board's scheme of assisting women in marketing their products was continued.

1.6.5 Ninth Plan

One of the major objectives for the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) was to implement micro-economic activities to women workers and empower them through self-employment scheme. In other words, more emphasis was laid
down to encourage women to start household entrepreneurial units and encourage them to form Self Help Groups (SHG’s). This is one of the areas where Government could improve the socio-economic condition of women who are in the household occupations for many years. Under this scheme, instructions were issued to banks to finance liberally to women’s Self Help Groups. The proposal to set up a National Bank for Women was well appreciated which aims to empower the women who seek micro finance to start their own household enterprises.

1.6.6 Tenth Plan

The Government of India is now launching on the Tenth Five Year Plan in which the number of women centered programmes have been given a prominent attention. Among these programmes, review and encouragement of cottage level household industries were given importance. Creation of such micro level household cottage industries will provide more employment opportunities to the needy women wherein by their participation they get the dual benefit of economic independence and empowerment. The Working Group on Leather Sector in this Plan has chalked out programmes for development of micro level artisan units wherein women’s participation and contribution towards production is predominant. Since, globalisation and liberalisation have affected a number of household artisan leather products, particularly footwear the Planning Commission in order to arrest further decline has sought to revive and strengthen this cottage sector by introducing innovative design upgradation programmes to preserve the skills of traditional
cottage leather industry through which women can contribute substantially towards social and economic development apart from their domestic commitments. There is a plan to formulate two million Women Self Help Groups (SHG’s) throughout the country during this plan period and through these SHGs women are to be empowered to take part actively in Village Panchayat Developmental Activities to progress collectively.

1.7 FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN TO ENTER WORKFORCE

There are several factors that gravitate women to enter the work force. The Labour Ministry in one of its reports identified four factors that contribute for women’s participation in the production activity. These factors are:

1. Inadequate income of the principal earner of the house which forces women to work and supplement the income.

2. Mishaps such as incapacity of the breadwinner.

3. Death of the bread winner

4. Women’s desire for economic independence.

In spite of the poor statistical data, there are counter claims emphasising the very important role played by women in the economic development of the country. This claim was supported by the findings of some studies. The contribution of rural women to the total labour energy in a household was 53 percent and that rural women work for longer hours and have lesser leisure time. Indian women are slowly emerging out of the system
that had oppressed and exploited them for centuries. The economic needs of
the family are increasing day-by-day demanding women to take up gainful
employment outside the house. On the other hand, she has to play either dual
or at times multiple roles of housewife, mother and worker.

Women can even play a central role in the developmental process not
only in determining the family size but also as environmental planners. They
manage resource stocks, particularly soils, firewood for fuel, and water for
drinking and other purposes for their household. In several parts of sub-Sahara
of Africa, women contribute upto 70 percent of the production, processing and
marketing of food. However, in most of the societies, they continue to be
treated as second-class citizens. UN convention on “The Elimination of all
Forms of Discriminations Against Women” has not effectively implemented
in the developing countries.

1.8 WOMEN WORKERS IN LEATHER FOOTWEAR SECTOR

Leather Industry in India was a household enterprise in which socially
downtrodden communities are engaged in the leather processing and
production activities. Footwear is the main item of the leather products
produced and marketed locally. Women’s participation in these production
activities are significant as they are the prime breadwinners for the family
whenever the male members unable to contribute towards family income.
After India’s Independence, leather industry has undergone remarkable
changes particularly during the last two decades. Due to export potential of
the products, many mechanised leather processing and footwear-
producing units were established. Non-leather footwear from mechanised units flooded the market and the consumers prefer these products. The traditional household footwear lost its market and consequently many household footwear units closed their units and switched over to other professions. However, a few footwear clusters are still surviving and continuing their family vocation. Athani in Belgaum district of Karnataka State in India is one such cluster and presently produce Kolhapuri type of footwear to cater to the local demand. The domestic consumption of footwear has also increased substantially in recent times. According to the Report of Nationwide Survey on Leather Product Units in India (CLRI, 1997) nearly 2000 million pairs of footwear were used per year in India and out of this leather footwear contributed 40% (800 million pairs). Of the 800 million pairs of leather footwear, the artisans of household sector produced 520 million pairs. Women's participation (33%) in this sector is significant and crucial in sustaining their family income.

The classification of leather and footwear industry among the agro-based industries category is not helpful to get any reliable data in this direction. During the last two decades, large-scale footwear-producing units have come up in India and majority of them were located in Tamil Nadu. These factories produce leather shoes meant mainly for export. Of the total 0.28 million women workers employed in Indian leather footwear sector, 0.18 million are in formal sector. In this, nearly 68% are employed in shoe industries in Tamil Nadu. These units prefer women for the floor level operations due to their easy availability and acceptance of low wages.
Remaining 0.10 million women workers participate in the informal household sector in which majority of them have specialised in footwear upper making.

Table 1.3

Women's Employment In Leather Industry

(Figs. In Millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Segment of the Industry</th>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Small Scale</th>
<th>Medium &amp; Large</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Flaying/Trade/Transport of raw materials</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Leather Tanning</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Leather Footwear</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Leather garments</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Leather goods</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Allied Industries</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>0.55</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Footwear producing units at household level are scattered throughout India. Kanpur and Agra in Uttar Pradesh, Kolkata in West Bengal, New Delhi, Chamba in Himachal Pradesh, Bhinmal and Piparsity in Rajasthan, Ahmedabad in Gujarat, Miraj and Kolhapur in Maharashtra, Athani, Nippani and other small towns in Karnataka are important clusters of footwear production at household level. Sizeable numbers of Muslim women dominate in footwear production in Kanpur and Agra, though traditional cobbler
communities still dominate in footwear production and continuing their family occupation.

Footwear production at household level is an age-old profession and traditional artisans involved in this production are unaware of the latest market changes particularly the changes that have taken place in newer designs and style of footwear in the recent past due to globalization. Hence artisans with their age-old footwear designs have to seek institutional support to strengthen and sustain their skills in the present competitive world. Under these circumstances a few government and non-governmental institutions have drawn up programmes to review the artisan clusters in the country to enhance their skills by introducing training programme on innovative designs to enable them to compete effectively in a liberalised economy. In fact, the process of globalization and its impact has been affecting a large number of household industries and deskilling many traditional crafts (Diana Elson, 2002). Hence, preserving, strengthening and sustaining the skills of traditional artisans is the need of the hour by all concerned institutes, agencies and policy makers. Such steps will not only protect the livelihood of the poor artisans but also strengthen the Indian age-old culture and heritage.

Footwear industry in Karnataka could be broadly classified into two categories. They are traditional and factory units. The traditional units, which functions mainly in the household premises, are following division of labour in their production. These units source their raw materials locally. The entire family members participate in the production activity. Apart from Athani and
Nippani, other centres are also popular in fabricating household level footwear in the State. These centres are Gulbarga, Hubli, Dharwad, Gadag, Malavalli, Madhubavi, Belgaum, Mysore, Lakkundi, and Shimoga. The other category of factory sector units, mostly function in industrial sheds where machine and power along with human labour is used for producing the footwear. These units are concentrated in and around Bangalore only. Athani and Nippani are predominantly producing Kolhapuri footwear, which is popular not only in domestic market but also in international market as well. In 2000-01, nearly Rs. 30 million worth of Kolhapuri footwear were exported to different countries. Manufacturing of Kolhapuri footwear is an art of traditional vocation of the family members in Athani and Nippani. Even school going children in their leisure time participate in footwear production. However, in recent years the number of artisans in the leather footwear trade is decreasing due to change in the customer’s preference to non-leather footwear. Even the artisans of this industry at village and taluk level are partially employed in cultivation as well as in tanning. Under employment problem is a common phenomenon among these communities.

The Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI), with the financial support from the National Leather Development Programme (NLDIP) had drawn up new programmes to enhance the skills and production capacities of leather artisans by introducing a number of innovative training programmes. As part of the artisan cluster development programme, Athani in Karnataka was selected. CLRI and Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) in collaboration with Leather Industry Development Corporation of Karnataka
(LIDKAR) implemented programmes for the benefit of footwear artisans. The training programmes designed by CLRI were intensively focussed on technical skill upgradation of the footwear artisans and to empower the women workers. To implement these programmes, CLRI has chosen Asian Centre for Entrepreneurial Initiative (ASCENT), an NGO, to monitor, supervise and act as liaison between CLRI and the footwear artisans.

1.9 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

It was observed from the above discussion that women’s participation in household informal production activities is gaining importance to sustain family growth. They struggle hard to hold their position in a male dominated society. The sudden decline in the demand for their products, rise in raw material cost and social restrictions on working outside their homes are some of the reasons contributed to women’s low level participation in the household leather footwear industry. In spite of their contribution to the socio-economic development, no scientific studies were carried out on these workers. Hence, this sociological study on women’s participation in household leather footwear manufacture is a maiden attempt to throw light on the status and extent of women’s participation in Kolhapuri leather footwear production activities in Athani. Further, sociological studies on women’s participation in leather footwear manufacture at household level are very less and the present study intends to fill this gap.
1.10 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The study will serve as an important source for reference to the policy makers who are interested in leather footwear cluster development and women footwear workers in particular. The present study also helps planners and Government agencies whose aim was to improve the living conditions of women workers in the informal household sectors and to identify appropriate development programmes to strengthen their skills.

1.11 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The important objectives of the study are:

1. To study the socio-economic background of the women workers in the household leather footwear manufacture in Athani, Karnataka State, India.

2. To examine the reasons for participation of women in the household leather footwear manufacture.

3. To analyse the institutional support to the women workers in the household leather footwear manufacture.

4. To evaluate the impact of the institutional programmes on women workers.
1.12 CASE STUDY SETTING

Athani, a small town in Belgaum District in Karnataka State (India) was selected for the present study. Belgaum District is a prominent place for leather and leather based products at informal household level. The table 1.4 shows number of household leather footwear and tanning units located in the Belgaum District (CLRI, 1999)\textsuperscript{19}.

Table 1.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the cluster</th>
<th>No. of footwear units</th>
<th>No. of tanning units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Madhubhavi</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Gundewadi</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Anandpur</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Mule</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ainapur</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Nippani</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Solapur</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Sankeshwar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Gokak</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Mughalkod</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Athani</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Chikodi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Other centres</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1020</strong></td>
<td><strong>202</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CLRI Report: 1999
It can be seen from the above table that household footwear and tanning activity in the District in general and Athani in particular is significant by their number. Hence, based on the concentration of the leather industry, Athani was selected for the present study. Further, the Kolhpauri leather footwear production in Athani is a unique product and marketed not only in India but also a sizeable production is exported to foreign countries. It is difficult to determine the exact origin, however, many generations are involved in this vocation. As part of the official visits to Athani, the researcher had opportunity to interact with the local footwear artisans and visited the cluster on many occasions and observed women’s participation in the footwear production activity and their effective management of household chores. This observation prompted the researcher to take up a research study in Athani to understand the reasons for women’s participation in footwear work, the extent of their participation and their contribution to the family income.

1.13 SAMPLE SELECTION

In Athani, there are 302 household leather footwear-producing units (CLRI, 1999). Out of which 290 units functioned at the time of the field study, and further noted only 284 household footwear units were found working with women’s participation in footwear manufacture. Accordingly those 6 units were excluded from the study for the reason that only male workers were manning them and women’s participation in those units was not found. During the study, particulars on men, women and children were collected from all the 284 household footwear units. A list was prepared on
women who participate in the footwear manufacturing activities. All the female members above 14 years of age were considered as women footwear workers irrespective of their marital status and one woman from each unit was selected. Hence, 284 women were selected for this study by adopting purposive sampling method. Women start their footwear work at an early stage of their teens. By the age of 30 women workers get lot of work experience and well trained in managing household chores and footwear work. The priority was given to the women of above 30 years of age for interview purpose.

1.14 METHODOLOGY

In this paradigm, for generating sociological knowledge, it is relevant to highlight Neil J. Smelser's approximation of the respondent and interviewer interaction and the same is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Actor passive</th>
<th>Actor active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observer passive</td>
<td>Sociological positivism (Durkheim)</td>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relativism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Historicism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer active</td>
<td>Sociological nominalism</td>
<td>Interpretative Sociology (Weber)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In keeping with the above tradition and in keeping with the nature of the respondents, this study has adopted the sociological nominalist approach through interview and case study techniques.
Further, the organized institutions have seized of this kind of problem in the footwear industry particularly about their plight in working in traditional and indigenous methods in the context of increasing competitiveness of the global pressures under the technology transformation. Hence, these institutions have innovated an institutional approach line to enskill or upgrade their technological skills and also to empower the women. The sociological issue is the issue of institutions and social change particularly the impact of institution centered approach on this caste based vocation i.e. dalit vocation.

1.14.1 Tools of Data Collection

Structured interview schedules were used to collect data on the socio-economic background of the respondents, their level of participation in the household leather footwear manufacture, reasons for their participation, institutional support and its impact on the women working in the household leather footwear manufacture. 10 women respondents representing different social background and production units were selected for in-depth case studies. Personal interviews were held with the local headman, community leaders, elders, and officials of local institutions and CLRI officials of Chennai.

1.14.2 Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary data pertaining to number of footwear households, caste wise distribution of workers, availability of infrastructure facilities and history of development of leather footwear industry in Athani. were sourced from
local offices like Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Leather Industries Development Corporation (LIDKAR), Town Municipal Council Athani (TMC) and other community leaders/elders of Athani.

1.14.3 Tools of Data Analysis

The data collected from respondents through interview schedules were computerized and programmed to get logically consistent inferences. The computerized data with the help of SPSS were tabulated and analysed. Simple statistical technique like percentage method was used to interpret the data.

1.15 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The entire thesis is divided into six chapters.

Chapter 1 deals with the introduction. This chapter mainly focuses on the background of the problem, importance of the study, objectives of the study and methodology adopted.

Chapter 2 gives with review of literature. In this chapter an attempt is made to review the available literature related to women workers in informal sector. The reviewed studies were classified under developed and developing countries. Limited studies available on informal footwear particularly leather footwear sector in India.

Chapter 3 explains the socio-economic and demographic profile of the study area (Athani).
Chapter 4 analyses the field data. In this chapter an attempt is made to interpret the data collected from the women respondents to understand their level of participation in footwear manufacture and their contribution to the family income. For the purpose of in-depth case-study, 10 women respondents belonging to different social background and also representing different categories of production units were selected.

Chapter 5 deals with analysis of institutional support to the women household leather footwear manufacturers. Institutions like Leather Industry Development Corporation of Karnataka (LIDKAR), Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Central Leather Research Institute, Chennai (CLRI) and Asian Center for Entrepreneurial Initiatives (ASCENT) Bangalore, have implemented various programmes such as skill upgradation training programme marketing assistance, and formation of Self Help Groups (SHG's) among women artisans. In this chapter, an effort is also made to analyse the influence of these schemes on women household leather workers in Athani.

In the sixth chapter, a summary of the findings of the study and conclusions drawn are presented. In this chapter an attempt is also made to identify the potential issues for further research. On the basis of this empirical study, a strategy for the development of informal leather footwear sector has been evolved.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid, p.2.


20. Ibid. 2.