CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY
CHAPTER - II
METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research work concentrates on social, cultural and economic factors directly affecting the female labour force in the coffee plantations of Chikmagalur District. While the study lays down special emphasis on these three dimensions, it is taken that these dimensions are considered as integral and interactive parts of the society in which they have been conceived. The social, cultural and economic factors are separated out for research work only at the analytical level because the social actor, in this case, the woman worker, is whole individual interacting with the totality society.

As mentioned in chapter one, the significance of this study becomes obvious when women's contribution to the national productivity is considered in its socio-economic context. The fact that no society can attempt to achieve comprehensive development by excluding its female labour force has been repeatedly pointed out by
scholars, but the planners of economy of both the developed and developing countries are yet to recognise the tremendous potential of female labour power. Ignorance of this simple social fact historically has lead to this predicament and a large majority of working women in most societies continue to be powerless and dependent. In fact, there is an increasing erosion of the female labour power. This situation is found in a magnified proportion in the case of areas like agriculture and plantations. The present work assumes immense significance when this socio-economic scenario is critically considered.

The economic and socio-cultural problems of plantation workers in general and women workers in special are large in number as well as enormity. Added to the problem of poverty are the problems of ignorance, ill-health and illiteracy which have spread their spider-nest through out the plantations. Within this complex social scenario, this study aims at an application-oriented sociological analysis in an attempt to provide some conclusive facts in this regard, both at the descriptive and analytical levels. Alternatively,
this work focuses on the inter-relation between variables such as age, marital status, family size and level of literacy, correlating them with respondents' poser to make decisions and take independent steps. Further, their compounded impact on the status and power dimensions of the female workers are explored, described and analysed.

Terms and concepts used in this work are contextually defined. A brief note on each of these terms is given here to make it easy to understand the connotations and the intention of the researcher during the course of this work.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The term 'organised labour' is meant to include workers working in the 'organised sector' in the country. The 'organised sector' in turn is characterised by the modern relations of productions, and regulated and governed by laws that are meant to provide security and regulate working condition. Thus, the phrase 'plantation as an organised sector' is used to convey the work environment where in the security and
the working conditions of the labour in the plantations is streamlined and patterned. 'Women workers' means all employed women who are engaged in various jobs on the coffee plantations; this term includes the permanent female labour force as well as those women workers who are hired on seasonal, contract or temporary basis. Further the term 'married women' is used as a category meaning those women who are married and living with their husbands. This obviously excludes those women workers who are separated, divorced or widowed.

'Plantation' in this study refers to all the coffee plantations owned by companies, group of people and individual owners. It is also recognised that the plantations vary in size, from a few hectares to a few thousand hectares with adoption of varied levels of technology. The terms like 'estate' or 'garden' are also occasionally used as synonyms.

The term 'manager' means the administrator who is the representative of the plantation owner and who in reality manages the affairs of the plantation by living in the area itself. He, in reality, represents the
management of the plantation. 'Planter' or 'Estate Owner' is the one who owns the plantation and has the right to sell the produce, or the estate itself. An Estate owner may be an individual, two or more partners, or may be represented by a registered company.

In this type of research exercise, the methodological approach itself presents a part of the problems to be resolved. The study is engaged in an indepth analysis of the total way of life of plantation women workers, their employment as an economic tool, their familial roles in relation to their work, their sense of power and status, and related aspects. Hence, the study examines their feelings of frustration, future expectations, aspirations, roles played by the management and labour unions and the government policies, the fit between the expectations and the perceived achievement in life.

To the extent that there are incompatibilities, the study then explores alternative measures which might have been adopted to operationalise the development plans. Analysis of empirical data is carried out in
the broader domain of 'work' as a social institution in
the Indian context as well as the economic and socio-
cultural status of women in quest. The study does not
strictly bind itself to any one sociological theoretical
perspective, thereby having the flexibility and
advantage of a multi-theoretical explanation.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
This is an attempt to understand and analyse the
socio-economic and socio-cultural problems of female
plantation labour in the District of Chikmagalur,
juxtaposing them with the management and other male
members in their working environment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
The study aims at a comprehensive and critical
reflection on the present status of women workers in
coffee plantations in Chikmagalur district. While
attempting this, the study keeps in mind the social,
economic and power dimensions in broad contexts of
gender stratification. The basic objective of the study
is to treat from a sociological perspective the present
position of these workers and the nature of continued
relationship between their traditionally defined roles and the modern world around them. In other words, this study analyses the socio-cultural and economic relevance of women workers in coffee plantations placing their positions within the broader context of the life world of Indian women.

HYPOTHESES

In order to conduct field-based empirical research for achieving the objectives stated above, the study has tested the following working hypotheses. These hypotheses have been formulated on the foundations of reviewing the existing literature, general observations of the study area by the researcher himself, and interaction with experts in this field and other scholars. Following are the hypotheses which have been tested during the course of the study:

i. The power structure among the workers in Chikmagalur coffee plantations is highly differentiated, women having relatively less power in terms of family and work-related decision making.
ii. The superordination and exploitation by the plantation owners as well as men in the working class families are the techniques to monopolise the source of socio-economic power. Hence, sources of power are vertically split and are based on gender.

iii. Owing to their low status in terms of family decision making and socio-economic sources of power, women workers constitute the most exploited and the least powerful segment of the plantation sector.

iv. Caste is still a dominant factor in the maintenance of social status among women workers of the coffee plantations. However, caste has an insignificant impact on economic and political issues in the lives of women coffee plantation workers.

AREA OF STUDY

The district of Chikmagalur which has the largest coffee growing area in the state of Karnataka is selected as the area of the present study. Chikmagalur
district is a part of the Malnad region having evergreen forests, rivers and rivulets. In terms of the quantity of production, this district is a major coffee grower with about 63189 acres of land having been utilised for growing coffee. It is estimated that Chikmagalur produces about 30 percent of the coffee in the country.

Chikmagalur district is one of the twenty districts of Karnataka situated roughly in the south-western part of the State. The Baba Budangiri mountain-range, the heart of the coffee growing area in the district, is situated in the centre. The district is situated between 12° 54' 42" and 13° 53' 53" north latitude and between 75° 04' 46" and 76° 21' 50' east latitude. The length from east to west is about 138.4 Kms and north to south is 88.5 Kms. The total area of the district is 7201 sq.kms with a total population of 1017283 of which 514526 men and 502757 are women according to 1991 census. The district is sub-divided into seven taluks. The topography is uneven with hilly terrain. Chikmagalur has several rivers like Tunga, Bhadra, Netravati, Hemavati and Vedavati rivers originating from different parts of the district.
STUDY UNIVERSE AND STUDY SAMPLE

The present work is a research study of women workers in the coffee plantations of Chikmagalur district. Given this comprehensive objective, women workers in all coffee plantations in the district constitute the study universe. It is estimated that the district presently has about 1,67,500 plantation workers out of which 60 percent are women. Precise figures are not readily available.

The study sample, obviously is drawn from this study universe. As it is highly impractical to engage in a census survey to cover the whole of female labour in all coffee plantations in Chikmagalur district, a representative sample is selected. The sample consists of 400 women workers who are selected on the basis of stratified random sampling. The 400 respondents have been chosen from two distinct types of plantations on the basis of the area. The first group of 200 women workers is drawn from company estates and large plantations which have an area of 50 acres or more and the second stratum of 200 is drawn from plantations whose size is less than 50 acres. The respondents are
selected randomly out of these two categories. Whereas in the case of the former group of plantations, resident managers take day-to-day decisions regarding the organisation of the plantation work, in the case of the second group, often managers themselves are the owners of the plantations. All the 400 respondents generally belong to the lower socio-economic strata. Of the 200 women workers in the first group, 183 are permanent workers in large holdings and company estates and therefore, are said to be eligible for various service and retirement benefits. As discussed in a later chapter, the term 'permanent' itself has different connotation and therefore, needs to be contextually understood. Several of these workers also suffer from work related problems like daily wage workers because of this different notion of 'permanent' work. The details of this idea are discussed in Chapter V. In the case of the second group, that is women workers employed by private individual owners of plantations, all the workers are employed on contract basis or on daily wage basis. Hence they are not entitled for retirement benefits. Precisely, 90 out of 400 respondents have permanent work with associated benefits.
TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

The study data were collected by individually interviewing the 400 respondents who constituted the study sample. The interview schedule consists of three basic areas namely the demographic, the socio-economic and the socio-cultural variables directly related to the study. It contains 42 main questions and sub questions (see appendix-B). The partly structured, open-ended interview schedule has been pilot-tested in two coffee plantations in Chikmagalur before it was finally used for data collection. Each interview lasted for about 45-60 minutes.

DATA PRESENTATION

The study data thus collected, have been codified and presented in tabular form. The information is presented through these tables representing various aspects of the study in absolute numbers as well as percentages.