INDRODUCTION

The term ‘Oil’ has been explained in different ways. A pocket dictionary describes it as a “light greasy substance derived from minerals, plants and animals. (Source: Bhargava’s Hindi – English Dictionary Page No. 269.) “The Big Word Power Dictionary describes it as, ‘Thick sticky mixture’ used as lubricant.” (Source: The Big Power Dictionary – Page No. 592.) Two properties have been attributed to this sticky mixture – It catches fire and does not mix with water. The second property is common to both - ‘Mineral and ‘Edible Oil’. Thus unless preceded by some adjectives ‘Oil’ alone will stick us somewhere or it will lead to fire to burn anything. My study of ‘Oil’ is confined to ‘Edible Oil’ only.

The Big Word Power Dictionary describes – (Source: ibid) ‘Edible Oil’ are obtained from sunflower seeds, peanuts and coconuts. Strange enough that such an exhaustive dictionary could not include Sesamum, Linseed, Mustard, Castor or exhaustively and extensively used Groundnut. In India peanut oil is rarely used for consumption. Coconut oil is largely used for consumption in Malabar and Keral, while in other parts of India. It is used for hairdressing. The FAO (Source: FAO) publishes data for Groundnut, Soyabeen, Rapeseed - Mustard, Sesamum, Sunflower, Linseed, and Safflower. Two other important oil seeds are Niger and Castor. Data are published for Cottonseeds also. My study includes the following nine major oil seeds:- 1. Groundnut 2. Rapeseed - mustard 3. Sesamum 4. Sunflower 5. Linseed 6. Safflower 7. Niger 8. Soyabeen 9. Castor. Last mentioned castor oil is either used for lubrication or medicinal purposes only. One more limitation of my study is the geographical area. My study is confined to the eastern part
of Chhattisgarh i.e. Bilaspur Division only which comprises Bilaspur, Raigarh and Surguja districts.

Safflower is grown in Maharashtra and Karnataka so this is excluded from my study. Niger is also excluded from my study. Soyabean and Rice bran oil are large capital-intensive plants. So they do not come within the purview of small and cottage industries. Thus my dissertation will include the following: -

1. Groundnut
2. Rapeseed – mustered.
4. Sunflower.
5. Linseed only.

Of the above five even the Sesamum is largely used for hair dressing rather than consumption. Some Gujarati families use Sesamum oil for consumption purpose.