CHAPTER 3

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One of the major characteristics of the Indian labour force is the structural stagnation in its inter-sectoral distribution. Women have been participating in the economic activities from time immemorial. A review of economic role played by women in India in the past reveals that they performed various agricultural operations and helped men in production and marketing of agricultural goods and handicrafts.

The labour legislation in India has been designed to protect women and children from undue exploitation. The Government contemplates to enact a law for equal wage for equal work. This has helped the Indian women a great deal. The International Labour Organisation has also taken an interest in the welfare of Indian women. The exploitation of women and male domination is continuing in different forms. As women are physically weak, men’s domination prevails. This could be seen even in 'eve-teasing’ wherein the basic human dignity is ignored. Atrocious and arrogant men suppress the submissive and sensitive women.
The various tables presented in this chapter show the trends in distribution of women workers in India, percentage of participation of men and women in various industries, percentage of labourers in specific age groups, participation of women in rural and urban areas, educated employees and uneducated employees, etc.

**Leather Industry**

Documents relating to 3000 BC show the progress made at that time in using leather. Leather footwear is a very old traditional industry in India. Footwear manufacturing technology can be considered in three levels. (i) Basic, (ii) Intermediate, and (iii) Advanced. The principle of 'equal pay for equal work' is one of the most intractable problems in India. In the organised industries, there is no discrimination of wages between men and women. But, invariably in many of the unorganised industries and economic activities, women workers are paid lower wages than men workers. Paradoxically, in the present research study, it is found that there is no wage discrimination between women and men workers of the shoe factories. The primary data collected show that women workers are treated on par with men workers.

One clear idea emerges from the study is that in these shoe factories which are export-oriented and they pay very low wage rates to the women workers. Perhaps it might be a reason for men showing little interest in getting employed in shoe factories.
In spite of the earning of enormous profits by the shoe factory owners, higher wages are not offered. It could be related to a situation in which the supply of labour exceeding the demand for it.

I. Women Industrial Labour Abroad

Women's economic activities are hard to compare precisely across countries and sometimes difficult even to compare within countries over time. The diversity is even greater across low income countries in what women do; but there is little consensus on how these roles are changing today. For women, it is also hypothesised that obtaining a job for wages outside the family contributes to women's control over the returns to their labour, hence augments their relative power in the allocation of household economic resource.


Women Labour: A Historical Resume

In 1890, when the outlines of today's economy were becoming clear, the Census of India counted 4 million working women, who constituted about one sixth of our working population. Of all the women in the United States, about one sixth were in the labour force. Since then, the number of working women has increased steadily. There are about 22 million women in the labour force, as has been seen, and they constitute over one third of all women and nearly one third of the nation's workers. Since the end of the last century, the United States has been transformed from an agricultural to an urban society. In 1890, almost two thirds of the population lived in rural areas. By 1950, the proportion was reversed, about two thirds were living in urban areas. For women as for men, this change has meant greater opportunities for employment in an ever growing variety of jobs in industry, commerce, and in professional, personal, and governmental service. Today the lifetime pattern of women's participation in the labour force is taking shape, to meet the challenges. An increasing number of girls go to work during their teens, with a temporary peak of nearly 50 per cent participation in the labour force being reached at around 18 or 19. World War II opened up new opportunities to women, primarily in industry. In many cases the work that women performed during the War had no relation to their pattern of pre-war employment. For instance, in the later part of the War, there were large number of women employed in the
shipyards, even on repair work, whereas in earlier periods women were not appointed. Much the same order or transformation took place in the aircraft industry. Before the war, there were only a few women employed in a limited number of positions, but at the peak of the war, they were to be found in practically every job in the aircraft industry.³

In U.K., when the Labour Representation Committee became the Labour Party in 1906, the need for a complimentary organisation for Labour Women was recognised in the same year and the Women’s Labour League (WLL) was established. ‘Member of the Society’, stated in its constitution, would work with the Labour Party locally and nationally. They would educate themselves on political and social questions. They would take an active interest in the work of the poor Law Guardians, Educational Bodies, Distress Committees. They would work to secure the full rights of citizenship for all women and men. They would take care of the interests of working women in their own neighbourhood, and strive, where possible to improve their social and industrial conditions.⁴ The first and most obvious example is the problem of equal pay. The call for equal pay was first made in 1886 and was

finally answered by the end of 1975. It has been one of the major
topics of discussion at every Women’s Conference and due to the
determination of leading women trade unionists, not least Anne
Godwin and Florence Hancock, who were delegates to Washington
when the International Labour Conference, a hundred countries
adopted a convention agreeing the principle of equal pay. In
France, where the number of women in the labour force has risen
more rapidly than the number of men, a very small proportion of
the relatively large number of women who work in industry hold
supervisory or technical staff positions, their ratio to men in
similar positions being 1:6. Where women do work in industry,
they tend to be found in certain branches such as textiles,
clothing, leather and foot-wear, where they are largely confined
to low-skilled and low-paid jobs. In 1939, women workers made up
a little over 25 per cent of the employed labour forces; by 1976,
about 40 per cent of the employed labour force were women.
Perhaps even more important from the standpoint of the design of
the social security system, has been, the big change in the
extent to which women work following marriage. In 1940, 14 per
cent of married women were working at any one time; and in 1976,

5. MARGARET Mc.CARTLY, ‘Women in the Labour Movement’, The
British Experience, (Edited by Lucy Middleton, London, 1971),
p.170.

6. DOROTHEA GAUDAVT, ROSEMARIE GREVE, ‘Women and Industrial
45 per cent. Many women were absorbed mostly into the rapidly expanding female jobs in the clerical and service categories. They represented at least 80 per cent of all employees in an occupation. About three fourths of all women workers in 1973 were in fifty seven occupations, in which at least 100,000 women were employed. In seventeen of these occupations, women accounted for 90 per cent or more of all employees, and in more than half of the occupations, women made up 75 per cent or more of all employees. Wage discrimination is prohibited by the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Right Act of 1964. The Equal Pay Act was passed as an amendment to the Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938, and required employers to pay members of both sexes the same wages for equivalent work, except when the differential was based on one of the following exceptions: (i) seniority system, (ii) merit system, (iii) a system that measures earnings by quantity or quality of production, (iv) a


9. Ibid., 29 U.S.C., Section 206 (d).
differential based on any factor other than sex. Interest in non-traditional blue collar jobs was displayed by women during war years when Rosie the Riveter was hailed as a wartime heroine. One example from Chafe’s analysis of the American Women from 1920 to 1970 is illustrative. In 1940, 36 women were involved in the construction of ships. By December 1942 over 160,000 women were employed in welding hatches, riveting gun emplacements and binding keels. "As stewards, blacksmiths, foundry helpers and drill press operators, they demonstrated that they could fill almost any job no matter how difficult or arduous".

In surveying Asia, we are looking at an area which covers almost one-third of the world’s land area and contains more than half of the world’s population, a continent of immense diversity and vast contrasts, with all the world’s major religions, cultures, social and political systems represented. Amongst Asian women, there are differences based on these fundamental divisions of socio-political system, ethnicity, religion, culture, class and urbanisation, but as we have seen in other broad geographical regions, there are also similarities.


There has been a considerable amount of research on women in Asia, varying in approach from country to country, and conducted within the framework of a range of institutions, including government agencies, international bodies, universities, and women’s organisations. A brief review of the position of women in a number of Asian countries with respect to labour force participation, involvement in economic development, education and demographic features will suffice here to indicate both similarities and differences in the position and status of women in the countries of this region. In Bangladesh, women represented 15 per cent of the civilian labour force in 1961 and this proportion fell to 4 per cent by 1974.\footnote{Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh, 1978, pp.320-321, see also for Bangladesh, Women for Women (edt). The Situation of Women in Bangladesh, Dacca 1979; Islam.M.\\.}

In Pakistan, women formed 8 per cent of the labour force in 1977-‘78.\footnote{Government of Pakistan, The Fifth Five Year Plan, 1978-1983.} May be, in Islamic nations, the ‘Purdha’ system is resisting women in participating as labourers. Religion is an important factor in such countries in deciding women’s role in the society as economically productive or less-productive or unproductive members.
In many countries, women have been displaced in the process of economic development and modernization from their traditional work of agriculture and cottage industry. They have been forced into marginal occupations, based on low technology and labour-intensive techniques of production, where labour is largely unorganised. Where women do work in agriculture, their work is often unpaid or little paid and unrecognised, either by their families or in Government and International Statistics.

In the poor countries of South East and East Asia, women have a higher rate of participation in the civilian labour force; in the Philippines, 33 per cent of women is in the labour market; in the Republic of Korea 39 per cent and in Japan over 50 per cent. But women in these countries are still employed at the lower levels of the occupational hierarchy and face the additional hazard of fluctuation in employment opportunities with economic recession and boom. In China, the labour force participation rate is 36 per cent. This is further complicated by changes in the ideological positioning of women in the home or in the work force over time. In Japan, rapid economic development and growth has drawn women into the labour market, thus increasing both the number of women working and the range of occupations, in which they are found. Lack of vocational training among women, widens the gap between men and women in terms of wages and promotions.
A OECD report (1973)\textsuperscript{14} indicates that women receive different treatments from men in the labour market. The study further suggests that economic growth can lead to greater subjugation of women if policy-makers are not prepared to counter these development with positive action,\textsuperscript{15} particularly with respect to two basic facts of the Japanese labour market. The seniority wage system and life-time employment virtually eliminate married women from successfully pursuing a career.

In general, women are either regarded primarily as housewives and mothers, or if they are engaged in the labour market, they are also expected to fulfil the functions of child-care and domestic labour in these countries.\textsuperscript{16}

In all developing countries, employment has been growing faster in industry and services than in agriculture. There are now several individual developing countries where women are more important in the industrial labour force than their counterparts in any developed country. The share of women in the manufacturing


\textsuperscript{15} HARAI.K., 'Economic Growth and Women's Role in Japan', (Paper presented at a Session on Sex Roles in Society, IX World Congress of Sociology, 1978).

labour force is more than 40 per cent in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Tunisia, while in no industrialised market economy, do women account for more than 31 per cent. On an average within each region, women are more important in the industrial labour force in developed countries to the level of 29 per cent of the total compared with 26.5 per cent in developing countries. However, for all the sectors, the overall recorded in the total labour force in developing countries is 33 per cent, compared with 40 per cent in developed countries. Doubtless to admit that women are less under-represented in industry in the developing countries. But even so, the share of women in the industrial labour force of less-developed countries (LDCs) is still lower than their share in the overall labour force.

The industries in which female labour is found can be characterised as light-industries, producing consumer goods of varying degrees of modernity, ranging from food-processing, textiles, and garments to chemicals, rubber and plastics, and electronics. Concentration or crowding is measured by comparing the proportion of women workers in a particular industry with their share in the industrial labour force as a whole. In these terms, crop processing (tobacco mostly) is a heavily female-labour concentrated industry in India, employing three times as many women as there are in the industrial sector. In South Korea, textiles is a feminised branch, employing closer to twice the overall share. In Hong Kong, India, South Korea, the Phillipines,
and Kenya, clothing is feminised, with around twice the overall share of female labour on average; in Kenya and Egypt, chemicals’ production is feminised to about the same degree; rubber employs a disproportionate share in Hong Kong, South Korea and Egypt, as does plastics in Egypt; and electricals (mainly electronics) is heavily feminised in Hong Kong, South Korea, and the Philippines, among other countries. In these six countries, those seven industries together employ between 75 and 94 per cent of the total female industrial labour force, but it lies between 44 and 65 per cent among the male (ILO, 1984).

In these countries, there has been a marked increase in total trade and in the share of industrial goods exported along with the relatively fast growth of female industrial employment. Outright job loss represents, in a sense, the ultimate deterioration, in conditions of employment. There is a proposition, from Karl Marx, that women as the ‘reserve’ part of the labour force, are drawn into formal employment only when male labour is no longer available and are the first to be expelled from the labour force when job opportunities fall back. This is undoubtedly true in many of the instances we come across in our Indian society. Neither the society recognises the role of women in building up of an economy nor the Indian women realise their rights and responsibilities.
The cross-country data show that women are drawn into the manufacturing labour force most rapidly, when growth of total employment is fastest and the availability of male labour mostly stretched. Thus, the positive part of Marx's prediction is fulfilled to that extent. There is less evidence on the negative side of what happens when total employment falls back. Studies of the industrialised countries show that women lost employment disproportionately, in manufacturing, in the mid-1970s. Women lost on the swings but gained on the ground of occupational segregation. In conclusion, recent industrialisation in developing countries has incorporated women into the sectoral work force to an unprecedented extent. But, it is at least arguable (though all of these prepositions need wider empirical verification) that women's conditions of employment in industry are inferior to men's in various dimensions; they have been worsening in periods of recession; and when there has been retraction in industry, women have suffered disproportionate loss of work. More certainly, it is undoubtedly the case that women are concentrated in low-grade, relatively unskilled jobs without significant promotion prospects and that women's access to employment is severely limited in many industrial branches. Women also have lower earnings than men in industry to a greater extent than can be explained by this pattern of differentiation. In sum, women have an inferior position in employment in the industrial sector even in the one new high technology branch, electronics,
where they are employed in large numbers. That the increased incorporation of women into the industrial labour force will not in itself guarantee any improvement in their position and that sector is suggested by two further observations. Occupational segregation by sex in Britain has not diminished over seventy years. Women's lesser technical and scientific qualifications are likely to prevent them from entering the newest, high-productivity, high-wage expanding branches. The fast growing Asian countries are increasing their capacity in 'science-based' industries, which will have increasing weight in the industrial sector in terms of both the number of jobs and the wages they offer. If women do not enter these new industries, women's earnings in the industrial sector will probably begin to fall on average relative to men's.\textsuperscript{17} Women in India engage themselves in the primary and tertiary sectors. Wage discrimination is more found in agriculture and rarely found in the organised services' sector.

\textbf{Women and unions}

Another determinant of future economic prospects for women will be their relationship with unions. Although unions have been male-dominated institutions in the U.S.A., and abroad, women are

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{INSTRAN SUSAN JOEKES, 'Women in the World Economy',} (Oxford University Press, New York, 1987), pp.81-105.
increasing their absolute union membership and constituting a larger percentage of total union membership.

Reflecting their occupational segregation, women are heavily concentrated in a few unions. In 1978, women constituted at least 50 per cent of the membership in 26 unions out of the 39, counting associations (out of 208 unions and associations). In 1978, 18 unions and associations reported no women members. The unions with the most female members in 1978 were: Teamsters (480,000); American Federation of State, Country and Municipal Employees (409,000); Retail Clerks (375,105); Clothing and Textile Workers (330,660); Service Employees (312,500); International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (303,510); Teachers (300,000); and the International Ladies Garments' Workers (274,000). These eight unions accounted for about half of all female union members in 1978.

However, neither unions nor women's organisations are monolithic, which means 'single upright'. Some women's groups and unions will have stronger interest in the problems of working women rather than others. Unions with large female memberships or potential memberships naturally will have a stronger interest in women's issues than others. The AFL-CIO and State and Local Federation will have an interest in coalitions with women's organisations because the federations are mainly political organisations. Moreover, unions are the means to achieve the ends
of their members, so women can work within unions to achieve their economic and political objectives.18

### Table 3.1: Female Work Participation Rate in Selected Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.,</th>
<th>COUNTRIES</th>
<th>WOMEN LABOUR AS % OF LABOUR FORCE 1990</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN LABOUR FORCE IN INDUSTRY 1989 - 91</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Poland</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: 'World Economy India's place in it', Table 2.12 Labour Force and Employment by Sector, Economic Intelligence Service, (CMIE) Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt., Ltd., October 1993.

Table 3.1 explains the female work participation rate in selected countries. Female work participation rate in general (women labour as percentage of labour force) in many developed countries had been very high, whereas in India it was only 26 percent. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, the lowest participation rates were found. It may be related to religious and other factors. The role of women in productive occupations is restricted in Islamic nations. It may be noted that the percentage of women labour force in industrial sector has been comparatively lower than women's labour participation as percentage of total labour force.
II. WOMEN INDUSTRIAL LABOUR IN INDIA

The entry of women in the economic sphere is not a new phenomenon in our country. Women have been participating in the economic activities from time immemorial. One of the major characteristics of the Indian labour force is the structural stagnation in its inter-sectoral distribution. With about 70 per cent of the labour force in rural areas and more than 60 per cent of it is concentrated in agriculture. The rural female work force participation rate has been stable around 28 per cent.19 A review of economic role played by women in India in the past reveals that they performed various agricultural operations and helped men in production and marketing of agricultural goods and handicrafts. However, their activities whether in agriculture or household industries were confined mostly to their homes or nearby farms. However, with the increasing pressure of population, growing economic needs, and social awakening, the prejudice against wage employment of women has weakened; with the result more women are to-day taking up employment in non-traditional fields also. The high cost of living and consequent increasing economic necessities have made it obligatory for almost all grown-ups to seek or perform gainful jobs for supplementing their family income. Labour force participation

helps to promote economic development of the country. Economic
development can also be seen as a gradual movement of the
population from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations. It
is important for a correct understanding of the process of
economic development and its implications for the status of women
to bear in mind that these two major shifts, the geographical
migration from village to town and the occupational migration
from agricultural to non-agricultural. These activities are just
two different manifestations of the same process of change.

A majority of Indian working women are employed in
agriculture. In recent years, there has been a rise both in the
absolute number of agricultural workers as well as a phenomenal
increase in the female work force participation rate in this
category of employment. Women have entered in non-agricultural
occupations such as coir industry and bidi industry. Coastal
Kerala produces 95 per cent of the country's output of coir and
coir goods. Women are working in bidi, cigar and tobacco
industries, that their figure has risen from 3.07 per cent to
7.04 per cent of all non-agricultural female workers. Tobacco
processing and bidi making are important commodity industries in
Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra
and West Bengal. Only 11 per cent of the country's female work

20. Data on the Coir Industry is based on Molly Mathew's 'Women
Workers in the Unorgan'ised Sector of Coir Industry in Kerala',
(ICSSR, Mimeograph, 1979).
force is employed in the organised sector of the economy. Among all women workers, it is only this small percentage which is supposedly protected by legislations on working conditions and wages. Women constituted a high proportion of the work force in the cotton textile industry between 1919 and 1939, touching 22.9 per cent in 1926. From 1929 onwards, there was a steady decline in their number, reaching 14.9 per cent in 1939. Various reasons for this decline have been cited, such as the passing of the Maternity Benefit Act, Night Work Acts and the mechanisation of the industry.

India is a fast developing country. Though the country has gone through the implementation of seven five year plans and the eighth five year plan is in progress it is paradoxical to note that women as half of the population have derived very little economic benefits. With rising cost of living, women are forced to come out of their homes to take up new professions and occupations. But their number is a microscopic minority when compared to the large masses of poor and illiterate women whose living conditions have not changed. It was implicitly assumed by planners and policy-makers in developing countries that

21. MALAVIKA KARLEKAR, 'Poverty and Women's Work', (Delhi, 1982), pp.36-51.

22. RADHAKUMAR, 'Women in Colonial India' Edited by Krishnamurthy.J., (Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, 1989), pp.133-162.
development planning will automatically bring socio-economic benefits to the women as to other sections of society. However, their hopes and expectations have been belied by economic trends in last few decades.

The processes of socio-economic changes from agricultural society to the modern industrial development has meant ruination of women's participation in economic activities. The traditional Indian society, as all other ancient civilizations, was primarily an agricultural society. The social institutions like the large joint families, the kinship groups, the caste and sub-caste groups, the social customs and traditions all were suited to agricultural production. The social norms, like dominance of older generation over younger generation, domination of men over women were all geared to patterns of rural agricultural life. In a changing society from rural to urban, agriculture to industrial, handicrafts to machines, non-technical to technical, the problems of adjustments for persons of rural background are many. In addition, women have their own problems arising out of their new roles as workers in urban industrial settings. For Indian women are highly integrated for centuries, in a closely knit joint patriarchal family life in the broad traditions of caste and rural communities.23

23. Dr. SUSHILA METHA, 'Revolution and Status of Women in India', (B.V. Gupta, M.D., Metropolitan Book Co., (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1982), pp.166 & 182.
Working women could be put into three categories on a socio-economic basis: 24

1. Agricultural workers and those engaged in traditional, menial services. This group is the largest and poor. Their counterparts in urban areas are construction labourers.

2. The second category, mostly comprises of those women who work in offices for meagre wages. The women who work in industrial factories can be called the blue-collar women workers.

3. Fewest in number are those who are better educated and enjoy economic security. Women from this category, work for improving their living standard and for economic independence. They work as employees and offices in Government, Public and Private enterprises. Doctors, engineers, lawyers, accountants, school and college teachers come under this category.

The women in the non-formal sector face a lot of problems such as low wages, long hours of work, insecurity regarding jobs and sexual harassment, despite the law prescribing equal wages for equal work. Women are seldom paid wages at par with men workers. The employers give two reasons for this, viz.,

(i) that women are less productive, and

(ii) that they are less skilled.

The reasons are unacceptable for the present because women may be physically weaker than men; but those men who are physically stronger are not always highly productive. Hardship, sincerity and devotion only decide the productivity. Moreover, production processes in all sectors have been made simpler and easier with the introduction of advanced techniques of mechanised production. Women are also equally skilled, though not more skilled than men.

Though the theme of the International Women's Year (1975) was to work for women's development, it may be appropriate to mention that the United Nations has been working for the advancement of women since its very inception. Besides the Charter of United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for safeguarding interest of women, as far back in 1946, the United Nations constituted a Commission on the status of women followed by several conventions and resolutions like the Equal Remuneration Convention-1951, Convention on the Political
Rights of Women—1952, International Conventions of Economic Social and Cultural Rights and Social and Political Rights; the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention 1958, the General Assembly’s Declaration of Elimination of Discrimination against Women—1967, etc. Despite these provisions and not withstanding the progress made during the last two decades a considerable gap still persists all over the world in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the women and it is being increasingly realised that discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity and with the welfare of the family and society.

The Labour Legislations in India have been designed in such a manner as to protect women and children from undue exploitation. But law itself cannot offer protection unless there is a sense of awareness of its existence among the workers. In this direction, top most priority must be given to women’s education, so that they may not only become conscious of their rights and responsibilities but also take advantage of the statutory privileges. In the organised sector, the employment of women has been steadily rising. Recently the State Labour Ministers’ Convention proposed that the lower wages, wherever fixed for women workers under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 should be revived on an urgent basis. The Government also contemplates to enact a law for equal wage for equal work. The year of 1975 was thus a historic landmark in the calendar of women’s progress,
notwithstanding the fact, it is also the year of Silver Jubilee of Republic of India.

The resolution passed by the United Nations aims at: (i) Equality; (ii) full integration in their totality in developmental efforts of women at all levels; (iii) employment of provision of the I.L.O. conventions on equal pay for equal work; and (iv) eradication of all existing discrimination against women.

The National Commission on Labour has classified the following industries which may be said to employ unorganised labour:

1. contract labour including construction workers,
2. casual labour,
3. labour employed in small scale industry,
4. hand-loom/power-loom workers,
5. bidi and cigar workers,
6. employees in shops and commercial establishments,
7. sweepers and scavengers,
8. workers in tanneries,
9. tribal labour and
10. other unprotected labour.

Neither precise figures relating to employment of women in the above mentioned industries are given in the report brought out by the Commission nor are they available in the Labour Bureau. It is a fact that many of the Government departments in the recent times have been appointing employees (both men and women) on contract basis. They are paid with very low wages or remunerations with no job security. State, as a law-maker, is
becoming a law-breaker in this respect. However, the general feeling is that these industries are employing quite a large number of women workers who require legislative protection.25 "Embodied in India’s Constitution, its fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy are a clear declaration of a just, equal and human society".26

"Women are a great power in society, but if they misuse their power, it can shatter to bits the whole fabric of society", said Gandhi.27

While studying the pre-Independence period, one finds that women's participation in the country's economy is not totally absent, and women from the lower strata of society have always worked for wages.28 On the contrary, those from the upper strata were mostly confined to their homes. Rural Indian women have always worked with men in the fields. Similarly, women have also been working to help their husbands in handicrafts, small and

cottage industries. It is only the very rich and affluent women in Indian society who have contributed very little to our national product. Even now they are not engaging themselves in economically productive activities. It is only the economic status of women that decides their contribution of labour to productivity.

According to the International Labour Review (1958), in 1951, India had the following percentages of women in the entire labour force in the selected major occupational groups. Professional, technical and related works 17 per cent; managerial, administrative, clerical and related works 5.5 per cent; sales works 9.8 per cent; craftsmen production process workers and labourers not classified elsewhere 12 per cent; and service workers including the armed forces 15.7 per cent. The great change, however, took place when women were employed in factories. In 1951, 3,00,000 women worked in factories formed 11.4 per cent of the total workers.

**Constitution and Protection of Women in India**

Indian Constitution provides for special steps to be taken by the Government to improve the conditions of women, by establishing separate Institutions. The Fundamental Rights and


the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution have helped Indian women a great deal. The Directive Principles of State Policy through Articles 39 and 42 give necessary protection to women workers.\textsuperscript{31} Article 46 directs the States to "promote with special care the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people". This is also considered a directive to improve employment opportunities and conditions of women workers.\textsuperscript{32}

The International Labour Organisation has also taken an interest in the welfare of Indian women. This organisation came into being in 1919 and immediately after its foundation a number of laws were passed to protect labour. Women have a special place in the history of labour legislation in India.\textsuperscript{33}

In industries such as match factories, tobacco curing works and tea plantations, women constituted a majority working force. In most factories like petroleum refineries, printing presses, tanneries, foot-wear manufactures, women's employment was negligible.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} CSWI Report, p.184.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.250.
\textsuperscript{33} Social Welfare in India, Planning Commission, (Government of India, New Delhi), pp.149-172.
\textsuperscript{34} Tara Ali Baig (Edt.), Women of India, (Publication Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1958), p.238.
Earlier women worked only in small industries like bidi-making, pickle and papped making, cowdung-cake making, soap making, glass decoration, bricks and tiles, match manufacturing, hand-made paper, sorting grain and number of such other industries. In non-agricultural occupational categories, women were found in the largest numbers in household industry. Small scale industries brought very little remuneration and necessity arose to develop cottage industries. These industries employed women for centuries; but in 1948 the number of women so employed increased tremendously because they became a means of rehabilitation. 35

The government simultaneously promulgated legislation for the protection of the women working in factories, mines and plantations. 36 The Factory Act of 1948 permitted women to work not more than 9 hours a day and 54 hours a week. It also saw to it that the working hours for women in these undertakings range from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. According to this Act, they were exempted from night work and it contained a Clause regarding the type of

36. Labour legislations:

work in which the employer should not employ women labourers. The
next significant Act protecting female labour force was the Mines
Act of 1951 that forbade lifting heavy weight in excess of 65
pounds per adult woman and 55 pounds for adolescents. It also
prohibited women from working underground. In 1954, it was
decided that women with aptitude and ambition should have equal
opportunities as men for undertaking all kinds of work. It was,
therefore, decided that the social education of women was to be
taken up immediately because it was necessary to arouse the
consciousness of the parents of girls. Special facilities should
be given to girls above the age of 11 to meet their social and
economic problems. The Government has passed a number of laws to
protect women. The need of the hour is, sincere implementation
of more legislations for the betterment of women labourers.
Society has to play an equally important role in this matter.

Women's discrimination has prevailed in the world for a very
long time. From the dawn of recorded history, women have played
an important role in producing G.N.P. As Samuelson (1976)
maintains, "It has been quite impossible to differentiate between
the co-operative roles of men and women in producing the G.N.P."


38. Ibid.,

39. KIRAN DEVENDRA, 'Status and Position of Women in India',
There is discrimination against women, even in advanced nations like United States, U.K., etc. In United States, half of the male population monopolises two of the three industries. For reasons, solely of irrational prejudice and bigotry, women get lower wages than men. In developing economies, the discrimination against women is seen more than in developed economies. In these countries, work force participation rates of women are significantly lower than that of men.

The Seventh Plan draft (1985) maintains that, "A number of social enactments have been put on the statute books for removing various constraints which hinder women's progress. In spite of these measures, they have lagged behind men in different spheres, especially in education. According to the 1981 census, only 14 per cent of the total female population in the country fall in the category of 'workers'. In 1991 Census it is 22.73 per cent. The unpaid economic activities of women and their contribution through work in the domestic activities remain unreported even today. An ILO study has estimated that the value of unpaid household work constitutes 25-39 per cent of the total gross national product in developing countries". 40 If it is so, we can be proud of our women.

However, the most important recommendation pertains to reservation of 30 per cent seats in all training institutes. The implied message is that women do not need the crutch of job reservations. Given half a chance to receive formal training and education, Indian women are capable of tackling even the most challenging assignments. In other words, education is the key to the total emancipation of Indian women. A UNICEF study has established the importance of female education and its overall impact on the welfare of children and the community as a whole.\textsuperscript{41} The study points out that for almost all children, the most important primary health care worker is the mother. The UNICEF study rightly points out that in some parts of the world, including India, there is still resistance to the idea of female education among those who do not believe in the 'emancipation of women'. It is due to illiteracy, poverty and other social problems such as lack of social awareness and rights.

The entry of women in large numbers to several modern industries is also witnessed. In those factory industries where women had earlier been employed in large numbers, technical improvements and the rationalisation of production organisations had led to the systematic curtailment of their employment

\textsuperscript{41} V.S. MAHAJAN, 'Women's Contribution to India's Economic and Social Development', (Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1991), p. 443.
opportunities. Cotton and jute textiles in the sixties and coal and tobacco industries in recent years provided excellent examples of such developments (Government of India: 1975). Therefore, the involvement of women in any process of modern industrial development is by itself worth studying.

In the garment industry, many studies have revealed the very fast rate of growth of its exports in recent years. Between 1970-71 and 1980-81 garment exports from India went up from Rs.300 million to 5,000 million. This export-oriented section of the industry is located in Bombay, Delhi and Madras. In Silk Yarn industry, India's major exporter of silk is Karnataka, which produces five times as much mulberry silk as in West Bengal. Even today, the industry provides some valuable insights into how sexual division of labour, based on the exploitation of the meek and vulnerable role assigned to women by our society. Women can have vital implications even in a capital-intensive industry with world-wide markets. In export garments' industry and foot-wears' industry, there is more employment of women.

Indian silk production has increased rapidly in the decade 1970-71 to 1980-81, mainly in response to the doubling of exports of silk pieces in that period. West Bengal’s raw silk production

42. The study made by Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, Readymade Garment Industry of India, (New Delhi, 1984), p.264.
has increased by about 64 per cent though it still accounts for not more than 10 per cent of the all-India production (Government of India - 1960-71: 1982).

In the leather products' Industry, the tanning and curing of leather is of long-standing repute in India and semi-finished leather is a traditional item of export. Besides, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh also have shown keen interest in exporting leather products. The preponderance of women workers in export-oriented industries is usually attributed to the fact that, generally women's wage rates are relatively low. They were generally more willing to work at lower wage rates in the more labour-intensive nature of technologies. They were slow to unionise because they were usually more desperate and/or were not fully conscious of their rights as workers. Also, political parties of this region had proved to be less alert in organising women workers. The best way to ensure meeting all these conditions was to use women workers.

Women workers and their participation in trade union activities

Unorganised labour movement has played a vital role for over a century in resolving the problems of industrial workers in India. However, the organised efforts in the form of trade unions

in our country started much later. Although considerable attention has been paid to the study of trade unions, the problems of women workers' participation in trade union activities have received little or no attention in India. Recently, in Western countries, some social scientists have tried to study the extent of participation of women workers in trade unions. But in India, particularly in the context of working class women workers in North Indian setting, no such studies have been done. Until the First World War, there was no organised and effective trade union organisation of industrial workers in India. The Madras Labour Union was formed in 1918. Almost at the same time a trade union organisation called the Kanpur Mazdoor Sabha (KM®) was formed in Kanpur. In the early trade union activities, the participation of women workers was almost negligible barring the period of 1940's and 1950's. To cite only a few examples, the legislation on women's right to equal pay for equal work was passed long ago. But even the trade unions, active in Kanpur, have not been able to secure its


45. V.B.KARNIK, 'Trade Union in India', (Bombay 1978), p.23.

46. S.N.PANDEY, 'As Labour Organises', (Sri Ram Industrial Relations Press, New Delhi, 1970), pp.23-44.

implementation so far; nor have they tried either intensive persuasion or organised resistance in this direction. These data show that neither the Kanpur women workers have been enthusiastic about their membership in the trade unions nor the trade unions have brought them their rights. However, this trend is not peculiar only to women workers but is equally characteristic of male workers.48

There are several ways in which the participation of workers in trade union activities could be measured and analysed. According to Miller's view 'participation' stands for attending meetings, taking part in discussions, voting, etc.49 Similarly Tannenbaum and R.L.Khan have postulated six separate items50 and Sheth has used seven items51 as indicators for studying industrial workers' active participation. On the basis of researcher's own observations during the field work, the following four items can be treated as indicators to measure the


degree of active participation in trade union activities:
(i) Union-membership, 
(ii) Regular attendance of the meeting, 
(iii) Holding union offices, 
(iv) Participation in union elections, in demonstrations and also in enlisting members.

THE STRUCTURE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The history of labour management relations in a plant or work organisation may also influence its workers' interests and participation in union activities. If the management has consistently adopted a soft and liberal attitude towards its workers, then the latter may reciprocate with favourable disposition towards the management and hence may feel reluctant to join the union activities although this may happen only under a set of other conditions. Also, if a management is perceived by workers as unfavourable to trade unionism, workers may refrain from participating in union activities, particularly where job security is lacking. In organised industries, government undertakings and public enterprises employees and workers evade their duties and responsibilities.

The management of production units fail to encourage collective bargaining with their workers' unions. Whenever suited them, the management initiate discussions and negotiations with one or more unions; sometimes the management deliberately ignore one union and favour the other in an attempt to bribe one section of their workers and thereby creating fissions. Playing one
union against the other often leads to intra union rivalries.  

SOCIAL CORRELATES OF TRADE UNION PARTICIPATION

To find out the influence of the social correlates such as age, marital status, education, length of service and job-security on participation of women workers in union activities are also considered.

This is in contrast to the moderate degree of participation reported by 35 out of 53 women workers (i.e., almost 62 per cent of them) with less (i.e., 1 to 5 years) years of length of service. This result is very significant in the sense that it is quite contrary to the trends reported by Sheth. In his study, he has found that the male workers have a tendency to be less active in union activities as they acquire more years of work experience. Therefore, an average male worker becomes more active in the initial years of service and as they mature in work experience, they grow more and more passive in union activities.

52. RAKA SHARAN, 'Indian Women Workers', (Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1985), pp.41-50.

Thus, working women of India have occasionally found a spokesman to voice their grievances through trade unions. But on the whole, working women of India are not yet class conscious. They are not yet organised or very much vocal of their grievances. They cannot be compared to the working classes of the west, in any sense. They do not have the aggressiveness or assertiveness of the working women of the west. Centuries of confinement and dependence have left their indelible marks on the working women of India. Due to their ignorance and illiteracy much of the advantages secured to them through the efforts of Government and the trade unions are lost by them. The very low social status accorded by Indian society to their own women is one of the greatest drawbacks, from which working women suffer. In this country of great masculine tradition, the fact that women everywhere, are always paid less than men in all unorganised activities and industries. Even for the same kind of work, women are always offered lower wages than men. Women do men’s jobs in their absence due to insufficient men workers. But the rate of wage always remains lower than what would have been paid to men for the same work. In fact, one of the demands of Assam Garden Labour strikes in recent years was to obtain a uniform ‘hajira’ rate (daily wages) for men and women.54

54. Dr.SUSHILA MEHTA, 'Revolution and Status of Women in India' (B.V.Gupta, M.D., Metropolitan Book Co., (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1982), p.191.
WORK PARTICIPATION RATE IN INDIA

Female work participation rates in India are given Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2: WORK PARTICIPATION RATES IN INDIA 1911-1991 (IN %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>22.73</td>
<td>14.44</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>51.56</td>
<td>51.23</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.2 shows that the low work participation of Indian women which is the result of contradictions existing in the society.\(^{55}\) When women play an important role in controlling the productive forces and participating in productive operations, their economic contribution is quite significant. With the emergence of a new productive force and the transformation of their ownership, classes began to emerge and women relegated into a backward position in the process. The exploitation is not only carried on the class lines but also on the lines of male domination over females. As a result, women become dependent and subservient in all walks of life. The productive relations and the impounding super structures create new institutions such

as family, marriage, caste, professions, etc., and have developed new laws to relegate women’s position unparallel to any other. Thus, the lower the women in the social hierarchy and the economic status, the lower her position in a society and the more they are exploited.

The exploitation of women and male domination are continued in different forms, contents and styles of socio-economic and political life of our country. On the one hand, women have not witnessed any change in their lifestyles over the years and on the other hand their conditions have became more miserable. The social conditions continue to be anti-women and exploitative in character, whether it is ‘eve-teasing’ or discrimination in wage rates. The economic conditions characterised by class structures and class-relations, further alienated the women from the society. Their ‘human bondage’ in the cultural arena further strengthened the class structures to disintegrate women from the mainstream of national life. The political field treats women as alien. All these conditions individually and cumulatively affect the status of women.56

The women in India are to be blamed for this. Even the educated and enlightened women, without knowing their Constitutional rights, allow men to suppress them. Ours is a peculiar system in which many a woman are treated so very kindly by men. Exceptions are also found due to the immoral and indifferent behaviour of a considerable number of men. This trend is mainly due to poverty and unemployment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total Female Population (Million)</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
<th>Agricultural Labourers</th>
<th>Total Female Workers</th>
<th>Female Workers as % to Total Female Population</th>
<th>% of Female Workers to Total Labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>123.9 (43.3)</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>12.8 (30.6)</td>
<td>41.8 (100.0)</td>
<td>33.73</td>
<td>34.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>122.7 (50.6)</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>10.9 (24.9)</td>
<td>40.1 (100.0)</td>
<td>33.73</td>
<td>34.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>136.1 (32.4)</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>15.0 (39.9)</td>
<td>37.6 (100.0)</td>
<td>27.62</td>
<td>32.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>173.5 (45.3)</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>12.7 (31.3)</td>
<td>40.5 (100.0)</td>
<td>23.30</td>
<td>28.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>212.5 (55.7)</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>14.2 (22.9)</td>
<td>59.4 (100.0)</td>
<td>27.96</td>
<td>31.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>263.9 (29.6)</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>15.8 (50.5)</td>
<td>31.3 (100.0)</td>
<td>11.64</td>
<td>17.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>330.8 (73.2)</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>20.6 (46.2)</td>
<td>45.0 (100.0)</td>
<td>11.99</td>
<td>20.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>406.33</td>
<td>48.05</td>
<td>37.85</td>
<td>44.24</td>
<td>22.73</td>
<td>22.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Notes:**
1. Data for 1941 was not tabulated on a full count basis due to pre-occupations in the second world war.

2. Figures do not include those of Jammu and Kashmir, figures within parentheses denote percentage of women workers: provisional. The figures are based on one per cent sampling.

From Census data contained in Table 3.3, it has been observed by Sen that the most serious under-counting of women workers took place in the Census years 1931, 1951, 1971, 1991. The relative extent of under-counting appears to have been greater, at least in 1971, for women cultivators (i.e., inclusive of unpaid family labourers) than for agricultural labourers. Every day women have to work for at least 12-14 hours including domestic work but "a woman was captured as a worker only to the extent that the output of her tasks entered the exchange network. The result is that a large number of women who are active in non-commodity sectors of the economy tend to be excluded from the census enumeration" (Duvvury, 1989, p.65). Thus, their activities viz., cooking, cleaning, washing, dung work, etc., along with outside work on family farm are not enumerated as their economic contribution.

**TABLE 3.4 : WORK PARTICIPATION RATES FOR MAIN WORKERS (1971-1991)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALL AGES</th>
<th>PER CENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MALES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>53.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>48.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The National Committee on the Status of Women revealed that female work participation rate declined from 33.7 per cent in 1911 Census to 23.30 in 1951. But in 1961, it was 27.96 per cent which decreased to 12.73 per cent in 1971. The decline is attributed to different definitions used for 'work' and to some extent due to urbanisation. A marked improvement in their work participation rates is seen during 1971, 1981, 1991 in accordance with Table 3.4. Generally talking, women’s work participation rate is much lower than men’s.

It is clear that work participation rate of male workers remained almost unchanged during 1971-’81; but work participation rate of female workers increased from 12 per cent in 1971 to nearly 14 in 1981, 22 in 1991. In rural areas, work participation rate of male workers slightly declined but female work participation rate rose from 13 per cent to 16 then to 27. The overall participation rate of women went up more sharply than those of men over this decade. There was an increase in the proportion of women to men, working as agricultural labourers. The 1971-’91 decades were marked by a noticeable increase in the number of women rural workers. Their share in the rural workforce went up nearly a third. As per NSS data which includes marginal workers in modified main activity, this position is confirmed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census period</th>
<th>Percentage of economically active among</th>
<th>Women's work participation as a percentage of men's work participation rate</th>
<th>Term used for denoting the economically active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>61.11</td>
<td>31.70</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>61.90</td>
<td>33.73</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>60.52</td>
<td>32.67</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>58.27</td>
<td>27.63</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>54.05</td>
<td>23.30</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>57.16</td>
<td>27.93</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>52.75</td>
<td>14.22</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>51.52</td>
<td>22.69</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1. The reduction in work participation rate of women between 1961 and 1981 has not yet been fully analysed, though it was expected that in view of the definitional change introduced for the 1981 Census, the 1981 rate would be closer to the 1961 rate. The fact that this is not so is possibly because of the ordering of questions on work participation in 1961 which yielded higher work participation responses.

Censuses of India, 1901 to 1991.
Table 3.5 presents the macro picture of work participation, by men as well as women, as it has evolved since the turn of the century. The table provides the following aspects: (i) women’s work participation rate in the country as a whole has been significantly lower than that of men; and (ii) the relative gap between men and women in this regard has been increasing, so that while during 1901–21, women’s work participation rate was a little over half that of men, in more recent years, 1961–81, women’s work participation has been markedly less than half of the rate for men. In fact, in a developing society, women’s work participation rate should be slowly and steadily rising. India cannot be an exception to it. Perhaps the methodological and definitional snags would have given the above figures.

Apart from the demographic aspects, one major factor responsible for the declining work participation rates for men as well as women is the changing concepts of work adopted in recent censuses. At the same time, however, it is an acknowledged fact that many traditional avenues of employment got closed under the impact of modernisation, as traditional industries gave way to modern industries and that this affected particularly women’s employment adversely. At the same time, although the census data for recent years indicate a decline in women’s work participation, it is not quite supported by evidence from other sources of information. For instance, although the census figures show decline in women’s work participation from around 28 per
cent in 1961 to 14 per cent in 1971 (a sharp change by any standard), the NSS data show virtually no change during this period. For the subsequent period also, the female work participation has possibly remained stable, although unadjusted figures yielded by NSS, would indicate a decline.

**TABLE 3.6 : DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS BY SEX, AND BROAD OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES (1981 AND 1991)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Agricultural Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Cultivators</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>48.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>37.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Household industry</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>46.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other workers</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>52.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Agricultural Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Cultivators</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>10.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>30.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Household industry</td>
<td>03.7</td>
<td>33.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other workers</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>32.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Memorandum Items

1. Work participation rate exclusive of marginal workers
2. Work participation rate inclusive of marginal workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PER CENT</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
<th>MEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1981 population census gives a sector-wise distribution of workers, by four broad categories, which is reproduced in Table 3.6. It can be seen that,

1. While nearly 63 per cent of the male workers were engaged in agriculture, the corresponding proportion for working women was 78 per cent,

2. The proportion of working women engaged as agricultural labourers, to be distinguished from cultivators who have an interest in land either by virtue of ownership or lease or both, is more than twice that for working men,

3. While the respective proportions for working men and women engaged in household industry do not diverge widely between the urban and rural sectors, there is a marked difference between the proportion of urban working women engaged in household industry and that of urban working men, and

4. The proportion of working women engaged in 'other work' is almost half of that for working men. It ought to be noted also that work participation of urban women is less than one sixth of work participation of urban men. While half of the urban male population in India is engaged in work, hardly one out of every thirteen urban women is economically active. May be the very rich women in urban areas show very little interest to take up economically productive work.
TABLE 3.7: DISTRIBUTION OF MAIN WORKERS BY INDUSTRIAL CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Main workers</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Cultivators</td>
<td>48.60</td>
<td>29.84</td>
<td>41.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agricultural Labourers</td>
<td>21.54</td>
<td>50.86</td>
<td>19.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Livestock, Forestry &amp; Fishing</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mining &amp; quarrying</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Total: Primary Sector</strong></td>
<td>70.22</td>
<td>85.01</td>
<td>66.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Manufacturing, Process servicing and repairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Household Industry</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Other than Household Industry</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>8.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Construction</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Total: Secondary Sector</strong></td>
<td>12.46</td>
<td>7.65</td>
<td>13.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Trade and Commerce</td>
<td>6.37</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>7.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Transport, Storage and Communication</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Total: Tertiary Sector</strong></td>
<td>18.30</td>
<td>9.31</td>
<td>19.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**: Figures exclude Assam.

**Sources**: 1. Census of India 1971, General Economic Tables, Series-1, India Part-II B(ii).

2. Census of India, 1981, Series-1, India Part-II, Special Report and Tables based on 5% sample date.

DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN WORKERS IN INDUSTRIAL CATEGORIES

When we look at the census data, we also get a picture of the jobs in which female workers are engaged. In table-3.7 data regarding women's occupations along with those of males for 1971, 1981 and 1991 have been presented. In 1971, under main workers female accounted for 17.58 per cent which increased to 20.21 per cent in 1981 and to 22.69 per cent in 1991. From Table-3.7, it is evident that out of 100 female workers in 1971, about 30 were cultivators which number increased to more than 37 in 1981 and 48 in 1991. Increase in the number of women as cultivators reflects large-scale migration of male workers from rural to urban areas and this is also the result of ceiling on land holdings and to some extent due to right of inheritance provided to daughters under Hindu Succession Act. Their number as agricultural labourers was more than 50 in 1971 which came down to about 46 in 1981 and 37 in 1991. Apparently there was some decline; but it may be partly due to some conceptual changes and partly to shift of women in some other jobs, because some upward mobility has taken place with the spread of education.
Table 3.8 contains data on the labour participation rates as obtained from the censuses of 1961 and 1981. The main and marginal workers have been merged for 1981 for a possible definition comparison. There is a fall, observed in the
participation rates of both men and women in rural as well as urban areas. The decline is more prominent in rural areas and among women. Prior to speculating into the reasons for this fall, it would be pertinent to look at the 1971 census and the National Sample Survey (NSS) data as well.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION LEVEL</th>
<th>CENSUS 1981</th>
<th>CENSUS 1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>URBAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MALES</td>
<td>FEMALES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Illiterate</td>
<td>99.63</td>
<td>26.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Literate up to primary</td>
<td>66.83</td>
<td>18.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Middle</td>
<td>67.67</td>
<td>16.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Secondary</td>
<td>64.18</td>
<td>12.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Graduate &amp; above</td>
<td>72.49</td>
<td>41.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.9 shows a U-shape pattern in the participation for both rural and urban areas, among illiterate persons, both men and women work in large numbers. Within intermediate education groups, labour participation could be low since some primary level literates may opt for middle level education and some middle certificate holders could consider secondary education. The participation rate of graduates is fairly high and in some cases, it is comparable with that of the illiterates. Women
graduates in rural areas predominantly belong to the middle class or landed households where taboos are there against working outside the household, along with non-availability of appropriate jobs keep women out of the labour market. The logic can be extended to urban areas as well.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION NEEDS NEW APPROACH:

Women's education is of a very low 39.42 per cent according to 1991 census, as against 63.68 per cent for males. Between 1981 and 1991 the number of illiterate females (leaving out girls below 7 years) rose from 182.91 millions to 202.14 millions, a gain of 19.23 millions, i.e., two millions a year. The total literacy ratio in 1991 recorded only 11 per cent for women compared with 52 per cent for men. Though the rate has progressively increased from 8.86 per cent in 1951, 15.34 in 1961, 21.97 in 1971, 29.75 in 1981 to 39.42 in 1991, this is still below the designated level. In absolute terms, out of a total population of over 840 millions, only 130 million women are literate. Further, the pace of increase in literacy among females has been less than that of males. During the last 80 years the increase in literacy among males has been 37 per cent whereas for females it is 24 per cent.

*The Hindu, (January 11, 1994) p.19
In the changing socio-economic scenario, more and more women are going out to work and are transforming their lives from being a 'mere' housewife to the dual and more fulfilling role of working woman and housewife. In fact, according to the 1991 census, 31 out of 264 million women are 'workers'. A report by the Census Commissioner has stated that women grabbed more opportunities than men in India during the last decade 1981-'91. One third of India's labour force consists of women. But on no account, it is an enviable figure.

Increased female literacy undoubtedly has a direct effect on the wages of female workers. Education improves worker's ability and in turn increases their productivity. Female workers will not lend themselves to exploitation, if they are educated. Also India invests far less for its women workers than for its working men.

**Table 3.10 : Employment in the Organised Sector by Sex, Public and Private Sectors (Millions)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>PUBLIC SECTOR</th>
<th>PRIVATE SECTOR</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>SHARE OF FEMALE EMPLOYMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MALES</td>
<td>FEMALES</td>
<td>MALES</td>
<td>FEMALES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-'75</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-'80</td>
<td>12.98</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-'85</td>
<td>14.72</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Ministry of Labour, as quoted in Duvvury, (1988).
Table 3.10 presents data on the total organized sector employment over the decade of the seventies to eighties grouped in 4 years averages. The growth rate in female employment in the public sector is slightly higher than that in the private sector. The size of the overall employment in the former is considerably higher than in the latter though in absolute numbers the private sector employs more women than the public sector. The size of female employment in absolute number in the organized sector too is low. Undoubtedly, women are lagging behind men in the employment market. In other respects, they are not up above men or on par with men. Some gap is seen between men and women even in developed countries. But in India, a wide gap is seen between them, in spite of improved women's education, enlightened journalism, significance attached to women, women's liberation movements, etc.

**TABLE 3.11**: SIZE AND GROWTH OF THE NON-AGRICULTURAL UNORGANISED LABOUR BY SEX (MILLIONS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total Non-Agricultural labour</th>
<th>Organised Non-Agricultural labour</th>
<th>Unorganised labour</th>
<th>Percentage Unorganised labour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971/73</td>
<td>Males 50.92</td>
<td>16.54</td>
<td>34.38</td>
<td>67.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females 12.47</td>
<td>02.10</td>
<td>10.37</td>
<td>83.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Males 24.83</td>
<td>20.85</td>
<td>51.98</td>
<td>72.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females 20.10</td>
<td>02.98</td>
<td>17.12</td>
<td>85.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ministry of Labour, as quoted in Duvvury (1988) and NSS 27th and 38th rounds.*
In the non-agricultural sectors, there are both protected and unprotected workers. The size of the unprotected labour outside agriculture can be estimated by subtracting the number of organized sector workers from the total labour force outside agriculture. These estimates for early seventies and early eighties are given in Table 3.11. The unprotected male labour in the early seventies was over two-thirds of the total male labour. By the eighties, this proportion rose to about 72 per cent.

For female labour, these percentages were about 83 and 85, for the early seventies and early eighties respectively. It is evident that the share of the unprotected labour in the total labour force is both larger and rising over time. Additionally, the proportion of the unprotected female labour is higher, compared to unprotected male labour. These figures reveal a deterioration in the status of workers, particularly of women, in the Indian labour force due to demographic pressures, slow growth and poor labour absorption in the organised sectors.
TABLE 3.12 : AGE AND SPECIFIC WORK PARTICIPATION RATES

(Per Cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-39</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 +</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ILO (1986).

AGE SPECIFIC WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION PARTS AS PER USUAL STATUS IN DIFFERENT NSS ROUNDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-29</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.12 provides the trends in work participation rates of men and women in India over the last 35 years. Between 1950 and 1985, the overall work participation rates of both the sexes declined. However, the decline in the overall work participation rate of women is sharper, and is more than three times to that of men. If one looks at the age-specific work participation rates, the trends in the declining female participation rates become more apparent.

It can be seen that the decline in the male work participation rate is primarily due to its decline in the age groups between 10 and 19. This decline, perhaps is a positive factor, pointing to the increasing accessibility to education. In other words, expansion of education may partially explain the decline in the male work participation rates.

The decline in the female work participation rates, on the other hand, is shared by all age groups. These trends become more clear if one looks at Table 3.13. Between 1950 and 1985, there was 9.5 per cent decline in the male participation rate while the corresponding figure for females is 31.1 per cent. Table 3.13 shows that it is an increasing function of age (except for the age group 60 and above). The smaller differences in the younger age groups is primarily due to the sharp decline in male participation rates while the larger differences in the older age groups are almost entirely due to the sharp decline in the participation rates of women.
### TABLE 3.13: MALE-FEMALE DIFFERENCES IN WORK PARTICIPATION RATES

(Per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (Years)</th>
<th>Difference in 1950</th>
<th>Difference in 1985</th>
<th>(% decline between 1950 and 1985)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MALES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>02.2</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>06.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-39</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>00.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>01.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 &amp; above</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ILO (1986).

The evidence shows that work participation rates of women in India are not only very low but have also declined rather sharply. The participation rates of males have also declined; but it is primarily due to the decline in the participation rates of the school age population. The decline in male participation rates is marginal for all age groups between 20 and 58. However, in the case of women, the decline is shared by all age groups and is substantial which clearly shows that women are increasingly excluded from employment in India. It should be carefully borne in mind that it is only the rates have declined and not the actual numbers of men and women employed. The actuals are always growing.
### Table 3.14: Female Employment in India by Status (Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employment</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular employment</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual wage labour</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** NSS(1986).

The figures are computed using the data from Sarvekshana, September 1980 and Visaria and Minhas (1991) and NSS Rounds.

**Female Employment by Status**

Table 3.14 shows that between the period 1972 and 1982, the share of women in self-employment and in regular employment has declined and their share in casual wage labour category has increased. The trend is similar, both in the rural and urban areas. In other words, women employment in India is increasingly casualised. Casualisation of women employment in India has at least two dimensions. First, to avoid provisions of maternity benefit, creche, etc., employers in the large scale manufacturing industries recruit women as casual workers. Second, with the introduction of sub-contracting of the production process, employment in general and that of women in particular are increasingly transferred from the organised to unorganised sectors. This casualisation process is easily facilitated by the fact that a substantial proportion (84.4%) of the women workers in India are illiterates.
### Table 3.15: Unemployment Rates in India

(Per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Usual status</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including sub-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sidiary workers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Weekly status</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Daily status</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The 1981 census makes a distinction between main and marginal workers. Marginal workers are those who have not worked for the major part of the preceding year. Women account for only 20.2 per cent of the total main workers in India. However, women account for 65 per cent of the marginal workers in rural areas and 63 per cent in urban areas.

This again shows the nature of women employment in India. Very often, it is remarked that women in India are not willing to enter the labour force and hence their participation rates are low. If the rate of unemployment among women were negligible or at least lower than that of men, one could have readily accepted
this argument. But there is also some truth in saying that voluntary unemployment among women may also reflect in these figures. In fact, unemployment should be related to many socio-economic factors.

However, the unemployment situation in India points to other significant aspects. As can be seen from Table 3.15, the rates of unemployment among women are consistently higher than that of men during all periods of the survey both in rural and urban areas. The unemployment rates by current daily status, viz., the percentage of unemployed person-days to all person-days offered or available for work, were 9.4 and 14.5 for males and females respectively in 1977-78. These have gone down to 8.8 and 12.0 in 1987-88. By 'Current' weekly status, the unemployment rate, viz., percentage of unemployed persons to all persons in the labour force, can be seen as declining throughout the seventies and eighties. The decline is sharper during 1987-89, particularly for the females. The trend by the usual status is a mixed one. Here, the unemployment rate increased during 1983-87 both for males and females. Subsequently, however, this rate has gone down significantly. Also, considering the total period from 1983 to 1989-90, one would argue that the usual status of unemployment rate has declined.
Figure 3.1

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FEMALE LABOURERS IN 1911-1991

Notes: 1 Data for 1941 was not tabulated on a full count basis due to pre-occupations in the Second World War.

The above figure 3.1 shows the percentage of total female labourers during 1911-1991. In the early stage of seventies, the female labour participation is low and in eighties and nineties, it is slightly in the upward trend.

More precisely, the Indian evidence shows that when a capitalist ideology of development is super-imposed on a
basically agrarian economy, it has adverse effects on the labour
in general and that on the women workers in particular. The
impact will be more severe than that of developed countries.
Consequently, India does not have a high female work
participation rate as in the case of developed countries. It has,
instead, a declining work participation rate as in the case of
developed countries during the early stages of industrialisation.
However, it does show trends of marginalisation of women into low
paying and low status jobs as in the case of developed countries.

To conclude, the Indian evidence shows a manifestation of
different forms of the process of marginalisation of women in the
process of development operating simultaneously. Women are
increasingly excluded from productive work; they are pushed into
and concentrated in marginal occupations and they are
increasingly casualised in terms of employment. All these are
relevant to agriculture, tiny, unorganised and decentralised
industrial units. It is not so in State, public and other
organised service sectors.
III. WOMEN LABOUR IN SHOE FACTORIES ABROAD AND INDIA

Evolution of the Leather and Foot-wear Industry

 Historical Background

The most ancient of civilisations were acquainted with leather. Documents relating to 3000 BC give an account of progress made at that time in the preparing of leather for warrior's sandals. Other historical sources show, for example, that the Chinese and the Egyptians knew the secret of alum tannage, whereas it was the Saracens who first introduced that product into Europe. At Rome and latter throughout the West, early use was made of Oak bark as a raw-material for tanning. Tanners were for a long time established in the country-side, beside rivers and near woods where they obtained their raw-material from the local livestock, their tanning product and water necessary for cleaning the skin of salt and dirt and restoring its original moisture and suppleness. In the middle ages, tanners and leather artisans in the west formed guilds and set themselves up chiefly in the suburbs, as the unpleasant smell of their raw-materials and the need to be established besides flowing water sets them apart from the residential quarters. Till the mid-nineteenth century, tanneries were very primitive establishments, where more often than not, the master-craftsman worked alone or with one colleague or some members of his family. Likewise, up to that period, shoe manufacture was carried out exclusively by craftsmen in simply equipped workshops.
The First World War, by dramatically increasing the needs of the armies, acted in many countries as a stimulus to mass production. Both shoes and other leather goods such as saddling, harnessing and items of military equipment were required by the armies.

Between the two world wars, the leather and shoe industry overcame the effects of the 1929 economic crisis and continued to develop in most countries, while mechanisation made steady headway. The emergence of a number of large international companies in the shoe industry also dates from this period. One of these, whose parent company was established in Czechoslovakia, set up several manufacturing subsidiaries, not only in European countries such as France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Switzerland, but also in certain developing countries notably in India. The United States shoe industry lost the lead it had over the European shoe industry before the 1914-1918 war, and about 1953 the United States controlled only 5 per cent of the world shoe trade. In contrast, Czechoslovakia had become the leading shoe exporting country, with over 30 per cent of the world shoe trade to its credit in 1935. The United Kingdom came second with 27 per cent of world shoe exports and the exports of other European countries accounted for some 30 per cent of the total world figure.57 India was a leading producer and exporter of

hides and skins. Having the largest number of cattle population, Indian Government has now prohibited the exportation of hides and skins. Only finished leather and leathers products are allowed to be exported. There are about 350 million cattle in India followed by USA which has less than 10 million. In addition, there are 63 million goats and 41 million sheeps. In India, modern vegetable tannage processes were introduced in 1867. Towards the end of the 19th century, several mechanised tanneries were established at Kanpur and Agra. The first tannery in Madras was established in 1903. At that time, several small tanneries, using the chrome tannage process, were set up at Calcutta. The two World Wars gave an added impetus to demand and caused a significant expansion of the tanning industry. The number of organised mechanised tanneries rose from 24 in 1956 to 33 in 1967. But there were also in addition to these large tanneries, some 750 small production units and an indeterminate number of village tanneries and handicraft workshops. In 1965, the average daily employment of the 436 tanneries covered by the Factory Act was 17,638 persons.\textsuperscript{58} Production of leather shoes has made considerable progress. In 1936, it was estimated that 4.3 million pairs were manufactured by some twenty mechanised enterprises and

a great number of small handicraft workshops. Demand for leather shoes rose steeply during the Second World War. Production went up from 88.5 million pairs in 1955-'56 to 102 million pairs in 1960-'61 and 140 million pairs in 1965-'66. 15 million pairs were made by 12 large enterprises, 42 million pairs by small undertakings and 83 million pairs in handicraft workshops. The Third Five year plan predicted a total production of 200 million pairs by 1970-'71.

As regards employment, it is worth noting that in Agra, the main shoe-manufacturing centre, some 40,000 persons were employed in this sector in some 3,000 small undertakings.

Leather footwear is a very old traditional industry of India. It was estimated that production has increased from 88 million pairs in 1950-'51 to 152 million pairs in 1965-'66, showing a growth rate of 3.8 per cent per annum. It was officially proposed to increase the production of leather footwear to 200 million pairs by 1970-71 against the production of 153 million pairs in 1965-66 requiring additional production of 47 million pairs or an increase of 5.4 per cent per annum, out of which 7 million pairs were proposed in the large scale sector

59. Ibid., p.58.
by establishing new units and 40 million pairs in small-scale and
cottage sector. 61

CHARACTERISTICS OF LABOUR FORCE

In the past few years, there has been a sharp reduction in
employment in most industrialised countries, resulting in
unemployment for tens of thousands of workers, particularly in
tanning and foot-wear. In the countries of the European Economic
Community, over 100,000 jobs were said to have disappeared in the
year 1979.

The characteristics of this labour force have changed little
since the end of the 1960s: women workers still constitute an
important percentage (60-70 per cent) of the total. In the
United States and other economically advanced countries, the
labour force in the foot-wear industry appears to be
characterised by a tendency towards aging. The lack of interest
shown by younger workers in the leather and foot-wear sector may
in certain cases explain the wage rates, which are lower than the
average wage in other industries. It may also be due to the
inadequacy or absence of training system. Although information
is lacking as regards the degree of skill required, there appears
to be a tendency towards down grading, particularly in the foot-

of India), p.40.
wear industry where it has been possible to automate many cutting and stitching operations. This trend has been accompanied by a movement in the opposite direction but far more limited in scope, to upgrade a number of skilled jobs such as those of specialized maintenance workers or control technicians.

There is not enough reliable information to make it possible to generalise as regards the characteristics of the labour force in developing countries, where the situation would appear to be very different because of the recent growth of certain jobs as a result of the opening of new factories, which has been accompanied by the disappearance of large number of craftsmen; in addition, the employment of women and the phenomenon of aging are less important factors. Indian women are peculiar and they cannot be compared with women in other developed countries. Social custom, tradition, culture, conservatism, superstition, illiteracy, parochialism, blind religious faith, economic status, etc., decide women's labour participation in India.

LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY

Efforts are made when the shoe is designed to arrange the production sequence to eliminate back tracking. The skill of the

operators and their versatility have an important effect on the success of production planning for a particular run. The work contents of the different operations are also taken into account so that these can be balanced as far as possible by standardisation. Such differences will inevitably cause leap-frogging to a greater or lesser extent if the work does not flow evenly from one operation to the next.

The closing department in modern shoe production is considered to be the most crucial part of the shoe-making process. 'Closing' is the sequence of operations in which the parts comprising the shoe uppers are put together. It involves painstaking and often time-consuming. In factory, the closing room has traditionally been the preserve of women. In the past, the closing operations were often situated away from the main factory and in many countries these operations are often still done in a semi-cottage industry or home working basis and in some countries are still a big factor in sub-contracting. Here in India, they are concentrated the labour-intensive operations which have attractive targets for modernisation and when they are changing from a smaller to a larger scale. As the closing department is notorious as a source of bottleneck, reasonable methods for improving in this department are desirable. Till recently, it has been the individual, usually female worker whose personal capacities have mastered the problems and her versatility has been counted on for rapid on the spot adjustments
of the difficulties as they arose. Such problems are accepted as characteristic of day-to-day production and the manufacturers have hitherto always adjusted to it. Shoe making firms had to make considerable investments in new technology, without which production costs and wage costs in particular tend to rise to the point where profits shrink. Innovations have tended to economise on labour requirements, but they have also permitted management to redesign the product and to reorganise the processes.63

A British study64 of Labour Productivity in the making, finishing and show rooms between 1950 and 1964 indicates that, taking into account all direct labour and supervisory time, productivity increases in the making room not related to innovations amounted to only 1 per cent for the entire 15 year period (i.e., less than 0.1 per cent per annum).

The foot-ware manufacturing sector has always had a wide range and variety of work organisations and production methods. Even to-day, they range from the very small-scale hand shoe maker and artisan to the large, mechanised mass producer.


Footwear manufacturing technology can be considered as having three levels: basic, intermediate, and advanced. Basic technology exists where manufacturing methods consist mainly of hand methods using simple tools and equipments. Intermediate technology is associated with mechanisation and the sub-division of working methods, where power assisted machinery controlled by the workers manual dexterity and skills is of paramount importance. Advanced technology utilises electronic and computerised methods and equipments and workers are required to have the necessary physical and intellectual skills to be able to control the operational mechanisms of machines, which are largely operated independently.
Figure 3.2

**ITALIAN FOOT WEAR INDUSTRIES**

**TYPICAL WORK FLOW IN A FOOT WEAR FACTORY: NINE SEGMENT**

Manufacture of foot-wear in shoe factories is usually organised in eight departments or rooms: cutting, closing, stock fitting, lasting, bottoming, finishing, treeing and packing.

Figure 3.3

FOOT MEASUREMENT

Last making

Design

Paper cutting

Pattern making

Upper cutting (clicking)

Upper preparation

Upper stitching

Closing

Lasting & making

Finishing

Shoe-room

Customer

Repair

Bottom cutting

Bottom preparation
- Sales
- Insoles
- Heels
- Stiffeners, etc.
However, whatever the level of technological development, the sequence and stages still follow the traditional pattern of foot measurement, last making, design, pattern cutting, pattern making, upper cutting and assembly, bottom cutting and preparation making, finishing and shoe room.66

Part time workers and a high percentage of female workers are a particular feature of foot-wear and leather goods manufacturing. This group of workers is mainly employed in upper assembly and stitching operations, which are some of the more skilled in the industry. The foot-wear and leather goods' sectors operate a wide range of machinery and equipments, as a result of increased mechanisation and the large number of suppliers. This variety of machinery and equipments makes it difficult to transfer semi-skilled operator skills, particularly in the lasting and making departments, e.g., sole attaching by sewing and adhesives demands different skills and training requirements.67


67. Ibid., p.35.
The main shortcomings of vocational training in the leather industries are also present. Most countries have no systematic training of manpower for the leather industries.68

WAGE FIXING PROCEDURES

In many countries, there is a statutory minimum-wage fixing procedure which applies to the leather and foot-wear industry as well. The minimum rates so arrived at are compulsory, and failure to pay them may expose an offending employer to the rigours of the law. Under systems such as these, wages in the leather and foot-wear industry are generally arrived at by freely negotiated, collective agreement between employers and workers' organisations, or between individual employers and representatives of his work people.

The purpose of the present system may be to protect the more vulnerable workers, such as the man or woman working at home. More generally, it may be to ensure that the workers enjoy certain minimum standards of living, compatible with their dignity as human beings, and in accordance with the standards prevailing in the country concerned. Such systems may be designed to eliminate undesirable under-cutting, which may occur when wages are abnormally low. The minimum wage fixing systems now in

force are of two kinds. Under the first, rates are fixed nationally, with suitable local or regional adjustments. Under the second, they are fixed on sector-wise basis. But experience shows that in practice, both systems tend to be applied in such a way as to protect labour as a whole. In India, minimum wage legislations are not generally followed and the poor women workers in shoe factories are prone to exploitation. They accept very low wages.

On the other hand, certain developed countries have no minimum wage-fixing machinery because the power of the unions is such that collective bargaining provides perfectly adequate protection for the workers' interests. Countries in which this holds good include Belgium, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

In Indian undertakings, in this branch of industry, workers were originally covered by the Minimum Wage Act of 1948. Further to this legislation, the governments of twelve States had, on 30 September 1967, laid down minimum wages for workers in tanneries and leather factories.69

Table 3.16 explains the rapid growth of foot-wears exports from India. The value of exports of foot-wears from India in 1986-87 was Rs.803.83 million and it increased to Rs.2042.96 million. There had been a very commendable increase in the value of foot-wear components export (Rs.2,406.92 million in 1986-87 and Rs.5,921.45 million in 1990-91). Export of unfinished leather is prohibited in our country from April 1990 and hence our exporters are exporting foot-wears and foot-wear components such as uppers and bottoms of shoes and other foot-wears.

MAGES FOR WOMAN WORKERS

In all probability, the problem of how to give effect to the principle of ‘equal pay for equal work’ is one of the most intractable problems relating to conditions of employment in the leather and foot-wear industry in view of the fact that the industry draws so very heavily on female labour.
In the leather producing sector of the developed countries, women represent but a small proportion of the total labour force, and are almost always employed on finishing. In these countries, women account for between 10 and 25 per cent of the labour employed in tanneries.

In the developing countries of Africa and Asia, there are still very large numbers of unemployed or under-employed male workers. A deliberate attempt has been made to absorb them in recruitment for this industry by offering only lower wages. But in the developed countries, considerable use is made of female labour in the foot-wear industry. The statistics show that of all manufacturing industries, it is like this only. The foot-wear industry and the clothing industry employ the highest percentages of women and girls. These percentages vary between 40 and 75 per cent among different countries.

But it is in the manufacture of leather goods that the proportion of women workers is the highest (60 to 80 per cent) in some industrialised countries.
### Table 3.17: India's Exports of Leather and Leather Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-tanned leathers</td>
<td>1523</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finished leathers</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>2268</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>7000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footwear composites</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>8000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footwear</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>2104</td>
<td>15000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather garments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5792</td>
<td>20000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather goods</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>4080</td>
<td>13000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td>1593</td>
<td>25530</td>
<td>63000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.18: India's Share in Global Import (1987)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>World import</th>
<th>India's export</th>
<th>% Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leather</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footwear components</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footwear</td>
<td>23625</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather garments</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather goods</td>
<td>9000</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46500</td>
<td>1245</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3.19: COMPARATIVE WAGE LEVELS IN LEATHER AND LEATHER PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

(Per Day)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>in US Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA/Germany</td>
<td>40 - 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>10 - 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>10 - 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2 - 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.17 shows the India's exports of leather and leather products during the years 1973, 1981 and 1991. The estimated figures for 1995 are also given. India's export in world's import in varied items of leather and leather goods in terms of value and percentage for 1987 are furnished in Table 3.18. The achievements are quiet remarkable. Table 3.19 explains about the comparative wage levels per day in leather and leather products industry in U.S. Dollars. The highest wage is in U.S.A., and Germany which is in the range of 40 - 50 Dollars per day. The lowest wages are in India that are in the range of 2 - 3 Dollars at the maximum. Herein lies the exploitation of labourers in the leather and leather products industry.
However, in spite of the progress achieved in some countries towards ensuring that wages for men and women are equal, the fact remains that in general women's wages are usually lower than those of men in the leather and foot-wear industry. It is by no means rare to find minimum wage scales, whether derived from official enactment or agreement or the fruit of custom and tradition, which provide only separate, and lower wage rates for women.

In India, the normal working week is consisting of 48 hours. There has been no reduction in working time since 1979. Industrial home work is not regulated or controlled; but industrial factory workers enjoy protection under the Minimum Wages Act. The Factories' Act 1948 prohibits the employment of children under 15 years; children between 15 and 18 years can be employed on obtaining a certificate of fitness. In the latter case, hours of work are restricted to 4 1/2 hours per day upto 16 years of age and also thereafter unless certified medically fit to work as an adult. The Indian Laws do not distinguish between workers with family responsibilities and others. However, one of the Central Organisations of employers has reported that wherever possible living quarters are provided to this category of workers on a priority basis. All these are only in paper and not practised strictly.
The Government of India observes that the resolutions and conclusions were brought to the notice of all State Governments and Union Territories and the employers' and workers' organisations for information and guidance. They are generally kept in view when framing legislative or other measures for the development of the leather and foot-wear industry.\(^70\)

**Indian Conditions**

Indian leather foot-wear industry, like many other industries is divided into three sectors - organised, small scale and cottage. But the importance of organised sector is much smaller in the foot-wear industry than in many others.

It was estimated that in 1965-66, out of total supplies of 153 million pairs, large scale sector accounted for 13.5 million pairs or 8.8 per cent, the remaining 91.2 per cent was supplied by small scale and cottage sector.\(^71\) In the organised sector, there were 12 units in 1965, of them one company alone accounted for 85 per cent of the total supplies of the large scale sector.


The average annual production for other 11 units worked out to 2.15 lakh pairs each or nearly 650 pairs per day.\footnote{A year of 330 working days has been assumed as is the case with many other industries. These are estimates of Fourth Plan Foot-wear Export Committee projected on labour force available for 1961.}

In the remaining 91 per cent supplies, the share of cottage sector is one third. The cottage sector is generally a ‘one man show’ with the help of his family. He uses old types of tools, lasts, etc., and has little means to buy equipments, raw materials or develop new designs. Because of small means, he has no advantage of bulk buying of materials. His productivity is also very low, estimated at 170 pairs per year against 337 pairs in the small scale sector and 1,057 pairs in the organised sector. Cottage type of organisation is almost non-existent in other foot-wear exporting countries. Even in India, for export purposes cottage sector is almost out of the picture, because of poor quality, high cost and problems of collection and organisation of exports involved.

Small scale sector roughly accounts for 30 per cent of foot-wear production. The size of the units differs widely, but generally they employ less than 20 persons to avoid labour laws such as Factories Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, Provident Fund Act and Employees Insurance Act. Even if some units produce 100
or 200 pairs per day, average production is arranged in a number of sheds and sometimes there is division of labour according to the technique or production adopted or type of foot-wear. Small scale sector employs machines for some purposes such as upper stitching, sole pressing, etc., but the techniques of production are generally outmoded and most units are non-mechanised. They do not have welding and cementing machines and, therefore, shoes are manufactured by hand, using nails and thread processes, discarded in advanced countries. Most of them have no means for adopting design development. They copy designs from foreign magazines or from the organised sector.

There exists also a small scale sector in some of the competing countries like Italy and Japan. But in these countries, even the small units are mechanised. They are small in size, but their processes of production are the same as that of bigger units. There is no such thing as hand operation which is prevalent in India. 73

Recent demand shows the need for structured foot-wear in which softness, lightness and flexibility result in a highly comfortable product. The challenge of innovation, higher productivity, quick changes, faster delivery, a free market and

competition have resulted in continuous changes in manufacturing methods. All these are major factors in influencing innovations and developments in competent manufacture. The small scale sector accounts for almost 85 per cent of production and for 65 per cent of exports of leather foot-wear, the organised sector accounts for the rest.\textsuperscript{74} Even assuming that there is a market in India for about a million pairs of shoes retailing at a minimum of Rs.400 a pair which includes a foreign exchange on this account would not exceed Rs.100 million per annum. This is a small price to pay for upgrading the technical abilities of foot-wear manufactures and preparing them for producing shoes for the export market that could well turn out to be as large as the market for foot-wear uppers.

India, with its large livestock population, can easily capture a major share of the world leather market. The share of India in the global market is only 2.5 per cent. Export of Indian leather and leather products touched a record Rs.3,214.71 crores during the year 1991-92, as against Rs.2,553.85 crores in the year before.\textsuperscript{75} The major markets for India’s leather products are Germany, USSR, USA, Italy and UK. Since 1985-86, exports to these markets have been progressively going up except for a

\textsuperscript{74} S.K.BHADRA, ‘Foot-wear Components and Accessories - Present Development in India’, (Leather Age Journal, August 1990).

\textsuperscript{75} Indian Express, July 17, 1992.
slight decline the case of the former USSR in the last seven years. In 1990-91, Germany bought Rs. 630 crore worth of leather products followed by the Soviet Union (Rs. 315 crore), USA (Rs. 314 crores), Italy (Rs. 310 crore) and UK (Rs. 309 crore). There are approximately 1,080 tanneries in India, mostly in the small and medium-scale sectors, concentrated predominantly in three regions. Tamil Nadu leads with 60 per cent of the installed capacity, followed by West Bengal with 20 per cent and Uttar Pradesh and the North Eastern region with 15 per cent, while the rest is scattered throughout the country.76

A large market for such products will appear as soon as footwear manufactures get used to using standardised lasts and components initially imported. In future, the sheer size of the increased demand for good quality foot-wears will force the manufacturers in India to use good basic raw materials and to get mass production facilities themselves. This in turn will make the Indian Footwear Industry even more competitive in the world market.