The organised sector provides socio economic securi tiesto working class and other benefits along with formal rational relations between the employers and the employees, but the unorganised sector lacks of these relations and benefits. In fact the unorganised sector is outsidethe reach of public regulations through labour laws. Informal sector includes both the rural and the urban sections and are characterised by the features of ease of entry, reliance on indigenous sources, family ownership of enterprises, small scale of operation, labour intensive etc. It includes workers in household production working directly or under some form of putting system, small workshops and factories. Some people want to say that the evolution of formal sector is arising out of excessive controls in the formal sector and is attributed to policies of the government. Entry in the formal sector is controlled. The emergence of the informal economies cannot be explained without the reference to the formal policies of the government. Informal sector is the outcome of government controls.

**National Productivity Council** (1985) has stated that “in India this unorganised or informal sector cuts across various crafts or industry, conglomerates like cottage and household industries, *khadi* and village industries, handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture etc, set up all over the country in rural, semi urban environments.”

**The ILO and UNDP Employer Mission to Kenya** (1972) mentioned the following characteristics of the informal sectors:

1. Case of entry of new enterprise.
(2) Family ownership.

(3) Small size of operation.

(4) Unregulated and competitive market.

(5) Labour intensive technology.

(6) Informally acquired skills of workers through the job training,

(7) No state support.

(8) Deplorable working condition and wages.

The National Commission on Labour has mentioned the following characteristics of informal sectors:

(1) Small size of establishment with low investment per employed person.

(2) Casual nature of employment.

(3) Ignorance and illiteracy.

(4) Scattered nature of establishment.

(5) Superior strength of employers operating singly and in combination.

According to the definition of the Central Statistical Office, the organised sector comprises units registered under the Factories Act of 1948 and covers those using power and employing ten or more workers as well as units not using power but employing 20 or more workers. The organised sector is governed by
legislations such as Minimum Wages Act, Labour Welfare Legislations, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act.

Thirty years ago, the International Labour Organisation coined the term “informal sector” to describe the activities of the working poor. Today it is expanding in both developing and industrialised countries. Informal workers are unprotected by labour legislations. It is always unrecognised and unorganised. We can say that informal economy is closely associated with poverty. The informal sector operates at a low level of organisation, with little or no division between labour and capitals as factors of production and on a small scale. As per the 15th ICLS the informal sector is defined in terms of an “enterprise”.

It is a known fact that with the growth of industrialisation and urbanisation, people migrate to the urban areas in search of employment. Because in the rural areas there is absence of proper employment. Moreover, due to the lack of education and unawareness, people do not know the methods of family planning. So, rural people always possess more than three children. With the low income they cannot run their family. In the urban areas, there are various sources of livelihood. So, uneducated and poor people are generally employed in informal sectors like beedi making, brick industry, weaving, tailoring, sale of fish and construction activities.

**Advantages of the informal sectors:**

Informal sectors have some kinds of advantages----
(1) Informal sector activities may help in maintaining the competitiveness and flexibility of production.

(2) Informal sector activities may bring growth if supported and encouraged.

(3) It offers lower prices for goods and services.

(4) It generates substantial personal income.

(5) Informal sectors are characterised by very low costs of labour.

(6) Informal sector provides employment to many families through which the families can meet their basic needs and requirements. It generates income to the families.

(7) In the informal sector workers can enjoy their freedom and opportunities as the workers can manage their own household activities without creating any conflict with their household activities.

(8) Here low level of money can be invested. For this reason any one can start any business with a low level of money. Thus, they can become economically self dependent.

(9) Any one can start informal sector business.

(10) By engaging in informal sector business any one supplements family income.
Disadvantages of the Informal Sectors:

Informalsectorissufferingfrom many problems. The different kinds of disadvantages of the informal sectors are as follows-----

(1) In the informal sector no so much development strategy and growth is expected.

(2) Informal sector is very much competitive as its existence induces an unfair competition for those involved in the national and international sector.

(3) As no such developed technological techniques is used in the informal sector so it may increase the technological gap between the developed countries and other industrialised countries.

(4) Informal sector is characterised by low level of productivity and low incomes.

(5) The workers are not enjoying any social benefits and security. The women workers are not enjoying any kind of maternity benefits and other social securities. So, during and after few weeks of delivery the women have to come to the work place.

Though there are some disadvantages and advantages of the informal sectors but we cannot ignore the existence and significance of the informal sectors. That who sees informal sectors negatively regards informal sectors as
negligible with a residual and marginal nature. The positive opinion considers informal sectors as dynamic phenomenon which might have a significant impact on the economy.

Informal activities have their own reasons and motives of existence and growth. The low rate of industrialisation and productivity, and, the presence of surplus labour are listed as principal reasons why a dualistic system exist in the cities of the third world. Due to the low technological and old economic mechanism these informal sectors are increasing rapidly in these developing countries. Earlier also a considerable amount of work has been done to analyse the informal sector phenomenon. Many researchers have been done to analyse the importance, role, problems of the informal sectors. Several methods have been used to deal with it. In my opinion, many methods should be used to study it thoroughly and to find out new insights in near future. We are still a long way from really understanding this phenomenon. Many empirical and through study is needed to understand this phenomenon.

**Women and Informal Sector:**

Women occupy an important place in the evolution of human society. “The historical evidence confirms that during the Vedic age, women enjoyed considerable freedom and equal opportunities with men”. (Thaper, 1975: P, 12). At that period, women were highly respected and considered as partners in economic activities. During the feudal period, women lost their respect and were
looked down upon as play thing of men. The marriages of the women were arranged by their parents. In choosing their own life partners the women had nothing to say. Hindu culture preached for the complete subordination of the wife to husband. Men were the heads of the household and the wives were used just like private properties. At any time he could use his wife. If we see then we will find that the status of Hindu women was similar to that of shudras. Women always have to live a life of subordination under male persons. The women were denied equal opportunities, employment, rights, freedom etc. She never got the right of property. She was deprived of property right, educational right and economic right and political right. A married woman was completely excluded from enjoying the right to property. If no male descendant was there, then the right of the deceased would come to be inherited even by his brothers or other male relatives but not by his own daughters. Only the male could enjoy these rights. Thus gender and marriage based discrimination was very much existed which created inequality in the society. A woman is always considered inferior to man. The position or status of women deteriorated in “epic” and “smrita” period. Marriage at a tender age had affected the education of the women. During the Raj Put period, the marriageable age of the women was lowered. Widow Remarriage was strictly restricted. Among the “kshatriyas” the “sati system” gained popularity through which the male dominated society destroyed the dreams, hopes and aspirations of the women by burning with her dead husband. Women could not raise her voice in decision making process. In case of marriage, she could not
take any decision. She did not have any voice in the settlement of her marriage.” (Sultania, 1994: P.8) Purdah system among the Muslim gained popularity. She had to sacrifice all her dreams for the sake of her family. She was deprived of education. The marriage age was further lowered. This purdah system brought about a tremendous degradation in the status of women. However during the nineteenth century, the British Government took bold steps in enacting number of laws concerning the liberation of women. In this case, we must mention the contribution of the reform movements initiated by enlightened intellectuals and reformers. Expansion of education facilities and the rise of democratic concepts like freedom, equality, and liberty have drawn women out from the seclusion of home. Kelin said, “The new industrial organisation made women an important part of its manpower resource” (Devi, 1982). “It can be said that the prosperity of economy lies in the upliftment of and betterment of its women. If the society has to develop it has to think about the development of all its members, men as well as women. It is more than apparent now that women cannot be relegated into a secondary position, they can no longer be rated as second class citizens and their problems compartmentalized and isolated. The popular impression seems to be that women today are taking a lesser share of the world’s work than they have ever done before that this is a new departure, the outcome of the factory system. As a matter of fact the share taken by women in the work of the world has neither altered in amount, nor even in its intensity but only in its character.” (Sultania, 1994: pp, 8-9). A society can develop only
through the development of both the sexes. Women are always regarded as second class citizen. But now this concept should be changed. Now women have made considerable progress everywhere. A state will be called civilised if it provides equal environment to both men and women. Women should be given equal status with men in every walk of life. Women should be economically secure. Work provides her economic security. For her survival she must work. Culturally and traditionally women were not allowed to work outside home for wages. Society thought that women should not go outside the home as it was not safe for her. Even during the first half of the twentieth century, women’s participation in economic activities was very less. But today significant changes are observed in the economic participation of women. They are working in large numbers in different occupations. They are involved both in organised and unorganised sectors. However, in many cases, women remain in disadvantage position in competing with men for the scarcity of job opportunities. Where there is scarcity of jobs, always preference is given to men. For some restrictions, in case of appointing women, employers always prefer to male persons. More than one third of our population are workers. The work participation rate for females has been showing an increasing trend. Economic difficulties of her family have compelled her to go outside in search of job and work. Her earning constitutes a major share of the family’s income. Economic setting determines women’s status. Not only economic setting but
social structure, cultural norms are important determinants of women’s role and their position in society.

Informal sector involves a large number of women. The actual economic participation of women in developing countries is much higher than reported through the official statistical system. Women from low income household participate in the workforce to a greater extent. These informal workers are scattered, under paid, exploited and invisible. Now the women’s participation in the workforce has been increasing. Women informal workers engage themselves in various informal sectors. They are working under extreme low wages. Through their participation in workforce the women tries to make contribution to their family income. Informal sector gives employment to the needy people who are eager and ready to do laborious work for making some money. Children, handicapped and old people are also found in this sector. But in the informal sector for some restrictions, children below certain age cannot be employed. Legislations lay down strict conditions for the appointment of women. Women labourers who cannot obtain employment in organised sectors are employed in informal sectors as labourers, domestic servants, casual workers in mills, agricultural workers, and construction labourers. Both skilled and unskilled labourers are engaged in different beedi, brick making industries.

In informal sectors, women from poorer sections of the society participate. Inadequate opportunities to work, casual nature of work, exploitation, lack of education, lack of skill, lack of access to better technologies, employment, poor
remuneration, lack of proper working facilities are some of the common features of informal sectors. Majority of informal women workers and their families are landless. So, they engage themselves in agricultural fields, look after animals, look after household activities and engage in different other informal sectors. They also participate in construction work, engage in factories, work in mines and engage in trade and vending. Moreover, the women have to take shoulder the burden of household activities like the burden of the children, preparing the food, collection of firewood and water, cleaning their home. During the rainy season, they have to face problems. Because during that period they cannot go out to work especially in the brick industries, agricultural activities and construction works. Agricultural poverty and lack of work have forced the males to migrate to the urban areas. This migration of the male members has directly affected the women. Because then they have to take the whole responsibilities of the family. She has to perform a dual role -- the role of earner and the role of home worker. So, besides during their daily household activities they have to earn money. So, availability of any other women member in the family can reduce the burden of the female workers. Women basically participate in the work force to make extra money so that she can properly manage or run her family. Because sometimes it becomes very difficult to manage their family with the little income of their husband. Women should be economically secure. Work provides her economic security. For her survival she must work. Culturally and traditionally women were not allowed to work outside home for wages. Society
thought that women should not go outside the home as it was not safe for her. Even during the first half of the twentieth century, women’s participation in economic activities was very less. But today significant changes are observed in case of women’s economic participation. They are working in large numbers in different occupations. They are involved both in organised and unorganised sectors.

**UNDP’s Human Development Report 1994** says, “Despite all over technological breakthrough we still live in a world where a fifth of the developing world’s population goes hungry every night, a quarter lacks access to even basic necessities like safe drinking water and a third lives in a state of despair at such a margin of human existence that world fails to describe it”. Women are always marginalised in the struggle for survival. The development process has put emphasis on women. There has been a decline in women’s employment in agriculture, mining, industry and other related works due to some prohibitions imposed on the employment of women. Moreover employers have to give extra concern to the women labourers. The decline in the employment of women workers may be due to the ban imposed by the Government on the employment of women for underground work, mechanical work, and night shift works. Informal women workers employment is mainly unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. The high rate of illiteracy among women, lack of awareness of their rights, lack of professional training and skills and existing social attitudes towards their employment are some of the reasons of not attaining highest level and rank in the
work force. Lack of permanency has forced them to change and shift their job from one unskilled job to another.

Nearly 90 percent of women labourers in the beedifactories are unskilled. A large number of women workers in the beedi factories are temporarily appointed. The study reveals that beedifactories are dominated by the women workers. No male workers were found in the study. In the beedifactory, the women are not working in shift. When they get time they prepare the beedis. There is no time bound for them to prepare the beedis. After finishing all the household activities they engage themselves in making the beedis. But in the brick industries the women are employed in loading the finished bricks in the vehicles, to carry the sand, clay water etc. However the working and living conditions are very poor. Moreover, in the informal sectors though the workers have to work in the most inhuman conditions, they are deprived of some essential benefits like maternity benefit, separate toilets and child care services. Employers always get opportunity to exploit the weak bargaining power of the women workers. So, unlike the male labourers, the women labourers are getting low wages. Though there are legislative provisions for regulating the working condition of women, ensuring provision of protecting them from health hazards and economic exploitation, but unfortunately non implementation of these legislations have not benefitted the women workers. It is true that labour laws are exclusively applicable to organised sectors. Because in the beedi and brick factories, employers do not adhere to such laws. Women provide economic
support to their household mainly by working at their homes or by their farms. However, the growing economic needs have forced the women to support the male members of their family for supplementing the family income.

The Indian Constitution guarantees certain rights and privileges to women through Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. Article 14 ensures right to equality to all men and women. Article 15 prohibits any discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste and sex. Article 15(3) contains an enabling provision for the state to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women. Article 39(e) ensures equal pay for equal work and article 42 directs the state to make provisions for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. Most of the women in rural India are employed in small informal sectors. But they are depended on contractors or middle men for their employment. The women never get due recognition and regard for their work.

Informal sector always creates competition. Women in the informal sector always have to live under constant threat of losing their jobs. So, there is no permanency of their work. At any moment they may be terminated. Women in the informal sector have to work at home or outside home. In the patriarchal society, decisions and judgements always go in favour of male. So, the patriarchal culture and value pushes women to a position of subordination. Discrimination is found not only at home but also in the labour market. The imposition of wages through which women are always forced to enjoy a subordinate position in the
labour market. Informal sector contributes more than 90 percent of work force. But this informal sector always remains uncovered by protective legislations. Consequently, the informal workers are deprived of benefits which are enjoyed by the workers of the organised sectors. The informal workers have to suffer many problems. So, now it is the duty of the Government to recognise various problems of informal workers.

More than 96 percent of the total working women are involved in the informal sectors. Women are engaged in low skilled jobs and they are always provided lower remuneration. Now due to rapid urbanisation process modern industries have been set up in the urban places. These modern industries in towns and cities give a death blow to the rural household industry. Modern developed technology has shifted the industries from rural to urban centres. So, this change creates problems for the women. Because for some women it is not easy to go to the urban areas in search of jobs. Employment pattern of women in urban areas is such that first women workers constitute a very small proportion of total number of women, the majority is engaged in low prestige occupation. (Joshi, 1995: p, 4).

Rural economy has forced the poor peasants and women to enter the informal sectors. For the burden of the family, women and children seek work which can meet their subsistence. However, most of them have no skills and are unable to face the tough competition in the labour market. Moreover, women have to play the traditional role as housewives. For the fear of losing jobs, women
accept cheap payment. So, for the employer, the availability of such cheap labour has been a boon.

**Beedi Industry:**

No one can say exactly when the tobacco was first introduced in India. According to one report, tobacco was first routed into India in medieval times when it was presented to Emperor Akbar as a medicine for some illness by some European doctors. (ILO Report 2001). Another report says that the Portuguese introduced the tobacco in India in the 17th century. In the 19th and 20th century, India was the second largest producer of tobacco. Currently India is the 3rd largest tobacco producer in the world. Madhya Pradesh is the largest producer of *tendu* leaves in India. In 1902 in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh beedi manufacturing began. After Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh is the second largest producer of *tendu* leaves. In 1930 Gujarat started cultivating tobacco. Recently Gujarat has occupied a very important role in producing tobacco. In 1920 the Beedi industry became very much popular. During that time, the Swadeshi Movement and Nationalist Movement had popularised the use of beedis.

Tobacco is a legal consumer product. It has a big significance in the economy of the country. There are almost a lakh registered tobacco farmers and a huge number which are not registered. There are over 3000 tobacco manufacturing facilities all over India. Around 0.25% of India’s cultivated land is used for tobacco production. Indian tobacco and tobacco products earn a huge
annual sum of about Rs. 10271 crore to the national exchequer by the way of excise revenue and Rs 2022 crore (2006-2007) by the way of foreign exchange. India is exporting tobacco today to 80 nations, more than any country of the world. The top leading companies are the Kanhaiya Tobacco Company, Sapna Enterprises, Sudarshan Tobacco and the ITC. The ITC is the leading company in the Indian tobacco market holding a 72/ share of the market value. Presently, the Indian tobacco industry is providing livelihood to more than 25 million people in the country. Besides the adults, large number of children are engaged in the tobacco industry. Prolonged exposure to tobacco and tobacco products harms the children up to 10 times more than adults. The farmers are low paid. (Borgohain, Assam Tribune: P,4 April 24, 2015).

The method of production of beedi differs from state to state. The production system involves the following process------

(1) Workers are employed in the factory under the direct supervision of the owner.

(2) Owners issue raw materials to the workers who roll beedis at homes and bring back the finished products to the owner’s premises.

(3) After giving the finished products to the employers a strict supervision is done on the quality of the output.

(4) In the marketing process the workers are not involved.
Moreover, there are three work systems in the beedi manufacturing process. First, the direct system, secondly the contract system, the third one is sale purchase system. In the first category, the workers are directly take the raw materials from the employers and returned the finished products. Under the second category, manufacturers hire the contractors to give work to the workers. In the sale purchase system, manufacturers sell the raw materials to the workers and buy back the finished products from them.

Beedi industry is a highly labour intensive industry. This industry employs unskilled labourers. Men are equally employed in the beedi manufacturing work when it is done within the factory premises. As it shifted out to the homes, more women are involved. Men are involved in labelling, marketing and selling the products. Beedi sector is dominated by the Muslims and among Hindus it is dominated by the other backward and scheduled castes. Beedi sector also involves a large number of children. Actually the owners of beedi factories do not formally employ children to roll beedis. However, the piece rate system has encouraged the women workers to involve their children in rolling beedis. The children help in rolling beedis such as cutting the *tendu* leaves, tying the threads for rolling the beedis.

Indian tobacco cultivation began in the late 17th century. Beedis were first created when tobacco workers left over tobacco and rolled it in leaves. The commercial Indian beedi industry dates from the 1920s and it saw a rapid growth during the 1930s. By the middle of the 20th century beedi manufacturing had
grown into a highly competitive. This stage of commercial production at the height of the beedi’s popularity saw the creation of many new brands as well as beedi factories. Factory-based beedi production declined as a result of increased regulations during the 1940s, 50s and 60s and beedi making became a cottage industry with home-based women workforce predominately employed only in the beedi rolling. Beedi smoking tends to be associated with a lower social standing and these are inexpensive only 2-8 rupees for a pack. Over 300 million Indians are employed in the beedi factories. Women workers roll an average of 500 to 1000 beedis per day.

Beedi industry can be included in the home-based works. The earliest form of home working existed in India in the *jajmani* system during 1500-1750 BC. (Prasad and et. all, 1985: P, 2). In the beedi industry, production was originally carried in *karkhanas* or workshops where workers remained busy at rolling beedis from morning till late night. (Ibid. P.5). During and after the British period, the *Royal Commission on Labour* (1929-31) and the *Labour Investigating Committee* (1944) had brought out the extremepoor working conditions of the beedi workers. So, the *Factory Act* (1948) was extended to the beedi industry. Due to this Factory Act (1948) the employers were compelled to provide healthy working conditions, benefits, welfare schemes to the beedi workers in *karkhanas* or workshops. Gradually this has shifted this factory-based production to home-based production. Work in *karkhanas* by the male workers declined considerably and it was left entirely to women as men
found more remunerative work elsewhere. (Ibid, P.5). The state compelled to formulate various legislations to regulate the working conditions due to the increased unionism among the working class. This gave a serious blow to the capitalist class. The capitalist class resorted to decompose the production process. This effort to decompose the production process had completely broken up the workers as a group. So, till now there is no well form of unionism among the beedi workers. They find it difficult to stand against the exploitative behaviour of the workers as a group. Therefore, till now the working condition and financial position of the beedi workers remain poor.

The beedi industry is included in the putting out system. This industry is spread in many parts of India. There are some reasons why this home based work is existing and is so widespread in the Indian context. These reasons are-

**Cultural:** For cultural reason many women are restricted from going out of their homes. So, working at the homes is the only way of earning money. This is also beneficial as the raw materials are delivered at home and finished goods products are collected from the homes. The wages are also paid on their homes. As the raw materials and delivery of finished products were at the homes of the workers homes so the women find it interesting to involve this type of work.

**Socio economic:** For the increasing prices of every essential commodity it becomes very difficult to run the families with the earnings of the male members. In many cases the male’s income is inadequate, so women are compelled to look for employment. They are willing to work for whatever wages are offered.
Other reasons may be that there is not so much competition among the beedi workers to secure better payment through bargaining. Because they are satisfied whatever they are paid by their employers. They are very much scattered so they do not get the opportunity to organise a union for protecting their rights.

The lack of fixed work hours also incites women to involve in the home-based work. They can prepare the beedis whenever they get time. So, they get a full freedom to do their work without any conflict with their domestic responsibilities. Not having a specific time and date for completing the work is another reason for engaging in the home-based work.

In the putting out system the middlemen, contractor, agent plays an important role. The production is organised by the middlemen, contractor, and the agents. They are the links between the workers and employers. The beedi workers work in their own homes and are paid on a piece rate basis. Here the production is characterised by low technology and these workers work under highly exploitative conditions. In the putting out system the production process is divided into 4 stages namely- recruitment of the workers, transformation of raw materials into final product, measurement of the output and finally the delivery of the finishing products. Interestingly in each of this stage the workers have to be exploited in the hands of the employers. The main person in the production process is the middle man. He is not a permanent employee. The middle man is generally the person who is from the same locality of the workers. The middle man is paid a commission for collecting the workers. For bringing 20 workers the
middleman get rupees 40. The middleman therefore tries to adopt different ways for increasing their commission.

The majority of the workers in the beedi industry are women. One of the reasons for getting work is to maintain a good relationship with the employers. Women workers always try to appeasing the middle man. Actually the workers are at the mercy of the middleman. The workers are not binding to a particular middleman. They have the full freedom to engage themselves under any middleman. Generally in case of the beedi industry the women workers are seemed to be engaged under more than one middle man.

In the beedi industry sometimes the middleman supplies the raw materials to the workers’ homes. But generally the workers collect the raw materials from the employer’s premises. The production completely depends on the quality of the raw materials. The women workers who are employing in the beedi industry are working in their own homes. There is no unity among them. They work for different agents. Every worker tries to get better wages from the employers. So, sometimes the atmosphere of jealousy and competition arises among the workers.

The method of distribution of raw materials creates problems for the workers. In his stage also the employers and middle man exploit the workers. While distributing tendu leaves and tobacco for beedi rolling there are no checks on the quality of the leaves. But in the bundles of tendu leaves there may be some defective leaves. Defective leaves in the bundles mean the shortage of leaf for rolling beedis. For rolling the beedis the practice of wetting the tobacco is done.
After drying the tobacco the weight becomes lesser and in such situation the workers cannot make the required number of beedis. Therefore they are subjected to wage cuts. So this is a way of exploitation over the workers by the employers.

The transformation of the raw materials into the finished product is done by the workers in their own homes. In the beedi rolling, the pre rolling process are wetting and cleaning and cutting of the *tendu* leaves in the required size. (Prasad *et al*, 1985: P, 35). The transformation of the raw materials into finished product, the involvement of the family members is required. Because the work has to complete in a specific time. Thus, by giving work to only one worker, the employers benefit from the labour of many. But these workers always remain invisible.

After completing the work, the products are delivered to employer’s premises. The beedi rolling process is not very highly skilled. So, here the work is turned every day. The middleman or employers apply a thorough check after the finished products are delivered. But interestingly there was no thorough check on the quality of the raw materials, or it can be said that the quality of raw materials is not thoroughly scrutinised while distributing to workers. So in this stage also employers or middlemen exploit the workers. The rejected beedis are retained by the branch. For the rejected beedis the employers cut the cost from the wage of the workers. *Tendu* leaves make excellent wrappers and the success of the beedis depend on the quality of the *tendu* leaves. These *tendu* leaves are collected from Andhara Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Orissa,
Maharashtra etc. Madhya Pradesh accounts for the largest share of production about 65 percent in the country. *Tendu* leaves are collected in the summer and made into bundles, the leaves are dried in the sun for 3 to 6 days before being used as wrappers. *Tendu* leaves are also known as *kendu*. It is scientifically known as *diosyros melannoylon*. This is a forest product. Beedis are indigenous cigarettes smoked by the lower middle class and the poor sections of the society. Rolling tobacco in particular leaf called the *tendu* leaf makes these cigarettes. In India, rolling beedis is an industry that employs more than 5 million workers most of them are women. The beedis are made in almost every district of India. The beedi industry does not require great capital outlay. A striking feature is the large proportion of women and children are employed here. Beedi work is one of the many types of informal and unprotected labour performed by the women in India. The work is poorly paid. So, there is a never ending cycle of poverty. Beedi is a home based industry and 95 percent of its workers are women. The entire process of beedi manufacturing is by human hands and no mechanical operation is involved. Through the **Beedi and Cigar Workers Welfare Fund Act, the Beedi and Cigar Workers Act** the interest of the beedi workers are tried to protect.

The final step is the delivery of the finished products to the employer’s premises. The beedi products are highly competitive in the market. Because there are different brands of beedis. So, the employers are very much careful in case of the finished products. Each employer tries to attract the customers. So, the final processing undergoes at the employer’s premises under his direction or
supervision. After the final step, finished products are supervised by the employers; these are labelled, and packed in cartons and sent to the market.

In the beedi making process there is no direct supervision of the workers. Employers are all in all. In each stage the employers try to control the workers. There are three stages, they are - distribution of raw materials, the measurement of the output and the payment of the wages. The wages in the beedi making process is piece rated and is very low. The wages start from 40 to 60 for rolling 1000 beedis. But the wages differ from employer to employer. The employers can control the workers in case of quantity of the product as full wages are paid only if they are satisfied with the output of the work. Thus, they compel the workers to be responsible for their own work. For the low quality of the product the workers are subjected to wage cuts. So, in case of beedi rolling process wage cuts are imposed on the workers for bad quality of work. For example, 94 to 120 beedis are rejected for every thousand beedis rolled. For earning extra money they work for longer hours as much as they can physically. In the beedi factory the women workers work for more than 5 hours. Of course, when they get time by finishing all the household activities they sit for preparing the beedis. Production process in the beedi factory is carried in a very informal way. The records of the actual number of the workers are never available. The actual amount of wages is also not available. Always the number of the workers is shown in less numbers. Beedi industry has been brought under the Minimum Wages Act and the home workers are recognised as workers under the Beedi and
Cigar (Conditions of Employment) Act 1966. (Prasad.1985: p,50). In the beedi factory, the raw materials, tendu leaves and thread are distributed to the workers and the rolled beedis are returned to the employer the next day. The average amount of tobacco amounts to 2057 gms. And 4982 Gms of tendu leaves are distributed to the workers. 800 Gms of tendu and 240 gms of tobacco are required for rolling 1000 beedis. About 8500 beedis can be rolled with 2057 gms of tobacco and only 6200 beedis can be rolled with 4982 gms of tendu leaves.

The beedi workers have to work for long hours to earn money. They are living in congested localities. The houses are too small and poorly ventilated in it. Their houses do not usually have drainage or drinking water facilities. Working in such atmosphere, the workers become weak physically. After a few years of work in such conditions many health related problems are seen and they are not able to keep up their pace. There is a drastic reduction in their speed. So in situation they cannot take up other skilled jobs and so sometimes their status reduces to the status of the helpers. The incidence of tuberculosis, asthma, nervous disorder, poor eyesight etc have been found from the beedi workers. For long hours of sitting they are faced by the problem of back pain. Their physical contact with tobacco and tendu leaves has also contributed to the outbreak of different types of physical disorder. Despite these types of physical hazards these workers are bound to work without any medical aid. In many cases the workers are not able to manage to visit a medical centre as the visiting cost of the doctors
is too high for them. Employers are not responsible to extend any health benefits to the workers.

In the beedi and brick industries the women workers are not able to enjoy any kind of social security benefits. The workers do not have any paid leave, annual vacation. The women workers do not get any maternity and always compel to return to the work place even after few weeks of delivery. They do not get any retirement benefits. They are not given any incentives and bonus during the festival period. During the festival period if they do not come to the work place then they are not given wages. Moreover the workers are not permanent. They do not enjoy the regularity of work. At any moment they can be dismissed from their work. So the workers are hired and fired on the availability and pressure of the work. The owners are not really independent. They always have to depend on the demand of the markets. Their survival is depended on the market situation or the orders received and are controlled by the whole sale traders who supply the raw materials. Its market is local.

In both the beedi and brick industries the employers employ middle man to engage the workers. Middle man is just like a tool in his hands. He is a link between the employer and the worker. The brick industry is totally seasonal. During the rainy season it remains close. However as the workers are exploited both in the hands of the employers and the middle man so the provision of the middle man should be eliminated and should provide adequate employment to the workers.
In the beedi factory the wages are paid by the employers after getting the finished products. Women prepare the beedis at their own home. The lack of fixed hours of work is an advantage for them. They can prepare the beedis whenever they get time. So, this gives them freedom which enables them to engage them in beedi preparing work without any conflict with their domestic responsibilities. Sometimes, some employers do not give them specific date and day for completing their work, so, this is an advantage for them.

The women workers are concentrated only in one part of the production process. They are not aware of the whole production process. They do not have sufficient capital to invest in their own. They do not have the sufficient knowledge of marketing. Moreover, the women workers do not want to take the responsibility of collecting the raw materials, sorting large quantities of raw materials, processing, packing and marketing them. Consequently, the women workers lack the knowledge of seeking higher wages through bargaining. Here there is no union among the workers. The workers work in isolation from each other. So, labour control becomes easy. The workers are not organised. Collective action is not possible. So, employers can pay them very low wages. The workers are not covered under any legislation. Therefore employers do not feel it essential to provide any form of social security benefits. The employers continually attempt to exploit the situation and derive the maximum profits for him at the cost of the workers.

In the beedi factories a large number of children are employed. Illiteracy, ignorance and large size of family have encouraged the children to start beedi
work. Parents are completely ignorant about labour laws, minimum wages, child labour act, 1986 and other social security benefits. Moreover, poor economic condition has forced the parents to engage their children into beedi work. Beedi work does not require any formal training and can be carried out at any time. Beedirolling industries are dominated by the women. Children are easily influenced by their mothers. Mothers can easily, sub consciously or consciously involve children in beedi making process.

The beedi industry has several instances of the system of bonded labour in many parts of the country particularly in Bihar, Tamil Nadu. Bonded labour is the system where a child /family goes to the owner who is given a particular sum of money and carries outwork in the premises of the owner according to his wishes in conditions of servitude till the money is repaid. (Dube. Yand Mahandoss G, 2013). The union government has enacted Bonded Child Labour Act in 1976. In the beedi industry children are exploited and ill-treated. Both part time and full time child workers are engaged in the beedi industry. As beedi industry is completely a home based industry, so women and children roll beedis in their home own homes. Trade unions who are engaged in upholding the rights of the workers find it difficult to mobilize women and dissuade the children from entering or continuing their work. (Reported by S.K Das, 2000)

**Structure of the Beedi Industry:**

Beedi manufacturing is labour intensive. The industry produces between 750 billion and 1.2 trillion beedi sticks per year. There are about 300 major
brands of beedis, there are thousands of small scale manufacturers. Production of beedis takes place into two main forms one is factory and the other is the contractual system. In the factory system, manufacturing is carried out within the factory premises. Manufacturing of beedis is done under the direct supervision of managers /employers . However, beedi rolling is home based production. Only 10/ of beedi manufacturing takes place within the factory premises. In the second category i.e under the contractual system, employers, middlemen or contractors supplies the raw materials to the workers. The workers roll the beedis in their own homes and return the finished products to the employer’s premises. According to the report of the Ministry of Labour there are about 4.2 - 4.4 million workers including both part time and full time workers in the beedi industry. The economic condition of the beedi workers is very poor. Most of them belong to the poor landless households. Muslim women are dominant in the beedi industry. Children are also employed in the beedi industry. The wage rate of the beedi workers is very low. They are given a very little amount of wages with which they cannot lead good life. They are economically exploited by the employers /contractors/middlemen.

In 2005 and 2006 almost 4.16 million workers were employed in the beedi industry. Of this, 3.42 million workers were engaged as full time workers while 0.74 million workers were engaged as part time workers. The beedi sector contributed 0.9/ of the employment .At the state level, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh employ the highest number of beedi workers. The annual report of the
Ministry of Labour revealed that Madhya Pradesh was found to employ the highest number of beedi workers at 7,50,000 while Andhra Pradesh by employing 6,25,000 people. Women and children are the most vulnerable group of workers in the beedi industry. In West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra the minimum wage laws were not obeyed by any beedi industry.

Tobacco occupies a very important place in the Indian economy. India is currently the world’s second largest producer of tobacco next to China and the fourth largest exporter of tobacco in the world. Tobacco production concentrates in the states like Maharashtra, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. The beedi industry is included in the category of cottage industry. Beedi industry is concentrated in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tripura, and Delhi. The beedi rolling activities are done basically in the rural and semi urban areas.

Beedi industry is dominated by the women and children. This fact is proved by the different surveys and studies. In Murshidabad, of 3 lakh home based workers, females and minors (both male and female) constituted 65 percent and 15 percent respectively. (Bagchi and Mukhopadhay, 1996). In West Bengal 60 percent of the labour force in beedi industry is women. “In Bombay, 90 percent of the workforce is women in the beedi industry. In Kerala’s Cooperative, Kerala Dinesh Beedi Worker’s Cooperative Society, out of 42,000 workers 18,000 are women.” (Mohandas and Kumar, 1992: P, 24). “The beedi industry is
dominated by the workers belongs to the backward castes especially the other backward castes (OBCs) and the Muslims. Most of the studies and findings indicate the predominance of Muslims women in the beedi industry. The participation of Scheduled Castes is high in certain centres of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh.” (Prasad, 1985: PP, 79-84).

Table 3.1

Breakup of Beedi Workers

Religion and Caste Wise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribes</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table provides a religion and caste wise break up of beedi workers. The participation of the scheduled caste is high in certain centres of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. (Prasad and Prasad, 1985: P, 51).

Table 3.2

Estimated Share of Beedi Receipts in Beedi-Producing States of India:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total beedi receipt (INR Millions)</th>
<th>Beedi sales as % of unorganized Manufacturing Sector</th>
<th>Beedi sales as % of all Manufacturing Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>7320</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Rural Share</td>
<td>Urban Share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>5953</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>3487</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>3013</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>2696</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>2434</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>2215</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>2118</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daman &amp; Diu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>31609</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*National Sample Survey.*
All manufacturing sector contributions include organized sector contributions as well. These were obtained from Annual Survey of Industries (2005–2006). Percentage estimates reported for the all India level include unorganized manufacturing industry and organized manufacturing industry economic activities in non-beedi-producing states.

Table 3.3

Estimated Share of Bidi Employment in Beedi Producing States:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>No of full time workers</th>
<th>No. Of Part time workers</th>
<th>Total No. of Workers</th>
<th>Beedi employment as % of unorganised manufacturing Sector</th>
<th>Ft Beedi employment as % of total employment in all sectors</th>
<th>Beedi employment as % of Total employment in all sectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>707163</td>
<td>279418</td>
<td>986581</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>512505</td>
<td>190982</td>
<td>703487</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar</td>
<td>343418</td>
<td>76895</td>
<td>420313</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradesh</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Rural Population</td>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>UDEF</td>
<td>NDEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>393466</td>
<td>20285</td>
<td>413751</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>357625</td>
<td>12769</td>
<td>370421</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>286640</td>
<td>35060</td>
<td>321700</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>285059</td>
<td>28383</td>
<td>313442</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>279238</td>
<td>18400</td>
<td>297638</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>91945</td>
<td>42279</td>
<td>134224</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>58064</td>
<td>10894</td>
<td>68958</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>40286</td>
<td>6365</td>
<td>46651</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>33472</td>
<td>10321</td>
<td>43793</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>8988</td>
<td>2745</td>
<td>11733</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>11523</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>11631</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Min. Wage</td>
<td>Provident Fund</td>
<td>Risk Premium</td>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>Other Benefits</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>4574</td>
<td>2333</td>
<td>6907</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>3594</td>
<td>5371</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daman &amp; Diu</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3415790</td>
<td>740918</td>
<td>4156708</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Sample Survey.

**Union and Government Initiatives for Protecting the Beedi Workers:**

Union Government has taken many steps to improve the working and living conditions of the workers of the beedi factories. Besides the Minimum Wage Act and the Provident Fund Act, the government has brought another two major laws for beedi sector workers. These are as follows-

**Beddi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act 1966:**
This act has saidto regularise the conditions of serviceof the beedi workers. **Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966:**

In 1966 this Act was enacted by the central government. Andhra Pradesh was the first stateto enforce this Act. The salient features of this act are as follows---

2. Annual renewal of licenses.
3. Appointment of authorities as chief Inspector and Inspector under this act.
4. Powers to be given to the Inspectors.
5. Maintenance of standards of cleanliness.
6. Proper lighting and ventilation.
7. Avoidance of overcrowding at work place at work place.
8. Supply of wholesome drinking water.
9. Conservancy and washing facilities.
10. Maintenance of crèches where more than 50 women workers are originally employed.
11. First aid facilities at work site.
12. Maintenance of canteen facilities where more than 250 persons are employed.
13. Regulation of working hours so that no employee required to work more than 9 hours a day or 48 hours in a week except on payment of
overtimewages provided that the total work does not exceed 10 hours a day or 54 hours in a week.

(14) Overtime wages fixed at twice the rate of ordinary work.

(15) Rest interval of half an hour after every 5 hours.

(16) Weekly rest except for vetting of beedi or tobacco leaves on a day which shall be specified by the employers.

(17) Prohibition of employment of children.

(18) No women or young persons to be required to work in any industrial premises except between 6 am to 7 pm.

(19) Every employee shall be allowed leave with wages prescribed in a calendar year.

(20) No employee who has worked for a period of 6 months or more can be dismissed except for a reasonable cause and after giving one month notice or wages in lieu of such notice.

(21) Penalties for offences under this act.

Many of the provisions such as cleanliness, ventilation, drinking water, crèches, latrines, and working hours are mainly for the factory workers. This act is silent on the medical, educational and recreational facilities for the workers. This act also does not say about the social security facilities for the beddi workers.
**Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976:**

This Act has said about the welfare schemes for the beedi workers and their families. This Act is important for the welfare of the beedi sector workers. Through this Act, welfare schemes are brought in the field of health, education, maternity benefits, housing etc. It is administered through the Labour Welfare Organisation, headed by Director General, Labour Welfare, and Ministry of Labour. Almost 3.7 million workers are covered under this Act (ILO, 2001). The medical benefits under this Act, can be provided to the workers who have been issued identity cards. There are housing schemes that have been launched by the Union Government for the beedi workers.

**Legal protection for the beedi workers:**

The legal protection for the benefits of the workers in the beedi sector is as follows-

(1) Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966

(2) The Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976

(3) The Beedi Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1976

(4) The Minimum Wages Act, 1948

(5) The Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952

(6) The Employers State Insurance Act, 1948

(7) Workmen’s Compensation Act, 1923
(8) Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972
(9) The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986
(10) Children Pledging of Labour Act, 1933
(11) Bonded Labour System (Abolition Act) 1976

**Minimum Wages Act:**

This act allows the government to fix and revise the minimum wage rate for beedi rolling.

1. It provides for the setting up Advisory Boards at the State level and at the central level.
2. It provides for payment of minimum rate of wages without any deduction except as may be authorised within such time and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed.
3. It provides for fixing hours for a normal working day.
4. It provides for overtime wages.
5. It provides for maintenance of registers and records.
6. It provides for appointment of Inspectors and laid down their functions.
7. It provides for the manner of dealing with claims.
8. It provides for penalties for offences.

**Employees State Insurance Act, 1948:**
This Act applies to factories. The ESI scheme is extended to new areas only after the state government who are statutorily responsible for providing medical care to the beneficiaries, create necessary infrastructure such as dispensaries/clinics and arrange hospital facilities in areas with viable labour concentration. (Das, 2000: P, 46).

**Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1952:**

This act has been extended to the beedi workers in 1977.

Other laws applicable to the beedi workers are as follows-

1. Payment of Wages Act 1936
2. Industrial Employment Act 1948
3. Maternity Benefit Act 1961
4. Payment of Gratuity Act 1972

In 2004 the central government had brought a scheme known as Integrated Housing Scheme for beedi workers. In 2007 the Revised Integrated Housing Scheme was introduced by the central government for the beedi workers. According to this scheme the government will encourage the beedi workers in the
construction of homes by providing a subsidy of RS. 40,000 and rest through assistance in the form of loan from financial institutions like HUDCO. In 2013 the Medical Insurance Scheme under Rashtriya Swasthya Yojana was brought by the government. This medical insurance will cover the beedi workers with a medical insurance cover of RS 30000 and additional mount incurred would be replaced by the welfare commissioner to the concerned hospital.(The Hindu, 2011).

The Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008:

This Act has been enacted by the central government. Under this Act, the leather workers, beedi workers, fishermen and fisher women, plantation labourers, handloom weavers, are included. As per the provisions of this Act, a National Social Security Board has been constituted for the formulation of different social security schemes like life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits, old age protection and other benefits. (Report of the Ministry of Labour & Employment).

The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY):

This was launched on 2007 to provide smart card based cashless health insurance cover of RS.30,000/ to BPL families in the unorganised sector. As on 29.02.2012, the RSBY is being implemented in 24 states. Recently, RSBY has been extended to building and other construction workers registered under the

In 1996 the central government has enacted another important Act for the construction workers namely the Building and other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1996.

Bonded Labour System (Abolition Act) 1976:

This Act protects individuals, especially children from being forced into labour when typically, and parents cannot repay a loan.

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986:

In 1986 this act was enacted by the central government. This act prohibits the employment of children under the age of 14. It has restricted the participation of children in beedi rolling process and limits the time of work. This act made provision that the children may work to six hours between 8am and 7pm. National Child Labour Project was brought by the central government. Under this project 76 projects have been set up in different regions to rehabilitate the child labour.

Beedi Workers Welfare Cess (Amendment) Act, 1976:
Under the cess collected through excise duty of manufactured beedis, workers receive benefits from a government fund. The cess is revised by central government periodically. It was Rs. 2 per 1000 beedis June 2000. This cess applies only to registered companies manufacturing more than 2 million beedis per year.

**Major issues relating to the beedi workers:**

(1) The system of providing identity cards to the beedi workers should be made compulsory for the employers. The systematic identification of the beedi workers is important if the benefits under the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund are to be availed.

(2) There should be a provision for providing uniform national minimum wages for the workers in the beedi industry. State governments are the main authority for notifying the minimum wages. However, differences exist in minimum wage rates from states to states.

(3) Issues of poor quality and inadequate, insufficient raw materials by the employers, middlemen, agents affect the worker’s earning.

(4) Majority of the beedi workers lacked the awareness about the provisions of different Welfare Policies and Acts brought by the government. Moreover majority of the beedi workers are illiterate, poor and from backward castes. So, there is a need for education and training programmes for the beedi workers.
(5) The beedi rollers are facing different kinds of health related problems. Actually they develop different kinds of serious diseases. They are not provided health care and medical facilities by their employers. So, there is a need to expand the health service centre under the BWWF and primary health care centres for regular health check up and providing medical facilities to the beedi workers.

(6) There is a low level of organisation and union among the beedi workers. So, among them a high dependency on the middlemen is observed. The middlemen and employers take the opportunity of ignorance of the illiterate beedi workers.

(7) So, there is a need for alternative employment and income opportunities for the beedi workers.

(8) Most of the beedi workers are from low economic background family and majority of them are uneducated. They do not understand the value of their rights and the provisions of policies brought by the government for their upliftment. So, the employers get it very easy to exploit them economically. The employers do not find it important to make them understand the value of the different provisions of the welfare policies. The employers are not concern about the education of the beedi workers.

**Beedi Factory in Goalpara District:**
There are four *Beedi* factories in Goalpara district. These are *Gopal Dey Patnai Bedi Company, Madhu Bedi Company, Nasib Bedi Company, Munna Bedi Company* etc. Among all these *bedi* companies *Gopal Dey Patnai Bedi Company* factory is the oldest factories in Goalpara district. Gopal Dey was the main person behind the establishment of this company. It was established during the British period. At first almost 1000 labourers both men and female were engaged in this company. But later due to the Government rules only the women workers were engaged. It had ensured employment to a number of women and contributed to the economic progress of the area. Till 1935 there was no beedi company in Goalpara district. Gopal Dey had established this beedi company in 1937. He had brought labourers from different parts of Assam. He had established this beedi company at his own premises. He ran the unit as a cottage industry. The labourers manufactured the beedis at his house and he sold them in the local market. During that time people began to seek employment in this beedi company because this provided regular employment. But in the later period for the lack of good management this beedi factory suffered a lot and now due to the lack of good management this beedi company remained completely closed.

Next Beedi Company is *Madhu Beedi Company*. Madhusudhan Das was the founder of this company. At first he was a beedilabourer in *Gopal Dey Patnai Beedi Company*. Later he came out from this company and kept busy himself in the formation of *Madhu Beedi Company*. At first, he brought beedis from the Gopal Dey Patnai Beedi Company and sold them to the shopkeepers. But after
the closing down of this company, he began to prepare the beedis at his own home and established this beedi company. It was established in 1978. He expanded his business providing employment to a lot of poor people. Slowly the name and fame of his beedi company spread to the other parts of the region. The beedis manufactured there were exported to the other parts of Goalpara region. After his death, his son Uttam Das had taken the responsibility of this factory. Now Uttam Das has been running this factory since 1992. Now only 150 women labourers are involving in this beedi company.

*Nasir Beedi Company* was established by Nurislam Nasir in Karbala area of Goalpara district. Almost 200 labourers are involved in this factory. Lots of women workers are engaged in this beedi company.

*Munna beedi Company* was established in 2008 by Munna Islam in Forest Gate area of Goalpara district. More than 100 labourers are engaged in this company.

The payment of the labours is not same in all these factories. In the *Gopal Dey Patnai beedi* factory the labourers get 38 rupees, in Madhu bedi factory they get 65 rupees, in *Nasib beediCompany* they get 36 rupees and in the *Munna beedi Company* the workers get 40 rupees. They are not provided any basic facilities and not given any extra payments during the festive seasons. The workers take the raw materials from their employer’s premises and back their finished works every after one day. The cost of one *beedi* packet is 6.30 rupees.
One bundle consists of 20 packets. There are 500 beedis in one bundle and one packet consists of 25 beedis. The cost of one beedi is 26 paisa. 6.2 gram of tobacco is required for one beedi packet. The cost of one kg tobacco is 180 to 200 rupees and cost of one kg tendu leaves is 200 rupees. Beedicompany employers bring the tendu leaves from Cohbehar, Jalpaiguri, and Siliguri. The quality of tendu leaves of Orissa is good. One less of thread is required for making 700 beedis. The employers pay 6 rupees tax for 1000 bedis. They provides ID card to the beedi worker

**Problems and Challenges to the Beedi Industry:**

The beedi industries are facing different kindsof problems. The law wage ratefor the beedi sector workers, poor livingand poor working conditionfor the workers are the main problems for the beedi sector workers. The lack of organisationfor uniting the workers is another challenge for the beedi sector workers. A greatchallenge on the beedi industry is created by the great cigarette companies. The initiatives of the various state governments on minimising the impact of tobaccoand various anti tobacco legislations. Competition between beedi brands is another challenge for the beedi industry. (Report by SK Das, 2000).

The Union and various state governmentshave launched tobacco free initiatives in the form of legislation. This has also created a great threat to the existence of beedi industry. Most of the beedi factories face competition from
informal unregistered beedi manufacturers who avoid labour laws. Moreover, today’s youth prefer cigarette to beedis.

All the workers in the beedi industry should be issued identity cards. The identity card should have a photo of the worker on it. If the worker does not issue such a card they can be fined up to rupees 2000. Most of the beedi workers are either semi literate or illiterate. They are completely ignorant of different kinds of benefits that are done to them. They are ignorant about the different Acts.

The beedi industry is also under pressure due to the prohibition of smoking of beedis in the public places. The central government has made restriction on the consumption of beedis in the public places and impose fine if anyone finds smoke beedis and cigarettes in the public places.

Million of workers are engaged in tobacco related industry. If the government completely ban the tobacco products then this will create problems for the tobacco cultivators and other workers engaged in the tobacco related industries. It will infringe the right to livelihood of these workers. Majority of the formal beedi industries face competition from informal unregistered beedi industries. This formal unregistered beedi industries avoid labour laws and produce unbranded beedis that escape payment of excise duties. The market for the beedis has been declined due to the rising incomes among the youths. This rising incomes among the people has led to a shift from beedi smoking to cigarettes.
Brick Industry:

A brick is a block made of clay burnt in a kiln. From ancient time till today it is used in different construction sectors. Bricks have gained prominence and come to the forefront with various styles and shape and size. Burnt bricks were used in ancient Indian civilization. Bricks were used in the Indus valley civilization. Bricks may be dried in the sun, but are usually baked in a kiln. The cost relatively less, resists dampness and heat and can last longer than stone. The colour varies according to the clay used. Some bricks are made of special fireclays for use in fireplaces or ovens. Others may be made of glass or they may be textured or glazed.

Making the bricks:

The process of making the bricks are given-

(1) Material procurement- First the clay is mined and stored in the open space for making the clay soft.

(2) Tempering- Then this clay is mixed with water. Mixing is done manually with hands and feet.

(3) Moulding---A lump of mix is taken, rolled in sand and slapped in to the mould. Initially moulds were made of wood, now metal moulds are used. Sand is used so that bricks do not stick in the mould.
(4) Drying- Then the bricks are dried in the sun. After two days they are ready to be burnt.

(4) Firing-Then the bricks are arranged in the kiln. Inside the kiln the woods and coal are fired. The quality of the bricks depends on the firing process. Experience holder brick makers know the process of firing. Actually the firing process depends on the knowledge and experience of the brick makers.

(6) Sorting---After the bricks are fired then these are sorted in according to colour. Colour is an indication of level of burning. If the bricks are not properly burnt then these are once again burnt in the next kiln.

Brick kilns can be divided into two categories. Chimney bhata and bangla bhata. Bangla bhatas are temporary. Bangla bhata is also known as clamp. Clamp kilns or bangla bhatas are located in the rural areas. The chimneys bhatas are also known as Bull’s Trench Kiln (BTK) are generally located near urban areas and more densely populated rural areas. Coal and wood are the most important fuels used for both clamp and BTK. It is estimated that the brick industry consumes about 15 million tons of coal annually.

Brick making industry is a traditional industry. It is estimated that more than 100,000 kilns produce about 80 to 100 billion bricks every year. In the late 19th century the Bull’s Trench Kilns was introduced. This industry is completely seasonal and it employs more than 3 million people. The mud bricks are the most popular bricks in India. It is the most economical. To make this brick, clay, sand,
water are required. The raw clay and sand are mixed. Then the mixture is again mixed with water. The clay is then pressed into steel moulds with a hydraulic press. The shaped clay is then fired. Then the fired bricks are cutted in to pieces.

The length of the brick is about twice its width about eight inches (200 mm) or slightly more. The bricks are small enough so it can be lifted easily. Small bricks are economical. Raw materials for brick making are available cheaply. Because sand, water and sand are available.

Brick is the major construction material used in India. The Indian brick industry is an unorganised with majority of the brick kiln units located as clusters in rural and peri urban areas. Brick industry consumes more than 20 million tonnes of coal as well as huge quantity of biomass fuels. The oldest discovered bricks originally made from shaped mud and dating to before 7500 B.C were found at Tell Aswad then later in the upper Tigris region and in South east Anatolia. The first sun dried bricks were made in Mesopotamia. In the ancient Egyptians and Indus valley civilisation the bricks were used. The Romans made use of fired bricks. During the renaissance brick walls were unpopular. It was only the mid 18th century that visible brick walls were recognised. Bricks were already known to the Native Americans of pre-Columbian civilisation. The great pyramids of the Olmec, Maya and other groups were made of brick faced with stone. The Indian brick industry is an informal and unorganised sector but this brick industry is also unprotected by laws. Brick production depends almost entirely on migrant workers half of whom are women. The workers engaged into clay brick production
are exposed to dust, sand and water. For working continuously the workers suffer from different types of diseases. Moreover in this industry the women workers do not enjoy any kind of social security, welfare benefits. They are exposed to serious exploitation. India is the second largest brick producer in the world with an annual production of 100 billion bricks. As the economic condition of the brick workers is very poor, so most of them are working against a debt owed to the owner of the kiln. The families loss their freedom. The practice of paying a lump sum to individuals and families at the beginning of the season is prevalent in the brick industries. In some cases advance is paid to the workers. The amount of advance ranged from 5000 to 6000 rupees. As many of the workers remain idle during the rainy season so they have to ask for loan. In case of illness they have to beg the owners for fresh loans. Now a day as the brick industry is expanding so fast, the labourers from far and away places are recruited. The brick labourers are under paid. So, lots of brick workers have gone to other professions. The brick kilns are established in dry lands. During the rainy season these brick industries cannot run. The labourers do not enjoy any social security. They have no unions or legislations to protect their rights. The more bricks they make the more money they get. But they leave in poor house structure. There is no proper drinking water facility for the brick labourers. They do not enjoy any proper sanitation facility. There is no proper medical facility for them. Brick kilns workers are subjected to various types of diseases. Problems like asthma, back pain, chronic bronchitis, and decreased lung function are the most dangerous
diseases of the brick kilns workers. Dust, sand, mud are the most essential raw materials for making the bricks and these are the most harmful for the health of the workers. The brick workers are exposed to the sun for long hours. So, much health related diseases may break out.

For the upliftment of the informal sector the government should work hard. Special efforts should be done to ensure minimum wages to all sections of unorganised labour. The government should give education and training facilities for the informal labour at nominal cost in government institutions. To ensure job security there should be employment guarantee scheme covering all labour. The government should try to eliminate all kinds of difficulties facing by the informal sector. Positive behaviour and attitude on the part of the government is very essential. The corruption of the bureaucrats should be stopped. The government should made measures for the benefit of the unorganised labour. The government should bring different legislations for the upliftment and protection of the informal sector. The ILO has already paid its attention to informal or unorganised sector. Thus, the coordinated efforts will be needed to raise the status and position of the unorganised labour in India.

Laws relating to Women Workers:

There are two directives applicable to the women – one is the provision for equal pay for equal work to both men and women in article 39{(d)} and the second is the human conditions of work and maternity relief for women in article 42. The Directive Principles of State Policy has also emphasised on socio
economic principles. All Indian laws get sanction from our Indian constitution and these laws guarantee justice, equality and liberty of status and of opportunity for all citizens. Article 14 mentions that “the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. Article 15(1) and 16(2) ban discrimination on the ground of sexes. Article 15(3) provides that the state shall make special provisions for women. A large number of laws are made for the protection of rights of the women workers. Factories Act 1948 restricts women’s employment in dangerous and hazardous tasks. Section 34{2} empowers the state government to make rules for that purposes. Section 66 {1} and {6} of this Act mentions that the women should be made to work between 6 a.m to 7 p.m. The Mines Act, 1952 and the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 also mention about the special provisions relating to hours of work, maternity and other benefits. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 is applicable to families employed in plantations. In this Act there is provision regarding health, safety and welfare of the workers. The Mines Act, 1952 is applicable to a person’s employed in the mines. In this Act special provision is also made for welfare of women relating to health, welfare and hours of work in the mines. There are two laws which are totally gender specific. These are Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and Maternity Benefits Act, 1961. The Equal Remuneration Act was passed to prevent discrimination against women in recruitment and pay. This Act restricts discriminations on the ground of sex against women in the matter of employment, training, promotion and so on. If the
provisions of the Act are violated then there is a mechanism provided under this Act to punish the employers. “Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 is applicable to women employed in the mine, plantation, construction, plantation. This Act is made for maternity benefits in case of pregnancy, abortion, miscarriages, medical treatment etc. In case of child birth, a woman employee is entitled to six weeks paid leave after delivery and in case of illness due to child birth on production of medical certificate, another one month of paid leave.” (Bajpai, 1996: P, 130).

“The Maternity Benefit Act is not applicable to establishments employing less than ten persons and to the factories and industrial establishments covered by the Employees State Insurance Act, 1948. The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948 excludes employees whose wages exceed Rs.2500/- per month. In case of employees covered under the Employees State Insurance Act, the maternity benefit is paid by the Employees State Insurance Corporation.” (Ibid P, 130)

But in the informal sectors this Act is missing. Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions and Employment) Act, Beedi Workers Welfare Act was enacted in 1966. This Act is applicable to the beedi industries. This Act provides provision for the welfare schemes of the workers. Under this Act, the employment of women in the night shifts is prohibited. International Labour Organisation Conventions has prohibited the night work in case of manual woman workers. Overtime work for women in factories is prohibited. Minimum Wages Act was enacted in 1948. The main objective of this act is to give protection to workers in small and scattered industries. It also provides minimum wages for the workers.
The Inter State Migrant Workmen Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service Act, 1979 regulates the conditions of service of migrant workers relating to hours of work, wages and welfare. The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970 wants to regulate the employment of contract labour in certain establishments. **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1968** is applicable to all children below the age of 14. This Act makes restriction in the employment of children in certain tasks and to regulate their conditions of work in certain other employment.

**Employees State Insurance Act, 1948** provides certain cash benefits to employees in case of sickness, maternity, employment, injury and medical facilities in kind.

In 1978 Ministry of Labour formulated centrally **Sponsored Plan Scheme** for rehabilitation of Bonded Labour. **National Child Labour Project** was brought by the central government. Under this project 76 projects have been set up in different regions to rehabilitate the child labour. The states in which the **National Child Labour Project** has made considerable progress are Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Orissa.

The women workers in the informal sectors are not governed by the **minimum wages act, factories act, and contract labour (regulation and abolition) act**. The workers in the informal sectors are not provided security of tenure, gratuity, pension and paid leave. Here the employers always make profits on the labour of the poor labourers. Their illiteracy, poor economic condition has forced them to remain in silent condition in case of exploitation done over them.
by their employers. The enforcement machinery should be strong. The problems of the working women should be understood. The Maternity Benefit Act should be extended to the informal sector workers. The Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) has been made attempts, to mobilise and organise the self employed and home based workers in the informal sectors.

It is true that mere laws cannot bring social changes in the society. Laws are the main branches through which the changes in the society can be brought. India is dominated by the patriarchal feeling. The principle of integrating women into all phases of the development process and recognising the importance of women’s contribution in the family, society and country has now widely accepted throughout the world. Now attempts should be made for the empowerment of women in the workplace and should be tried to establish a gender equal society. Laws are the main basis through which empowerment of the women can be established through conferring rights to the women workers. This can be done by strengthening the implementation and enforcement machinery and facilitating access to legal services. Another method of empowering the women is by legal literacy. Women can be made aware of their rights through the legal literacy. This can stop injustice towards the women in the workplace.

The National Commission for Women Act, 1990 has created the National Commission for Women. The Commission has recommendatory functions such as:
1) To make in its report’s recommendations for the effective implementation of safeguards provided for women under the constitution and the laws.

2) To review the provisions of the constitution and laws affecting women and recommend amendments thereto.

3) To make periodical reports to the government on any matter pertaining to women and in particular regarding various difficulties under which women toil.

It is the duty of the **National Commission for Women** to observe whether the beneficial legislations are properly honoured or not. It is the duty of the executives for overseeing the implementation of these laws. Otherwise all these laws told so highly of remains only on the papers. Majority of the workers in the informal sectors get hardly any benefits made by the provisions of the laws. Women get less money for their work. They also do not get any medical and other benefits from the employers. So, women have faced double disadvantages for these discriminations. Moreover the women have to take the burden of reproduction and domestic work. Besides these problems in most of the factories the woman workers are denied proper working conditions. This has resulted in a complex situation which is reflected in poor health for women. Women in the informal sectors do not get any recognition as economically active individuals. Powerlessness and disregard condition of women makes them to suffer from different kinds of injustices.
Beedi and brick industries have occupied an important place in the informal economy. Like other sectors of unorganised labour such as agriculture, forest, fish, home based workers and so on female worker’s participation in the beedi and brick industry is of vital importance. Both these industries employ a large number of workers in our country. In the brick industry, the production unit is mobile which a unique feature of this industry is. So, the workers in the brick industries move from one site to another site after completion of the work. In the brick industry, work is seasonal, temporary, and casual in nature, the employment relations between the employer and the employees are not permanent and all relationships remain contractual. The bulk of brick workers come from rural areas as migrant workers are illiterate and poor and work under low working conditions. They are scattered so it is very difficult to organise them. In this industry, there are different categories of labourers such as skilled, unskilled semi skilled, majority of the labour force are rural migrants. These workers migrate to the urban areas in search of work and they get job they work under exploitative conditions. They have no security of employment and get very low wages. They are illiterate and have no medical, housing and other welfare facilities. They are completely ignorant of their rights. The social and economic oppression has developed in them a sense of apathy and fatalistic attitude to life.

The woman workers constitute a sizable place in the brick industry. The task performs by them are-

Carrying water, sand for the preparation of bricks.
Smoothening of surface before mixture is given in the fire.

Carrying the prepared bricks and cutting them into piece.

Loading the bricks.

These women workers have to shift from one place to another and bear the burden of house work, childcare. So, compare to her male partner her works are much more. She has to perform double roles. Many little girls are employed in this industry. They are regarded as “helpers” at an early age. The kind of work they do is strenuous and repetitive with no upward mobility. So, their presence is always neglected in the brick industry. Their designation is just like an “assistant”. In this industry there is no scope of promotion for the woman workers. There is upward mobility for the male workers. But the woman workers remain same as helpers. In the brick industry, the employment of the women is restricted by the pregnancy and old age. Old women are not recruited in this industry as they cannot work. Woman workers have to leave their job at the time of delivery as they do not get any maternity benefits and leave. So, there is no special security for the woman workers in the brick industry. Not only the maternity benefits the woman workers in the brick industry do not get any medical care, holiday leave, paid leave, social security benefits and so on. Social service security such as provident fund and so on is also not provided.

In the brick industry there should be special provision for the minimum wages and equal remuneration to both men and women. There should be a law for prohibiting the employment of child in the brick industry. There should be
provision for gratuity, provident fund, maternity benefit, paid leave, medical care and such welfare measures. There should be provision for payment of compensation to workers injured at work. According to the Equal Remuneration Act, the workers should be given equal amount of payment for the similar kind of work. But in reality the woman workers are not getting their rights. Male workers always get more payment than the female workers.

**Brick industry in Goalpara District:**

Hindusthan Brick Kiln is run by Monowar Hussain. He constructed the brick kiln in 1990. Twenty five women workers and 10 male labourers are employed in this brick kiln. They are all poor, uneducated Muslim and tribal people. This brick kiln is situated at Balbola area of Goalpara district. Here the total value of production is five lakhs. He exports the bricks in the nearby areas of Goalpara district. During the rainy season this brick kiln remains close. So, during that time the kiln workers are stumbled off. All the labourers are paid labourers.

In general, the total production of brick kiln is 1 lakh to 2 lakh. Apart from labour charges and transportation fees the owners of the brick kilns receive profit. There is a keen competition of the brick kiln owners. So there arises a heavy demand for labourers. Male, female and children are worked in this brick kiln.

Another brick kiln namely the Shrestha Brick Company is situated in Dudhnoi area of Goalpara district. It was established in 2011. Rahit Roy is the
owner of this brick kiln. This brick kiln is managed solely by him. The production cost of this brick kiln is three lakhs. He solely takes care of purchasing the raw materials and managing the labourers. He has possessed a truck for the transportation of the finished bricks to different parts of Goalpara district. He purchases the fuel wood from the local area. Altogether 25 workers are engaged in this brick kiln.

The Ma brick kiln was established in 1995 by Babul Das and his two sons. Now this brick kiln is marching towards successful growth. Altogether 30 workers are involved in this brick kiln. On special occasion the workers are given some incentives. Apart from this brick kiln there are many brick kilns situated on the outskirts of the locality. It gives livelihood to the poor people. Now it is a profitable business. Many educated unemployed youths are engaging themselves in this business.

In 2008, Chandra Das a resident of Krishnai area of Goalpara district had established Purabi Brick kiln with 30 workers, both male and female. At present, he is working in a private school at Krishnai area. The profit comes from his brick industry gives him extra money. The production cost of this brick kiln is 2 lakhs. He has possessed two trucks for the transportation of the finished bricks. He collects the raw materials are from the local area.