Review of Literature

While surveying the literature on unorganised labour one finds that numerous studies have been done from different angles by social scientists at macro, regional, district and micro level based on primary as well as secondary sources of data. Several economic journals are full of research papers on unorganised workers. Several seminars have been conducted and several books have been published. It is not possible to give summary of all such studies due to paucity of resources. Therefore, a brief summary of selected papers is being given below:

K. Murli Manohar\(^1\) (1976) through a study on women construction workers of Warangal town indicated that though the informal sector offered varied job opportunities, women preferred to undertake certain specified work. Wage differentiation, turn-over of equal work and more submissive nature of women were important attraction for the employers to employ women in the construction field. The study found that there was no guarantee for permanent employment due to a number of factors such as volume and intensity of construction work, migration trend, contractor’s choice, wage rates and manipulation of employees. He further observed that there are two types of women workers engaged in construction industry i.e. contract labour and casual labour. The road and building construction workers were invariably casual/daily wage workers. Casual workers were recruited on temporary basis while the contract labour was semi-permanent.

Committee of Secretaries of Six States\(^2\) (1981) including Bihar, Kerala, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Pondicherry, introduced a new concept of ‘General Minimum Wage’, which was defined as the lowest wage essential to meet the bare minimum needs of workers and their families. The general minimum wage envisaged the statutory bottom level below which wage rate in any scheduled employment is not legally permitted to fall; but according to the Committee there should be no bar on fixing of minimum wage above the general minimum wage in cases where concerned employment with a better financial health might be capable of paying higher wages.

Ela Bhatt\(^3\) (1988) recommended enlargement of the definition of work done by women to include all paid and unpaid activities performed within the home or outside as an employee or on own account. According to her, the single most important intervention towards moving the economic status of poor women working in informal sector of the
economy would be to devise strategies, which would enhance their ownership and control over productive assets. She noted the fragrant violation of statutory provisions regarding payment of wages, safety regulations, and provision of housing and medical facilities, accident compensation and so on. She felt the need for more stringent observance of the existing labour laws and the introduction of deterrent penalty clauses. She recommended:

i. Simplification of judicial procedures, particularly to enable unorganised workers to obtain legal redress without undue harassment.

ii. Introduction of a system of registration of domestic workers in order to prevent their exploitation.

iii. The setting up of an Equal Opportunities Commission under a Central Law and also that such a commission should have wide powers of investigation, direction, advice and monitoring.

iv. Establishment of Tripartite Boards to regulate implementation of the legislation and also to make women workers visible, and empower them to be equal partners and participants in the production process.

v. The setting up of a separate wing in the Labour Department for unorganised workers with adequate number of women employees at various levels.

vi. Piece rates be converted into daily wages based on the normal quantum of work completed at a healthy pace, and that health insurance including compensation for accidents should be available for women workers.

vii. A comprehensive law on health and safety be formulated and enacted.

Thippaiah (1989) examined the problem of urban informal sector in Bangalore metropolitan area with the help of interview method to collect field data. According to Thippaiah women workers in urban unorganised sector can be broadly grouped into the self employed and the wage employed. Among the self employed there were those engaged in *papad* making, *masala* making, embroidery work, *zari* work, envelop making, *beedi* rolling, *agarbatti* making, match splints making, retail trading, waste paper collection and so on. The wage employed workers were mostly skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled and casual workers. They also belonged to the category of contract workers in construction activities, industrial and commercial enterprises. In addition, women workers were also manifested as paid on piece rate basis or part-time, full-time domestic servants for a fixed payment.

In self employment activities who earn their livelihood independently or with the co-operation of family labour constituted an overwhelming majority. A vast segment of
women in the urban informal sector was migrant families to the city of Bangalore at different points of time on account of draught, jobs and marriages and wage differentials between urban and rural sectors. Most of them were in the age group of 18-32 years, and lived in slums, small towns which were devoid of basic amenities. The informal women labourers were paid low wages and their wages were just around the subsistence level, proper medical facilities and safety measures were not guaranteed for these women who worked in hazardous materials such as chemicals in dyeing or cement dust in construction work.

K.N. George⁶ (1990) in his study covered unorganised women beedi workers in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. In each state three different places were studied namely the state capital and other districts in which such workers predominate. For this study 900 samples were taken from the three above mentioned states. Tamil Nadu – 400 respondents, Kerala - 200 respondents and Karnataka – 300 respondents were selected by informal random sampling method. Structured interview schedules were used after pretesting them. This study was based on the observations concerning working conditions and related matters. From the study it was found that a large number of married women than unmarried/ divorced or widowed women were engaged in beedi rolling. Most of them were illiterate. There were more Muslim women among beedi workers than from any other religious group. Married women rolled more beedies and thus earned more income than unmarried women. Women from the higher age groups worked for longer hours. The desire for savings was more evident with the younger age group. The housing conditions of workers were below par but their health status was generally good. A sizeable number of women beedi workers were indebted but incidence of bonded labour among them was negligible. Their income was a major portion of their family income. A large number of workers worked for 7-12 hours per day and rolled about 501-1000 beedies per day. Most women workers were taking the advantage of less than two hours of rest period per day. A large number of women workers were unaware of the Beedi and Cigar Act and Welfare Act but aware of the Minimum Wages Act.

On the basis of findings of the study it was suggested for the women beedi workers that the government should make the provisions to educate them to know their rights and to strengthen their united power. The government through voluntary organisations should help them to form co-operatives – on a profit sharing basis to give them free loans to buy raw materials and to build well ventilated, hygienic work sheds and to market their products.
Dr. Samal\(^6\) (1990) studied the economics of informal sector of Sambalpur town with the help of questionnaire and interview method. The questionnaire sought information about the enterprise; the workers engaged as self employed or wage workers in these enterprises. The enterprises in manufacturing, trade, transport, service, etc., had been surveyed. In his study he observed that though few entrepreneurs earned a comfortable income, about two thirds of the informal sector participants’ families were poor since their per capita income was less than the poverty line. The earnings of about one fifth of entrepreneurs, own-account workers and wage labourers were below the minimum wage fixed by the Government of Orissa. The informal sector units had backward linkages through input, credit and partly through acquisition of skill and technology. About 31 per cent of total sample units had direct backward linkages fully or partly with the formal sector for their inputs/ raw materials/ commodity used or traded.

**Tripathy and Das\(^7\)** (1991) examined the problem of informal women labour in the tribal district of Orissa. The study, based on primary data collected through a field survey and conducted at the micro level covering Phulbani town, analysed the growth and size of informal labourers in the area of study. The sample consisted of 25 construction labourers, 25 maid servants, 25 washer women, 25 sales women and vegetable vendors and 25 from allied groups. Thus, a total of 125 households covered with a view to assessing economic conditions and work character of informal labourers.

The study brought to light that tribal women of Phulbani though could not enter formal sector jobs because of low education and training; they contributed a significant amount to total family income through their engagements in informal sector. The study pointed out that there were less than 50 per cent of women labour force in the age group of 15-60 years and 33 per cent of the sample labourers below the age of 15 years. Hardly 8 per cent of women labourers had school education up to 8-9 years. Women engaged in washing activities belonged to 98 per cent who were mainly belonging to Khand, Gouda, Panda, Suda and Keute castes. The study also revealed that 38.4 per cent of the workers had no land, 32 per cent had a marginal land, 23.2 per cent had a small size of land holding and 6.4 per cent had landed property of five acres and above. The study further pointed out that the maid servants income was the lowest among all categories of informal workers. Most of the women belonging to this category were divorcees, widows and younger girls.

**Tripti Sarna and Archana Shukla\(^8\)** (1994) examined physical health and neuroticism among women (\(n = 200\)) engaged in the unorganised home-based production
of chiken embroidery. The results indicated that women chiken workers in general were facing some serious health problems. Significant variations were also obtained across groups of women associated with different centres of chiken production. The study pointed towards the stressful nature of environment in which the women chiken workers live and work. The studies indicated that in the unorganised sector, working conditions are appalling, wages are incredibly low, and workers face great uncertainties and exploitations. Home-based industrial work is one of the least regulated, least supervised, and most hazardous system of industrial production. Yet, a large number of women workers are drawn into the unorganised sector mainly due to lack of personal resources such as education, awareness and non-availability of employment opportunities.

Tripathy⁹ (1996) analysed the socio-economic conditions of women engaged in construction activities in Ganjam district of Orissa with the help of data collected through sample interview and questionnaire method. Tripathy observed through his study that ignorance, tradition-bound attitudes, lack of skill, seasonal nature of employment, heavy physical work, lack of job security, long hours of work, lack of minimum facilities at the workplace, ill-treatment and bondage were some of the features of the employment of women in construction sector.

Mohiuddin et. al.¹⁰ (1996) observed through their study the problems of rural women workers engaged in tailoring and readymade garment activities in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. For the study a sample of 400 respondents (200 each from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka states) was selected. For data collection semi-structured interview schedules were used. From the study they observed that almost two third of the total respondents were married women. The number of unmarried women was more from Andhra Pradesh than from Karnataka. Most of the women were illiterate but the majority of respondents had studied upto primary level and there were only five graduate respondents in the sample. The majority of women were engaged in tailoring in order to earn their livelihood or to supplement their family income. Women from Andhra Pradesh earned substantially higher amount than their counterparts from Karnataka. The average income of the readymade garment workers was slightly higher than the tailors. There were a few women from Andhra Pradesh who mentioned that their family members were opposed to the idea of women working outside the home. Childcare responsibilities were also one of the reasons for being home-based. The working conditions for those who were working in the unorganised sector were voiced as ‘unsatisfactory’. The problems in terms of receiving the payment ranged from delay in payment to not receiving the entire
amount. As far as wage rates concerned, they ranged from 50 paise to Rs. 6/- based upon the expertise of the tailor, size of dress, design and type of raw material used. By and large, in both states in general, males were getting higher rates for the same kind of work. On an average the working hours for garment making were about four hours per day whereas for household chores, women devoted 7 hours a day. No significant differences were noticed in case of working hours in the two study states. The provision of leave and paid lunch break or compensation at the time of accidents, were not available to those who were engaged in readymade garment production.

**Jhabvala**\(^{11}\) (1998) in his study at macro level emphasised on the need for social security for women workers and explored the mechanism for security provisions, insurance, security funds for women in unorganised sector. Thus, pointing out that the women of unorganised sector could be helped by decentralising, participatory social security and implementation of programmes and create work. The employment-based programmes should have social and financial security for women in unorganised sector.

**Divya Pandey**\(^{12}\) (1998) examined the nature and types of migrant workers, temporary (seasonal) and permanent in the light of socio-economic order and analysed the strategies and employment patterns of the female migrants from Maharashtra. It was brought forward, in temporary type of migration, the migrants worked in unorganised sector without legal protection or job security, long working hours, low wages and no facilities. The factors aggravating their pitiable conditions are lack of sanitary facility, unsafe conditions, and exploitation and gender discriminations. These women mainly worked in unorganised sector to supplement the family income and face all the other hardships of life. These seasonal migrants generally came to work through the contractors and as a whole family or at least as couple. She suggested increase in participation of NGOs and the government’s support through the programmes and policies focused for the benefit of these migrant women and reduce the negative consequences of migration and other social problems.

**Rao**\(^{13}\) (1998) studied the general profile of the women workers in beedi industry which was at corporate industrial level on the line of cottage industry in states of West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. He found through his study that in beedi industry women’s earnings were meagre. They worked on piece rate basis and earned as low as Rs. 40 per 1000 beedis rolled. He also found that the beedi workers were exposed to dust, nicotine, causing respiratory diseases and infertility in young women.
Srinivasan\textsuperscript{14} (2000) looked into conceptual issues of the unorganised sector along with profile of women’s employment and its trend. He concluded that employment for the unorganised women workers moves to the sectors where these women have no say at all and away from the legal protection. Non-farm employment hailed as the panacea for surplus labour in agricultural sector could not pick up in rural India and the women were most affected.

Pushpinder\textsuperscript{15} (2002) studied on the socio-economic profile and the problems faced by the female farm labourers of Punjab. For analysis data were collected by interview schedule of 120 female respondents in three villages of three districts i.e. Burj village from Ludhiana, Gannapind from Jalandhar and Khele village from Hoshiarpur district of Punjab. His study observed that the maximum number of respondents belonged to the age group of 25-34 years and the minimum number of respondents were in the age group of 35 years and above. All the respondents were illiterate, married and living separately from their husbands. Nearly eighty per cent respondents were natives of their respective villages and 20 per cent migrated from outside states. Majority of respondents lived in joint families with a family size of upto 4-5 members. The wages received by female were less than males. All the respondents had to work as daily paid labour. About 31 per cent were the sole earners in their households. All the respondents were seasonal workers. About 50 per cent of them were also employed on contract basis. Almost all the respondents had to be brought to the fields from their villages by farm owners in tractor-trolleys, and were taken back to their respective villages in the evening. All respondents fully agreed that they had to bring their small children to their worksite. About 93.33 per cent respondents also felt that there was insufficient drinking water supply at the worksite. Further he concluded that the respondents faced numerous household work management problems due to their small children, poor health, poor housing, lack of proper water supply and electricity, and because they were getting tired.

Parul Saxena\textsuperscript{16} (2002) through her research work on women chiken workers of Lucknow city analysed female participation in unorganised sector. Her study was based on primary data personally collected through field survey with the help of questionnaire on living conditions, education and health, nature of work, occupation pattern and personal characteristics. She concluded that women chiken workers in Lucknow city did not have adequate exposure to educational opportunities. They worked for the subsistence of their family because of financial crisis. Immobility of labour, seasonal nature of employment, lack of job security were the greatest impediments of women labour that
kept them confined to low paying, irregular and local avenues of employment. Women workers were facing economic exploitation due to ignorance, lack of skill, and illiteracy, extremely unsatisfactory working conditions in the form of heavy physical work, long working hours, lack of minimum facilities at workplace, ill-treatment and bondage, temporary or casual nature of employment and poverty due to low income, high level expenditure, lack of assets and indebtedness. Women workers were also unaware of the beneficial provisions enhanced by government through various acts and schemes.

Finally she suggested provisions for educational opportunities, awareness generation, vocational training, basic facilities such as food, shelter and clothing for workers living below poverty line, credit facilities through banks and government schemes, elimination of exploiters or middlemen, enforcement of labour laws and schemes, facilities of crèches for their children, promoting NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs), and collaboration with international agencies such as ILO/ the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to promote union leadership among women workers.

Reddy and Reddy (2003) assessed socio-economic conditions of the rural women associated with agriculture in Andhra Pradesh. They selected a sample through simple random sampling method from fourteen villages (7 villages each in Srikalasthi and Chandragiri Mandals with the number of respondents 139 and 137 respectively), consisting of 276 agricultural women from villages where agriculture had been the main source of livelihood. Then they collected data from the respondents through a structured interview schedule.

After analysing the data they found that nearly half of the respondents ranged between the ages 20 and 40 years. Lower caste women’s participation was greater than upper caste women. They had very little access to education, hence most of them suffered from illiteracy. The rural women had very busy work schedule. They worked for 16 hours or more till night. Half of the respondents started doing domestic work at an early age of around 9 years. The rural women’s domestic work included sweeping, fetching water, cleaning the house, washing utensils, clothes, cooking, feeding and bathing children, fetching fuel, carrying food to fields, stitching, supervising children’s education etc. without anybody’s help. The wages paid to females were very low when compared to males for the same work. They were paid Rs. 4 to Rs. 5 per day for the whole day. During off-season when there was a limit in farm work, these women went for other jobs like brick making, jaggery preparation, beedi rolling etc. They worked till the advanced stages
of pregnancy and returned to work within two months after confinement. Most of them experienced backpain, bodypains, headache, dizziness and vomiting because of pesticides and chemicals sprayed. They had problem with the water organisms, when they had to remain standing in knee-deep water during transplantation. The economic condition of these women was deteriorated with their men’s addiction to alcohol and smoking. There were no saving opportunities because of continuous famine, drought, and insufficient wages, lack of work during off-season, marriage of children, increasing price of fertilizers, chemicals etc., and other inevitable expenditures. This enforced them to raise loans at exorbitant rates of interest. The socio-economic conditions under which these women live were traditional and exploitative which impeded their development and went on lowering their socio-economic status day by day. The socio-economic problems faced by these women rarely attracted the policy makers whose prime interest vaguely appears to be rural development.

S. Mahendra Dev\textsuperscript{18} (2004) examined female work participation and child labour rates using occupational data from National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and compared this data with the Census 2001\textsuperscript{19} and national sample survey (NSS) data. Attempts were made to identify the determinants of both female work participation and child labour. It was found that the larger the size of the family, the lower is the ability of a woman to participate in economic activity. Household size is not a determining factor for the participation of children in the workforce.

Supriya Roy Chowdhary\textsuperscript{19} (2005) examined the conditions of women employed in the garment manufacturing industry in Bangalore, and the role of an activist group engaged in articulating the interests of these women. She concluded that the main focus should be on to build solidarity amongst completely powerless women to bring to them a sense of economic security and self sufficiency by promoting credit societies, and to use this organisational framework in future as a tool of collective action.

Nalini Nayak\textsuperscript{20} (2005) advocated the need to re-conceptualise social security for the unorganised sector paying heed as much to the issues of the procedures as to the issues of the workers. She said that the concept of social security should, therefore, focus on the following two aspects:

i. Recognise and support the social and material base of living communities, and

ii. Take cognizance of the fact that structural poverty can only be confronted by valorising the contribution of this sector to the economy and thereby checking the growth of unbridled capitalism.
Thus, the safeguarding of access rights to natural resources should not be ignored in framing rules that will make the bill functional.

Santosh Nanda\(^{21}\) (2006) through a study on the unorganised women workers of construction industry in Haryana concluded that a vast majority of India’s labour force is in unorganised sector. In the absence of economic opportunities in their own states, many workers migrate across the other states of India to seek employment. Construction industry depends almost entirely on migrant workers, majority of which are women. Through this paper Nandal has thrown a light beam on the socio-economic problems being faced by a section of the women workers in construction industry in Haryana according to which the women workers have a very tough life. In spite of being actively involved in economic activities for survival, women workers focus on bearing and rearing of their children which is their prime responsibility, and thus they end up with playing roles in both production and reproduction.

S. Sakthivel and Pinaki Joddar\(^{22}\) (2006) examined that in non-farm sectors, as the ladder of income moves up, the share of informal sector gradually declines. However, as far as agricultural sector is concerned, irrespective of economic class, the share of unorganised segment of the workforce remains flat. They also found out that the coverage of social security schemes has been largely against economically and socially vulnerable sections. As far as the larger issue of extending social security measures to the unorganised sector is concerned, they argued that given the poor affordability and lack of institutional mechanism, any design of social security that relies heavily on contributory basis, is bound to fail dismally.

Martha Chen et. al.\(^{23}\) (2006) focused on the challenges of descent work for the working poor in the informal economy. They illustrated the multi-segmented structure of the labour force – both formal and informal – and the average earnings and poverty risk associated with working in the different segments. Special attention was paid to the differential location of working poor, both women and men, in multi-segmented labour markets. They argued that there is a need to reorient economic policies to promote more and better employment in order to reduce poverty; improve national employment statistics to capture all forms of informal employment; rethink economic model of labour markets to incorporate self employment and all forms of waged labour; and increase the representative voice of workers - especially informal workers, both women and men – in the processes and institutions that determine economic policies and formulate the ‘rules of the (economic) game’.
International Metalworkers’ Federation\textsuperscript{24} (2006) conducted a survey on the working and socio-economic conditions of shipbreaking workers in Mumbai, Alang/Sosiya in India. On the basis of this survey International Metalworkers’ Federation found that in Mumbai shipbreaking workers have no job security. They are hired either on daily or monthly basis, or on a contract basis. They are illiterate, unskilled and paid monthly, usually at the daily rate. Their average income is around Rs. 1500 to Rs. 3500 per month. They do not get basic minimum wages or any facility like leave benefits, medical expenses and social security. They work in dangerous, hazardous and unsafe working conditions. They are not provided any protective gear such as helmets, safety shoes, goggles, mask etc. Most of them live in slums which are made up of asbestos, plywood, metal sheets in a very pathetic condition.

In case of Alang/Sosiya most of the workers are migrant and illiterate from economically weaker states. They get the work only around 180 days in a year that is why they are always in a state of insecurity and under the fear of unemployment. Their average wages per day are around Rs. 84. They live in the hutments situated near to the shipbreaking yards. They are subjected to various diseases. They also work in very hazardous and unsafe conditions. Many of them suffer from minor accidents particularly burn, cuts, etc. and also face major accidents. They do not enjoy any benefit provided either by their employer or by government authority to take care of health, safety and welfare. Their service and working conditions are very much exploitative and poor.

J.Y. Suchitra and D. Rajasekhar\textsuperscript{25} (2006) found the difference in the extent of employment security faced by different occupational groups within the unorganised sector and the factors influencing the same. They argued that a one-size-fits-all policy for the entire unorganised sector would be inadequate because of its failure to address the sector-specific needs of workers. They defined employment security as primarily the availability of employment and the workers’ perception of the short fall of employment that they have faced. They found the determinants – sex, age, skill and average wages of workers, prerequisites they get from employers and the position of their households with respect to human development indicators, of the extent of employment security of agricultural workers. They expressed the area of residence, human development, average wages and age of workers as the determinants of the employment security of the construction workers.

Raman Sachdev \textit{et. al.}\textsuperscript{26} (2006) carried out a cross-sectional study to identify work related health problems experienced by salt workers in Rajasthan state. They
identified that the salt workers were exposed to adversities of environmental conditions as well as salt in the environment. There was a lack of information about their occupational health problems. For the purpose of study data were collected in the health camps held near salt sites by inviting the workers of salt manufacturing units for their free health examination. Then the analysis of the data was carried out using Epi-Info 2002 software. After analysing the data they found that prevalence of ophthalmic symptoms was 60.7 per cent, that of dermatological symptoms was 43.8 per cent and symptoms like headache, giddiness, breathlessness, muscular and joint pains were experienced by 52.1 per cent salt workers. The ophthalmic problems were most common, probably due to irritation by direct sunlight and its glare caused by salt crystals and brine as well as irritation caused by fine salt particles suspended in the air of the working environment. Traumatic ulcers, dermatitis, muscular and joint pains, headache and giddiness were other more common symptoms observed among the workers and the prevalence of hypertension was 12 per cent. Looking at the large number of salt workers exposed to salt and facing occupational health problems, they suggested that there is a need for developing a mechanism for prevention of these problems in them.

Suchitra and Rajasekhar (2006) conducted a study in Bangalore and Mysore in August to September 2006 in order to discuss the working conditions of the women workers in agarbatti making. During survey they covered 109 workers in Bangalore (in the areas of Chamrajpet and Srirampura) and 43 workers in Mysore (in Ghousiananagar and K.N. Pura). The survey covered only women and mostly agarbatti rollers of whom 30 per cent rolled either at factories or directly for the factories and the remaining workers were home-based workers who worked for contractors.

The data collected from sample agarbatti rollers showed that neither the home-based nor the factory workers were availing minimum wages. The wages obtained were between Rs. 9 and Rs. 16 per 1000 agarbattis rolled, depending on the length of agarbattis. The average amount of wages per 1000 agarbattis rolled was Rs. 12.48. There were some differences between the wages paid in Bangalore and Mysore – while in Mysore, no worker was paid more than Rs. 13 per 1000 agarbattis, the situation was marginally better in Bangalore, where around one-third of the workers were paid at least Rs. 13 or more. Further with respect to the home-based workers who usually got their employment through layers of contractors, they had to pay some proportion of their wages to the contractors, and often, the workers ended up getting just around Rs. 9 per every 1000 agarbattis rolled. When wages obtained by women agarbatti rollers were
compared with minimum wages, more than 30 per cent of the workers were paid less than 50 per cent of the stipulated minimum wages, while no worker was paid more than 70 per cent of the minimum wages.

They also found that women workers were facing very poor working conditions at their work place. In the factories, typically 10-20 agarbatti rollers were accommodated in small rooms (usually 10 by 15 feet) which were poorly lit, poorly ventilated and very cramped. They were permitted few breaks. Factories seldom had toilet facilities, and workers who took breaks to use the toilets were often reprimanded by the employers. There was no crèche facility and no access to safe drinking water within the factory premises. Due to the nature of the work in agarbatti rolling, which involves being slouched continuously and using the hands and shoulders, almost all women workers had shoulder and back trouble, which becomes worse as they age. Many also develop gynecological complications early in life. These health problems become a constraint because with body aches and pains, the workers can seldom meet the targets they are expected to and therefore, their productivity and wages come down with age.

**Hisam** (2006) provided an overview of the work environment, labour relations and working conditions in the road transport sector in Pakistan, addressing issues related to social security through collective action. According to Hisam transport workers – drivers, conductors, cleaners, helpers – in Pakistan are predominantly male, with the exception of a couple of women taxi drivers found in big cities. The road transport sector is marred with one of the most critical and damaging working conditions – long and irregular working hours. Often the workers (on the inter-city routes) are on the vehicle for as long as 26 hours at a stretch. The work includes not just driving or assisting passengers, but loading/ unloading, training, cleaning and maintenance, work related to ensuring the safety of the vehicle and its cargo and passengers, administrative formalities or work linked to legal or regulatory (either formal or informal) obligations. On intra-city routes bus workers work on an average of 14 hours a day while rickshaw and taxi drivers are at the wheels on an average of 12 hours a day.

The informal work relations pose a number of barriers to the road transport workers in organising/ forming unions. Unregistered enterprises and resultant exclusion from labour legislation, clash of interests with big-fleet owners of the same mode and between heavy and light vehicle operators, diversity of workforce and modes of operation, plethora of provincial and federal regulatory mechanism and constant mobility make it difficult for road transport workers to organise.
According to her, membership-based unions/federations have evolved certain collective care arrangements in response to threatening and insecure work conditions. The linkages established by office bearers with related resource persons (doctors, lawyers, councillors/politicians, media, NGOs) facilitate the organisations to achieve the objectives of collective care arrangements (legal help, medical care, advice on regulatory procedures, news coverage). Due to deficits in administrative, managerial and strategic skills among members, these arrangements, remain informal, carried out on ad-hoc basis and are depended on several variables (i.e. involvement of the union in court procedures and subsequent drying up of the funds, inability of members at times to pay dues, goodwill of office bearers).

Padhi²⁹ (2007) observed the conditions of agricultural labourers in India and on the basis of the study made suggestions for the improvement of the socio-economic position of the agricultural labourers including better implementation of legislative measures, improvement in the bargaining position, resettlement of agricultural workers, creating alternative sources of employment, protection of women and child labourers, improving the working conditions, regulation of hours of work, improvements in agricultural sector, credit at cheaper rates of interest on easy terms of payment for undertaking subsidiary occupation, proper training for improving the skill of farm labourers and co-operative farming.

Sunanda Sen and Byasdeb Dasgupta³⁰ (2008) conducted a primary survey during 2004-2006 in pockets of Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, West Bengal and Maharashtra, of selected industrial units in the organised industrial sector of the country. They found no evidence of any improved labour status in terms of employment, wages, other benefits, and hours of work, job security or the ability to save. They did not find any positive impact of industrial growth, trade intensity or technological upgradation on the economic status of industrial workers in sample. As for the young workers who are the new entrants of the labour market the deprivation is even more, in terms of long working hours, casual status and other related aspects.

They threw light on the new generation of workers in India, young, casualised with no options for trade union activities, which could provide a bit of bargaining power to these people to fight for their due share in industry. Not much difference can be noticed with workers having permanent jobs in this day of labour flexibility.

Rekha Pande³¹ (2008) examined the status of women and child workers in the Old City of Hyderabad. She applied questionnaire method for data collection. She
surveyed a total of 250 respondents: 100 bangle making women and 100 *agarbatti* making women, in addition to 50 female child workers.

She found that almost all the women interviewed preferred to be housewives taking in work at home because they felt they had no other skill. They did not want to go out and work as wage labourers or domestic helpers since they considered both occupations to be below their dignity. Neither did they feel capable enough to establish their own petty businesses while salaried jobs were beyond them. Hence most of the women saw themselves as housewives doing extra paid work because of lack of any other opportunities.

Further she added that the harsh physical conditions of the bangle and *agarbatti* trades, the social environment, long hours, and the general stresses and strains of poverty all affect women’s health adversely. In spite of their ill health and their aversion to the work, they believed they had no option but to continue in these trades. A large number of girls in the *agarbatti* and the bangle industries are illiterate or have dropped out of school at a very early age.

She concluded that immediate action should be taken to alleviate the specific health problems of the women and children in the trades. Health programmes in the Old City have to have direct linkages with programmes for protected water supply, environmental sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, education, family planning, maternity and child welfare. Only when these issues are addressed will the women and children who engage in the bangle making and *agarbatti* trades have any guarantee of a socially just life.

*Nidhi Kotwal et al.* (2008) studied the impact of work and environment on the women living in slum areas of Jammu city. The sample for the study consisted of 100 working women from four different slum areas of Jammu city. An interview schedule was formulated for data collection. The results revealed that apart from the general hardships living in an area with a poor environment, women of slum areas suffered from many disadvantages, they faced a heavier work burden because employment did not free them from responsibility of housework. The dual task (paid and unpaid jobs) and the poor environment became more demanding on the health of the women and the women experienced weakness, fatigue, breathlessness, poor appetite and frequent illnesses.

They also found that all the women were illiterate. Lack of education and low income of the family was the compelling factor for the women folk to opt for seeking petty jobs in unorganised sectors to augment the family earning to sustain livelihood. The
respondents were engaged as part-time housemaids, as informal women labourers, as vegetable vendors, in warehouses and in ration shops. Lack of toilets/urinals at the workplace put women to a great deal of inconvenience. There were no crèche facilities at their workplace so majority of the respondents carried their kids to their workplace, a few left their kids under the care of the elder brother or sister. About 40 per cent had faced humiliation by higher authorities at their workplace and 30 per cent were sexually harassed by their male colleagues, who would often tease or touch them for no reason. They had to work for long hours and often complained of neck pain, backache and headache.

According to them there was a need for more systematic study into women’s health problems in relation to work. Environment hazards in slums including drainage, waste removal must be attended as priority. Informal women labourers should organise themselves to raise a crusade against exploitation and form a union to protect their rights.

The Ministry of Labour and Emoloyment33 (2008) conducted a survey in six states namely Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka and Tripura to assess the socio-economic conditions of women labour in plantation industry during the period September – October, 2008. The survey was conducted in 4 plantations viz. tea, coffee, rubber and cardamom. The survey was conducted in all the major plantation growing states. For tea plantations the states of Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura had been covered. In case of coffee, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka had been taken. The units under the rubber plantations were covered in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Tripura and under the cardamom plantation these were covered from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. A two stage sampling design was adopted for the survey during which a total of 132 unit level and 827 worker level schedules were canvassed.

During the survey it was found that more than 50 per cent of the total workers employed in the plantations were women. Male workers were employed in non-manual jobs. Majority of the workers was unskilled. Most of the units surveyed were found paying annual bonus to their workers and allowing weekly off without wages. Average per day earnings of the plantation labourers worked out to be Rs. 67.6 at aggregate level. Only 48.5 per cent of the units were providing medical facilities to workers and their family members. Housing facility was provided by 77.3 per cent of the total units surveyed. Maternity benefits were provided by 73.5 per cent of the total units surveyed. Canteen facility was provided by only 12.9 per cent of the units surveyed.
In Assam state, from which maximum number of sample units was drawn, only 16.7 per cent units were providing canteen facility. The welfare facilities for women workers like washing facility, separate urinals, rest shelter were provided by 6.1 per cent, 7.6 per cent and 6.8 per cent units respectively. More than five per cent of the plantation workers were migrated from other states. Majority of the sampled women workers (54.4 per cent) were found to be illiterate and 1.1 per cent women workers were found to be working beyond the normal daily hours of work.

The survey’s findings indicated that economic condition of the workers, particularly women workers, in rubber plantations of Tripura was poor. About 50 per cent sampled women workers in the plantations in the state were employed either on temporary or on casual basis. Housing facility was available to only 15 per cent workers in rubber plantations of Tripura. The average daily earnings of workers were also lowest in the state’s plantations of rubber when compared with these plantations of other states covered during the survey.

In plantation industry, the working hours of women workers stretched from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In addition, the women workers had to perform multifarious household activities which, *inter-alia*, include preparing food, taking care of children and other household chores.

**Nirmal Chandra Sahu et al.** (2009) through a valuable study on the conditions of fisherwomen in Ganjam district of Orissa enquired into the nature and extent of the socio-economic and ecological problems associated with the fisherwomen which hinder sustainable development of the community. They adopted stratified random sampling method to select sample villages and then chose the sample respondents. They selected 13 villages out of 28 marine fishing villages situated in Rangeilunda, Chatrapur and Chikiti blocks of the district, around Gopalpur-on-sea then they selected 360 fisherwomen randomly from the list of all households of the sample villages. The sample fish vendors constituted about 12 per cent of the total number of households in the villages. For the purpose of the study they collected primary data through questionnaire-based interviews. Then they derived analytical inferences through the application of standard statistical tools including simple and multiple regression analysis. Further they found that the fisherwomen are Telugu speaking with almost no education. They live in ill-built houses and the infrastructural facilities available in the villages are very poor. Their health conditions are not good and suffer from subordinate socio-economic status. Their efforts and contributions are invisible.
They observed that men take over women’s economic activity when it changes from subsistence economic activity to market economic activity and the women are pushed down to lower remunerative economic activity. Thus women who were once independent and self employed are forced to engage in uncertain casual jobs. The economic contribution of fisherwomen to their families is quite significant. The income of the fisherwomen is mainly determined by the amount of time allocated to collection, processing and marketing of fish. The age, marital or maternity status or education do not significantly influence their income. There is no scope for leisure and pleasure. They are being exploited by the middlemen and traders belonging to their own community and others. The fisherwomen are aware of the conditions of sustainability such as diversity, alternative sources of income, community harmony and familial equilibrium. They suggested their traditional ecological knowledge should be documented, recognised and appreciated. The natural fishery capital stock in the sea and land resources in the coast should get protection. The fisher people’s council should be recognised as a socio-political institution.

On the basis of the reviews cited above following generalisations may be made:

i. Wage differentiation, turnover of equal work and more submissive nature of women are important attraction for the employers to employ women in the construction field.

ii. There is no guarantee for permanent employment in construction field due to a number of factors such as volume and intensity of construction work, migration trend, contractor’s choice, wage rates and manipulation of employees.

iii. There is fragrant violation of statutory provisions in unorganised sector regarding payment of wages, safety regulations, and provision of housing and medical facilities, accident compensation and so on.

iv. A vast segment of women in the urban informal sector are migrant families on account of draught, jobs and marriages and wage differentials between urban and rural sectors.

v. In urban areas most of women workers are in the age group of 18-32 years, and live in slums and sub-urban areas which are devoid of basic amenities.

vi. Unorganised women workers can not enter formal sector jobs because of low education and training.

vii. The factors aggravating pitiable conditions of migrant workers are lack of sanitary facility, unsafe conditions, and exploitation and gender discriminations.
viii. Migration has serious impact on wage rate. Those who come to the towns for the first time have to be satisfied with lower wages as well as poor working conditions.

ix. Women mainly work in unorganised sector to supplement the family income.

x. *Beedi* workers are exposed to dust, nicotine, causing respiratory diseases and infertility in young women.

xi. Immobility of labour, seasonal nature of employment, lack of job security are the greatest impediment of women labour that keep them confined to low paying, irregular and local avenues of employment.

xii. Women workers are facing economic exploitation due to ignorance, tradition-bound attitudes, lack of skill and illiteracy, extremely unsatisfactory working conditions in the form of heavy physical work, lack of job security, long working hours, lack of minimum facilities at workplace, ill-treatment and bondage, temporary or casual nature of employment and poverty due to low income, high level expenditure, lack of assets and indebtedness in unorganised sector.

xiii. Women workers are unaware of the beneficial provisions enhanced by the Government through various acts and schemes.

xiv. The coverage of social security schemes have hardly reached to the economically and socially vulnerable sections.

xv. Unorganised labour is a neglected lot.

xvi. They are exploited in a number of ways like low wages, long working hours, wage discrimination, no social security, seasonal and periodic employment, poor working conditions, etc. etc.

xvii. The women folk get lower wages than men which is not at all linked with the quantity or quality of work; it is simply because of gender bias.

xviii. Government enactments are neither adequate nor effective and no employer pays respect to legal provisions. These laws have simply ornamental values whereas at grass root level the employer dictates the terms.
References


