

**WOMEN WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR :
A STUDY OF THE HILL AREAS OF
DARJEELING DISTRICT**

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To

My Parents

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PREFACE

The 1973 International Labour office report on Kenya and its use of the term 'informal sector' sparked off a great deal of controversy in the development literature over the meaning and usefulness of such a concept. A number of theoretical and empirical studies have been conducted, in the meantime, to highlight the problems and prospects of the informal sector all throughout the world. The researchers across the world are of the opinion that informal sector is fundamentally diverse in nature in the sense that the opening of employment opportunity is more than it is in the formal sector. To be more specific, as the chances of women to get employment in the formal sector are much less than the advantageously placed males, the informal sector is the main source of their employment all throughout the world, particularly in the less developed countries.

It is a well known fact that though women are an increasing part of the labour force, they continue to suffer disadvantages in terms of benefits, job mobility and occupational segregation. In India, they are very much part and parcel of the labour market but their role is less recognised. It is so because most of them are engaged in the informal sector activities which often do not have the immediate exchange values or at the most less exchange values. As such, the potentials of the informal sector have remained undermined. A number of theoretical as well as empirical studies on the informal sector and on the socio-economic aspects of women workers have been undertaken by the researchers in Indian context. But these two issues have been treated as two separate aspects. It is an irony that even the researchers have neglected the lowest strata women workers of the informal sector by not dealing with their problems and the contributions they are making. This thesis is

a sincere attempt towards exploring the problems and prospects of the women engaged in the informal sector activities such as agriculture, domestic service, construction work, petty trade, homebased manufacturing and a few other self-employment activities. For the purpose, the women workers of the hill areas of Darjeeling district in West Bengal have been considered to be the focal point of our discussion. This study has tried to examine their multiple problems at micro level, tested the probability of potential growth and suggested some course of actions that may lead to the improvement in the status of these neglected women.

My interest to this particular field has been raised by Prof. M. Dasgupta, Dept. of Economics, North Bengal University. In fact, it would not have been possible to prepare this thesis without his encouragement, guidance and supervision. He had been kind enough to let me use the questionnaire (with little bit of modifications as required) prepared for the ICSSR project on the women workers under his direction. I express my utmost sense of gratitude and indebtedness to him.

I always remember with gratitude Dr. J. C. Debnath, Dr. H. K. Chakraborti, Dr. C. Mukherjee, Sri S. Basu, and Sri J. Sankirtayan, all my teachers in the Deptt. of Economics, North Bengal University for their encouragement and assistance at different stages of this work. I am grateful also to Prof. M. R. Gupta, Deptt. of Economics, Jadavpur University who gave extensive time for discussions and personal insights. My fellow colleagues at St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling have remained constant source of encouragement and inspiration to me. Among them, Prof. C. B. Rai and Miss N. Dunne gave me the valuable suggestions and often exchanged their ideas about the destitute women of Darjeeling hills which they gathered in course of various social works they had undertaken. My grateful thanks are acknowledged to both of them.

I acknowledge my appreciation to the UGC and Rev. Fr. Pappadil, S. J. Principal of my college for granting me a leave of one year under the Faculty Improvement Programme to complete this work. I record my thanks to Sri Ravi Poddar, an ex-student of mine from Kalimpong for all the troubles he had taken to assist me during my field work. I owe my sincere thanks also to Sri Michael Dutta, Deptt. of Geography, NBU for cartographic work and Sri Dipayan Sarkar and Sri Debabrata Biswas for computerising this thesis. Further, I would be failing in my duty if I do not mention a word of praise for all the poor women workers who in spite of their busy schedule had spared their valuable time with me to respond to my various questions.

Last but not the least, my wife Subrata always stood as a source of perpetual inspiration and relieved me by shouldering all household responsibilities. I record my indebtedness and thankfulness to her.

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Abbreviations Used in the Thesis

A.I.W.C.	: ALL INDIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
C.P.W.D	: CENTRAL PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
C.R.S.	: CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES
D.D.W.W.F.	: DELHI DOMESTIC WORKING WOMEN'S FORUM
D.G.H.C	: DARJEELING GORKHA HILL COUNCIL
D.I.C	: DISTRICT INDUSTRIES CENTRE
D.W.C.R.A.	: DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE RURAL AREAS
E.D.P.	: ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
G.N.L.F.	: GORKHA NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT
G.N.W.O.	: GORKHA NATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANISATION
H.H.I.	: HAYDEN HALL INSTITUTE
I.C.D.S.	: INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SCHEME
I.G.S.S.	: INDO GERMAN SOCIAL SERVICE
I.L.O.	: INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION
I.R.D.P	: INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
I.S.D.	: INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIBERS' DIAL
L.D.Cs	: LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
M.O.T.H.	: MANUFACTURING OTHER THAN HOUSEHOLD INDUSTRIES
N.B.S.T.C.	: NORTH BENGAL STATE TRANSPORT CORPORATION
N.C.A.E.R.	: NATIONAL COUNCIL OF APPLIED ECONOMIC RESEARCH
N.G.O.	: NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION
N.R.I.	: NON-RESIDENT INDIAN
N.S.S.O.	: NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY ORGANISATION
P.W.D.	: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
S.C & S.T.	: SCHEDULED CASTES & SCHEDULED TRIBES
S.E.W.A.	: SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
S.T.D.	: SUBSCRIBERS' TRUNK DIAL
T.R.S.H.C.	: TIBETAN REFUGEE SELF-HELP CENTRE
T.R.Y.S.E.M:	: TRAINING OF THE RURAL YOUTH FOR SELF EMPLOYMENT
T.T.C.I	: TEA TRADING CORPORATION OF INDIA
W.B.C.A.D.C:	: WESTBENGAL COMPREHENSIVE AREA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
W.B.T.D.C. :	: WEST BENGAL TEA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
W.W.F.	: WORKING WOMEN'S FORUM.

Chapter I

Introduction

Research efforts in urban employment and urban labour markets in the past have most often focused on the organised sector with an emphasis on industrial development. It is needless to say that a large share of the benefits from the growth of this sector have accrued to a small and exclusive group of people. The different socio-economic groups within an urban area have generally shared in highly unequal proportions. A large section of the urban poor are generally excluded from this sector and the resultant benefits.¹ The third world countries are the best examples of this discrimination.

In the past, urban growth in India has largely been due to the migration of people from rural areas. It has also been agreed by most researchers that major motivation behind such migration from rural areas is the employment opportunity in the urban centres. The initial spurt to migration generally came from the 'modern' sector in manufacturing, administrative and commercial establishments. However, the output growth of this sector especially in manufacturing, due to its capital intensive nature, has failed to promote a proportional growth of labour demand.² Initial models based upon competitive markets and distinguishing two sectors viz. the subsistent and the capital sectors as developed by Lewis (1954) and Ranis & Fei (1961) failed to explain this phenomenon. The 'push' factors operating in the rural areas were strong enough to send large supplies of labour to urban areas. This has been attempted to be explained by lifetime earnings and 'expected income' of the potential migrants

(Todaro, 1969 and Harris-Todaro, 1970). However, despite the failure of the 'modern' sector to absorb these labour supplies, large scale unemployment has not been rampant in the urban centres as would be predicted by competitive models. The so-called surplus labour unable to gain entry in the formal (modern) sector is generally found to be absorbed by the rest of the urban economy which has been largely termed as the informal sector.

1.1 : The Concept of Informal Sector

The classification of labour market of labour market into formal and informal sector is not a very old phenomenon. It was only in 1973 that Keith Hart, launched the term 'informal sector' to mean that part of the urban labour force that falls outside the organised labour market.³ During his field work among the urban workers of Ghana, he came across a large self-employed sector which provided means of livelihood for new entrants to the urban labour force who were unable to obtain employment in the formal sector. He then questioned the traditional attitudes of treating this sector as being highly unproductive and constituting surplus labour and broadly put this sector into informal sector. The informal sector since then has been further refined by a mission of the International Labour Office while studying the employment situation in Kenya, within the framework of the world employment programme. Hart has used the term informal income generating activities, unorganised sector, unenumerated sector, self-employed individuals and urban proletariat in his study more or less alternatively and interchangeably.⁴ In order to understand the meaning and scope of 'informal' sector, it is necessary to have an idea of the 'formal' or the more frequently used concept of the 'organised' sector of an economy.

The formal or organised sector of an economy is generally taken to mean wage labour in permanent employment, employment being registered under the Factories Act so that the conditions

of works get regulated such as that which is featured by industrial enterprises, govt. offices and other large and small scale establishments.⁵ Employment, generally in the formal sector involves a wage contract of employment with an employer who has a continuous identity through time and many other employees. The employer can either be a private capitalist or the govt. and is usually engaged in producing 'advanced' or 'modern' goods with a given technology.⁶ The work-force is required to have skills and discipline. At the same time, the job is permanent. The management may be bureaucratic and working conditions of production units permit both the formation of union of labour and govt. protection and regulation of employment. All these aspects categorically uphold the fact that the employment of labour is secured and that the employees do come under the social security schemes. The working conditions are laid down subject to the Minimum Wages Act. In view of these characteristics, some authors have referred to the employment in the formal or organised sector as 'protected' or 'registered'.

Economic activities which do not meet these criteria are grouped under the term 'informal sector', a key-word which covers a considerable range of economic activities in most of the third world countries. The employment in informal sector falls outside the purview of the existing statistical data collection machinery and therefore very often ignored by official census. Another important aspect of the employment in the informal sector is that working conditions here are rarely covered by the legal statutes. This description of the informal sector is very inadequate in view of its large and growing scope. This raises a number of problems in properly defining the informal sector. Jan Breman, in this context, has remarked:

"..... the lack of a proper definition is very often, although not very sat-

isfactorily compensated by a somewhat arbitrary listing of these activities which meet the eye of anyone who strolls through the streets of a city in the 3rd world: Street vendors, newspaper sellers, shoeshine boys, stall keepers, prostitutes, porters, beggars, hawkers, rickshaw drivers etc".⁷

This, in other words, implies that the informal sector includes those activities of small tradesmen and unskilled workers which bring them low and irregular incomes.

S.V. Sethuraman has defined the informal sector as consisting of goods and services with the primary objectives of generating employment and income to their participants notwithstanding the constraints on capital, both physical and human.⁸ Papola's definition of informal sector is rather very simple. In his study on the informal sector of Ahmedabad, he has said that the informal sector is a convenient way of designating a segment of economy having certain characteristics which lead to unfavourable conditions for the growth of enterprises and activities operating in this segment. He has identified a number of well acceptable characteristics of the informal sector. These are as follows:

(i) Small size of operations – Informal sector generally consists of small establishments. The term "smallness", however, may have different interpretations in different economic situations. The small size generally means a relatively small size of employment having low capital intensity and low rate of return on capital.

(ii) Informal structure and family ownership – This means that the informal sector does not have a formally structured organisation; there is limited function of division of labour and specialisation and most of the management and supervisory and

even the production functions are performed by the proprietor. Also there can be very expensive use of family labour. Papola is found to be very cautious and has remarked that all these characteristics may not exist together.⁹ Small size itself makes it necessary and possible to run an organisation without a structural division of labour and management hierarchy. Even organisations with wider ownership and using hired labour may reveal these characteristics of their size of operations is not large enough. On the other hand, large enough family-owned enterprises can not be run on the basis of informal and unstructured organisation and undefined functional division of labour. Structure of organisation is mainly a function of size and is not necessarily related to the pattern of ownership.¹⁰

(iii) Non-modern technology – Non-modern technology means the use of labour intensive, predominantly manual, low productive techniques as compared to capital intensive, highly mechanised and high productivity ones used by the formal sector units. According to John Weeks, the private formal sector is also often characterised by foreign ownership and imported technology and intermediate goods and it usually produces for sophisticated markets. The informal sector, on the other hand, is characterised by small scale operations, labour intensive techniques, low-level of income and indigenous ownership.¹¹ In fact, there are some opinions which state that the distinction between formal and informal sectors on the basis of the use of imported foreign technology and adopted indigenous technology appears to represent a rather extreme view point. Examples in this regard can be cited. Technology used in Indian large textiles can no longer be considered foreign, yet to include them in the informal sector because they use indigenous technology would make an absurdity of the informal sector concept.¹²

(iv) Lack of access to govt. favours – It is a well

accepted view that the informal sector receives ill-treatment from the government. Formal sector enterprises are supposed to have access to resources controlled and distributed by the government. Thus the advantage of organised capital market, bank finance, foreign technology, imported raw materials, protection from foreign competition etc. are not expected to be available to the informal sector enterprises. Papola is of the opinion that these facilities are not denied to the informal sector units but the fact is that they are not able to avail of them because of their meagre material resources.¹³ It is our experience that even when governments have tried to mitigate some of their disadvantages by giving them a preferential treatment, the benefits have not gone to the smallest of the informal sector units because of their inability to cope with official procedure for obtaining them.

There are some services and inputs such as bank credit, space, electricity, water etc. which are not supplied on a government license. Even these items are not adequately availed to the informal sector units. It is the picture everywhere in a country like ours. This situation is the result of uneven distribution of private resources which seem to directly determine the distribution of the benefits of public resources as well. It is a basic contradiction of a mixed economy that even the state measures to reduce them often result in accentuating them.¹⁴

(v) Competitive and unprotected product market - Generally, the informal sector in the 3rd world countries are found to have competitive and unprotected markets. However, it is not always true that informal sector produces goods and services of general use while formal sector predominantly caters to the demand of high and sophisticated sectors of people and foreign markets; nor do all the informal sector enterprises operate in a

competitive market and all the formal sector enterprises operate in an oligopolistic and protected markets.¹⁵ We can cite plenty of examples in support of this argument. Personal services like that offered by domestic servants in the urban areas are the examples of an informal sector activity catering to the needs of high income groups. The whole range of artistic handicrafts produced by the informal sector units in our country can also be mentioned in support of this. Textile clothing, washing soap, matches and many other items of mass consumption are produced both in the formal and informal sectors. The formal sector products have an advantage of brand names and better marketing network. But it has to be admitted that the formal sector units are required to operate in a highly competitive market. The producers of artwork and handicraft goods in the informal sector, on the other hand, operate in a market mostly devoid of any competition.¹⁶

Still, the informal sector units can not realise the same revenue per unit of their output from the market as do the formal sector units. It is not due to the nature of the demand for product and the nature of the markets faced by them but on account of the relative lack of holding capacity and marketing arrangements available to them.

(vi) Unprotected labour market - This is another important aspect of informal sector establishments. It is true that the labour market in the informal sector is supposed to be unregulated and highly competitive as there is absolute freedom of entry while the labour market in the formal sector is regulated and has entry restricted on the basis of some standard and neatly chalked hiring norms and finalised hiring procedures.¹⁷ The supply of labour in the informal sector consists mainly of new entrants in the labour market - immigrants or young persons entering the labour force. These immigrants as well as young persons are keen to get jobs in the formal sector but the opportunities are limited and also the entry is very much

restricted. Hence, they become compelled to start doing something or the other in the informal sector. They may start small business of their own thereby selfemploying themselves or may absorb themselves in any part-time work or apprentices or as full-time workers in small establishments. The informal sector thus formed as a consequence of the non-availability of jobs in the formal sector suffers from the problem of excess supply of labour and hence a situation of significant underemployment and depressed wages arise in contrast of the formal sector where workers and conditions of work are regulated. Their jobs are secured and the level of wages assured while various studies undertaken in the third world countries including India have shown that the informal sector suffers not only from the vicissitudes of market fluctuations but also from the whims of the employers.

The various definitions of informal sector we have considered above summarily distinguish the formal sector and informal sector under four different heads, namely, mode of production, market structure, technology and relationship with the government. Whereas formal sector is capitalistic in nature operating as large oligopolies with capital intensive technology, the informal sector generally uses traditional methods of production and operates on highly competitive market. The former has sufficient access to and influence over the machinery of the government; the latter, however, is denied of any such protection. This is extremely important since the informal sector units can not approach the organised credit market for finance. Besides, it is generally true that workers in the formal sectors are unionised mostly being led by the political parties whereas the workers in the informal sector are open to exploitation because they are not unionised.

Having understood the concept of informal sector in the

light of the above discussion, we can well in the line of Sethuraman say that the informal sector as its name suggests is not formal in its characters.¹⁸

1.1.1 : Contrasting Characteristics of the Informal and Formal Sectors

Informal Sector	Formal Sector
(a) Easy entry to the sector	Restricted entry to the sector
(b) Family ownership of enterprises	Corporate ownership
(c) Small scale of operations	Large scale of operations
(d) Labour intensive and adapted technology	Capital intensive and use of imported technology
(e) High degree of resourcefulness	Frequent reliance on "other" resources
(f) Skills acquired outside the formal school system	Formally acquired skills
(g) Unregulated and competitive markets	Protected markets (through tariffs, quotas and trade licenses)
(h) Labourers open to exploitation as they are not unionised	Less chance of labour exploitation as trade unions are there.

1.1.2 : Relation Between Formal and Informal Sectors

Having discussed the meaning and scope of the informal sector, a question that generally strikes one's mind is that whether these two sectors have watertight compartmentalisation or whether they do have any interlinkage. If there existed any interlinkage, what sort of is it? A number of studies have been done in this particular direction; a few of these are highlighted below.

The interlinkage at the very basic level may be classi-

fied into direct and indirect. The direct linkage may be in terms of resource inputs from formal to informal sectors or technology and market linkages. The indirect linkages, on the other hand, refer to the demand for goods and services generated in the informal sector by a clientele whose income is dependent upon the formal sector.

Direct linkages - Many of the field studies have identified the nature of these relationships. Brienfield's study is worth mentioning in this connection. Brienfield starts his paper based on Tanzania with a tentative framework which assumes that

"many small scale operators are engaged in a process of production and of technological development but their ability to develop cumulatively over extended periods is limited by their being exploited through the terms of trade; by their dependence on large scale industry for inputs (often illegally obtained) and by the fact that when the markets they serve grow beyond a certain size, this will not be a gradual but accelerating stimulus to further will-not-be-a-gradual development of the forces of production. Instead, it will trigger a discontinuous shift to international technology which will incorporate this market by virtue of its efficiency and/or its market power the latter based on effectively limited access to capital and on the establishment of brand name products through heavy advertising".¹⁹

Brienfield thus places great stress on the exploitative character of their linkages and attributes this reason for the relatively involuntary character of this sector.

Bose, in his study of the informal sector in the Calcutta Metropolitan Economy for the ILO, explains the direct linkage between the formal and informal sectors in the following lines.

"The casual hypothesis that this study has thrown up is that the formal and informal sectors operate in basically two different markets that it is the difference [that] mainly differentiates the informal sector from the formal, and that these two sectors are dependent upon one another in much the same way that a colonial economy and a metropolitan economy are dependent upon each other. This means that the underemployment and backwardness of the informal sector are necessary conditions for the development and advancement of the organised formal sector dominated by a few oligopolistic houses".²⁰

This recognition of the interdependence of the formal and informal sectors comes from the fact that a sizeable segment of the informal sector is dependent upon the formal sector for marketing of its own product and acquisition of technology. On the otherhand, the employees in the formal sector are assured of the sufficient supply of labour from the very existence of the informal sector. And accordingly, they have a domination in wage-fixation in the formal sector. Studies in India and abroad have supported this hypothesis. For example, T. Duttachaudhuri has established linkages between the informal and formal sectors. In his study he has shown how the interactions between the two sectors determine wage, availability of finance and output of the total economy.²¹ N. Vijay Jagannathan, on the otherhand, explained the direct linkage between the two sectors and went in to conclude that the low wages in the informal sector in developing countries are the result of the existence of a huge parallel

urban informal sector.²²

After looking at the structure of economic activity in the informal sector Papola concluded that though the informal sector provided a significant part of the goods and services in the urban economy and provided employment to practically the entire residual labour force, its growth depends on the fortunes of the formal sector.²³ However, he did not look into whether the linkages between the two sectors were exploitative or benign in character. He did distinctly identify the informal manufacturing activities which are linked up vertically to the formal sector through market and technology linkages as the ones which promised better productivity and earnings.²⁴

Based on her study of shoe manufacturers in Bogota, Colombia, Peattie found that these enterprises served two distinct categories of clientele. First, as Bose has found in Calcutta, these enterprises were producing an inferior and cheaper products in a way which makes it accessible to persons who can neither buy in large quantities nor transport them for long distances.²⁵ The other type serves "a small and individualised market (as in custom made furniture and shoes) or where a great deal of flexibility in marketing is advantageous (as in street vending and illegal occupations)".²⁶

The two sectors are thus neither exclusive circuits nor distinct compartments. Strong backward and forward linkages are quite typical, which are often of very complex arrangements and extremely unfavourable to the smaller enterprises.

Besides these direct linkages in terms of market technology and resource inputs, researchers have found the existence of social dependency relationship which have their basis in the lack of economic insecurity.²⁷ A complete lack of public welfare or unemployment situation coupled with a highly irregular and inse-

cure nature of income, forces the people enter into either social dependency relationships of petty entrepreneurship. Breman's work in South Gujarat vividly illustrated these. He pointed out :

"it should be realised that the poor try to increase their security within the urban system by entering into dependency relations with social superiors, and in doing so they accept a wide range of contractual and semi-contractual commitments".²⁸

Indirect Linkages – The indirect linkages refer to those generated by the goods and services produced in the informal sector for a clientele whose income is dependent on the formal sector. The building and furnishing of middle class houses, repair services, traders of fresh vegetables, fruits etc. and of course the well known domestic servants are dependent upon formal sector activities for their livelihood. Thus only a growth in the formal sector's productivity and wages would create additional demand for these activities. This, infact, has sometimes led researchers to conclude as informal sector dies and lives with formal sector.²⁹ However, there is a paradoxical relationship arising out of the demonstration effect of formal sector goods. The rise in the demand for formal sector goods is likely to increase the formal sector production and accordingly, formal sector wages. This growth would worsen the income distribution and induce a shift in the pattern of demand away from the informal sector's products.³⁰

Thus, we can conclude that the informal sector is in no way an independent and exclusive entity. It is linked to the formal sector and the rest of the economy through a variety of linkages. The possibility of growth of the informal sector then depends on the nature and types of linkages that are operating in reality.

1.1.3 : Importance of the Informal Sector in the Light of Women's Participation in it

It has been recognised by all sections of researchers and writers that the working and labour conditions in the informal sector are deplorable and in fact, the informal sector is at a disadvantageous position deserving supportive policy measures. This, however, in no way reduces its significance in a populous country like ours. Informal Sector, has become a perennial source of employment generation. It is surprising to note that this sector absorbs more than 90% of the total work force in our country.³¹ The size of the informal sector has been substantial although it shows a declining trend.³² The majority of Indian workers being employed in the informal sector also produce useful goods and many formal sector industries depend on the informal sector for the supply of raw-materials. Thus, the informal sector not only provides income earning opportunity to the poorer group of population but also feeds the industries of the country. It is estimated that over 60% of the employment in Nairobi,³³ and Kumashi³⁴ and 50% in Jakarta³⁵ is found in this sector.

To be more specific, informal sector has established itself to be the main source of survival to a large segment of female work-force, in particular. An increasingly large portion of women has been absorbed by this sector. Women all over the world and more so in India are part and parcel of the labour market. But it is a fact that everywhere they are excluded from crucial economic activities. For example, in the agricultural sector in India women are employed in production, processing and preservation of agricultural produce and are not at all active in ploughing. In the urban areas, they are engaged in works which sometimes have no exchange value or low exchange value, as in the case of domestic servants. As a matter of fact, in LDCs, the women have inferior status in the society; they are looked upon as

meant for bearing and nurturing the children and caring for their husbands and other members of the family. We can refer the world economic profile of women, in this context, to ascertain their status and contribution in the world economy. As per ILO report, women represent nearly 50% of the world population, constitutes 33% of world's labour force, contributes 60% of all working hours but controls less than 1% of the world property. Now, the question is that women are mostly excluded from the crucial economic activities and also they have inferior status than how do they contribute 60% of the total working hours? Answer lies in the fact that women are mostly absorbed in informal sector activities. They are found employed in informal sector as domestic servants, sweepers, construction workers, brick-kiln workers, agricultural labourers, coolies and as self-employed workers in knitting, sewing, weaving and trading. All these works are characterised by low productivity and low-wages. According to 1981 census, in India, out of total working women, 96.33% are absorbed in the informal sector. The following table shows the absorption of women workers in the informal sector in 1971 and 1981.

Table 1.1 : Women Work-force in India

	1971	1981
Female Population	264 million	331 million
% of total population	48.2	48.3
Work Participation	31 million	48 million
Working women as % of total women	12.3	14.44
Total women workers in the informal sector	29 million	46.24 million
Women in the informal sector as % of total working women	94	96.33

Source : Sudha Kumari, Women Workers in Unorganised Sector of India, Yojana, Vol. 33, No. 12, July 1-15, 1989.

From the table above, it is clear that the ratio of women workers in the informal sector in India has gone up considerably from 94% in 1971 to 96.33% in 1981. This implies that female workforce has increased more than the job-opportunities for them in the formal sector. This has thrown the higher proportion of women into secondary jobs. Thus, their participation in the informal sector has become an increasing phenomenon.

No one thus can deny the importance of informal sector so far its role in absorbing the women workers is concerned. Furthermore, due to the availability of cheap labour in this sector, there is chance of more and more activities diverted to this sector. All these facts have raised strategy issues before the policy makers of our country. Should the national strategy be that of promoting informal sector in preference to the formal sector or should it involve an integrated development utilising the instrument of growth and employment in the short-run only or a dichotomous model of urban economy for a long period goals as well?

1.2 : Review of Related Literature

The concept of informal Sector, as already mentioned, is a relatively new concept (the concept being introduced in 1973). Since then a number of theoretical and empirical studies of the labour in the informal sector have been made in our country and abroad. The Studies on women workers, on the otherhand, over the years have become a separate branch in the socio-economic literature at present. As such, there have been vast literature on the subjects of informal sector as well as on the women workers.

The Studies of ILO (1972) in Ghana and Kenya initiated the proceedings of studies about the informal sector abroad . Among the other famous studies in Africa and Latin America, mention may be made of Bunster (1983), House (1984), Rossini and

Thomas (1990), Tannen (1991) etc. All these studies at the very outset have explained the importance of the informal sector in the LDCs, and the role played by the workers engaged in it in building the economy. However, Researcher like House has raised the issue that the simple dichotomy of the urban economy in the LDC into the formal and informal sector is inadequate. He maintained the view that informal sector can be further categorised into atleast two subsectors : an intermediate sector, which appears as a reservoir of dynamic entrepreneurs, and the community of the poor, which contains a large body of residual and underemployed labour.³⁶

Tannen, while studying the dual-market model in Brazil stated that rural labour markets are distinct from urban ones in the setting of wages and level of employment and urban workers are considered to have greater skills than rural ones. Urban labour markets are themselves separated into formal and the informal sectors, with corresponding high-paying and low-paying jobs. These wage-differential in the urban economy, according to him is due to the differences in the quality of human capital.³⁷

Such studies at the conceptual level have been undertaken in India too. The studies of Bose (1974), Lubell (1974), Dipak Majumder (1976), Breman (1976), Banerjee (1976), Joshi and Joshi (1976), Sethuraman (1975,1976,1977), D'Souza (1978), Papola (1980), Desai and Krishnaraj (1982), Rajula Devi (1985) etc. are worth-mentioning in this context. The theoretical studies of Jagannathan (1987), Dattachaudhuri (1989), Sudhakumari (1989) and M.R.Gupta (1991) etc. have dealt in with the policy-implications and suggestions to make the informal sector in LDCs competitive with the formal sector. Some of these studies are briefly summarised below.

Jan Breman (1976) has examined the utility of the concept of informal sector in Indian context. He argues, partly on the

basis of research into labour relations, in a small town in Western India, that the concept of informal sector is inadequate. The informal sector, he has suggested, can't be demarcated as a separate economic compartment and/or labour situation. He has suggested that rather than divide the urban system into segments, it is preferable to emphasise the fragmented nature of the entire labour market.³⁸

Papola (1980) has also explained the informal sector enterprises in Indian context. He has raised the debate whether govt. measures should be taken to improve the working conditions in informal sector. According to him, if done so, informal sector may loose the characteristics of its "informality".³⁹

Jagannathan's study (1987) seems to be a landmark in the context of informal sector analysis. He has developed a conceptual framework in assessing the true potential of an urban informal sector. According to him, the small scale enterprises of informal sector of many developing countries have contributed to increase in both private and social wealth. He has also held the opinion that although employment and wealth are generated in the urban informal sector, there are no institutional mechanisms available to ensure equitable diffusion. He is thus in favour of a practical policy that encourages diffuse urbanisation, by which the flexible adaptive manufacturing enterprises of the informal sector can be encouraged in small rural towns and large villages. This policy involves encouraging sub contracting in rural areas or smaller districts or sub-regional towns, so that labour can secure the benefits of economic growth without having to shift residence to overcrowded cites. This policy of diffuse urbanisation, according to him, would be far less expensive than the massive infrastructural investments required to tackle the manifold problem of rural poverty.⁴⁰

The existence of urban informal sector and its employment

potential have encouraged the large scale migration of rural people to the cities. Ashish Bose (1974) thus has pointed out that the process of urbanisation has been essentially a process of migration to the cities. The cities can provide employment in the informal sector to rural migrants who are largely unskilled and illiterate. Majumdar (1976) and Sethuraman (1977) have agreed that the primary reasons for rural-urban migration is economic, and the rural poor migrate to the cities in search of employment rather than better employment opportunities. In this connection, a study of Birla Institute of Scientific Research (1980), has argued in favour of the positive contribution made by this sector. This study reveals that informal sector is marked by significant turnovers both in occupations and labour mobility.

With regard to the policy implications, Studies made by Dattachaudhuri (1990) and Gupta (1991) command unquestionable respect. Odded Stark (1982), in his study has assumed a downward linkage between the formal and informal sector and then has concluded that informal sector lives and dies with the formal sector. It implies that informal sector can not prosper if formal sector did not.⁴¹ Dattachaudhuri, in his work, has established the fact that increasing capital cost is the reason for the informal sector units not to grow. Hence, given the provision of cheap credit to the informal sector, output and employment can be increased there. He then has refuted Odded stark, by establishing the fact that in spite of the downward linkages between the formal and informal sectors, the informal sector can expand in the face of a contracting formal sector.⁴²

Development policies like capital-subsidy policy and price subsidy policy to the informal sector have been often recommended. Gupta has criticised all these subsidies for not dealing with the effects of these policies on the welfare of the society. He has, thus, developed a model in the line of Harris-

Todaro. This model studies the impact of the welfare programmes on the informal sector. In his model, there exists open urban unemployment even in migration equilibrium in spite of the existence of the formal sector.⁴³

On the status of women, their role in the society and their position, numerous works have been done. Among the notable works about the problems, prospects, status and the changing scenario of the working women in India, we can mention the works of Padmini Sengupta (1960), Promilla Kapoor (1974), Devaki Jain (1977), P.Sundar (1981), Jaya Arunachalam and Nandini Azad (1985), Nirmala Banerjee (1989,1991), Sujata Gothoskar (1989), P.Devi Devaki (1994), etc. All these works highlight the patterns of employment, the wage-differentials, the sources of demand and supply of the female labour, the problems the women face in the employment etc. The literature on the role of women in the informal sector, in particular, is very limited in our country.

However, a number of literature on women's participation in informal enterprises in the global scenario have come out. Acknowledging the significance of women's participation in the informal sector — the subsequent studies oriented to explain why women are a majority in certain of its branches, have contributed to build up and popularise a paradigm in women's studies on the informal sector.

Many studies have reevaluated the inferior status which women occupy in the informal labour market [Arijpe (1977), Jelin (1977), Heyzer (1981) etc.]. These studies have tended to identify poor women, survival strategies and informal workers as synonymous in their analysis. The paradigm is recognizable in Heyzer's overview of women's participation in the informal sector in which she states :

"Many of the women in the informal sector came from extremely poor households and this includes single woman with children, women married to men in low-income brackets and older, married, divorced and widowed women for many of these women working in the informal sector is a matter of survival!"⁴⁴

Similarly, some studies such as Arijpe's (1977), have looked at women working in the informal sector, such as vending in the streets as performing a needless, unproductive activity. She speculates that these women would change jobs if they had the chance to.⁴⁵

Another important study of the women in the informal sector of Peruvian is done by Bunster (1983). In his work, Bunster transmits, when looking at a Peruvian market, the image of women as powerless, victimised people on the very fringe of society, who suffer from authoritarianism and constant intimidation by inspectors. They are seen by the author as "..... Powerless to fight back".⁴⁶

Although it can be argued that the situation portrayed above seems to constitute a pattern in many third world countries, other studies have also argued against the validity of the paradigm of poor women in the informal sector, by highlighting remarkable exceptions. The case of women in Grand Dakar as shown by Van de Laar (1991) is a good example. This study has found that it is privileged women who could participate in the informal sector.⁴⁷

The studies made by Indian scholars, however, are different in character. They have mostly given the statistical information of women's absorption in the Indian informal sector. Of course, there are some exceptions to this. The studies of

Malavika Karlekar (1982), Sujata Gothoskar (1992), Renana Jhabvala (1992), Helji Noponen (1987) and Nirmala Banerjee (1991) etc. have dealt with some special dimensions of women workers of informal sector. Helji Noponen has shown how the women's organisations under the able leadership of WWF and SEWA are helping in mobilising the street vendors, fisherwomen, and the women petty traders in South India. Noponen views that the lack of institutional credit is the main problem of the women workers and her study has shown how the women's organisations have come out with the positive results of the institutional credit programmes.

Renana Jhabvala (1992), on the otherhand, has concentrated in highlighting the problems the women petty traders in Gujarat and in other states of India are facing. According to her, they face not only the financial problems but also the police atrocities and exploitation. She feels that the women workers of the informal sector are compelled to bear with these evils only because they do not have the legal status. It is this legal status for which SEWA, according to her, is trying to get for them.⁴⁸

Among the other studies about the women workers of informal sector, the following have some sort of relevance to our study. The study of the socio-economic aspects of the brick-kiln workers in Kerala by Leela Gulati (1979) is worth notable . She has discussed the causes of the wage differentials between male and female workers in the informal sector industry. She is worried to note that women's wages for work which is not physically less exhaustive than that done by men are only about half of those earned by men.⁴⁹ Kumari (1989) has studied the constraints that women face while working in the informal sector. She finds that the method of payment of wages, retrenchment etc. in the informal sector are all arbitrary. The hours of work are

longer than permitted by law and also medical and maternity benefits are conspicuously absent.⁵⁰

Nirmala Banerjee (1976), on the basis of an empirical study in Calcutta, has said that women have a target income level which they try to attain in order to survive. Over a period of seven years, an increasing number of women were coming found by her even though the wage rates remained almost constant in the informal sector. The factors that encourage the participation of the women workers in the informal sector can be understood, with some limitations, from the studies of Neera Desai and Maitreyee Krishnaraj (1982). They have found that economic development with its capital intensity has adversely affected female labour absorption in this sector. Growing mechanisation has reduced the number of women in foodgrains processing, food and vegetable products, footwear and earthware. The same trend is seen in construction, trade and commerce. Desai and Acharya's Study (1986), confirms that the displacement of labour is continuing. There has been some structural changes which is tilted against female occupation. Displacement of women by men in the formal as well as in informal sector is more pronounced in Punjab and Haryana.

Chakrabarti and Tewari have also said that with industrial development there will emerge a preference for men even in predominantly feminine jobs. This is inevitable in view of the growing mechanisation in various occupations (quoted in Kumari, 1989). But Ranade and Ramchandran (1982) have denied such possibility and have gone further to comment that transplantation, food processing and domestic services still prefer female over male. They, however, agreed that changes in land relations have adversely affected the rural women workers in agriculture. It has pushed them down to a state of dependence on men.

1.3 : Objectives of the Study

Darjeeling hill areas in the state of West Bengal has a higher work participation rate of female than the Indian average or the state average. Due to the social constraints, like the economic hardship in the family, the alcoholism among the male earning members among the poor, the women are compelled to take up various jobs in Darjeeling hills. But their entry in the formal sector activities is very limited. The major formal sector establishment in Darjeeling hills where the female workers are in majority is the plantation industries. Elsewhere, they are rarely seen. The unskilled, semiskilled women are absorbed in various informal sector works. This varies from working as maid servants to affluent families, to wage labourers in construction work, to artisan workers in home based industries, to independent vendors of commodities, to the owners of roadside restaurants etc. in the urban areas. In the rural areas agriculture is the only informal sector activity where hill women are taking part actively. It is quite surprising to see women traders and vendors every where in all three major urban centres of Darjeeling hills dealing in petty consumption items to tea leaves, vegetables, cosmetics, woolen garments and foreign goods. While the majority of women are full time workers, there are women who have taken up part-time jobs such as weaving, knitting and embroidery works in the informal sector. Darjeeling, famous for its educational institutions, recently has envisaged the upcoming of a large number of nursery and other preparatory schools for the children. These privately-run schools mostly employ the educated women as the teachers and instructors at a very low wage. The employment in all these establishment is very much unsecured and the working conditions are not protected by law.

There have been a number of empirical studies about the informal sector undertaken in selected areas in different parts

of our country. But the hill areas of the state of West Bengal where the women play a pivotal role in the society have remained completely undiscovered. The hill areas are also experiencing a fast rural to urban migration of people, thereby increasing the urban population and with that the female workers in the informal sector is expected to increase further. It is in this context, the present study is a modest endeavour to study the problems involved in the process of such participation of hill women in the informal sector as well as the manner in which working women's lives in this sector are being affected by the process of economic development, social change and population dynamics. An attempt has also been made to trace out the entrepreneurial qualities of the women workers. It has also been tried to find out whether the migrant or the native women in the urban informal manufacturing sector have proved themselves to be successful entrepreneurs. Having studied the nature of the informal sector works in the rural and urban areas of Darjeeling hills, efforts have been made to assess their potentials too.

Voluntary organisations are seen to play a crucial role today in mobilising the workers of the informal sector. This study also intends to examine the role played by such organisation, if any, in Darjeeling hills. The lacuna in this direction would also be highlighted at the same time. Further, the study is extended to prescribe some policy implications in regard to informal sector activities. It seems that some observers have tended to undermine certain policy considerations. Even if its granted that informal sector employs people, particularly women, produce useful goods and provides income earning opportunities, the question of public intervention in economic and social matters can't be decided on the consideration alone that the sector is absolutely informal. Whether the emphasis should be on promoting more formalisation or should the informal sector be

allowed to continue and grow in the Darjeeling hill areas would be a point of discussion and prescription accordingly.

1.4 : Methodology and Limitation of the Study

This socio-economic study of the women workers of the informal sector in Darjeeling hills is an empirical one. Therefore, it is based on the survey research technique. The bulk of the informations about them are acquired from the field through observations and interview schedule. Personal interactions with many such workers also gave insights of their problems. As the women workers of the urban informal sector constitute a heterogeneous group, stratified method has been used while collecting the sample workers. By doing so, it has been tried to eliminate between-the-strata error and the proper representation of the population.

To get acquainted with the role of women in the rural informal agricultural and allied activities, in Darjeeling hills, two agriculture based villages --- one each from Kalimpong subdivision and Darjeeling subdivision have been selected at random. The reference of these two villages have been given in chapter III while explaining the role of the women workers in the rural informal sector. The informations about the works connected with agriculture performed by the women have also been collected from the randomly picked up households from the two villages.

Besides these primary data, other necessary data have been collected from various types of secondary sources. A few such secondary sources are the tea statistics, published by the Tea Board, various issues of the district census handbook and many other public documents.

For studying the various themes, related to these women workers, in depth, statistical tools have also been used. For example, to find out the determinants of the entrepreneurial

traits and also of the earnings of the women workers engaged in informal sector activities, multiple regression has been carried out. In the process of analysis, chi-square test has also been undertaken. Besides, to explain the nature of relationship between two variables, correlation coefficient has also been calculated.

This study, however, is not free from its limitations. Several problems that arose during the course of field work and later on have, to some extent, reduced the scope of the work. The respondent women were mostly illiterate and poor. The widespread illiteracy and ignorance of theirs at a time helped in getting free, frank and sincere responses, but on the other appeared to create problems in getting precise informations. Their inability to give the exact information to the researcher had sometimes put him in trouble in generalising the case.

It is a general phenomenon that the respondents do not want to give the exact picture of their income and expenditure. In this case too, the incorrect informations from the respondents, particularly about their income and the pattern of consumption put the matter on some occasion in a very ambiguous situation. In some cases, language was also a problem to communicate with. While interviewing a few of the aged Tibetan lady engaged in weaving and in home based production, the researcher was required to take the help of the interpreter, as they were not well conversant in other languages except their mother tongue. There was the possibility of these interpreters to use their own judgement while answering for others. This may have affected the survey result to a limited extent.

1.5 : Distribution of Chapters

Chapter I : Introduction.

Chapter II deals with the historical backdrop of the district of

Darjeeling in West Bengal along with the causes of the growth of the urban informal sector with special reference to the stagnation in the plantation industries of the hills since 1951. The causes of heavy concentration of the women workers in the informal sector of hills have also been dealt in this chapter.

Chapter III is devoted to study the nature of rural informal activities where women are absorbed in large number. The rural informal sector, in fact, constitutes of the agricultural activities. And accordingly, the differential participation of male and females in different agricultural occupations have been calculated and it has been shown that the contribution of women in various enterprises in the rice-based hilly farming is greater than that of men. In a separate section, in the chapter, the informal contracting processes in the agricultural sector have been discussed. And quite in support of Ashoke Rudra's content, it has been found that the attached agricultural labourers in the hills earn some rent over the semiattached and the daily wage labour.

Chapter IV onwards we move on to the nature of the urban informal activities of women workers. In chapter IV, the problems and the socio-economic aspects of women construction workers have been analysed. Chapter V, on the otherhand, discovers the role played by the most neglected domestic servants. Employers' attitude towards the servants have always been questioned. It is in this context, a section in this chapter has been devoted to study this particular aspect.

Self-employment has been considered to be the best policy in view of the increasing unemployment situation in our country. We have studied the role and status of self-employed women, particularly the petty traders in the hill economy in chapter VI.

Chapter VII has dealt with the problems of women entrepreneurs in

the home based industries in the hills. It has been established that the women workers of Darjeeling hills have the required entrepreneurial traits and given the adequate support, entrepreneurship in the home based industries can be well developed. It has also been shown in this chapter that the immigrant entrepreneurs in Darjeeling hills like the Tibetan and Bhutia women have proved themselves as more successful entrepreneurs than the majority natives. This is the chapter where a few interesting case studies have been incorporated which help establish the above phenomenon.

In chapter VIII the common institutional features of the various urban informal occupations of women are analysed. The important determinants of the informal sector earnings in the hill areas of Darjeeling district have also been found out using multiple regression analysis.

Chapter IX varies greatly from the rest in the sense that here the role of various govt. and non-govt. organisations in mobilising the women workers of our study-area has been carried out. A reference to a few notable women's organisations in Indian context has been made in order to highlight the role such organisations can play for the purpose of a meaningful contribution to uplift the status of the exploited women workers in the society.

Chapter X contains the concluding remarks and the suggestions made accordingly for the upliftment of the status and conditions of the women workers engaged in the informal sector of Darjeeling hills.

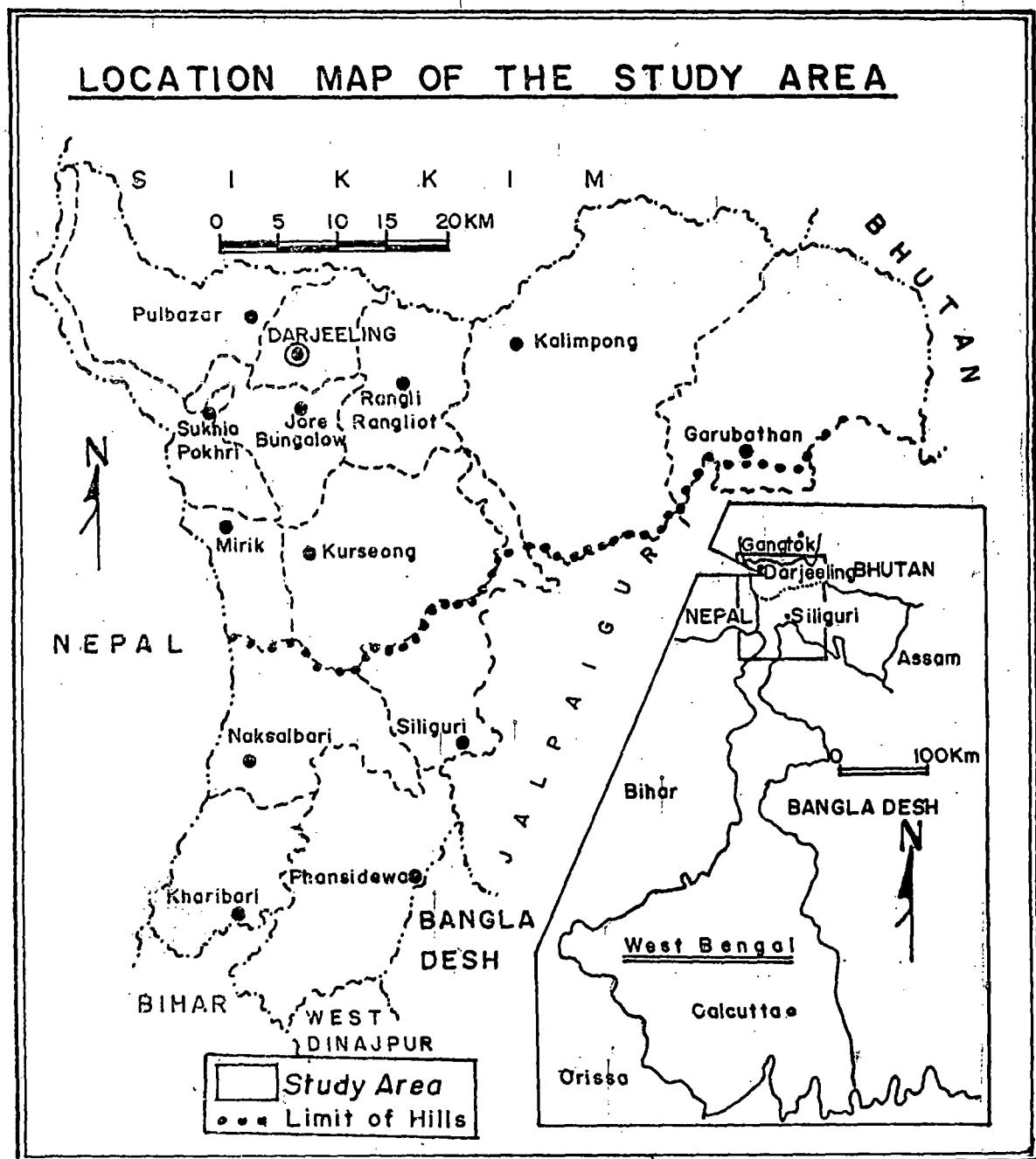
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LOCATION MAP OF THE STUDY AREA



Chapter II

The Growth of Urban Informal Sector in the Historical Backdrop of Darjeeling District

2.1 : A Brief History of Darjeeling District

Darjeeling, lying between $26^{\circ}31'$ and $27^{\circ}13'$ north latitude and between $87^{\circ}59'$ and $88^{\circ}53'$ east longitude, is the northernmost district in the state of West Bengal in India. In shape, it's an irregular triangle. The name, Darjeeling, is a corruption of Dorje-ling and means the place of the Dorje, the mystic thunder-bolt of the Lamaist Monastery which stood on the top of the observatory hill.¹

The history of Darjeeling shows a frequent change in its rulers. Upto the beginning of the 18th century, it was a part of the dominions of the Raja of Sikkim. During the reign of Chador Namgyal (1700-1716), areas in the southeast were lost to Bhutan. However, Chador Namgyal was able to clear much of the country under Bhutanese occupation.² But in 1706, what is now Kalimpong and Rhenock were annexed by the King of Bhutan. Towards the end of the 18th century (1788-89) the Gurkhas of Nepal overran Sikkim as far east as Teesta and annexed the terai.

After the termination of Anglo-Nepalese War (1816) the tract which Nepal had wrested from the Raja of Sikkim was ceded to the East India Company. As per the treaty of Titaliya (1817) between East India Company and Nepal, the whole of the country between the Mechi and Teesta was restored to the Raja of Sikkim and his Sovereignty was accordingly guaranteed by the company. Sikkim was thus maintained as a "Buffer State" between Nepal and Bhutan.

Ten years after this treaty, boundary dispute arose

between Sikkim and Nepal. According to the terms of the said treaty, the matter was referred to the Governor-General. Two officers, Capt. Lloyd and Mr. Grant were deputed in 1828 to settle the dispute. Lloyd spent a few days in February, 1829 at the "Old Gurkha Station" of Darjeeling and was attracted by the possibilities of Darjeeling Spur as a centre which would engross all the trade of the country and as a position of great strategic importance commanding the entrance into Nepal and Bhutan.³ Grant reported accordingly to the then governor General, Lord William Bentinck, the numerous advantages to the British employees in India by a Sanatorium at Darjeeling and also recommended its occupation for military purposes as the key of a pass into Nepal territory.⁴ In the same year Captain J.D.Herbert, Deputy Surveyor-General, was deputed to examine the country with Mr. Grant. He strongly justified its claim for such a purpose.

Lord William Bentinck directed General Lloyd (formerly Captain Lloyd) to start negotiation with the Raja of Sikkim. And in the pretext of enquiring into the causes of incursion from Nepal of Lepchas who had taken refuge to Sikkim, he succeeded in obtaining a deed of grant on the 1st February, 1835 executed by the Raja of Sikkim. The transition of the deed was worded as follows:

The Governor-General having expressed his desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I the Sikkimputti Raja, out of friendship to the said Governor-General hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company that is all the lands South of Great Rangeet river east of the Balasun, Kahail and Little

Rangeet rivers and West of the Rungno and
Mahanadi rivers.⁵

General Lloyd and Dr. Chapman were sent in 1836 to explore the country to ascertain the nature of its climate and to investigate the potentialities of the place. On receipt of their report it was finally decided to build a sanatorium at Darjeeling in 1837.

The peaceful relation between Sikkim King and the East India Company lasted for almost a decade. There was no more cessation of Sikkim territory. But their relation strained in 1849 following the arrest and detention of Dr. Hooker and Campbell in Sikkim during their tour. As no protest on the part of the British Govt. could obtain their speedy release, a punitive expedition was forced over the borders in February, 1850. The surrender of Raja led the East India Company to annex the whole of the Darjeeling district which covered an area of 640 sq. miles. Thus did the district of Darjeeling pass into British possession and that too without a shot being fired.

Owing to constant violation of the treaty of Titaliya by Sikkim, in 1860 an expeditionary force first under Dr. Campbell and then under Colonel Gawler with Asley Eden as envoy was sent. In March 1861, a treaty was concluded at Tumlong, the then Capital of Sikkim. This treaty put an end to the frontier disturbance with Sikkim and helped flow of Commerce beyond the frontier. The annexation of Darjeeling was confirmed. Finally, the Daling . . Subdivision of which Kalimpong is the headquarter and which is bounded by Jaldhaka and Teesta rivers in the east and West respectively; together with the Bengal-Duars was annexed from Bhutan in 1864. These areas were included in the Darjeeling district in 1866, thereby increasing the area from 640 square miles to 1164 square miles.

The District then consisted of two sub-divisions: Dar-

jeeling and Kalimpong. In 1891, the Kurseong Subdivision was formed from the sadar subdivision. In 1907, Siliguri subdivision was formed from the Kurseong subdivision.

Hope Namgyal, formerly Gyaldo of Sikkim, held that Darjeeling was originally sought for use as a sanatorium, but after several years, pressed by the intensity of Anglo-Sikkimese clashes "the British had more cause to reflect on the wider aspects of the Darjeeling grant".⁶ Indeed, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, commercial interests and strategic considerations of the British Government shaped the destiny of Darjeeling.⁷

A new administrative and political phenomenon, which created history in India, is the formation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988. A blood-bath political agitation was carried out under the leadership of GNLF Supremo, Mr. Subash Ghising for the creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland in the Darjeeling hills during the 80's. The demand for a separate state was thought to be the most urgent one in order to safeguard the national identity of the Indian Gorkhas. Ultimately in 1988, through a tripartite agreement between the Centre, State and the GNLF party, the DGHC was set up with a view to creating an idea of state within the state. The entire hill region along with a selected areas of plains of Garubathan police station in Kalimpong subdivision, Panighata from Naxalbari P.S. and Sukna in Kurseong subdivision have been included in the jurisdiction of DGHC. As per the tripartite agreement, some economic and political powers have been transferred from the State to the DGHC in order to allow it function effectively. After the creation of DGHC, the Zilla Parishad - highest body in the existing three tier Panchayati system became non-existent and as such after the amendment of Panchayat Act, Mahakuma Parishad with same power of Zilla Parishad has been set up for Siliguri subdivision. At

present, the entire district has been divided into the two distinctly separate areas of (i) DGHC and (ii) Siliguri Mahakuma.

2.2 : Some Interesting Features of Darjeeling District

The area of the district is 3149.0 square kilometers. The natural feature consists of a portion of outlying hills of lower Himalayas and a stretch of territory lying along the base of the hills known as the terai. The terai is only 91 meters high above the sea level but there are parts of the district in the hills which are nearly 3658 meters high. Darjeeling district has many characteristics which are not found elsewhere in India. A few of such characteristics are discussed below:

(i) The land-use pattern of Darjeeling is different from that is seen in other parts of West Bengal. The Himalayas are the source of many rivers and streams. Forests occupy a very significant percentage of the land. It covers nearly 40% of the total area of the district. But unfortunately, this percentage over the last couple of years is found to be declining. Due to illegal felling and mismanagement by the West Bengal Government's Forest Department the forest cover in the districts' hill areas has plummeted to a shameful 38% from 60% in the 50's. Local environmentalists say that a survey by NGOs in collaboration with Forest Department in 1989, actually found that forest cover had dropped to just 15%.⁸ In West Bengal, however, forest covers a meagre 13.5% of the total geographical area. The interdependence between forests in Darjeeling and the economy is much greater than commonly thought of. The Water-Cycle, fertility, soil erosion, landslides, waterflow, degree of rainfall, moisture retention, crop physiology, evapotranspiration of the sensitive Himalayan region depend upon the quality of forest area and its quantum. The Himalayan region of Darjeeling district is equally responsible for maintaining a steady monsoon, water supply and above all the ecology system as a whole in the state of West Bengal.

(ii) The district of Darjeeling has a mixed population of both hill and plain people. According to the census report of 1981, 53.83% of the population live in the three subdivisions in the hill areas and the rest 46.17% in the plains.⁹ The demographic composition of the people of the district is also quite interesting to look at. It is seen that the proportion of SC population in most of the blocks of the hill subdivisions of the district varies from 7 to 10 percent while the same is as high as 34% in the Kharibari - Phansidewa block in Siliguri subdivision. The ST population in the hill blocks of the district is slightly higher than that of SC population. On the other hand, the Kharibari - Phansidewa block only has 32% of its population under ST category. In the hills, Kami, Sarki and Damai form the major scheduled castes whereas in the plains of the district, majority of the scheduled castes are Rajbanshis next to which are Bagdis, Namasudras, Jatiya Kaibartyas etc. Among the STs Lepchas, Bhutias, Sherpas, Dukpas, Yolmos, & Kagatay Tibetans constitute the majority; their counterparts in the plains of the district are the adivasis (ie. Oraons, Mundas, Santals, Malpaharias, Kharias and Meches).

(iii) Among other typical characteristics of the district we can also speak of the population growth. It is interesting to note that population growth of the district has always been above the growth rate of the state population. Since its inclusion in East India Company's colony in the middle of the 19th century, there had been considerable immigration of people from neighbouring areas from time to time to take part in the development activity of the region and for employment in the tea gardens which were being opened one after another. The immigration in the hills initially was encouraged by Dr. Campbell, the then superintendent of Darjeeling. The largest increase in population in the district during the last couple of decades was

recorded in the ten-year period of 1951-1961. This period recorded 36% increase in population. In this context, it has also been observed that the three hill subdivisions have not grown so much as the Siliguri Subdivision in the plains. The migration of people from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and very recently from Assam and other North-eastern states due to political reasons had led to a very high rate of growth of population in Siliguri subdivision during 1951-61 and thereafter.

(iv) Although the growth rate of population of the district is above the state average, it is interesting to note that the district has a lower density of population in comparison to the West Bengal average. According to the 1981 census, the average density of population was 614 per square k.m. in West Bengal but it was only 327 per square k.m. in the Darjeeling district. The low density of population is obviously due to the difficult terrain and inaccessibility of mankind in the steep slopes of Himalayas in the district. The hills also represent considerable variations in this regard. Kalimpong town and Kalimpong rural blocks I and II and Garubathan are all located on the east of Teesta river. These areas together represent nearly 45% of the hill territory but only 30% of the hill population live in there. The areas to the West of Teesta occupy nearly 55% of the hills but account for nearly 70% of the total hill population.

(v) Density of population in the Darjeeling hills appears to depend largely on the location of tea gardens. Most of the tea gardens of the hills in Darjeeling are situated on the Western side of Teesta. This is evident from the fact that Kurseong block has the highest number of tea gardens (30), followed by Darjeeling (19), Jorebunglow (16), Sukiapokhri (11), Rangli Rangliot (9), Mirik (5) and Pulbazar (2). On the otherhand, in the whole region of Kalimpong-Garubathan, the total number of tea-gardens are only six.¹⁰ The existence of around 95% the

gardens have invited more people to get settled to the western side of Teesta leaving Kalimpong-Garubathan area mostly dependent on agriculture which always exert a push of labour to the industrial belt. As a result, density of people is more to the western part of the hills.

(vi) It is already mentioned that forest occupies nearly 40% of the total area of the district - a large share of which is prevalent in the hills. The hills supply only 14.2% of land for plantation and cultivation. This is in sharp contrast to other parts of West Bengal. For example, in Nadia district 80% of the land is available for cultivation while in North and South Dinajpur districts land available for cultivation is nearly 84% of the total area.

(vii) Darjeeling district differs in the sex-ratio too. Since 1901, in West Bengal males have always out-numbered the females. The sex ratio in 1901, was 945. Upto 1931, this ratio was declining and it was only in 1941 that there was a slight improvement in the sex-ratio. This trend, however, did not continue and it was found, in 1961, that the number of females per 1000 males in West Bengal was only 891. This ratio in 1981 stood at 911 and 914 in 1991. Darjeeling district too had a fluctuating sex-ratio but surprisingly this ratio was always lower than that existed for the state as a whole. The sex-ratio of the district in 1981 was only 888 which has slightly increased to 896 in 1991. This alternating rise and fall in the sex-ratio is caused by the migration of people in the district from the neighbouring states and countries like Nepal and Bangladesh. This is an indicator of the fact that Darjeeling has a floating migratory population which is not very often found in many parts of our country.

2.3 : Growth of the Urban Informal Sector in Darjeeling Hill Areas

In the eastern Himalayas, Darjeeling hills have the

highest concentration of tea industries. Since the annexation of Darjeeling by the East India company from the Raja of Sikkim, tea industry along with chincona plantation industry had received the direct and indirect patronage of the rulers. Over the years, the plantation sector has absorbed the largest number of workers, both male and female, in the hill areas. The tea industry is not only the principal source of employment but also has played an important role in earning foreign exchanges. Side by side of the tea industry, agriculture and tertiary sector have also absorbed a large number of workers. Inspite, majority of the workers of the hill areas are in the informal sector. Thus, it appears very necessary to go deeper into the past and present of the tea-industry and the agricultural network of the hills in order to highlight the growth of the informal sector in the wake of the deteriorating condition of the tea-industry, in particular.

2.3.1 : The Tea Industry -- Origin and Early Growth

The discovery of tea in Bengal dates from 1826 when Mr. Bruce found the plant growing indigenously in Assam and brought down with him some plants and seeds.¹¹ But the steps towards the cultivation of tea in India started when Warren Hastings, the then Governor General appointed a committee with a view to formulating a plan for tea cultivation in 1834. Attempt was made by the Govt. to establish experimental plantation in Lakhimpur in upper Assam in 1835 but the project failed.¹² By 1837, experimental tea plantations were again started in Punjab and Assam and in 1839 private enterprise took the field with the formation of the Assam Tea Company.

The introduction of tea into Darjeeling is due to captain James, who persuaded Govt. of India to obtain seeds from China which he distributed among the residents of the district to experience with.¹³ In the mean time, in 1838 Dr. Campbell was posted as Superintendent of Darjeeling. Captain James' endeavour

was encouraged by him and started pleading with the govt. all along for establishment of experimental plantations in Darjeeling region. Finally, between 1840 and 1851, Dr. Campbell and Major Commelin were successful in setting up nurseries at Darjeeling and Lebong respectively.¹⁴ Although the experimental planting had started, much headway was not made till 1853.

The development of tea industry in Darjeeling district on an extensive scale, however, started in 1856-57. The earlier planters, owing to lack of experience, made many mistakes. These mistakes were remedied and the next ten years marked a steady progress and prosperity as the suitability of the soil and climate became apparent thereby placing the industry on a solid footing of commercial enterprise. By 1866, the number of tea gardens were 39 with 10392 areas of land under tea cultivation. During the four years following 1870, the tea industry in Darjeeling continued to develop in an even greater ratio and by 1874, shown in the following table the number of gardens had been doubled from 56 in 1870 to 113 in 1874. The cultivated area too

Table 2.1 : Number of Tea Gardens, Area Under Cultivation, Outturn and Employment : 1866-1874

Year	Number of Gardens	Area under cultivation (in acres)	Outturn of tea in lbs.	Number of labourers employed
1866	39	10392	433715	N.A.
1867	40	9214	582640	N.A.
1868	44	10067	851549	6859
1869	55	10769	1278869	7445
1870	56	11046	1689186	8347
1871	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1872	74	14503	2938626	12361
1873	87	15695	2956710	14019
1874	113	18888	3927911	19424

Source : W.W.Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, 1877, P.165

rose in the same period from 11046 acres to 18888 acres, the outturn from 1689186 lbs. to 3927911 lbs and the number of labourers employed from 8347 to 19424. The growth is remarkable from the viewpoint of the fact that while during this period the area cultivated increased by 70.99%, the outturn and the employment had increased by 132.53% and 132.71% respectively.

It is to be noted that most of these tea gardens were established in the two subdivisions viz. Darjeeling and Kurseong. The Kalimpong subdivision was almost closed to tea. It was due to the government's policy to reserve the area for forest and ordinary cultivation.¹⁵ As such, by the end of the century, there were only 4 tea gardens in the Kalimpong subdivision.¹⁶ Even today, the position of the gardens in this area has not changed at all. At present, the number of tea gardens in the subdivision is only six of which the Upper Fagu Tea garden has been locked-out since 15th March, 1968.

By 1891, the number of tea gardens rose upto 177 which started declining afterwards. The reason was that from this time onwards, tea estates were more and more organised under big limited concerns so that although the total area under tea cultivation increased, the number of separate gardens decreased.¹⁷ The number of gardens in 1941 had declined to 136 although the acreage, total yield and the total employment increased continuously. The yield was more than doubled. 1951, on the other hand, marked a fall in the acreage, production and also in the total number of labour employed.

The following table shows how the tea-industry grew in the district during 1881 to 1951.

Table 2.2 : Growth of Tea Gardens in Darjeeling District
: 1881-1951

Year	No. of Tea Gardens	Total Area under tea (in hectare)	Yield (in lb)	No. of labourers employed
1881	155	11347	5160316	N.A.
1891	177	18234	10910487	N.A.
1901	170	20690	13535537	40451
1911	156	20595	14250615	39561
1921	168	23602	14030946	48710
1931	169	24471	20496481	63665
1941	136	25269	24815216	69699
1951	138	25032	29283499	69590

Source : District Census Handbook, Darjeeling, 1951

2.3.2 : Stagnation in Tea Industry Since 1951

Till 1951, it is very difficult to find a separate account of the tea industry in the hills and the terai of Darjeeling district. The table-2.2 represents the picture for the district as a whole. Nevertheless to say, the industry during the last 100 years had grown in the hills in such a way that the rural life style was determined by it. The tea-industry thus formed the back-bone of the hill economy.

But after 1951, during the last three decades, in particular, the industry has been infested by many diseases varying from low productivity to labour unrest and industrial sickness to final close down of many tea gardens. The problems of low productivity per hectare and per labourer employed in the tea gardens of Darjeeling hills have become so acute that its scope as employment generating industry has become questionable and as such the increasing population finds no other way than to migrate to urban centres in search of alternative employment. The tea

gardens right from their establishment in the hills had absorbed a larger proportion of women workers than the male workers. This was inevitable as the field works such as weeding, sickling, plucking of tea leaves and many other jobs are well-handled by the women workers. The overall stagnation of the industry in respect of the "production" and "employment" led to continuous inflow of the women workers in the informal sector.

The productivity and employment aspects of the tea gardens of the hill areas are dealt in briefly here which would give us an overview of the problem.

During the last three decades, it has been noticed that the average daily number of labour employed in the tea gardens of the hills had remained more or less static. During the same period, the employment potential of the tea gardens of the neighbouring areas (Such as Terai and Duars in West Bengal) has moderately increased. The following table highlights this fact.

Table 2.3 : Estimated Average Daily Number of Labour in Tea Gardens of Darjeeling Hills, Duars, and Terai : 1961-1990.

Year	Darjeeling	Terai	Duars	All West Bengal	All India
1961	42432	17310	129900	189642	816262
1965	42236	18067	130459	191762	806152
1970	45549	19177	135554	200280	759646
1975	44021	20050	136059	200130	774897
1980	45987	23290	149571	218848	846659
1985	46275	24893	161563	232563	892954
1990	48116	37875	162680	248671	986781

Source : Tea Statistics of different years, Tea Board of India

It is quite disappointing to look at the rise in average

daily number of labour employed in the Darjeeling hills. Since 1961, these tea gardens have almost a static employment. Only a meagre 13.39% rise has been recorded during the last 30-year period. During the same period, Terai, on the otherhand, recorded 118.8% rise in labour employment. Duars gardens also have recorded a slightly higher (25.23%) rise in employment generation capacity. The hill areas have lagged drastically behind the average employment growth rate of both West Bengal (31.23%) and all India (20.89%) level.

Coupled with this, hill tea-gardens witnessed a low productivity per hectare as well as per labour. Though over the years productivity per hectare has increased from 473 Kg. in 1951 to 546 Kg. in 1961, 1965 recorded a fall. After 1965, productivity has continued to increase but it appears to be very marginal compared to the Duars, Terai and All West Bengal average. Table 2.4 helps understanding the comparative productivity per hectare in various years in tea growing areas of West Bengal. As seen in

Table 2.4 : Productivity of Tea per hectare (in Kgs) : 1961-1990

Year	Darjeeling Hills	Duars	Terai	All West Bengal	All India
1961	546	1161	878	990	971
1965	519	1191	921	1015	1072
1970	557	1337	1117	1150	1182
1975	596	1470	1197	1338	1341
1980	659	1666	1383	1424	1494
1985	652	1853	1815	1606	1641
1990	723	1684	1583	1480	1729

Source : Tea Statistics of different years, Tea Board of India.

the table, the productivity per hectare in Darjeeling hills over the period of last 30-year had remained less than 50% of what the other tea-growing areas in West Bengal have experienced.

In this context we can refer the inference drawn by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) on the basis a sample study. It states that the productivity per hectare has a positive correlation with the size of the tea estates. This study found that 41% of the total tea estates in Darjeeling Hills have areas more than 200 hectares and have comparatively high productivity (2/3rd of the average All India productivity). But the average productivity of Darjeeling hill gardens has been pulled down by the extreme low-productivity of the estates having areas below 100 hectares particularly and more accurately by the estates having areas less than 50 hectares. These estates are found to be operating under great diseconomies of scale.¹⁸

The NCAER finding is further corroborated by the fact that Duars region where productivity rate has been higher than all India average, about 50% of the tea gardens have areas more than 400 hectares. The number of tea gardens falling under this high hectarage in Darjeeling hills is only 8% which itself explains the difficulties in economies of scale the hill gardens are facing.¹⁹

Not only the productivity per hectare but also the productivity per labour is inexplicably low in Darjeeling gardens. It is, in fact, very difficult to measure the labour - productivity as the exact number of the productive labourers is not easily countable because of the absence of the reliable statistics on manhours and employment. Also, it is difficult to evaluate the performance of the labourers because of their variety in skills and intensity involved at different stages of production. However, Tea Board of India, on the basis of the estimated average daily labourers employed in the tea gardens calculates it annually. The same has been considered here. Likewise, the productivity per hectare, productivity per labour are also the minimum in Darjeeling hills compared to other tea-

growing areas. Incidentally, productivity per labour stood to be less than 45% of that found in Duars and less than 50% of the all West Bengal average. Table-2.5 below compares the productivity per labour in various tea growing areas of West Bengal.

Table 2.5 : Productivity of Tea Per Labour (in KG) in Various Tea Producing Areas : 1961-1990.

Year	Darjeeling	Duars	Terai	All West Bengal	All India
1961	234	505	529	447	425
1965	222	522	509	454	454
1970	221	584	624	505	551
1975	243	647	656	559	629
1980	276	699	681	609	673
1985	279	755	882	677	735
1990	301	702	558	602	730

Source : Tea statistics of different years, Tea Board of India.

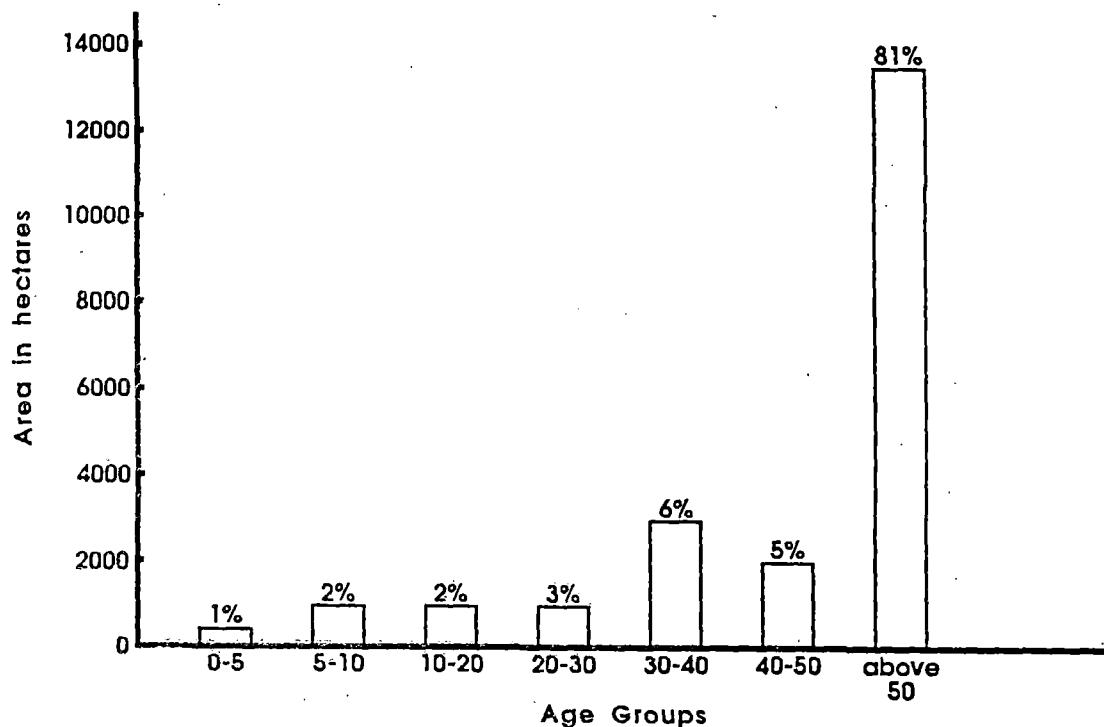
Between 1961 and 1970 Darjeeling hills witnessed a fall in labour productivity whereas all other tea-producing areas of the state witnessed a significant rise in it. A marginal increase in labour productivity in Darjeeling has been recorded during 70's & 80's. It was only in 1990 that the labour productivity crossed the 300 Kg mark in Darjeeling which seemed to be too little compared to the labour productivity of 702 Kg. in Duars and 558 Kg. in Terai in the same year. The All West Bengal average was also quite high (exactly double) to 602 Kg., All India level labour productivity being further high of 730 Kg.

Such a slow and negligible growth in employment, productivity etc. in Darjeeling tea gardens are attributed to a number of important factors. The owners of these gardens are not the local people and hence the profits are not reinvested there. The

profits are diverted to another areas. As a result, Darjeeling tea industry has extraordinarily lagged behind in the replantation, extension and infilling of the vacancy schemes. Most of the researchers have pointed out that the low productivity, in this region, is due to the ages of bush and decreasing fertility of the soil. More than 80% of bushes are more than 50 years old. The proportion of area under young bushes (up to ten years old) is less than 4%. The bushes after 50 years are generally characterised by diminishing returns and replete with frames riddled with pests and diseases. Generally highest yield is given by the tea bushes within the age 30-40 years. In Darjeeling only 6% of the total tea bushes falls under this category.²⁰

The following figure shows the area covered by bushes according to their ages (as on 1992).

Fig. 2.1 : Area Under Different Age Group of Bushes



Source : Based on data from Tea Statistics, Tea Board of India.

In the span of last 40 years, the replantation rate has

also been very low (2% approx). As far as extension is concerned, during 1951-1990, the area under tea in Darjeeling hills had increased only by 21% whereas in the same period, in the Terai, it has increased by more than 58%. Here is table-2.6 that shows the growth of area under tea cultivation in various regions of West Bengal.

Table 2.6 : Area Under Tea Cultivation (in hectares).

Year	Darjeeling	Duars	Terai	All West Bengal	All India
1951	16569	54609	8402	79580	316840
1961	18605	54756	9344	82705	331229
1971	18245	59485	10769	88479	356516
1981	19239	63418	11314	93971	383629
1985	19804	65816	12395	98015	398966
1990	20065	67760	13345	101170	416563
% increase					
over 1951	21.10	24.0	58.83	27.13	31.43

Source : Tea statistics of different years, Tea Board of India.

The lowest growth rate of extension, as seen in table-2.6, is mainly due to the financial constraints faced by the planters as well as the high cost of production. In general, the cost of production in hills is higher than that in the plains. Construction costs of some basic infrastructure facilities such as roads is much higher than that in the plains. The topographical variation in the region has accentuated this. There is tremendous lack of transport and communication, energy and irrigation which have profoundly hampered the productivity in these tea gardens.²¹

Also responsible for this apparent stagnation in the tea industry is the frequent change of gardens from one set of directors to another. The frequency of change of ownership in

Darjeeling hill areas is much higher than either in Duars or in Terai. For example, in between 1951 and 1981, 56% of Darjeeling gardens were affected by this change of owners, where as in Duars and Terai only 36.54% and 22.72% gardens underwent change of ownership.²² After the British left, most of the new planters came to tea business by accumulating wealth in wholesale trade or speculative business. Gardens had changed from one set of speculative owners to another set. In the meantime, the old owners had stripped the gardens off leaves and vitality. There had been cases of shade trees being cut and sold as firewood besides rampant "Strip plucking" at the time of change of ownership. This has certainly led to gradual fall in productivity of tea bushes. It is also stated that governments, both central and state, are more interested to take the surplus of the gardens in the form of various taxes but never cared positively to look at the health of the gardens. Some half-hearted measures were taken by the govt. for replantation of the bushes through different schemes of tea board. But at times it has been admitted by the tea board that money given to planters were not used in the gardens rather were shiphoned off to other speculative industries. Added to this is the bad management too. The frequent change of managers affected the long term stability of gardens and accountability became diffused.

Mid 80's was marked by continuous stoppages of works in the tea gardens due to the frequent and long strikes organised by the trade unions. This was inevitable in view of the spontaneous support of all classes of people of the hills, including the tea garden labourers towards the demand for creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland. During the period of political agitation in the hills, the leaves could not be plucked in time, as a result of which, the tea gardens suffered a setback in the production. This was, however, a temporary phenomenon and after the political

solution of the problem through this creation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC), no such continuous halt has occurred in the production of tea.

As a result of these factors, quite a few tea gardens have become "sick" in Darjeeling. Five such tea gardens have been undertaken by the West Bengal Tea Development Corporation (WBTDC).²³ The net loss incurred by the WBTDC in running these gardens in the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 stood respectively at Rs.65 lakh, Rs.59 lakh and Rs.90 lakh. The cumulative loss during these three years stood at Rs.7.08 cr., Rs.7.64 cr. and Rs.8.54 cr. respectively.²⁴ Even the TCCI faces the same problem. It has undertaken five tea gardens of Darjeeling hills under its direct control and management in view of their deteriorating condition. But the condition could not be improved. Out of these five, Vah Tukvar Tea Garden has been facing tremendous crisis. It has remained closed for quite a few months since the mid 1994 but TCCI neither has declared lockout there nor has taken any positive step towards the payment of a huge due amounting to nearly Rs.40 lakh to the labourers.

In view of such problems leading to a state of stagnation in tea industry, it has lost its character of absorbing the excess labour force. It is estimated that 10%-12% of the labour force in tea plantations remains unemployed.²⁵ The increasing population in the rural areas of Darjeeling hills finds it too difficult to depend on tea-industry and the undeveloped agriculture. The result is the outflow of people from rural to urban centres seeking job somewhere. As the formal sector puts entry barrier for them, the urban informal sector is bound to grow.

2.3.3 : Falling Land-man Ratio in Darjeeling Hills

Agriculture in the hills of Darjeeling district occupies the 2nd place after the tea-industry in absorbing the rural populations. The pressure of rising population on agriculture can

be understood from the fact that the agricultural labour category which was conspicuously absent in the hill areas till 1941, got recorded first time in the 1951 census and from 1961 onwards agricultural labourers assumed quite a prominent place. Incidentally, this is the most striking feature in all North Bengal districts. While the state of West Bengal as a whole recorded more than 80% increase in agricultural labourers, for four of the six districts of North Bengal agricultural labourers rose by more than 155% in 1971 as compared to the figure of 1961. The district wise break up for the three districts with unprecedented rise is as follows: Darjeeling 248.80%, Jalpaiguri 264.14% and Malda 156.75%.²⁶

This sharp increase in the population of agricultural labourers requires some explanations. In the north, especially in Terai and Duars region, the institution of share cropping grew out of land system atypical of other permanently settled areas of West Bengal. These areas were mostly uncultivable at the time of settlement and was thus not considered for Zamindari settlement. The areas were leased out through auction in "lots". The lot-owners or jotedars induced the tribal and semitribal communities to get settled in the unclaimed areas. Being attracted by a better source of living, these settlers started working as share-croppers. Thus a *jotedari-adhiari* system emerged in the dominant form in cultivation in Terai and Duars.²⁷

But Darjeeling hills differ socio-politically and topologically from both Terai and Duars. It has been already mentioned that areas of plantations industries and forests are more significant than that under food-crop cultivation in Darjeeling hills. Also, labour engaged in the agricultural sector is comparatively smaller than those engaged in plantations, forestry and other miscellaneous activities. The presence of large tracts of uncultivable land, shady, slanty and marshy areas and other

such physical handicaps have reduced the employment potential of hill agriculture. On top of all these, due to topographical peculiarities the average land-holding size is found to be much smaller in the hills.²⁸ The tea-industry has been unable to absorb the excess supply of labour and agriculture has no other alternative than to bear with the overcrowding on it. As a result, the land-man ratio became adverse overtime. The following table speaks about the falling land-man ratio in the Darjeeling hills.

Table 2.7 : Land-man Ratio in Darjeeling Hills

Year	1961	1971	1981	1991
Land-man Ratio	0.445	0.364	0.278	0.101

Source : M. Dasgupta, Project Report on Women Workers in the Informal Sector : A Case Study of the Hills and Plains of Darjeeling District, ICSSR, 1992

This diminishing land-man ratio has resulted in more intensive cultivation in the rural areas. The falling Land-man ratio has also resulted to work as the "push factor" encouraging the people to migrate to the urban areas and market places of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong in search of alternative employment. The migrating people mostly are less educated and unskilled and hence find the entry in the formal sector market very difficult. These labourers for the maintenance of their family or for their own survival are compelled to start doing something for self employment adopting absolutely labour intensive technique or get absorbed in part-time works or even full-time works in small establishments. The hill urban centres are the tourist centres too, where a large number of hotels, holiday homes, restaurants and transport means have come up. A sizeable section of the migrating people have managed to get part-time jobs in these hotels where they work as hotelboys, touts and even

coolies. The migrating women, on the otherhand, prefer to work as construction workers or domestic servants or roadside vendors. Thus, the urban informal sector has grown up in the hill areas of Darjeeling district and has remained a source of attractions to the rural migrants.

A few observations have been made, in this connection, in the hill areas and the plains of the Darjeeling district.

(i) That over the period the average size of landholding in the hill areas has declined. The 1931 census India recorded 7.21 acres as the average size of land holding in the hill areas. It declined to 5.21 acres in 1941 and by 1971 the same had come down to 1.19 acres. By 1981, the average size of land holding has further declined to a mere figure of 1.04 acre. Thus, during the last fifty-year period, total marginal holdings have increased considerably.

(ii) The proportion of small farmers has dwindled continuously and the small farmers have been relegated to the level of marginal farmers.

(iii) The concept of "agricultural labour" which was non-existent in the hills till 1951, has become prominent at present. The percentage of agricultural labourer in total workers in 1981 was 8.78% which is almost equal to the same for the district average of 8.96%.

(iv) The importance of the tea-plantations also appears to be declining in the hill economy so far the extra employment generation potential of the industry is concerned. Over the last forty years, the total number of labour force in tea-industry in the hills almost has remained stagnant.

(v) Small scale and cottage industries would have played pivotal role in mobilising the excess labour but no positive steps have been undertaken by the govt. in promoting these in the

pretext of topographical and communication difficulties in the hills.. As such, not even 2% of the hill population is found to be engaged in small scale industry.

(vi) The "tourism", however, has a veery bright prospect. But the rural areas are not covered by the tourism network. The tourism network is centralised only in a few urban centres. Supported by it, the transport sector has been very dynamic. In fact, a large proportion of people in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong depend upon the transport sector for their survival.

(vii) "Trade and Commerce", both medium, small & petty also have gained momentum over the years. And it must be mentioned here that this particular sector has absorbed quite a significant proportion of female workers.

(viii) There are 1046 inhabited villages in the district of which only 11 are identified, in 1981 census report, as villages with "concentration" of rural industries. And surprisingly all these villages are located in the plains and the industries are mostly concentrated in and around Siliguri town.

(ix) Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong are the three important hill towns and urban centres. But the importance of the hill urban areas has dwindled over the years with the increasing importance of Siliguri as a trade centre in the Terai area of the district. The rapid growth of Siliguri can be understood if we look at the population figures of the four important urban centres in the district.

Table 2.8 : The Growth of Population in Four Major Urban Centres of the District.

	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Darjeeling	21185	27224	33605	40651	42873	57608
Kalimpong	8776	11961	16677	25105	23430	28885
Kurseong	7451	8495	11719	13410	16425	18008
Siliguri	6067	10487	32480	65471	97462	154378

Source : Bengal District Gazetteers, A.J.Dash and District Census Handbooks, Darjeeling District, 1951, 1961, 1971 & 1981.

In the year 1931, the first time when Siliguri was considered to be an urban centre, it constituted only 14.28% of the total urban population of the district but by 1971, the proportion increased to 54.08% and to our surprise in 1981, 60.57% of the urban population of district were found in Siliguri.

Now it is not only the biggest urban centre in the district but also of North Bengal as a whole. Very recently it has been given the status of Municipal Corporation. In fact, after the partition, Siliguri emerged as the most important urban centre due to a certain strategic locational advantages. It is the gateway of the hills of Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam, Bhutan, Nepal and other north-eastern states. The growing markets in all these areas have made Siliguri as the main centre of trading activities. Further, the ethnic trouble of 80's in Assam, recent communal upsurge in Meghalaya and other neighbouring states and the continuous migration of people from Bangladesh in and around Siliguri has increased its population so remarkably. Siliguri's urban conglomeration had about 3.5 lakh population in 1985 which has crossed a figure of five lakh at present.

It can be summed up that while growing informal sector

activities is the main feature of the hill urban centres, Siliguri is characterised by rapid growth of both the formal and informal sector activities. If the locational advantage had contributed so largely in the growth of Siliguri in Terai, the locational disadvantage followed by the closure of trade route from Kalimpong to China (formerly Tibet) had led to the declining importance of the hill urban centres.

2.4 : The Informal Sector as Principal Source of Employment to Hill Women

Informal sector employs a large segment of the female workforce in India. It covers marginal workers²⁹ as well as workers living on the border line of starvation and survival. Not only in India but in most of the developing countries of Latin America, Africa and even in some developed countries like Mexico almost throughout all informal economic sectors, the proportion of women is double that of men.³⁰

The female work-force participation picture in Darjeeling hills is slightly different from that in the rest of India. Whereas the participation rate in economic activities for all-India women was 12.13% and 14.44% in 1971 and 1981 respectively, the same was quite high for the hill women. But a matter of concern in the Darjeeling hill is that their labour-force participation rate is declining sharply. The participation rate was 35.37% in 1961 which declined sharply to 28.64 % in 1971 and it further fell to 27.62 % in 1981. Table 2.9 below represents the picture of women workforce in Darjeeling hills from 1961 to 1981.

Table 2.9 : Women Work-force in Darjeeling Hills

	1961	1971	1981
Male Population	211431	248352	286556
Female Population	193361	231325	244818
(% of total population)	(47.77)	(48.23)	(48.03)
Total female Workers	68783	66243	73155
(% of female Workers in the female population)	(35.57)	(28.64)	(27.62)
Total Workers in the Informal Sector (Women in Informal Sector as % of total working women)	35812 (52.07)	32776 (49.46)	37416 (51.15)

Source : Darjeeling District Census Handbooks, 1961, 1971 & 1981.

The much higher work-participation rate of women in Darjeeling hills can be explained by the very fact of the existence of 102 tea gardens in the three hilly subdivisions. These tea gardens together with cinchona plantation industries in the hills have employed a large number of women. Roughly 55% of the total employees in the plantation industries are women.³¹ This is the feature peculiar to the hill economy. In no other tea growing areas in India, the female workers outnumber the male workers in employment.

Barring the plantation industries, the scope of women's employment in other formal enterprises and govt. or semi-govt services is too minimum. For example, out of 35739 women employed in formal sector enterprises (table-2.9) in 1981, 26671 are absorbed by the tea-industries only. Hill women are thus found to be concentrated into a relatively limited number of specific occupations in the formal sector. In the rural areas, the only informal sector activity in which women are involved is the

traditional agriculture. They are working as cultivators and agricultural labourers. Cultivators are in a bit better situation than the agricultural labourers since agricultural labourers are the wage-earners and the wage payment to agricultural labourers although at times is decided by the govt. but is not being followed in villages. The agricultural labourers are compelled to supply their labour for agricultural purpose at a low wage-rate. In the urban areas, those having some capital have taken up the occupation of petty trade and homebased production while majority are found engaged in vending, construction work, domestic service and knitting & weaving. The employment in these typical informal sector activities is characterised to be highly exploitative, labour-intensive, discontinuous production, low-productivity, use of unskilled manual labour etc.

2.4.1 : Causes of Heavy Concentration of Women in the Informal Sector

[A] On Supply side, there are some handicaps which prevent women from spreading to the formal sector. These handicaps are as follows.

(i) Immobility of urban labour - This is the greatest handicap of the urban female labour in the hill areas of Darjeeling district that keeps them in low paying, irregular and local avenues of employment in the informal sector. Today, the immobility is not a big problem. But even if they migrate, their exodus take place in groups, with their family. The married women do not migrate separately and independently. This immobility or better to say, limited immobility of urban women has forced them to accept low paying jobs like vending, starting up of a Small restaurant, domestic services, local construction etc.

(ii) Natural factors - Most of the female work-force is in the age group of 15-40 years which happens to be the reproductive age of women. Usually women above 30 years in age

have more than 2-3 children for which they are not always available for continuous and regular type of work due to their child - bearing and child care roles. But to supplement the family income, the hill women do not hesitate to take up part-time jobs in the informal sector.

(iii) Illiteracy and low skills - For higher paying jobs in the formal sector, education and training is a must. But for most of the women in Darjeeling hills, education and training are not easily available. The schools and colleges mostly are located in the urban and semi-urban areas. The vocational training facilities/institutions for vast majority of the rural women are beyond their imagination. Employment problem of women in the formal sector thus stems from lack of skill and training.

[B] On demand side, certain other factors are found to encourage the employers to employ more women in some specific informal sector activities. These are as follows.

(i) The immobility of female workers encourages the employers to employ them in low-paying jobs. This gives them somewhat stable work-force. If men are employed in such jobs, they would not stay for a long-time. In the English medium nursery schools and some other private schools in the urban centres of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong most of the teachers are women. They are being paid abnormally low salary but they have not left the job. With the same qualifications, male teachers are seen to leave this job as they form a mobile labour-force. They do not mind even to move to a distant place provided they can earn more there.

(ii) There are certain low paying jobs in the hills which are regarded as purely fit for women like paddy transplantation, harvesting, grinding, food processing, domestic service, handicrafts, knitting and weaving etc. These works are, therefore, carried out by the women, in general.

(iii) The mechanisation of formal sector activities is also responsible for women being switched over to the informal sector. The increasing capital intensity of the tea gardens of Darjeeling hills over the years has resulted in almost a stagnant female labour-force there. At weaving centres too, the replacement of handlooms by powerlooms has opened the scope for males to replace the female workers.

The informal sector in the hills is seen to shelter the unemployed and in general the less privileged in the society. Among them are women, children, the very young or the very aged people who have no chance of finding a job in the formal sector. But this sector is not only a place where the poor and marginalised are found, some activities involving women within the sector constitute the profitable source of income. It has been seen that earning of the workers such as the owner-weaver, the road-side restaurant owners, particularly those on the Tenzing Norgay Road (formerly Hill Cart Road) between Tindharia and Kurseong and the traders dealing in woolen garments and other consumer garments of tourist attractions earn much more than the workers would earn in the service sector. However, women workers such as the domestic servants, coolies and even the artisan workers are at a very vulnerable situations. It can thus be stated that the workers of Informal sector who can control their own finances in Darjeeling hills are privileged rather than obliged to do so.

In the next few chapters, the role and status of women in various informal sector activities in Darjeeling-hills would be discussed. The discussion would help us establish the fact that women in the informal sector can be located in a position of relative power but taken-for-granted notion is that it is a constant source of oppression for women.³²

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27. M. Dasgupta, Women Labourers in the Informal sector: A case Study of the Hills and Plains, ICSSR Project Report, 1992
28. T. B. Subba, The Quiet Hills : A Study of the Agrarian Relations in Hill Darjeeling, Bangalore, 1985, p.79
29. In 1981 census any one who has done any work at all in a year has been considered as a worker. The main workers are those who have worked major part of the year. In other words, the main worker is somebody who has done economically productive work for at least 183 days during the year. The marginal workers, on the other hand, are those who have not worked for a major part of the year (ie. engaged in productive work for less than 183 days during the year).
30. Lorena Nunez, "Women on the streets : Vending and Public Space in Chile", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 28, No. 44, October 30, 1993, p. ws-69
31. The average daily number of male and female workers for a few selected years in the Darjeeling gardens are given below in support of the statement. (Source: The Statistics of various years, Tea Board of India)

Year	male workers	female workers	adolescents	children
1965	15568	23606	1532	2530
1975	14561	26212	847	2315
1985	17339	27008	590	1338
1990	17885	29043	440	748

32. Lorena Nunez, op.cit., p.70

Chapter III

Women in the Rural Informal Sector : Agriculture and Allied Activities

Agriculture and the allied activities in other parts of our country, especially in areas where mechanised farming has been adopted, can be considered as organised sector activities. But the nature of Darjeeling hill agriculture is somewhat different from the rest of the country in the sense that the agriculture here is predominantly traditional and is also characterised by small scale of its operation and labour-intensity of it. All these factors have led us to include agricultural activities in Darjeeling hills in the informal sector. The physical configuration of the hills in the district of Darjeeling has made agricultural conditions extremely difficult. Many of the slopes in the hills are so stony and precipitous that nothing can thrive on them except scrub jungles. As such, much of the hill land is unsuitable for cultivation of any kind, but on the gentler slopes the soil is often of wonderful fertility. Altitude and aspect also have important effects on agriculture.¹ The arduous hill agriculture although is traditional and faces many other problems including the lack of irrigation facilities, in some parts of our study area, it is still the main source of livelihood of a large population. And also the agriculture and its allied activities have side by side of the male workers absorbed a large number of female population in it.

The geographical division in the hills is such that in the hills west of Teesta, a very large proportion of the area is under forest, tea and cinchona and the area under non-plantation crops is very small. In the hills east of Teesta, there are very few tea gardens and most of the land is under forest and non-plant agricultural cultivation. And, in fact, agriculture is the main source of livelihood

of the vast majority of the people in the hills east of Teesta, represented by Kalimpong subdivision.

When the district was first taken over by the British administration, the hill portion was almost entirely under forest. The only cultivation followed by the aborigines was that of jhumming.² Jhum cultivation has now entirely disappeared due to forest reservation, appropriation of land for tea cultivation and extension of plough cultivation to the remaining land. The following are the main crops being cultivated in the hills depending upon the altitude and climate.

i) Maize - This crop grows on almost any soil at altitudes between 1000 to 7000 ft. above sea level. It does best at low elevations in sunny aspects and grows quite well in places where rocks retain moisture. It is the staple food-crop for cultivators and is grown on dry land.

ii) Millet - Locally known as "Kodo", it is grown at heights between 1000 to 5000 ft. above sea-level and in dry cultivation. Transplantation of the seeds of millet are done in the monsoon and is harvested in autumn.

iii) Wheat, barley and mustard - These are not extensively grown in the hills. They are grown up to 5000 ft. in dry cultivation.

iv) Rice - Paddy is grown up to the heights of 5000 ft. above sea level. In the hills, it is transplanted in July-August into irrigated lands and harvested in November-December. It is the main crop grown in Kalimpong subdivision.

v) Potatoes - Hill areas are suitable for potato cultivation and it grows even at the altitudes of 8000-9000 ft.. It is grown in dry cultivation but requires heavy manuring.

vi) Cardamom & Ginger - Cardamom, also known as "elainchi", is a valuable crop doing best at altitudes from 1000 to 5000 ft. above sea level. The crop requires a rich soil, shade, some warmth and a good

supply of water. Ginger also grows at an altitude up to 5000 ft. above sea level and it has become one of the principal commercial crops of the hills.

vii) Fruits - Orange growing is extremely profitable and for this reason, it has expanded considerably in recent years. About 90% of the orange output is exported. It is one of the important cash crops of Darjeeling hills.

viii) Vegetables - Vegetable growing is also very profitable in the hills. Peas, beans, potatoes, cauliflowers, beetroots, carrots, radishes, tomatoes, squash are the general vegetables grown which have both local and distant markets. The seasons for many of these vegetables is long because it is possible to grow them over a considerable range of altitude.

Hill women play a very crucial role in growing all these crops. The social framework in the hills is such that many of the agricultural and allied operations like sowing of seeds, transplanting, manuring, weeding, harvesting, and cattle care & milking etc. are assigned solely to women. With rapid urbanisation, young men from villages are shifting away to towns as job seekers. As a result, women are assuming more or even exclusive responsibility of agricultural operations. Therefore, the success or failure of agriculture depends mainly on the contribution made by them.

The following table shows the total number of men and women workers engaged in agriculture in the hill areas of Darjeeling district. This would help us to understand their importance in agricultural activities.

Table-3.1: Distribution of Male and Female Cultivators and Agricultural Labourers in the Hill Areas: 1961-1981.

Year	1961				1971				1981			
	Sub-div. Cultivators		Agri.Labs.		Cultivators		Agri.labs.		Cultivators		Agri.Labs.	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Darjeeling	13941	13369	683	777	14225	10107	3739	2378	14750	11424	2873	1550
Sadar	(26.87)	(38.56)	(1.32)	(2.24)	(25.54)	(28.45)	(6.71)	(6.69)	(23.37)	(30.5)	(4.55)	(4.14)
Kalimpong	17325	15386	1510	1133	17138	11391	3789	2306	18864	11887	2574	1156
	(48.22)	(71.83)	(4.20)	(5.29)	(45.69)	(65.52)	(10.1)	(13.26)	(46.56)	(62.99)	(6.35)	(6.13)
Kurseong	3674	3630	186	125	3567	2160	1587	972	2956	2041	728	431
	(18.45)	(23.61)	(0.90)	(0.98)	(16.61)	(16.19)	(7.39)	(7.29)	(11.22)	(16.69)	(2.76)	(3.53)
Total	34940	32385	2379	2035	34930	23658	9115	5656	36570	25352	6175	3137
Hills	(32.43)	(47.08)	(2.21)	(2.96)	(30.72)	(35.72)	(8.01)	(8.54)	(28.23)	(36.98)	(4.75)	(4.58)

Figures in the Parentheses represent the % of the men & women in their total work force respectively.

Source: District Census Handbooks, Darjeeling 1961, 1971 & 1981.

From the table, it is observed that all throughout the years since 1961, although female absorption in agriculture is lower in absolute number than the male workers, larger proportion of women workers are found to be engaged in. In Kalimpong subdivision, 71.83% of the working women were cultivators in 1961 which declined to 65.52% in 1971 and further declined to 62.99% in 1981. But only 48.22% of working men in 1961 were engaged as cultivators which had declined to 46.56% in 1981. For the hills altogether during the same period between 1961 and 1981, while the percentage of female cultivators in total working women declined sharply from 47.08 to 36.98, that of men workers declined marginally from 32.43% in 1961 to 28.23% in 1981.

The same period, on the other hand, has been marked by the growth of both the male and female agricultural labourers. A brief reference to the phenomenon of growing size of agricultural labourers in the hills has been made in chapter II. It has been analysed there that the emergence of the category of the agricultural labourers was preceded by the emergence of a large number of marginal cultivators. When the average size of landholding became small due to the increase

in population brought about by natural growth and immigration as well, the households could not draw the sustenance from the land alone. They gradually started looking for additional sources of income. In the process, the richer and educated got relatively better opportunities while the bulk of the population who were poor had to work as agricultural labourers. Thus, gradually the emergence of the agricultural labourers category became inevitable.³

Women are involved in all categories of farm works in the hills. The family female labourers classified as 'cultivators' have a typical way of working in the field. While the agricultural labourers are hired by the cultivators' family to work at a stipulated wage; the family labourers of a particular locality work under labour exchange systems known as "Parma"⁴ and "hoori".⁵ These labour exchange systems are in use particularly in transplanting and harvesting of paddy. The existence of the labour exchange systems among the family labourers in a locality have led the cultivators to avoid the use of hired agricultural labourers as far as possible. But in terrace cultivation of cardamom, ginger, potato and other vegetables where there is the need of continuous and prolonged labour to be used right from the sowing to the harvesting, the agricultural households are compelled to employ the agricultural labourers as hired labour on daily wage basis.

3.1 : Differential Participation of Males and Females in Different Agricultural and Allied Activities in Darjeeling Hills

In order to study the difference in participation rate of males and females in various agricultural operations data were collected by personal interviews. The operational areas selected for the purpose were -- (i) Pudung Khasmālal, 7 Km. away from Kalimpong town and (ii) Kaijalay in Pulbazar police station falling under Darjeeling sadar Subdivision, 48 Km. away from Darjeeling town. In both the villages, agriculture is the main source of livelihood. Pudung Khasmāhal in Kalimpong subdivision has 290 households while Kaijalay under Pulbazar police station has 269 households. For the sake of our study, we had

randomly selected 30 agricultural households from each village. Thus total number of sample households came to 60.

The crop activities selected for this study were limited to the major rice-based cultivation and these included apart from rice, vegetables, ginger etc. The allied activities of agriculture such as livestock rearing, fuel and water collection etc. were grouped under miscellaneous activities. The participation level of males and females in the various operations/activities were collected from the heads of the respective households. The operations which were carried out on a farm holding exclusively by males were put under the heads 'males' and those carried out exclusively by females were put under the head 'females' and those carried out by both males and females without any clear distinction were put under the head 'jointly carried out'.

The findings about the involvements of the 'males' and 'females' in the individual operations under each of the four enterprises have been presented below.

(i) Paddy Cultivation - The data in table - 3.2 shows that the highest level of involvement of women in Darjeeling hills was in the transplanting operations, while the lowest was in the land preparation. On the other hand, the land preparation was carried out in 76.67% cases exclusively by males, while in 20% cases, mostly with smaller holdings, it was carried out jointly. Also activities like harvesting

Table 3.2 : Level of Participation of Males and Females in Different Operations of Paddy Cultivation

Operations	Males	Females	Jointly
Land Preparation	46(76.67)	2(3.33)	12(20.00)
Nursery Sowing	42(70.00)	11(18.33)	7(11.67)
Seedle uprooting	24(40.00)	8(13.33)	28(46.67)
Rice transplanting	2(3.33)	48(80.00)	10(16.67)
Irrigation	28(46.66)	16(26.67)	16(26.67)
Harvesting	5(8.33)	45(75.00)	10(16.67)
Threshing	8(13.33)	34(56.67)	18(30.00)
Marketing	38(63.33)	22(36.67)	0(0.00)
Storage	12(20.00)	37(61.67)	11(18.33)

Figures in the parentheses are percentages.

Source : Field survey

(75.0%), storage (61.67%), threshing (56.67%) etc. were mainly carried

out by females. It was only in marketing, after land preparation and nursery sowing that males participated mostly.

(ii) Vegetable cultivation - In this enterprise, the level of participation of females was highest in sowing/transplanting (58.97%). Their involvement was least in land preparation (25.64%), but not as least as it was in the case of paddy cultivation.

Table 3.3: Level of Participation of Males and Females in Vegetable (including ginger) Cultivation Practices

Operations	Males	Females	Jointly
Land preparation	18 (46.15)	10 (25.64)	11 (28.21)
Transplanting/Sowing	4 (10.26)	23 (58.97)	12 (30.77)
Nursery raising	6 (15.38)	22 (56.41)	11 (28.21)
Plant protection	15 (38.46)	20 (51.28)	4 (10.26)
Weeding	12 (30.77)	15 (38.46)	12 (30.77)
Harvesting	12 (30.77)	19 (48.72)	8 (20.51)
Marketing	15 (38.46)	17 (43.59)	2 (5.13)

Figures in the brackets are percentages. Out of 60 respondents only 39 did vegetable cultivation.

Source : Field survey.

Accordingly, the highest level of male involvement was in land-preparation. The other major operations carried out by females in vegetable cultivation were nursery raising (56.41%), plant protection (51.28%), harvesting (48.72%) and marketing (43.59%). On the other hand, the major operations carried out by men were marketing and plant protection (38.46%), harvesting and weeding (30.77%), indicating that none of the major operations in vegetable cultivation was carried out exclusively or even predominantly by men. Even the arduous work of land-preparation for vegetable cultivation was shared by women. This may be primarily, because of the fact that holdings in the hills, particularly, the plots under vegetable cultivation, are predominantly small and do not require the use of heavy implements. This, therefore, does not seek the exclusive service of male workers.

(iii) Livestock rearing - Livestock rearing constitutes as one of the important allied activities of agriculture. In the rural-hills, almost every family has undertaken livestock rearing as their secondary occupations. And women do play important role in this activity too. It was found that the fodder collection (90%) and milking operation (81.67%) were carried out exclusively by them. The other operations in which women's involvement was significant were clearing the cowshed (68.33%), feeding (56.67%), etc. The level of women's involvement was equal to those of men in the marketing (23.33%). As far as this enterprise was concerned males in the hills of Darjeeling district were mainly associated with breeding and medical care (46.67%).

Table-3.4 : Level of Participation of Males and Females in Various Operations of Livestock Rearing.

Operations	Males	Females	Jointly
Feeding	9 (15.00)	34 (56.67)	17 (28.33)
Clearing	2 (3.33)	44 (68.33)	14 (23.33)
Milking	11 (18.33)	49 (81.67)	0 (0.00)
Cutting fodder	5 (8.33)	54 (90.00)	1 (1.67)
Marketing*	14 (23.33)	14 (23.33)	0 (0.00)
Medical care	28 (46.67)	23 (38.33)	9 (15.00)
Breeding	41 (68.33)	19 (31.67)	0 (0.00)

*only 28 households marketed the milk and milk-product.

Figures in the Parentheses are the percentages.

Source : Field survey.

(iv) Miscellaneous activities - These activities included fuel, water collection and maintenance of houses etc. The women of rural-hills play such a crucial role that the duty of collecting fuel is solely assigned to them. Water, all throughout in the hills is a scarce commodity. The rural people mainly depend on the natural streams and *jhoras* for water. The collection of water from distant *jhoras* and streams through the hill terrace is a tough job. Thus, water collection

is not absolutely done by women as in the case of plains. The men-folk do not hesitate to share the responsibility of water-collection with female members of the family. Table - 3.5 shows that women in the hills carried out the fuel collection activity in 89.33% cases, while their participation stood at 41.67% and 30.0% in maintenance of house and water-collection respectively.

Table 3.5 : Levels of Participation of Males and Females in Miscellaneous Allied Agricultural Activities

Activities	Males	Females	Jointly
Fuel collection	7 (11.67)	53 (89.33)	0 (0.00)
water collection	12 (20.00)	18 (30.00)	30 (50.00)
Maintenance of house (ie. repair etc.)	15 (25.00)	25 (41.67)	20 (33.33)

Figures in the parentheses are percentages.

Source : Field survey

It is thus seen that women's contributions in various enterprises in the rice-based farming in the hill areas of Darjeeling district was greater than that of men. From, the analysis above, it is quite evident that women were involved primarily in those activities which required less skills, and in repetitive and monotonous operations like transplanting of seedlings, harvesting or threshing. On the other hand, males performed activities like plant protection, chemical weed control, land preparations and marketing etc. These activities required skill and were also considered more prestigious. However, it was found that ploughing of land was done exclusively by men. It is the case everywhere in the country. The ploughing of land by men is not necessarily because it requires skill or is arduous, but primarily because social customs and tradition do not sanction ploughing of land by women. In hills, however, some women dig small plots of land with small spades where ploughing is not feasible or necessary.

It was also observed that mechanised operations were performed

by men, while operations needing manual labour were done mainly by the women. Paddy transplantations and threshing can be cited as examples here. Wherever, threshers were not used, it was seen that women performed the threshing operation, but where threshers were available and used, this operation was usually performed by men. We can also cite the example of rice pounding in support of the above statement. A few decades back, the rice husking operation was carried on by the women in the hills with the help of traditional wooden implement called 'dhinki'.⁶ And the husking was done irrespective of caste/tribe except the affluent ones, who used to dehull paddy for consumptions at home, for others on payment of a wage, or for a sale in the markets. The rice produced in this method had several utilities from rural women's standpoint : it gave them employment and some wage; such rice had more carrying capacity and nutritive value. The by-products were also useful for both human beings and domestic animals. But once the rice mills and hullers were introduced in the villages, the women who were dependent on husking wages were thrown out of employment. Machines have substituted the traditional 'dhinki' and now the operators of husking machines are the men folk. The tragedy is that in this process of labour displacement, the bread earner destitute women are affected severely. On the other hand, the lower middle class housewives are relieved from the arduous work of husking paddy with the help of the traditional instrument. To be precise, the introduction of rice hullers in the villages has necessarily displaced the women labourers from a gainful activity.⁷ Thus rightly said, Devdas et al:

"Whenever a new technology has introduced implements that take the back break out of farm jobs, men seem to have assumed charge, either replacing women from jobs that they hitherto performed, or displacing them to more manual work".⁸

3.2 : The Process of Informal Contracting in Rural Informal Labour Market and the Wage Differential Among the Agricultural Labourers

The agricultural operations in Darjeeling hills are characterised by the relatively greater involvement of women than the men. The use of hired agricultural labourer is avoided as far as possible. But during the peak agricultural hours and in cardamom production, in particular, the household farms are compelled to hire them. But a peculiar feature observed in this connection was that the agricultural labourers (both men and women) of the same quality do not earn equal wages in farm-work. The wages vary from person to person, similarly from place to place. Such a differential in wage-rate paid to the agricultural labourers can be explained in terms of the process of informal contracting in rural areas.

The forms of labour contracts in the rural areas can be explained by asking a simple question : What are the resources available for a landless agricultural worker in rural labour markets and what can they be used to acquire?

According to Jagannathan, One can hypothesise that labour has a choice between the following categories of activities in the labour market.⁹

(a) Generation of social assets. By an appropriate usage of resources a worker (both man and woman) can generate bilateral relations with the hirer of labour services;

(b) participation in the daily wage-labour market by offering the services of just-time, as assumed by the standard neo-classical economics;

(c) use of all or part of social assets that have been generated. The women labour can choose to develop their social assets partially and to continue to remain in the wage-labour market.

The activities are subject to some resource constraints. In

neo-classical micro economics, labour has only time to sell as resource and the worker's labour supply curve depends on his/her subjective allocation of time between labour and leisure. But modern writers are of the opinion that besides the time resource, several other resources or endowments a worker can utilise. Some of these resources are available as natural endowments, while other depend on the worker's subjective set of preference.¹⁰ The resources used in generating social assets are categorised as time resource, behavioural resource, physical resource, locational resource and the social assets themselves.

(i) Time resource - Time is the most familiar resource that a worker possesses. Under conditions of intense poverty, while time may not have the same opportunity costs, in the normal labour markets, it continues to remain a limited, exhaustible resource.

(ii) Behaviourial resource - An worker's behaviour does not seem to be a resource at the first glance. But economists usually describe the behaviour of a worker as arising from his/her subjective set of preference. And in fact, in the rural areas everywhere, the contract between the agricultural labourer and the hirer agriculturist requires a mode of behaviour appropriate to the hirer's specifications - such as reliability, trustworthiness, and efficiency.

Cultural and social factors may increase the importance of the behavioural resource. For example, a clear understanding of local mores, customs and etiquette becomes an important prerequisite for hiring. In these situations, a labourer's set of preferences can determine his/her contracting capability. A docile, subservient but physically strong labourer has a greater earning opportunity than an aggressive one.¹¹

In the modern context, a new but important dimension has been added to it. When labour is politicised, the behavioral resource becomes extremely important because unionisation of the landless labourers makes the landowners face a new set of bargaining problems.

And obviously, they will be willing to offer rents for well-beaved workers, who can be expected to remain loyal to them during agitations organised by their organisations. However, the landowner-cultivators of Darjeeling hills are till now free from such management difficulties in agriculture because the agricultural labourers are not yet organised under any banner.

(iii) Physical resource - Agricultural operations in the hills are subject to a number of critical emergencies arising out of the uncontrollable nature of farm environments. Unexpected rainfall, attacks by pastes and landslides are more likely to affect hill farmers, who therefore require strong supportive help from agricultural labourers at short notice. In effect, labour may be required to perform a wide range of extra roles. The functions can not be given specific payments, because their marginal contributions can not be calculated.

The physical resource depends on whether a woman is capable of effort in the form of hard labour much above what is required normally. Obviously, physical strength will be the main factor determining this. Hence, the women with extra physical strength can always expect to earn a premium in rural agricultural market. But this is not the case, they are physically weaker than the male workers and hence they receive lower wages compared to their male counterparts.

(iv) Locational resource - Another important resource that earns rent arises from simple living in the village. By remaining in the village not leaving the physical or social space - an agricultural labour may be able to secure some rent as she is known and thus gets the privilege over the relatively unknown one from a nearby village.

The idea being developed here is simple. Labour uses different amounts of resources to earn varying amounts of rents. For example, an agricultural labourer using her naturally endowed physical strength, plus having full loyalty to the landowner will be able to fully develop general bilateral relations and maximise her social

assets. On the other hand, the physically weak and the rebel, are to be content with daily wage-labour.

Having all these three resources in any agricultural labour makes her an attached labour. The worker is like a farm servant working for the same employer for many years, thus qualifying for the term "permanent farm servant".¹² Such an attached labour earns substantially above that of other agricultural labourers. Bardhan and Rudra's Study also indicate the annual earnings of attached labour are substantially higher than daily labour.¹³

If an agricultural labour, on the other hand, is either unwilling to devote enough of the behavioural resource or simply lacks the required physical resources, she falls into the category of semi-attached labour. According to Bardhan and Rudra, there are several forms of semi-attached labourers.

(i) Physical + locational - In Darjeeling hills, due to widespread poverty and deprivation, many are not able to reach their potential physical strength. A person endowed with extra physical strength can be expected to secure rent from land owners, even if she is not willing to compromise on behavioral factors. Such workers are given short-term contracts for the duration of the cultivation season or for specific jobs, and can be described as one of the categories of semi-attached labour.

(ii) Behaviourial + locational - Such an agricultural labour earns less rent than another contracting physical endowments. But the behavioural factor gains in importance with Unionisation of agricultural labourer or during agrarian unrest. This combination leads to another variation of semi-attached labour.

Thus, the women agricultural labour in Darjeeling hills earns differential wages by negotiating contracts using different endowment resources. These arrangements could explain why wage-remunerations in the rural informal sector exhibit wide diversity.

3.3 : Summary

Whenever one thinks of Darjeeling hills, he thinks of tea-industries as the tea-industries constitute the back-bone of the hill economy. But to one's surprise, agriculture still is the main source of livelihood of a large number of people there, particularly in the Kalimpong subdivision. As there is no entry restriction for the labourers in agricultural works, and characterised by family ownership, small scale operations, competitive markets, labour-intensive technology, and no skill required for the agricultural workers, the hill agricultural sector constitutes the largest rural informal sector. And women are seen to play a dominant role in agriculture and its allied activities. A larger proportion of working women than men are engaged as cultivators and agricultural labourers. But, they are put to such agricultural operations which are repetitive, monotonous, and arduous while the men have taken over all those agricultural operations which require skill and are considered to be more prestigious.

The women workers in agriculture are subject to many other constraints. All mechanised operations are performed by men. And whenever a new technology is introduced men seem to have assumed charge either by replacing women from job or displacing them to more manual work.

A recent phenomenon that has come up in the hills is the increasing number of women agricultural labourers. Their increasing number indicates the fact that they are being pushed further down to a lower social hierarchy in rural economy of hills. They are seen to earn various wages depending upon their informal contracting processes with the landowners. The attached agricultural labourers are earning some rent from the landlords over the semi-attached and the daily-wage labour. This is all due to the fact that attached agricultural labourers are endowed with all requisite resources like the time resource, physical resource, behavioural resource and locational

resource where as the others do lack one or more resources thereby falling into the category of semi-attached or daily-wage labour.

Notes and References :

1. A. J. Dash, Gazetteer of the Darjeeling District, 1947, p.99
2. 'Jhumming' means the nomadic system of cultivation by which a piece of forest land used to be selected and cleared, heavily cropped for a year or two till the soil showed signs of exhaustion, when it used to be abandoned, a new site selected and cleared and the same process used to be repeated.
3. T. B. Subba, The Quiet Hills: A Study of the Agrarian Relations in Hill Darjeeling, 1985, p.77
4. "Parma" means a system of direct labour exchange between two households. They work in each other's land mutually on alternative days or so.
5. "Hoori" means a system of indirect or cyclical labour exchange. It may consist of 10 or 20 or even more members who work on each other's lands in cyclical order.
6. The 'dhinki' consists of a wooden beam working on a seesaw principle fixed to a pivot. To one end of the beam is fixed a short pestle and this drops into a wooden/stone mortar fixed in the ground. The mortar is filled in with paddy and the worker trends on the end of the beam opposite to the one to which the pestle is fixed and thus lifts the pestle two or three feet above the mortar. By suddenly releasing the pressure on the beam, the pestle drops with force into mortar and husks the paddy contained in it. Normally, two to three women are needed to operate a 'dhinki', one or two working on the beam and the other stirring paddy in the mortar and winnowing husk, while the pounding is in progress.
7. B. G. Baboo, "Impact of Mechanisation on Rural Women : A Case Study of Rice - Husking Industry", in Dak, T. M. (ed.), Women and Work in Indian Society, Discovery Publishing House, Delhi, 1988, p.259.
8. Rajammal P. Devdas et al. "Technologies Don't Happen, They Have to be Generated", Indian Farming, 38, No.8, Nov, 1988 p.52
9. N. V. Jagannathan, Informal Markets in Developing Countries, Oxford University Press, 1987, p.45
10. ibid, p.45
11. ibid, p.46
12. For details about 'permanent farm servant', see Ashok Rudra, Indian Agricultural Economics : Myths and Realities, Allied Publishers, 1982, p.423
13. Pranab Bardhan and Ashok Rudra, "Terms and Conditions of Labour Contracts in Agriculture : Result of a Survey in West Bengal, 1979" in Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics, Vol. 43, No.32, 1980, pp.82-90

Chapter IV

Female Labour Absorption in Construction Work

4.1 : Female Construction Workers of India

In terms of employment, the building history is one of the largest in India, employing millions of workers. Although, the construction work is an important source of absorbing unemployed people, the industry relies heavily on unskilled labour. At the same time, the use of mass-production technology is practically absent.¹ As a matter of fact, such industry is primarily suitable to Indian context as it is mostly labour-intensive. And being labour intensive, construction works in India, by and large have given employment to a sizeable section of women workers too. Unlike other industries where women are employed in semi-skilled or sometimes even in skilled jobs, in construction industry they are employed as only as unskilled labourers. In building construction, the tasks assigned to them are carrying earth, mortar cement, stones, water, bricks etc. on their heads or backs from the place of storage to the site. In road construction and repair, they are absorbed for crushing the stone, carrying the headloads and also for working on hand pumps etc. It is disappointing to note that the women workers in construction works are assigned all sorts of the physically exhaustive tasks whereas the finishing jobs like that of mason etc. are completely done by the men-folk.

There have been many studies on the construction workers in our country. Estimates of the number of construction workers are also done from time to time. According to 1971 census, there were 2,04,000 women construction workers in India (down from 2,90,000 in 1951). At an average women comprised 10% of the rural and 9% of the urban workers in construction. As per A. Mitra and S. Mukhopadhyay, in all class I cities of India, the construction sector had absorbed 3.55% of the total female work-force in 1971

which had gone upto 4.04% in 1981. The corresponding percentage of male workers in their total work-force were 3.50 and 4.43 in 1971 and 1981 respectively. They also calculated the compound annual growth rate of female construction workers during the period 1971 to 1981 to be 6.33% as opposed to 5.34% for males.² The female intensity of the construction work has, in fact, increased from 9.098% in 1971 to 9.908% in 1981. This implies that there were more women relative to men in construction sector in 1981 as compared to 1971.³

Summarising the whole picture that emerges from the census data on construction workers, Mitra and Mukherjee had shown that on an average the construction industry has staked a larger claim on the work-force in 1981 as compared to 1971, both in absolute and relative terms. Not only has the number of construction workers gone up in the cities of India, on average the sex composition of the work-force has changed, in that the female intensity⁴ of the construction work-force has shown an appreciable increase. While the share of female construction workers to the total female work-force (female construction workers/female workers) has also gone up marginally, the increase is lower than that observed for males (male construction workers/male workers). This apparent anomaly has been explained by a substantial increase in the work-participation rate of women as well as an increase in the sex-ratio of the population.⁵

Mitra and Mukherjee further pointed out that there does not appear to be any appreciable structural change in the overall employment structure of female work-force in the cities, whatever change one can detect, appears to be less pronounced than that for male workers. However, one important feature of female employment in the construction sector has been its primitive alignment in manufacturing other than household industries (MOTH). This is found from the factor analytic exercise on the

data. This is so for the structure of female employment in both the census years i.e. 1971 and 1981 separately, as well as for changes over the inter-census decade. This alignment can be observed from individual city data especially for cities undergoing rapid increases in the female employment in the construction sector. This is a feature peculiar to female labour market. For male workers, employment is negatively aligned to employment in non-household manufacturing.⁶

Another significant feature of the construction labour market is the high variability of the female intensity of the construction work-force overtime. Mitra and Mukherjee held the view that the significant percentage of the change in the employment of female workers in this sector can be accounted for by changes in the male-female ratio within the construction work-force rather than changes in the overall importance of construction sector as such. This phenomenon lends credence to the hypothesis that while construction workers, as a whole, are known to be an exploited category of workers, women within this category are subject to a more intense form of job insecurity. It is quite likely that in a macro sense women as a whole operate in the capacity of a reserve army within the construction work-force, being drawn upon in situations of excess demand and retrenched as demand slackens. This last-in-first-out kind of a situation would indeed generate a high degree of variability in the female intensity of the construction work-force.⁷

4.2 : Importance of Construction Work and the Absorption of Women in it in Darjeeling Hill Areas

Contrary to the average Indian picture, in the hilly subdivisions of Darjeeling district, construction and repair of road works are crowded with women workers. The roads that lead to various corners of the hilly region are very often closed or destroyed by land-slides and land-slips and side by side of the

male workers, women are employed in large number in repair and reconstruction. Another new phenomenon that has come up recently especially in Darjeeling town is the continuous migration of people from the adjoining rural and tea garden areas. The influx in the urban centres has become quite noticeable during and after the Gorkhaland agitation in the hills. It can be visualised from the upcoming of hundreds of residential buildings in and around the municipal areas. It may be mentioned, in this connection, that migration was encouraged by Britishers right from the period of early settlement in Darjeeling.⁸ And the process of rural-urban migration (the inter-country or inter-state migration have been virtually nil these days) is still on. Together with this, the peace restored after the amicable solution of the ethnic identity problem through the creation of DGHC in 1988, the tourism industry after a temporary halt, has found a good prospect. This has encouraged private entrepreneurs to build up new hotels, restaurants, shopping complexes in Darjeeling, Mirik, Kalimpong and in Kurseong. Moreover, the conversion of the Tenzing Norgay Road from Siliguri to Darjeeling into National Highway no.55 A has required its proper maintenance and possible expansion. Opening of all these opportunities has led most of the contractors employ many people in road and building construction. And it is the fact that women are favoured by the contractors as they can be exploited easily and they can be made to work at a relatively lower wage rate. Also, as per a few contractors whom this researcher has visited, the women folk are regarded more attractive to their works as compared to their male counterparts. They acknowledged that women drink much less. Male labourers drink very hard and often it becomes difficult to make them work.

A few words, in this context of construction workers, must be written to make it understand why continuous road repair and construction are necessary in the hills of Darjeeling. The

main reason is that very often there are landslides and land slips in the area and the roads get blocked frequently. Very often, particularly during the monsoon the roads go down due to various physical reasons operating in the area. For example, Paglajhora (both upper and lower) in between Ghayabari and Kurseong is a place where the road itself is sinking over the years thereby causing enormous trouble to the people living or visiting there. Similarly, Likhevir on the national highway in between Lohapool and Teesta Bazar, Peshok on the way to Kalimpong from Darjeeling etc. are the famous spots where the stones continuously slip down from above the top of the hill and blocks the road.

The main reasons of the frequent landslides/slips in the hill areas are related to intensive and extensive cultivation, felling of trees on large scale, defective drainage system, badly constructed houses on the slopes, undercutting steep slopes for terrace cultivation, taking out of coals by digging abruptly in the lower altitude range of Tindharia areas and many other similar factors. The unprecedented rise in rural population without corresponding increase in employment opportunity also has compelled the people to encroach the forest land and cultivate on slope which has led to the landslips.⁹

The problems of frequent landslides and landslips in the hill areas have been the theme of discussion and study of the various official organisations and researchers. In this connection, it can be mentioned that various reports have pointed out that Darjeeling hill area is "unsafe" due to landslides. It has been estimated that about 50% of the farmers are unsafe in Rangli-Rangliot, Mirik and Pulbazar blocks. Another survey report states that out of a total rural population of 3,97,507 in the hills of the district (1981 census), 2,17,507 persons i.e. nearly 56% live in the face of landslides. The report further stated

that the major road arteries connecting agricultural zones with district headquarter via Tenzing Norgay Road, Maneybhanjan-Rammam Road, Ghoom-Darjeeling Road, Darjeeling-Kalimpong Road, Kalimpong-Gangtok Road, Punkhabari Road etc. have become vulnerable to landslides on a reasonable scale.¹⁰

Such problems of landslides and landslips have been further accentuated by the perennial problem of soil erosion in Darjeeling hills. All these factors together have made the repairing and construction/reconstruction of roads a routine affair in the hill areas which continue uninterrupted all through out the year. And it has already been mentioned that most of the contractors prefer women to work in there sites. Normally in the hill areas the construction works for women are mainly of three different types. First, a group of women crush a big boulder of stone & bricks with hammer and other primitive instruments. Secondly, a group of women help the male labourers in laying stones and bricks and digging. And the third group of women workers do bring the stones, mortars and other materials on their heads or in *doko*¹¹. Digging with shovel is mainly done by the males and in the hills it appears to a very arduous job. But crushing stone and carrying the loads are equally difficult and these tasks are solely assigned to women workers. Most of the women labourers are paid according to piece-rate but some of them are paid daily wages too. There are large number of teenagers among the construction labourers.

In the hills, the group for repair and construction of road is termed as "gang". The "gang" consists of about 20 to 25 labourers under the supervision of an elderly supervisor. The gang generally moves enblock from one place to another for the same type of work once the construction work at a certain locality gets over. Such a movement generally takes place after the "gang" works in a place for 5 to 7 days continuously in

average. The "gang" as such lead a community style of living having food together. Also, the "gang" very often stays in the makeshift shanties and only a few of the gang-members go to the nearby villages for night stay wherever they have come from. Very often, one has to travel a long distance if one does not want to stay in the makeshift shanties. But in winter this is not always possible. Winter, as we all know, in the hills is very severe and it seems one has no option but to stay with the "gang" on the roadside till the work at the site is completed.

The "gang" enjoys and suffers collectively. The women workers generally take up the responsibility of cooking and washing for the gang in spite of the fact that they work on the site arduously side by side of their male counterparts. One aspect that gets credence is that there is no sense of caste differentiation in the life of labourers, especially living in the "gang". This researcher had gladly noticed that in the gang there were labourers both males and female from the so called lower castes like "kamis" and "damais" and other "adivasis" working with high-caste people like "rais" and "gurungs". The female labourers and generally not afraid of their male counterparts except when the male workers get drunk and sometimes misbehave with them. There was, however, no incidence of sexual harassment of the female construction workers by their male co-workers.

4.3 : Labour Laws and the Wage-Payment in the Construction Work

India has progressive labour laws on the books. They are not enforced, most laws do not even cover to the vast majority of Indian workers, particularly, the informal sector labourers. The Abolition of Contract Labour Act, 1971 sought to eliminate the practice of contract labour and provide some benefits such as maternity leaves and some medical facilities to women labourers. It, however, is often violated. In the hill areas of Darjeeling

district, it is the practice and even the women workers in construction industry have taken it granted that they never fall into the category of beneficiaries of such benefits. On enquiry, it has been found that even when the workers both men and women are deprived of the accidental benefit by the employers in case they underwent any accident during work-period. In fact, the labourers are completely unaware of these rights. In some states of our country, construction workers are covered by Minimum Wages Act; but in our study area, the minimum wages Act have never been enforced. The government is itself a culprit in this regard. Many construction projects - building roads, bridges, railway lines and government buildings are in the public sector. The government is the largest employer in construction sector in other parts of India; yet public works are constructed on contract. The construction contractors solicit the services of labour contractors for supplying labour in order to complete the work in time. These labour contractors, popularly known as "sardars" play a key-role in bringing the construction workers at various sites in hill areas too. These labour contractors receive commissions from the construction contractors for the number of workers they supply and understandably the commission which the construction contractors pay to the sardars are deducted from the wages to be paid to the labourers. Also, the construction contracts being short-term, based on tenders and scattered at different places, the construction contractors can not employ labourers on a permanent basis. This temporary character of the work, make the construction labourers dependent on the sardars. And thus they are subject to wage exploitation.

Govt. regulations provide for amenities such as creches, sanitary services and holidays as well as specified maximum hours and minimum wages for workers in the construction projects of CPWD.¹² According to the model rules of the Central Public Works

Department (CPWD) of Govt. of India, there should be at least two huts with two ayahs for children where there are more than 50 women workers on a construction site. There are some sites in our study area where construction works are under P.W.D. and more than 50 women are generally found to work (e.g. Paglajhora constructions site on the National High Way no.55 A). But unfortunately the women Labourers of the "gang" can not think of having the huts built by the contractors and ayahs deputed for their children. The working mothers, therefore, are compelled to leave their children uncared at home with siblings.

As a matter of fact, the creche facility is conspicuously absent in the hill areas of Darjeeling. Only 3 creches have been found in the course of this study - 2 in Darjeeling and 1 in Kalimpong. In Darjeeling town, the Hayden Hall Institute is running a creche and a bawaldy for the 35 children of the 200+ women workers attached with it. The 2nd one run by the Darjeeling town Women's Congress is at a very poor state due to the lack of proper supervision and the existing inter-rift among its managing committee members. In spite of this, at an average daily nearly 20 children of the poor mothers working in nearby site as the construction workers and coolies are looked after here.

Women constructions Workers are special target of wage discrimination too. The Indian constitution, in the Directive Principles of State Policy, has recommended equal pay for equal work. The article, 39D of the constitution - equal pay for equal work - is only a policy statement at present. The women workers in the informal sector activities do not get equal remuneration for equal work. According to a Delhi Administrative Notification in 1974, the minimum wage rate for unskilled construction worker was fixed at Rs.5.15 per day. However, during the survey made by Sinha and Ranade in Delhi in 1975, they found that the women workers were being paid only at the rate of Rs.4.50 per day.¹³

Such wage discrimination even during the 90's still exists everywhere. In Darjeeling hill areas, although female construction workers undertake the same order and hard work done by men workers like crushing the stones or carrying the chips and mortars through the steep road or through the ready made stair cases leading to a multistoried building, they are paid much less than the payment made to the male workers. The following table shows the existing wage structure of the male and female workers in building construction in 1992 in our study area.

Table 4.1 : Wage Pattern and Mode of Wage Payment of the Building and Road Construction Labour

Nature of works	Mode of Wage Payment	Daily Wage (in Rs.)
Thikadar + Mason	Weekly	45 - 50
A Grade Mason	Weekly	38 - 45
B Grade Mason	Weekly	28 - 37
Unskilled male labour	Weekly	20 - 25
Unskilled female labour	Weekly	15 - 22

Source : Field Survey

The general mode of payment to both the male and female construction workers is found to be weekly. In most of the sites, they are found to work six days a week. For the rest day, they are not paid anything. It has been observed that the male workers enter the construction labour market as unskilled labour first and they gradually upgrade themselves in accordance with their ability and can go to the top. During the field survey, a number of male labourers were met who were simple unskilled labourers in the beginning but in course of time they developed their ability and efficiency. A few years later they had gradually been promoted to be masons and thus reached the top position in the construction labour market. The wage accordingly varies from Rs.20 per day to the unskilled labourer to Rs.50 per day to the

A-grade mason. The B-grade masons, on the other hand, are the close associates and the helpers of A-grade masons.

But this is not the case for women, the women workers in construction do not have the scope of promoting themselves to a highest position in the market. They start their construction career as simple labourers and remain at the same position till they retire. Surprisingly the sardars in the construction works are invariably the men. It thus shows that the opportunity of lighter works are exploited by the male workers only. Even though they have the experience, it is not utilised by the contractors. It has been observed that the elderly women give proper suggestions to the B-grade masons regarding the proportion of mixture of the cement and sand but are not allowed to do the job. Given the opportunity, they can prove themselves equally efficient with the experienced masons. The female workers are found to get a wage of Rs.15 to Rs.25 a day. This variation in daily wage depends on the age - structure of theirs. The teenagers and old ladies generally get below Rs.20 while the young ladies do get little more. The difference in wage payments between the male and female construction workers thus reflects the 'male chauvinism' and their domination in construction sector.

4.4 : Findings of the Field Survey

Age composition of the female construction workers - Of the total 332 respondent female construction workers picked up randomly from various urban construction sites in the Darjeeling hills, 59.34% were between 20 to 40 years in age. The presence of aged workers were quite low. Only 5.12% of the female workers were in the age group of above 50. At the same time 1.2% of the women workers were virtually the child labourers in the sense that they were in the age group of below 10. The participation of the child and old female workers in the arduous construction

works in the urban areas is the indicator of the plight, economic backwardness and miserable status of the women workers in the hill areas. The following table shows the overall pattern of age-composition of the women workers in the construction sector.

Table 4.2 : Age Composition of the Female Construction Workers

Age - range	No. of workers	% of total female construction workers
Below 10	4	01.20
11 - 20	84	25.30
21 - 30	104	31.33
31 - 40	93	28.02
41 - 50	30	09.04
above 50	17	05.12
Total	332	100.00

The respondents were asked to indicate the age at which they took their first job. The data show that 3/4th of the women got employed when they were 20 years or below in age. Nearly 36% of the women were already employed by the time when they had reached the age of 15 years. Also over 40% of the women had worked for more than 7 years and at least 20% of them had held more than three jobs.

Caste composition - Another feature that had been noticed in the construction sector was that 83% of the female workers belonged to SC/ST category, with only 17% belonging to other castes. The general picture, therefore, was that the female construction workers in the hill areas of Darjeeling district mainly come from the SC and ST Sections of the society.

General educational level - The general educational standard of the female workers in the construction industry was quite low. The following table represents the general educational standards of the female construction workers.

Table 4.3 : Educational Status of the Female Construction Workers

Education Level	No. of workers	Percentage
Nil	149	44.89
upto class IV	120	36.14
V to VIII	43	12.95
above class VIII	20	06.02

As seen in the table, 44.89% of the female construction were illiterate. In fact, the educational status of them was so poor that only around 19% of the women workers had schooling experience in the real sense. Such a low educational status of the female construction workers had made them vulnerable to various exploitations. Also, the lack of education was the main cause behind the impossibility of changing their profession.

Marital status - 52.10% of the women construction workers were found to be married. Presumably they were in the exhaustive construction work only to supplement the family - income. The maidens were not very far behind the married in their presence. They accounted for 35.54% of the total female constructions workers. This obviously included the teenaged. Instead of being in schools and colleges, a large number of them had to be engaged in income - supplementation of their families. Similarly, 8.14% of the workers were widowed. Comparatively large percentage of

Table 4.4 : Marital Status of the Female Construction Workers

Marital Status	Number of Workers	Percentage
Maiden	118	35.54
Married	173	52.10
Widowed	27	8.14
Divorced/Separated	14	4.22

widowed women in manual job is the indicator of the fact that the male "Karta" of the lower - income group families mostly failed in protecting the future of their family-members thus

compelling their wives and children to take even the most inhuman jobs.

Commuting distance - In road and building construction, as already stated, although many of the workers stay and move along with the "gang", quite a number of the women workers were also found to commute daily to the work-site. Normally, they were seen to come from nearly villages and tea-industries. The daily commuting distance of the women construction workers has been shown in the following table.

Table 4.5 : Daily Commuting Distance of the Construction Workers

Commuting distance	No. of female workers	Percentage
0 km	83	25.00
1 - 5 km	223	67.17
5 - 10 km	21	06.33
above 10 km	05	01.50

It appears from the table - 4.5 that only 25% of the female construction workers hailed from the area around the construction sites and therefore they do not have to commute to reach the work place. The rest were the daily commuters to the sites. Most of the female workers being married, the family responsibilities would not allow them to stay with the gang but to commute daily. 1.50% of the female construction workers had to travel around 20 km. daily. To travel 20 km. daily in the hills is not a matter of joke. Above all, the transport cost they incurred constitute a large proportion of their income from the work. The 26 respondents who commuted daily a distance of 5 km or more had to spend the transport cost from Rs.50 to Rs.150 a month.

Family size of the female construction workers - Most of the workers came from the families having more than four members. In fact, there was a large concentration of female workers when the family size increased. As the family size increased and the

income of the husbands became insufficient the females moved out in search of a job.

Table 4.6 : Family Size of the Female Construction Workers

Family size	No. of workers	Percentage
1 - 4	136	40.97
5 - 8	178	53.61
above 8	18	05.42

Family income - It is not only the family size that affected the female workers' participation in construction works but the family income was also equally responsible. The approximate family incomes (monthly) of the construction workers are shown in table 4.7.

Table 4.7 : Monthly Family-Income of the Construction Workers

Family Income	No.of construction workers	Percentage
up to Rs.1000	237	71.38
above Rs.1000	95	28.62

The family income as stated by the respondents were approximations only and they are expressed in terms of current prices. It has been observed that the construction works were crowded mostly by the women from the families having income of Rs.1000 or less per month. In this context, it should be mentioned that 18 respondents declared that agriculture was their additional source of income.

Monthly contribution - The table below shows the contribution of women construction workers to their families.

Table 4.8 : Average Monthly Contribution of the women Construction Workers

Contribution made	No.of workers	Percentage
Nil	4	1.20
upto Rs.150	24	7.23
Rs.150 - Rs.250	56	16.87
Rs.250 - Rs.350	107	32.23
Rs.350 - Rs.450	64	19.28
Rs.450 - Rs.550	55	15.96
above Rs.550	24	7.23

Only a few workers (7.23%) could contribute more than Rs.550 per month to their families. Of the married workers over 80% had contributed the same as their husbands. Sixteen respondents earned more than their husbands. Thus, it can be said that in the economic sphere, the status of most of the women construction workers was the same as that of their husbands. This fact, however, is not recognised in the society and also the economic freedom of the women workers is virtually nil in the sense that their participation or non-participation in the construction work is dependent upon the willingness of the male members of the families. Another interesting feature was that, in all cases, the women worked as labourers and so did their husbands. Only 4 teenaged respondents were found not contributing anything to their families. Their income was not regular and whatever they earned was being spent on their private consumption of clothes, cosmetics and such other items.

Age of entry - The responses about the age of entry of the women workers in the construction can be summarised as follows. That nearly 2/3rd (65.66%) of them had entered the construction labour market at the child-bearing age of 15-30 years. The participation of the child & adolescent workers in the hills was relatively low at 18.67% compared to their high entry

rate of 30.42% as shown by the ICSSR study.¹⁴ The percentage of female workers who had entered the construction labour market at the age of 30 years or more was only 15.66. This sizeable fraction of women construction labourers were found to have entered due to certain domestic compulsions such as sudden death of husbands, separation etc.

Hours of work - The working hours in the construction sector in our survey area differed from place to place and site to site. For example, in Mungpo areas, in the road repair, the workers were to work for 7 hours a day in average whereas in all other parts the working hours varied from 8 hours to more than that. The break-up of the women construction workers according to the hours to work is as follows:

Table 4.9 : Working Hours of the Female Construction Workers

Working hours	No.of workers	Percentage
7 to 8 hrs.	295	88.86
More than 8 hrs.	37	11.14

It has been already stated that the construction workers are mostly employed by the private contractors. And for this reason, in some cases, they had to work for more than 8 hours a day. However, all workers were found to have a short break for lunch.

Encouragement - Almost all respondents stated that poverty was the main reason to take up employment in the construction sector. The largest single category of respondents (40%) took up the employment of their own accord. 22% of the respondents were persuaded by their husbands, 24% by their in-laws and the known persons already in construction work, and 13% were found to be persuaded by their parents. It is thus obvious that in the strata of the hill society employment of women is not tabooed at all as it is seen in many upper and middle class

societies in other parts of the country. Women in Darjeeling in general, are encouraged to take up employment.

In spite of a large number of women being absorbed in construction sector, the construction works are not available to them for all throughout the year. Most of them get jobs in this sector for about 100 days a year in average. For the rest of the days they either remain idle or in many cases it is found that they take up other casual jobs such as agricultural works in the rural areas. As a matter of fact woman who works as construction worker in one season might be found to work as agricultural labourer or casual labourer in tea gardens in another season.

4.5 : Summary

The construction industry in India absorbs an increasing number of female workers. This can be understood from the increasing female intensity of the construction work during the period 1971 to 1981. The female intensity rate in the construction industry has increased from 9.098% in 1971 to 9.908% in 1981. The compound annual rate of growth of the male and female workers in the construction sector during the same period was 5.34% and 6.33% respectively. Although, their proportion in the construction industry in India is increasing, it has been observed that women in this industry are subject to an intense form of job insecurity. They operate in the capacity of a reserve army in the construction work being drawn upon in situation of excess demand and thrown out as demand slackens. Thus, there exists a high degree of variability in the female-intensity of the construction work-force.

In the hill areas of Darjeeling district, construction works, road repair and construction in particular, are undertaken almost round the year. The main reason for round the year repair works is that very often there occur landslides and slips and the roads connecting the various interior parts with the urban

centres get blocked frequently. Such slides and slips in monsoon are due to the soil erosion, felling of trees on large scale, defective drainage system, badly constructed houses at terraces, and taking out of coal in the lower Himalayas. The recent rural to urban migration and the bright prospect of tourism in Darjeeling hills also have contributed to the round the year construction of hotels, roads, and residential houses. Added to these are the new developmental projects undertaken by DGHC. Such a growing construction industry in the hills has absorbed a large number of women. In both the road construction and building construction, women's role is equal, if not more than the male workers, in Darjeeling hills.

The construction workers in Darjeeling hills are generally recruited through the sardars and it is a fact that the contractors prefer women to men. Women are ready to work even at a lower wage and they are more sincere to their duties. The male labourers give troubles to their employees at times when they get drunk. The women are free from such addictions. The preference of the female workers in construction is attributed also to the fact that the women of hill areas can perform the arduous manual works equally with their male counterparts.

The hill construction workers have certain peculiar features. A group of workers engaged in the repair and construction of roads at a site is known as "gang" which consists of 20 to 25 labourers inclusive of both male and female. They move enblock from one place to another after working at a site. The members of the "gang" barring the mother workers often stay together in makeshift shanties where they take common food. The gang lives a community style of living in the sense that they enjoy and suffer collectively. There is no caste-barrier among the labourers. Also, the female labourers in the gang are not afraid of the male labourers while staying in the gang. The male

labourers are rarely seen to misbehave with or harass the female workers in the gang.

Although there are certain labour laws in connection with the construction works, they are hardly found to be followed in the hills. The construction workers are not covered by the Minimum Wages Act neither do they receive any accidental or any other medical benefits from their employers. Female workers can not think of availing themselves of the maternity benefits. Women construction workers are subject to wage-discrimination too. A male worker who starts the construction career as an unskilled labour can upgrade himself to the top position in the construction labour market but the women workers has no such promotional prospect. She starts the construction career as an unskilled labour doing the manual works and ends up at the old age with the same type of arduous works being assigned to her.

The field survey in the Darjeeling hills has shown that most of the female construction workers are at the child bearing age. Most of them are illiterate and are from the families having the family members between 5 and 8. They are found in the construction works mainly owing to the economic hardship of their families. The employment of female members of the family is generally not tabooed in the hill society rather they are inspired, in some cases, compelled by the male members. The women construction workers although play a very crucial role in the society and also in supplementing the family income, they have little liberty in deciding the pattern of family expenses. This aspect is determined and as a whole decided by the husbands or other male members, as the case be, of the families.

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Chapter V

Women as Domestic Servants in Urban Areas of Darjeeling Hills

5.1 : Urbanisation, Migration and the Demand for Migrated Labour for Domestic Service

During the last few decades, the process of urbanisation has been very rapid in the district of Darjeeling. This process has been accomplished through a high rate of migration from the rural to urban areas coupled with a relatively high rate of natural population growth.¹ The following table helps understand the comparative growth of rural and urban population in the hills and plains of Darjeeling district during the period 1971-1981.

Table 5.1 : Decadal Change in Distribution of Population : 1971-1981

Subdivision	Percentage Decadal Variation		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Darjeeling	10.58	34.36	14.74
Kalimpong	3.68	38.36	17.98
Kurseong	-1.85	76.84	11.04
Total Hills	8.82	43.93	14.90
Siliguri	51.63	67.30	56.69
Total District	23.36	56.57	31.02

Source : Computed from Annexure I

According to the 1971 census, the district was inhabited by 7,81,777 persons out of which 61.38% constituted the hill people. The proportion of the hill people in the total population has declined at a sharp rate during the next 10-year period. As shown by 1981 census the population of the district increased to

10,24,269 but the percentage of hill people declined considerably to 53.83. This proportion has declined further in 1991 in view of the continued influx of people from Assam, Bangladesh and from other states in and around Siliguri in the plains.

With regard to the urbanisation, during this 10-year period West Bengal, as a whole, experienced an increase in the urban population by 31.73%. The rate of increase in urban population of Darjeeling district (56.57%) was much above the state average. Incidentally, the urbanisation (in terms of population growth) in the hills of this district (43.93%) was although above the state average, it lagged far behind the growth registered by the adjacent siliguri subdivision (67.30%). It should be mentioned here that the moderate increase in urban population in the hill areas can be explained by the fact that there were only three statutory towns viz. Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong in the hills till 1971. But in 1981 besides these three, two non statutory towns were declared urban.² These two non statutory towns together added urban population in the hills to the tune of 14,571 persons. At the same time, the three municipal towns of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong registered a growth in their population by 34.36%, 23.28% and 9.64% respectively.

A fact different from the rest of the state is that the urbanisation in the hills had not been due to fast industrialisation or commercialisation but due to rural economic crisis generated from a very high rate of population-growth therein, the resultant overcrowding and unemployment in rural economy. Accordingly, the unemployed people from the rural areas banked on the urban centres in search of employment. The rural to urban migration thus has been inevitable in the hills.

It has been already mentioned in earlier chapters that tea-gardens which have absorbed the highest number of women

labourers in the hills have almost a stagnant labour force over the years. The scope of unskilled women workers to be absorbed having been reduced in tea-industry as well as in agriculture, even women-migration to the urban centres has become common phenomenon in the hills. Here, it ought to be noted that when so many young women come to the urban and semi-urban areas seeking a job it is obvious that there certainly exists a demand for women labour. The demand for women labour as domestic servants comes mainly from the upper and middle classes of the society and demand is met mainly from the supply of migrated labour as they are ready to work at a relatively low wage rate. Hence, labour-force participation rates among migrants in our sample study are higher than native women! This is accentuated by the fact that the urban native women are not willing to work at a very low wage rate. It has been found in all three hill urban centres that migrant women in all age group have higher participation rates than native women.

Further, there is a wide difference in the occupations of migrants and native women as well as between the earlier and recent migrants. Our field study shows that the proportion of manual workers is highest among recent migrants and the lowest among the native women. This inference has been drawn on the basis of following observation of urban women domestic servants. In our sample, we had altogether 200 women working as domestic servants chosen at random from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong, Mirik and Mungpo. Of them 83 were native of these places while 117 were migrated from rural hills as well from other districts. Also observed was that out of the 117 migrated domestic servants, the old migrants numbered only 39. We had considered all those workers as old migrants who migrated at least 5 years back. The recently migrated (migrated 1 to 5 years back) domestic servants numbered 78.

The picture that we can draw about the women domestic servants in the hills of Darjeeling is that domestic service is numerically important occupation for women in urban and semi urban areas. This occupation is predominantly filled in by the migrants to the concerned areas and especially by the recent migrants.

Job opportunities in the domestic service offer rural women the chance of moving to the urban area with a subsistence job at least and thus the young women gain the autonomy away from their families of their origin. It is mainly the economic pressure and hardship in the rural areas that encourage the migration and employment in domestic service. It was encountered in course of the empirical work in this field that many rural families allowed their daughters to move to the towns just because there were jobs in the domestic service in which the basic minimum needs of the young woman i.e. food and shelter would be covered.

One of the guardians happened to meet this researcher in his place of work in Darjeeling with a request to employ his eldest daughter aged about 14 as maid as she was spoiling herself moving around with some of her bad companies. Thus, sometimes poor parents would like their daughters/sisters in towns to keep them away from the bad elements of their localities. In these cases, it is not the economic compulsion but the protection they expect to get from the upper middle class and the middle class families of the urban centres encourage their movement from rural to urban areas. This, however, is not the general practice. It has also been observed that parents felt that their young daughter more secured and morally and psychologically more sheltered if they lived with families in towns instead of having to fight the cold and poverty in villages.

As a matter of fact, most make the move willingly and on

their own initiative, some only because they are brought or sent, and a few mostly from outside the district, the child and adolescent servants are brought to the urban centres very much against their wishes.

Besides the seemingly aspect as thought of by many parents for the migration of the women to work as domestic servants, their own aspiration about the career is also important. With luck, a few during their tenure as servants met young men and in some stray cases even the masters themselves married them and permitted them to drop out of the servant world to become upper, lower-class house wives. Studies of domestic servants abroad have taken into consideration the perception and orientation that women have towards this particular job. Margo Smith's study of female domestic servants in Lima, Peru is a pioneer work in this direction. Her idea about the servitude providing a channel of upward mobility for the female servant is continued in the following lines.

"Domestic service provides one of the few opportunities available to lower class migrant women for upward socio-economic mobility within the broad spectrum of the lower classes".³

5.2 : Nature of their Work and the Determination of Wages

The employers of the female domestic servants are mainly in the middle and upper middle class people such as businessmen, teachers, doctors and other govt. employees. The female domestic servants on the basis of their contract with their employers can be classified as i) thika workers, ii) full time workers, iii) residential workers and iv) part-time workers. The thika workers serve a number of houses for a duration of 2-3 hours a day in each of the houses. Thika workers are found to serve a maximum of four houses. The full time workers are attached with a single household for the whole day only; they are given one time food by

the employers. The residential workers live in the families as family members doing all type of household works. Most of the migrated women employed as domestic servants prefer to work as residential servants. If employed as residential maids they ought to serve for a longer duration but the shelter remains no more a problem for them. The part-time domestic servants, on the other hand, are generally indigenous workers who make themselves available for household works for a short duration everyday. This classification of maids is mainly done on the basis of the hours of work and the provision of their stay with the employees.

The job assigned to them, however, in all the places and for all types of maids are almost the same. They are required to do as a whole lot of sundry jobs as cleaning utensils, washing clothes, sweeping and cleaning the houses, fetching water etc.. Cooking is generally assigned only to a selected number of experienced workers. The cooks do not always hail from the lower castes. This is because many of the higher class employers do not allow scheduled caste women in cooking. But for all household jobs caste is not considered. Besides the manual jobs some of them are employed for minding the minor children, escorting the children to their schools and looking after the kitchen gardens. The wages paid to these serving women are determined by the nature of the jobs (whether manual or non-manual), family size of the employers, status of the employers and the duration of their works. The wages given for non-manual works like that of minding the children or escorting them to schools and back are higher than that offered for manual household services. This difference seems to be attributed by the fact that the non-manual domestic services require the women to be well dressed and relatively smart. Also the residential workers get lower wages in cash than that earned by the non-residentials. In addition to the monthly wages the residential maids are provided shelter and food by the

employers. The adolescent residential maids had told that the quality of food was not always the same as what their employers ate. They were seldom given the delicious items; sometimes they were given the leftovers to eat and usually they ate after everybody of the family had taken the food.

The demand for women domestic servants, however, is not uniform all throughout the years. In the hills, the demand for part time domestic servants goes up during the period of acute water-crisis (generally first three months and last two months of a calendar year). The water crisis has remained as an everlasting problem. No effective step so far has been undertaken by the state govt. and the newly formed DGHC to solve this problem in the hills. Excepting the monsoon, for the rest of the year, quite a large number of women get employment for carrying water from the nearby natural streams. This is a common practice in Darjeeling town since water is scarce there and people mostly have to depend on the natural streams and springs for water-supply. A recent phenomenon that has developed in Darjeeling is the formation of a group of women who along with the help of a few male workers divide the areas among themselves and thus take the right over a particular area to supply water from these sources. They work as piece rate workers. As they are engaged in supplying a vital commodity like water, the employers virtually have no role in determining their wages. The rate of a tin⁴ of water is fixed by the women carrier themselves. The rate varies from Rs. 2.00 to Rs. 5.00 a tin depending upon the distance of the households from the water sources. As all the people of a particular locality depend heavily on this natural streams (the municipality supply of water being restricted to twice or thrice a week or so for a short duration of 10 to 15 minutes only), the rush in the springs is so heavy at times that these water carriers are compelled to work in the chilly cold even at midnights.

5.3 : The Employers' Attitude towards the Servants

There appears to be some awareness on the part of a minority of employers that the employment situation of their servants should be changed. This is, in fact, a global phenomenon. The change in the attitude has been noticed by many researchers in this line.⁵ In Darjeeling hills, increasing number of employers are permitting, and in some cases insisting, that their servants attend school. Apart from their wages, the female domestic servants these days receive new clothes or sometimes festival grant in cash or Christmas gifts from their employers. Some affluent employers are seen to extend this generosity even to other members especially the children of the servant's family. Annual increment of wages are also granted to the thika and full time domestic servants. Such incentives had led the domestic servants to serve a particular household for years. Another positive outlook of a few employers can be understood from their initiative to convince the women servants to go for saving. The outcome of this encouragement is quite promising. To give an example, in 1992, out of 2000 + savings bank account in Uco-Bank extension counter of Singamari, Darjeeling, it was found that 24 belonged to the female domestic servants serving in that locality. According to the then officer-in-charge, these servants deposit a certain amount of their earning everymonth.⁶

In spite of such positive outlooks of a number of employers, the domestic employees have some genuine grievances against the housewives. A few of the housewives in the upper strata of the society when contacted considered themselves enlightened on the subject of good treatment for servants and insisted that they treated their maidservants just like members of their families. Yet upon questioning, the same women consistently referred to their servants as naukarni⁷, acknowledged that the servants ate by themselves in the kitchen

off old dishes especially set aside for themselves after the rest of the family had finished eating. Few are the employers who want to see changes in their servitude complex and support their talk of change with action.

There are numerous employers who speak of servants as half-savage, who consider them invisible objects generally to be ignored or do not see any need for changes to occur. They hold the view that servants should not be allowed to move freely inside the house; they should be under strict vigilance all the time; there is no need for servants to be educated (certainly not beyond the barriers of reading and writing) ; education only would give the servants ideas about changing status quo; and so on. In spite of these, Darjeeling hills have a tradition that it has no record of any severe atrocity on the domestic servants.. Neither the domestic servants so far have lodged any complaint to the police station against the employers' behaviour. Of course, the servants often have shown their dissatisfaction, but it never has taken the extreme turn. This shows a somewhat mutual recognition of both the employers and employees for their respective status.

5.4 : Paid Domestic Service and its Social Consequences

Domestic service performed by the paid women is not a job like others. The women are hired to provide some personal services but not at a profit - the employers are not doing business hiring domestic servants. The labour expended during this job does not provide any goal or service that will enter the money circulation process in the society. It is rather the work performed for self-consumption and in that sense the work is more comparable to house work performed by the members of the family without pay than to the work performed by a wage-worker. Although it is work for self-consumption, the self involved is not the worker herself but her employer, with whom only monetary links

exist. It may be arranged so that in this respect the work is not that different from the housework performed by the housewife; but the other links between the housewife and the members of the household are lacking for the domestic servant.⁸

For the economy and employment structure, the performance of domestic tasks by means of paid domestic services from women has many consequences. First, the availability of relatively cheap domestic service in our study area affects the quality of life of the middle and the upper middle strata enjoying such service. If domestic service were not available, personal services would then have to be purchased from established enterprises (such as restaurants, laundry and dry cleaning etc) at considerably higher prices. Thus, the use of domestic servants implies some savings for those who can afford them. However, as a source for productive investment, the aggregate effects of domestic service seems negligible since the saving is probably diverted more often to other consumption and luxury items than to investment.

Secondly, the availability of domestic service has some indirect consequences for the women in the households that can afford them. It is needless to say that there is no end to housework but the employment of domestic maid help frees the housewife from many of her domestic obligations. In some cases as found in Darjeeling hills, the domestic servants are so trained that they can take over the management and organisation of the household ; the housewives only occasionally supervise their work. This implies that it may be easier for middle-strata women to enter the labour force or remain in it after marriage and during child rearing without having to carry the full burden of the employment and the household hazards. The availability and employment of the domestic servants thus might encourage woman to take full-time jobs in the formal or even in the informal sector.

Further more, such availability of domestic servants may also encourage them to lead a life of leisure and comfort unknown to women at comparable income levels in other places where domestic service is considerably more expensive.

5.5 : Findings of the Survey of the Woman Domestic Servants in Darjeeling Hills

The field survey on 200 women domestic servants picked up randomly from 200 households of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong towns in the hills gave the following results.

Age composition of female domestic servants -The majority of women servants were older adolescents and young adults. This is illustrated in the following table. 61% of the domestic servants ranged in the age from 11 to 30.

Table 5.2 : Age Composition of Women Domestic Servants

Age	Number of Servants	Percentage
Below 10	2	1.0
11 - 20	52	26.0
21 - 30	71	35.5
31 - 40	43	21.5
41 - 50	23	12.5
Above 50	09	4.5

The number of female domestic servants declined with increase in age. Only 17 % of them belonged to the age group of 41 and above. This is so because the employers normally do not employ very old ones as their capacity for labour is limited and they cannot perform their duty in a normal way.

Nature of employment - It has been already mentioned that the nature of employment of all domestic servants is not the same. Majority of the aged workers preferred to work as 'thika'

servants while the adolescent and young ones mostly migrated from the rural areas and the neighbouring districts preferred to be employed as residential maids. The following table shows the contactwise breakup of the maid servants interviewed.

Table 5.3 : Nature of Employment of Female Domestic Servants

Pattern of employment	Number of workers	Percentage
Thika or piece rate	80	40.0
Full time	61	30.5
Residential	43	21.5
Part time	16	08.0

It was surprising to note that out of 43 residential domestic servants in the towns of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong 29 were from the far distant places like Naxalbari, Alipurduar, Cooch Behar and Mathabhanga. Majority of the plains to hill migration had occurred among the children and adolescents. A section of the employers preferred such child and adolescent maids because they were found to be loyal and in no time could mix with the family. They sometimes got homesick but were motivated for the household jobs in no time. The chance of leaving the job was also minimum for the migrated adolescent maids.

Education level - Domestic service, not only in Darjeeling hills, but every where within the country and abroad is the most important occupation absorbing the largest number of illiterates. The education level of the female domestic servants in our study area is summarised in the following table. More than 50% of them did not possess any education at all while 17% of them had gone to school but dropped out before they completed the primary level. Only two domestic servants were found to have passed Madhyamik.

Table 5.4 : Education Level of Female Domestic Servants

Level of education	Number of domestic servants	Percentage
Nil	101	50.5
Upto class IV	35	17.5
V to VIII	45	22.5
Above VIII	19	09.5

Both of them were from Kalimpong serving as the attendants of medical practitioners. Above all, 8 part-time domestic servants in Darjeeling and Kurseong were school goers too.

Marital status : Quite in support of the teenagers dominating the labour market of the domestic servants, maidens outnumbered the married ones.

Table 5.5 : Marital Status of the Female Domestic Servants

Status	Number of servants	Percentage
Maiden	92	46.0
Married	74	37.0
Widow	19	09.5
Separated/Divorced	15	07.5

The presence of widow and separated women in servants' labour market is also significant. These two groups together formed 17% of the total female domestic servants. The labour market of the domestic servants was such that even after marriage, women continued to remain in the labour market unless they were married in distant places. It is a fact that the maidservants get married to persons who are economically weak and hail also from informal labour market working as tailors, hawkers, carpenters drivers or casual workers. The husbands earning being insufficient the women are left with no other

choice than to stick in their pre-marriage occupations to support the families.

Contribution to the family income - To what extent the maids and other domestic servants supported their families by directly contributing to the family income can be understood from the following table.

Table 5.6 : Income Contribution of the Domestic Servants

Monthly Contribution	Number of Workers	Percentage
Nil	5	02.5
Upto Rs. 150	78	39.0
Rs. 151- Rs. 350	93	46.5
Rs. 351- Rs. 500	21	10.5
Above Rs. 500	3	01.5

The table shows that most of the female domestic servants contributed to their families within the range of Rs 150 and Rs 250. 85.5% of the total sampled domestic servants had contributed in that range. 2.5% of them did not contribute at all. Among the adolescents a few were found to spend a part for their personal expenditure and save the rest. Those contributing more than Rs 500 constituted only 1.5% in the labour market.

Perceptions of the work - The domestic service had established itself as one of the principal sources of informal activities absorbing the unskilled, uneducated, indigenous and migrated women. The servants abroad both in the developed and developing countries earn sufficiently. Margo Smith's study in Lima had shown that domestic servitude was considered as the stepping stone for building their careers. They began to focus one of the servant specialities and improved their position within the servant hierarchy as they passed from one job to the next.⁹ The perception of the domestic servitude in our study area

differed considerably from that shown by Smith. In Darjeeling hills, 36.5% of the female domestic servants had considered the job as transitional; they hoped to change their occupation but 63.5% thought they had no option than to remain in the servitude occupation. Neither did they find the scope to improve their positions in the servant hierarchy.

Reasons for taking the job of domestic servant - As in the case of other informal occupation like petty trade, construction work, manufacturing work etc., economic compulsion was the main reason behind taking up domestic service as their livelihood. However, there were a small percentage (5.5%) of the workers, mostly the teen aged girls, who entered the job market with a view to passing out the idle-time. Their entry did not seem to be economically necessary but the earnings they received in exchange of their labour working as domestic servants for a part time basis were utilised on fashionable dresses. Barring this particular group, vast majority of the female domestic servants in the hills toiled just for the sake of their children and other family members. The following table exhibits the break-up of the female domestic servants on the basis of the various reasons for being in the servitude job.

Table 5.7: Reasons for Taking the Job as Domestic Servants

Reasons	Number of servants	Percentage
Idle time	11	05.5
Income supplementation	56	28.0
Economic compulsion	133	66.5

Mode of recruitment - Their recruitment as domestic servants had occurred mainly through own effort (54.5%). Only 14% were brought from outside directly by the employers themselves. The residential adolescent maids in most of the cases were recruited by the employers' effort. Labour sardars and employment

agencies had no role at all. In fact the concept of employment agencies as found in other big towns and cities in our country and abroad has not developed at all in Darjeeling hills. Detail discussion about the employment agencies has been done in chapter IX of this thesis. To what extent and how the female domestic servants were recruited has been summarised in table-5.8 below.

Table 5.8: Mode of Recruitment

Recruitment through	Number of domestic servants	Percentage
Own effort	109	54.5
Fellow workers' help	41	20.5
Employers' own effort	28	14.0
Labour sardar	Nil	00.0
Employment agencies	Nil	00.0
Others' help	22	11.0

5.6 : Summary

The demand for women labour as domestic servants in the rich, upper-middle and middle class societies in Darjeeling Hills is generally met from the migrant women. A section of these workers also hails from the same locality where they have been working. The domestic servants in the hill economy do play a very important role in the society by performing the household jobs on wage-payment. The household jobs generally performed by the housewives when are shouldered by the domestic servants, the housewives can participate in other economic activities both in the formal and informal sector. And this has what exactly happened in our study area. Also, the availability of relatively cheap domestic servants has some positive impact on the quality of life of those who can afford to employ them. If domestic services were not available, personal services would then have to be purchased from established enterprises at considerably higher prices. Thus, the use of domestic servants at a relatively low

wages implies some savings for the employers which can be diverted to productive investment.

In spite of their significant contribution, the domestic servants everywhere are subject to various kind of harassment. The employers' attitude have always been a matter of concern for them. Recently domestic servants of Darjeeling hills have witnessed an improving attitude from the employers. A few of the employers are encouraging their education and also have convinced their servants of the need for savings. But, the general feeling still existing is that there is no need for servants to be educated; it would give the servants about changing their status quo. So long, this conservatism prevails in the society, the maid servants may have to suffer a lot.

The main reason for taking up the job of servitude is the economic hardship. In Darjeeling hills the majority of the women servants are adolescents and young adults. The old ladies are not generally employed because they cannot perform the arduous household works of cleaning, sweeping, cooking and nurturing of children in a normal and best way. In the labour market of domestic servants, the maidens have outnumbered the married ones. Most of the maid servants are found to contribute the bulk of whatever they earn from their job to their families. It is only the adolescents who keep a fraction of the earning for their personal expenditures. The wages paid to them, in general, are very low since they do not have the bargaining power. Had they been employed through some agencies, it would not have been the case, as we find in many big cities of our country. However, such cheap availability of domestic servants have encouraged the housewives to lead a life of leisure and comfort unknown to women at comparable income levels at other places where domestic service is considerably more expensive.

Notes and References :

1. M. Dasgupta, The Project Report on the Women Labourers of Informal Sector, ICSSR, 1992, p.17.
2. Cart-road in Kurseong subdivision and Jaldhaka Hydel Project in Garubathan police-station under Kalimpong subdivision had been declared as urban areas in 1981 census.
3. Margo L. Smith, "Domestic Service as a Channel of Upward Mobility for the Lower Class Women : the Lima Case", Female and Male in Latin America, Ann Pescatello (ed), Pittsburg : University of Pittsburg, 1973
4. A tin is an empty container of mustard oil that contains roughly 15 litres of water. The women water suppliers find it comfortable to carry water in these tins on their back.
5. Margo L. Smith, "The Female Domestic Servant and Social Change : Lima Peru", Women Cross-culturally : Change and Challenge, Ruby Rohrlich-Leavilt (ed), Mouton Publishers, The Hague, Paris, 1975, p.169
6. The author is indebted to Mr. S. Lama, the then officer-in-charge of UCO Bank Extension counter for his kindness to let the researcher know the information about the saving potentials of female domestic servants of Singamari Locality.
7. A derogatory term to mean the maid servants in local language in the hills.
8. Elizabeth Jelin, "Domestic Servants in Latin American cities", Development Digest, Vol XVII, no.1 July 1979. pp.67-74.
9. Margo L. Smith, op. cit., p.168

Chapter-VI

Self-employed Women: The Petty Traders

In a country like ours where unemployment and poverty are the main economic problems to tackle with, self-employment opportunities have considerable relevance. Accordingly the self employment schemes as instrument to eradicate unemployment are being encouraged. Special credit assistance measures are also launched to induce the unemployed youths taking self-employment activities. In fact, the preferred mode of working in our own culture is self employment, to work for oneself, to one's own resources and to be able to have the freedom to decide one's own working conditions.¹ In the light of this tradition, among the various informal sector occupations, self-employment is conceived as one of the important profitable and challenging enterprises.

A typical feature of Darjeeling hills is that a large number of women, especially in the urban and semi-urban areas are self-employed. They have taken up street vending and other petty business involving low capital as their principal source of livelihood. A selected group of artisan women, on the other hand, are absorbed in some other self-employed activities such as the noodle manufacturing, handicrafts production and other home based enterprises like knitting and weaving which need less capital. This chapter first makes an attempt to highlight the status of the self-employed women mainly engaged in petty-trade in the developing countries including India. The role of women petty traders of Darjeeling hills would then be discussed. This would help us compare their problems and plights in petty trading with those faced by their counterparts in some developing countries.

6.1 : Self-employed or Own Account Workers vs. Piece-rate Workers

In simple terms, self-employed women are those who have full control over production or commercial processes and the mar-

ket. The self-employed women are the owners of the means of production. They do not work for an employer but have several customers of their own. They fix their own rate according to the value they assign to their works and to the competition. In view of these characteristics, some researchers have referred self-employed as own-account workers.

Distinction can be made between the self-employed workers (or own-account workers) and Piece rate workers. The own-account workers work at their own place and convenience. They set their own levels of production depending upon the amount of money they have, extent of raw-materials they can collect or buy, number of family members, their contact with the market and the demand for the goods. In other words, self-employed take their own risks and deal with the economy. But for various reasons when the resources of these workers are destroyed, they are forced to work for somebody else. This is how the piece-rate work starts. Being skilled only in their own occupations, they can only do that kind of work or manual labour. If they work in the same occupation, they work as piece-raters. Obviously, the piece-rate work is subject to exploitation and the workers are left with no choice but to work long and hard hours to earn enough to survive. They are not provided any of the facilities or support services that factory workers in the formal sector are given.² Thus, the piece-rate worker has no other identity than a mere worker. With respect to organisation of productive process the self-employed, on the other hand, represents an extreme example of the lack of structure of the informal sector, since one person has the role of worker, employer and owner substantially.³

It is very much common in Darjeeling hills that women run most of the road side restaurants and tea-stalls and vegetable and fruit stalls. They are very much engaged also in street vending, retailing in woolen garments, second hand clothes and for-

eign goods smuggled from Nepal. Quite a number of women petty-grocers are also found. Besides these, like in other places, the beauticians and hair dressers are running a number of beauty-parlours mainly in three municipal towns. To one's surprise, women in these places also have started running the meat stalls. All these women have been included in the self-employed category and are considered as "petty-traders" in our analysis. The women workers engaged on wage-basis in knitting, weaving, food processing and in other home based manufacturing units are the piece-rate workers in the true sense. They have been clustered together as "artisans". Many researchers (Moser 1981, Escobar 1989) have raised questions whether petty trade activity should be included in the purview of informal sector market. Their doubt is based on the fact that the traders posses a fixed place on the streets or a stall in the market and also are required to pay the specified tax to the local administration body; the non-payment of which ban their entry in the market. These facts have been considered by these researchers as the govt. regulation upon the petty traders and hence according to them, these works in the true sense do not fall in the informal sector. While raising these points, the advocates of the view seemed to be in dark about the other side of the fact. That the labour market in general, does not impose any entrance barrier such as minimum educational or skill requirements as needed for any work in the formal sector. The work conditions are not regulated by the legal status; neither the self-employed are covered by any social security benefit when they become old. Last but not the least, this sector is not properly represented in the census of ours. It should be mentioned here that this sector is represented in the census as trading but it does not give the accurate and true picture of the women engaged in it. For example, the 1971 census report showed only 1079 women engaged in trade and commerce in the three hill subdivisions of Darjeeling District. In 1981, women in trade and com-

merce had been shown together with those engaged in mining and quarrying, plantation, construction, transport and manufacturing units in household sectors combinedly termed as other workers. If only plantation workers were deducted the number of women engaged in other activities would be far below the exact figure. This may be due to the fact that many self-employed women engaged in petty trading were considered as housewives only. All these facts suffice us to say that the petty-traders constitute a major part of the informal labour market.

6.2 : The Status of Women Petty-traders in Developing Countries

In Latin American countries informal sector absorbs the largest number of women. In countries like Peru, Brazil, Chile women are mostly employed as domestic servants. Next to their preference in the informal sector comes the self-employment activities of which street-vending attracts mainly the poor women. Even in Asian countries trading at street has absorbed a large women population. Street vending activity is said to have no barriers with respect to areas and the street appears to be just a free open space for those wanting it.⁴ Vending in the streets requires almost no capital and hence the earning of such women workers is bare-minimum. This is true in all the developing countries that these women would change jobs if they had chance to. In view of the low earning from street vending researchers have looked these women as performing needless, unproductive activity.⁵ The economic status of these women has been well summarised by Arizpe in the following lines:

"They had to offer an unnecessary service and to create their own demand, since a street vendor who sells what she has just brought in the market two blocks away is not fulfilling a real demand. It is reasonable to suppose that if they had other alternatives these women would not en-

gage in such activities".⁶

The condition of women petty traders is no better than street vendors. The only difference between them is that petty traders transact their business at a fixed place in the market sheltered at a structured shop but the street sellers have to occupy a corner of the street or the space outside the regular shops. The established petty traders have to spend something for the maintenance of their shops while the street vendors are free from these. What makes petty traders' condition bleak is the need of capital to be collected from unorganised credit market at comparatively higher interest rate. Thus, the petty trade sector has higher capital cost than the street vendor. Bunster, thus transmitted, when looking at a Peruvian market, the image of a petty women trader as powerless, victimised people on the very fringe of society who suffer from authoritarianism and constant intimidation by inspectors.⁷

Thus, the researchers have experienced a discouraging phenomenon that has reduced the importance of petty trade as a promising informal sector activity for women in many third world countries. There are some other stories which have argued against the validity of the paradigm of poor women in informal sector trade. In this context, mention may be made of the study of Van de Laar in Grand Dakar. The study found that it was privileged women who could participate in the informal sector trading:

"This case study demonstrates that membership in a relatively well-to-do household is a necessary precondition. Only those women who have the time to embark on private entrepreneurship have the luxury to control their finances — .Therefore in the Grand Dakar situation women working in the informal sector are privileged rather than obliged to do so".⁸

India's picture of the women petty traders is no better than that in most Latin American countries. In South and in North-eastern India, a large number of women workers especially in urban areas are self-employed - vending or hawking on the streets (flowers fresh produce like vegetables, fruits, ready-food items etc.). Various studies on them described them to be confined to the lowest end of the trading hierarchy. In a study of the women petty traders and homebased producers in South India, Helzi Noponen described their overall status as:

"They are perpetually in debt to moneylenders or to wholesale suppliers thus losing much of their meagre earnings in paying exorbitant weekly interest charges. They often suffer the indignities of sexual harassment, being jostled away from prime selling spots, and lack of access to public water and toilet facilities. These micro enterprises can be contrasted with more lucrative male-dominated operations of stall owning, institution supply and wholesaling outlets".⁹

6.3 Women Petty Traders of Darjeeling Hills

In the hill areas of Darjeeling district women are very prominent in all kinds of selling from the market to the pavement. It is a familiar scene in the hills to see women starting from the road side temporary foodstalls, to various stalls temporarily erected at the tourist sights, to the crowded market places in permanent stalls and pavements bargaining with the customers. Modernisation implies new avenues of employment and if this so defined, women petty traders in the hill economy constitute a very important segment of the "modernisation process".¹⁰

The "modernisation process" only cannot explain the large participation of women in petty trade. The structural conditions of the economic crisis also forced poor families to set up diverse mechanisms in order to recompose their income and women's absorption in informal sector petty trade is supposed to be as

part of these mechanisms.

Women are also encouraged by the fact that these ventures require relatively less capital. Being predominantly labour intensive and the male members of the family extending the necessary help, the women find petty trade the best suitable way to utilise the idle time. For such a work barring the cases who are required to leave home, (the street vendors mainly), others having established the shops mainly at their residences and at the nearby market places do not feel the physical separation between work place and domestic place. Thus, the degree of tension in women petty traders' life is somewhat less than that faced by women workers in the formal sector as well as some others like construction workers and domestic servants etc. in the informal sector.

There is an immense variation in the organisation and structure of petty trade run by the women and a quick generalisation is extremely difficult. However, it has been observed that the retailing in second hand clothes, woolen garments and the foreign goods smuggled from Nepal is predominantly carried out by the Tibetan and the Bhutia women. The Nepalese women, on the other hand, are mainly engaged in dealing with vegetables, grocery items and roadside foodstalls as well as running small restaurants at market places. While for the majority of the Tibetan and Bhutia women petty trade is found to be full time occupation. Nepalese women have mostly taken up petty trade as a part-time occupation. The street vendors dealing in ready made food-stuffs are mostly migrated from the rural areas. The very nature of this activity enables them to operate without overhead costs. Hence, they can supply goods at competitive prices to the consumers.

From the nature of goods they deal in, it can be said that while a sizeable section of them are high income-earners an-

other group is found to be the bare subsistence earners. Such differences in earnings, however, is absent in construction works, domestic services and in nursery schools where women participate in large numbers in Darjeeling hills.

A sample of 300 women petty traders was selected at random from the urban and the semi-urban areas of the Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong subdivisions and the observations are tabulated as follows. This table helps us understanding the percentages of women petty traders dealing with various goods. The average daily turn-over of each group of the petty traders has also been calculated on the basis of their own approximate estimation of their daily sales in 1991-92.

Table 6.1 : Distribution of Women Vendors in Different Categories and the Corresponding Daily Average Turn-over

Category	Number of women	Percentage	Approx. avg. turn-over (in Rs.)
1. Vending in refreshments and wine	84	28.00	116
2. Vending in perishable products	99	33.00	102
3. Selling grocery items	7	15.67	155
4. (i) Retailing in clothes and woolen garments	38	12.67	461
(ii) Vending in foreign goods	8	02.67	562
5(a) Street vending (Lottery tickets, newspaper & magazines and dry food items)	12	04.00	100
(b) Miscellaneous (dealing in picture cards, video cassettes, tea leaves, meat etc.)	12	04.00	473
Total	300	100.0	187

The table 6.1 above shows that although there are nine different categories of the petty traders, the goods they deal in are mostly the consumer goods. The last column of the table also shows that the highest average daily turnover of Rs.562 are accrued to the vendors of foreign goods followed by Rs.473 in miscellaneous items. The retailers in garments at the average have a daily turn-over of Rs.461. Expectably, the lowest turn-over of Rs.100 only is found in street vending.

The women traders having permanent shops and the satisfactory sales of foreign goods and garments constitute the major earning members and the more or less happy ones but the street vendors in the hill economy are subject to many atrocities. The vendors (dealing particularly in newspaper, magazines, green vegetables and old clothes) do not have any legal status. The policeman on duty use this illegal status of the women vendors to exhort bribes. The police persecution of the vendors is encouraged by the big shopkeepers also. The urban centers have specific market places where the shopkeepers sell vegetables and fruits. They complain that vendors set up shop just outside their pukka shops selling the same items undercutting their prices. These shopkeepers have written to the police department complaining that vendors create public nuisances. Some cases of bribing the individual policeman are there to harass the women vendors. In order to protect themselves from the police harassment, the vendors are also paying *hafta* (weekly payment) to them. This constitutes the cost of maintaining territory for their business.¹¹ Thus, the status of various category of the self-employed engaged in petty-trade is different.

6.4 : Results of the Survey

The findings of the survey on 300 petty traders of Darjeeling hills are summarised in tabular forms in the following way.

Age composition of the women petty traders - Different types of women were found engaged in petty trade and their age structure was different. The main concentration of the petty traders was in the age group of 31 to 40.

Table 6.2: Age Distribution of the Women Petty Traders

Age	Number of workers	Percentage
Below 11	Nil	00.00
11-20	22	07.33
21-30	78	26.00
31-40	83	27.67
41-50	62	20.67
Above 50	55	18.33

It was quite logical to note that contrary to the workers in the construction sector and domestic service, the child workers were conspicuously absent in the trading sector. The girl child being immatured and unable to handle the monetary transactions was not given the responsibility of running the trading as the inexperience would lead to severe loss. The petty trade was more or less run by women of older age. The percentage of the workers in the age group of 21 to 50 was 74.34. Even the participation of old women was quite high. 18.33% of them were of the age above 50. This showed that in trade it was the experience that was counted. The physical strength was not at all a factor that affected the self-employment of woman in petty trade.

Caste composition - The caste composition of women petty traders was quite interesting to note. The SC & ST population of Darjeeling hills constitute only 8.48% and 10.99% of the total population respectively. Of the total female population of the hills SC constitute 8.58% while STs constitute 11.21%.¹² But their presence in the informal sector petty trading was not so negligible. In fact, 18% of the women petty traders were STs while 10.33% were SCs. The social stratification in the urban

centres can be used to explain this apparent anomaly. Large number of Tibetans, after Chinese invasion in Tibet had taken refuge to the three urban centres in the hills of Darjeeling district. Trading is their main occupation. And everywhere in the hills, the Tibetan ladies look after their business, thereby leading to a high rate of participation of the ST women in trading. This is attributed to the fact that among them ladies from the beginning of their life here are assigned to trading while men folk have tried to earn something from elsewhere. It has been already mentioned that the Tibetan women are mainly engaged in retailing business of woolen garments, old clothes, foreign goods and many other Tibetan handicraft items.

Educational level - The overall level of education of these women was poor. But compared to construction sector and domestic service relatively educated women were seen engaged in petty trade. The percentage of illiterate women was only 27.67%. It was quite encouraging to find 5 graduate women too.

Table 6.3: Education Level of the Women Petty Traders

Level of Education	Number of Workers	Percentage
Nil	83	27.67
Upto to class IV (Primary level)	68	22.67
V to VII (Intermediate level)	74	24.67
Above VIII (High school and college level)	75	25.00

The number of women petty traders who had passed Madhyamik or its equivalent was 17 while 11 of them had passed Higher Secondary. The educated women were found trading mainly in

curio-items, ladies cosmetics and fashionable garments. In Darjeeling town, one graduate lady was found to run one STD/ISD telephone booth too. It is quite encouraging to find such enterprising women in Darjeeling hills which is very rare even in the big towns of our country.

Marital status - It was observed that most of these women were married. The presence of maidens, widows and divorced or separated women was relatively low. In the construction sector, it was sheer economic compulsions that led the adolescent girls and married women to join the strenuous construction works. The petty trade, on the other hand, mostly being carried out at domestic places, the married women's participation was noticeably higher in it. Following is the break-up of the women vendors according to their marital status.

Table 6.4 : Martial Status of the Women Traders.

Status	No. of Workers	Percentage
Maiden	51	17.00
Married	206	68.67
Widowed	36	12.00
Divorced/Separated	07	02.33

Family size - The average members in the family of the women vendors were calculated as 6. Majority of these women came from the families which had more than four members.

Table 6.5 : Family Size of the Women Petty Traders

Family Members	No of Workers	Percentage
1 - 4	93	31.00
5 - 8	181	60.33
Above 8	26	08.67

It appeared that the critical level for starting vending was the number of members in the family. When the number exceeded five, there was an ample chance that women take up petty trading and enter into the informal sector.

and enter into the informal sector.

Family Income - Needless to say, size of family was not the only factor determining the entry of women in vending. It was rather family income¹³ which was more important. For women, the sample survey revealed the fact that as the income of the family increased their participation in vending declined. The following was the distribution of the women petty traders' family income.

Table 6.6 : Family Income of the Vendors

Family income	Number of vendors	Percentage
Upto Rs.500	23	07.67
Rs.501-Rs.1000	122	40.67
Rs.1001-Rs.1500	83	27.67
Rs.1501-Rs.2000	38	12.67
Rs.2001-Rs.2500	13	04.33
Above Rs.2500	21	07.00

Table - 6.6 shows that the highest percentage (40.67) of the self-employed women engaged in petty trade were from the families having the monthly income between Rs. 501 and Rs.1000 while the least (only 11.33%) of them were from relatively higher-income earning (above Rs.2000 p.m.) families.

To find out whether there existed any relation between the family income and the participation of women in petty trade, the rank correlation coefficient between the family income and the percentage of women in the respective income category has been calculated using Spearman's formula for rank correlation (r)¹⁴. The value of r is found to be -0.6. This implies that the family income and women's participation in petty trade are strongly but inversely related. That is, higher the family income less the women's participation and vice versa.

Monthly contribution to the family - The role of women petty traders in the hill economy can be understood from their

financial contribution to their families. Their contribution was in no way negligible. In many cases, the women vendors' income and the resulting contribution to the family was higher than what the husbands had earned. A number of respondents were found to run the business in joint venture. Both husband and wife worked together in their own shop. Retailers in garments and the petty grocers were found to work jointly. The husbands generally looked after the transit of the goods while most of the selling was done by the wives. In such cases of joint and mutual business, 50% of the total earning was counted as the wives' contribution. The pattern of the monthly family contribution made by the women vendors was as follows.

Table 6.7 : Average Monthly Contribution by the Women Petty Traders to their Families

Amount	Number of women vendors	Percentage
Nil	5	01.67
Upto Rs.200	29	09.67
Rs.201-Rs.400	76	25.33
Rs.401-Rs.600	87	29.00
Rs.601-Rs.800	33	11.00
Rs.801-Rs.1000	27	09.00
Above Rs.1000	43	14.33

Indebtedness - Informal sector activities are characterised by the use of labour intensive methods. The use of capital is minimum. Self-employment, running the petty trade and manufacturing units in particular, however, requires the use of some capital at least. The day to day trade transaction, the purchase of capital etc. cannot be met always from the family savings. Self-employed women thus were required to borrow finance from various sources. Apart from the investment loan, the street vendors in particular had borrowed for the purpose of consumption too. Out of 300 interviewees, 218 had responded while asked about

their indebtedness, if any, and the source of borrowing. The following table represents the distribution of petty traders' indebtedness.

Table 6.8 : Distribution of the Women Petty Traders' Indebtedness

Amount of Loan	Number of Women Petty Traders	Sources				Purposes	
		Money Lenders	Govt.	Banks	NGOs	Inves- tment	Prod- uction
Nil	119 (54.59)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Below Rs.1000	32(14.68)	20	3	7	2	26	6
Rs.1001-2500	41(18.81)	25	2	11	3	34	7
Rs.2501-5000	22(10.09)	8	-	14	-	18	4
Above Rs.5000	4(01.83)	-	-	4	-	4	-

* figures in the parentheses denote the percentages.

** Govt. loans include loans from DGHC, DIC, Panchayats and blocks etc.

Further information:

a) % of total indebtedness	45.41
b) % of money lender finance	53.53
c) % of govt finance	5.05
d) % of bank finance	36.36
e) % of NGO finance	5.05
f) % of loans for product and investment purposes	82.83
g) % of loans for consumption purposes	17.17

It is thus seen that 45.41% of the women petty traders were somehow in debt. Of the total vendors having the burden of loan, 53.53% were indebted to private money lenders. Among the rest 36.36% had availed of financial assistance from banks and 5.05% from NGOs. The govt. assistance was surprisingly minimum, only 5.05% had availed it. Of the loans, 82.83% was told to be

meant for investment purposes while the rest for consumption and other non-productive purposes.

6.5 : Problems of Self-Employed Women in the Hills

From the study of the self-employed women, particularly the petty traders, in the hills, it is observed that lack of access to business credit is only one of many problems they face. The institutional credit is not easily available to them and at times of urgency, credit is being supplied by the moneylenders at a high rate of interest.

Some other factors which operate to keep women in the lowest trade positions and inhibit their rise in the trading hierarchy include time limitation due to the demands of child care and cooking, lack of opportunities to acquire business skills, physical limitations in carrying greater loads and inability to command the male workers. Another significant factor that restricts the ability of women to move onto more profitable activities are female behavioural norms regarding mobility and interactions with men. At the same time, they are handicapped in the current centralised wholesale market set-up absolutely controlled by men. It has been expressed by many respondent female petty traders that their ability to bargain aggressively for the lowest prices without losing respect or to secure better credit and supply positions from the wholesalers is severely limited. Last but not the least, the structure of informal market itself is a problem to them. There are several instances of depressed earnings received in saturated trade as more and more women have crowded into the static female occupations in the informal sector in Darjeeling hills.

Apart from these, it has been already mentioned that the street vendors have to face hostilities from the traders of the established market. The attack from the police in the pretext of

their illegal structure is also a matter of concern to them.

Experience of South India leads us to say that opportunities for improving the position of women petty traders in the market and expanding income-generating activities for other homebased producers do not seem to be impossible. Organisations like Working Women's Forum in South India and Self-employed Women's Association in Ahmedabad, now having a broader network, have continued to gain in experience and resources. They are playing a key role to mobilise the self-employed women. To mention a few important steps undertaken by WWF, we can cite the establishment of two co-operative banks for women in Madras and Narsapur.¹⁵ This was an important measure to break the cycle of onerous indebtedness of women workers. Now more timely business loans and also consumption loans are being extended to them. Forum also has tried to tackle the problem of market structures by directing workers away from saturated trades and by introducing better technologies. Alternative supply and marketing setup are established wherever possible.¹⁶ Similarly, SEWA in Ahmedabad is trying hard to get licences for the vendors' so that the status of women street vendors remains no more illegal.¹⁷ Details about WWF and SEWA are given in chapter IX while explaining the role of various organisations in serving the women workers of the informal sector.

In order to extend such services to the weak and exploited self-employed women in Darjeeling hills, the formation of a Forum type organisation is a must. Given the proper guidance, the 'Path Pasalay Sangh', an organisation of the street vendors, irrespective of the sex of the workers of Darjeeling hills, in fact, can utilise the forum experience in this direction.

6.6 : Summary

Self-Employed workers are those who work at their own place and set their own levels of production depending upon the

demand condition, the amount of money they have, and the extent of raw materials they can collect. They also take their own risks and deal with the economy accordingly. In a country like India where unemployment and poverty are the two main economic problems, self-employed and the self-employment schemes have significant relevance to cope with. In Darjeeling hill areas, a large number of women have taken up self-employment schemes and have been playing crucial role in the development process.

It is indeed very encouraging to find the women engaged in trading, street vending, vegetable selling, and running the newly started road side restaurants and hotels in the urban and semi-urban areas of Darjeeling hills. The need of less capital and the possibility of starting with the venture at home or at the most to a very nearby place from the residence have attracted the women workers in such occupations. In other activities, women are required to move to a somewhat distant places thereby caring the children and doing the household works become almost impossible. Trading being carried out mostly at the domestic places do not abstain them from undertaking household duties too. The women traders dealing in the sale of woolen garments, the foreign goods and the curio items are financially sound and their earnings from these ventures seem to be higher than that from any other formal sector jobs suitable to their qualifications. The earnings from the vegetable shops and road side restaurants are moderate. The street vendors, on the other hand, are the subsistence earners and are subject to a number of atrocities too. Most of the street vendors do not have the legal status and they are the prey of the policemen on duty. The police atrocity on them, sometimes, is found to be encouraged by the women shopkeepers having permanent stalls in the specific market places. Their complaint is that the vendor setup shops just outside theirs and sell the same items at reduced prices. In order to

safeguard their interests, the street vendors - both men & women - are required to make some lump sum payments to the police. This constitutes the cost of maintaining territory for their business.

The petty trading in Darjeeling hills is generally run by the elderly women. The child participation is found only in street vending. Interestingly the participation of ST women in petty trading is very high. Their monetary contribution towards the family has also been found to be very significant. In some cases, the women traders' income and the resulting contribution towards the family expenditure is much higher than what the other male members have so done.

The lack of access to institutional credit, the partisan attitude of the male wholesalers, the problem to tackle and command the male workers, the police atrocities etc. are a few of the main problems faced by the these women workers. The time limitation due to the demands of child care and cooking, lack of opportunities to acquire business skills etc. have mostly kept women in the lowest trade positions and inhibited their rise in the trading hierarchy. It may, however, be mentioned that the informal petty trading activities being done mostly by the women in Darjeeling hills, have made the men folk available for some other formal sector activities. Instead of staying ideal at home, the women of Darjeeling hills have come out to participate in trading and this has, to some extent, made them economically independent thereby injecting a social status too.

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13. Family-income here means the total income earned per month by all the adult earning members of the family.

14. Spearman's formula for rank correlation coefficient is
 $r=(1- 6 \sum d^2)/(n^3-n)$

where r=correlation coefficient, d=difference between the ranks and n=no of observations

Table 6.9 : The Calculation of Rank Correlation Coefficient

Family Income	Rank X	% of Women	Rank y	d=x-y	d ²
Petty Traders					
Upto Rs.500	1	7.67	3	-2	4
Rs.501-Rs.1000	2	40.67	6	-4	16
Rs.1001-Rs.1500	3	27.67	5	-2	4
Rs.1501-Rs.2000	4	12.67	4	0	0
Rs.2001-Rs.2500	5	4.33	1	4	16
Above Rs.2500	6	7.00	2	4	16

$$\Sigma d^2 = 56$$

$$r=(1-56)/(6^3-6)=1-(56/210)=-0.6$$

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Chapter VII

The Study of the Problems of Women Entrepreneurship in the Informal Sector

7.1 : Concept of Entrepreneurship and the Factors Affecting the Success of Entrepreneurship

Economists have long recognised entrepreneurship as one of the four important factors of production. The dynamism of an entrepreneur in connection with the production is very important as entrepreneurship has to suite the changing ethos of the socio-economic reality. Entrepreneurship has been explained in varied form from time to time. There are some unresolved differences in these changing definitions of entrepreneurship, but there is agreement that the term includes at least a part of the administrative function of making decisions for the conduct of some type of organisation.

The word 'entrepreneur' appeared in French language long before there was any general concept of the entrepreneurial function. In early 16th century, the term 'entrepreneur' was used for men engaged in leading military expeditions.¹ It was Richard Cantillon in the 18th century in France to draw attention to entrepreneur as a technical term and labelled it with risk-bearing function. He saw the entrepreneur as anyone purchasing means of production at certain prices in order to transform them into a product that he would sell at uncertain prices in future.² Later by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jean Baptist Say described entrepreneurship as a function of bringing together the factors of production and provision of continuing engagement as well as risk bearing. According to him, the entrepreneur is supposed to be endowed with personal qualities of judgement, perseverance and knowledge of the works as well as business.³ He thus, attributed an extra insight and imagination to the entrepreneurial

concept.

By far, the most systematic definition of entrepreneurship was given by Schumpeter and later by Cole. Schumpeter defined entrepreneur as a dynamic agent of change; or the catalyst who transforms increasingly physical, natural and human resources into corresponding production possibilities.⁴ According to Cole, entrepreneurship is an integrated sequence of actions taken by an individual or a group operating for individual business units in a world characterised by a large measure of uncertainty.⁵ In recent years, managerial aspects of entrepreneurship are being emphasised. Whatever the definitions be, the basic underlying concept seems to have remained the same. It connotes innovativeness, an urge to take risk in the face of uncertainties and an intuition.

Entrepreneurship is the result of four dominant factors : the socio-sphere system, the self sphere system, the resource system and the support system. These four systems are interlinked, interacting and constantly adjusting each others. Planned endeavour to develop entrepreneurship among people in a society, therefore, requires integrated efforts concerning all the four systems.

What are the factors which are conducive to or which inhibit the growth of entrepreneurship in the village based economy like ours? It is to this question that now we turn in this section.

The factors, in general, found to affect the success of entrepreneurship are as follows.

1. Economic factors - The entrepreneurship in the small scale and in the cottage industry depends heavily upon the availability of raw materials, finance and the marketing facilities. We can cite the example from Darjeeling hills itself to explain it. The urban centres of the hill areas being the tourist centres have the readymade market for the food & accommodation and thus the entrepreneurship for the hotel industry has a better prospect. As such, Darjeeling town is

endowed with around 500 hotels of different status. On the other hand, the handicrafts, the woolen carpets woven by the hill artisans do not have the local market. The entrepreneurs engaged in carpet weaving have to rely heavily upon the foreign market. The hazards and other procedural obstacles with very little rate of return from weaving of carpets and other products have not led to the growth of private entrepreneurship.

2. Socio-personal characteristics - The most common socio-personal characteristics that affect the entrepreneurship are caste, family occupation, age and education and religion. It has been emphasised by many researches that Hindu religion and caste system have had a crippling effect on the growth of entrepreneurship and economic development.⁶ Their view was that Hindu society and culture did not provide the ideal atmosphere for the growth and nourishment of spirit which is responsible for capitalist development in the west.⁷ To these one may add certain others, such as size and type of family, working hands, earning members and social participation which are likely to have an influence on entrepreneurship particularly in case of Indian rural enterprises. Economic factors, no doubt, occupy a prominent place in determining entrepreneurship success but socio-economic facts do add to the chances of success. The following aspects are the important parts of the socio-economic characteristics.

a) Caste and family back ground :- Caste and family background help create entrepreneurial environment and occupation awareness for the entrepreneur. There are certain castes in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh which are traditionally involved in certain type of weaving works. For example, the Andhra Pradesh weavers mainly belong to 'Padmashali' caste whereas the Tamil Nadu weavers belong to 'Mudalia' caste.⁸ These typical people are running the weaving enterprises for generations. It has been so happening because the familiar tasks are easy to perform as compared to the unknown ones.

b) Education - Education is a must for an entrepreneur as he/

she has to deal with a number of formal situations, such as meeting official and functionaries etc.. A basic level of education is reported to be important for entrepreneur. A World Bank Staff working paper (1973) referring to the studies on several African economies referred that entrepreneurs who were able to read and write..... the minimum level of functional literacy, showed significantly better performance than illiterates.⁹

c) Working hand - A small entrepreneur in the rural areas, in particular, depends on the family members for help in running the enterprise as the entrepreneur generally can not afford to employ the hired labourers. The size and type of unit would thus depend on the assured help from within the family. In fact, the number of earning members could have a direct bearing on the responsibility of an entrepreneur.

d) Size and type of family - Entrepreneurial activity may also be affected by the size of the family and the entrepreneur's position in the family. For example, in a large family, the entrepreneur may occupy a lower position within the hierarchy resulting in his having only little authority. However, in such a family, there may be other members who would provide the entrepreneur the necessary support that would enable him to pay required attention to the enterprise.

In the same manner, the type of the family- whether joint or nuclear, also has some bearing on the entrepreneurial activity. In a nuclear family, the entrepreneur has a sense of independence and strong determination, the two chief qualities of good entrepreneurship.¹⁰ Accordingly, the entrepreneur will enjoy the full command over the resources owned by the family. In the joint family, on the other hand, the entrepreneur is not independent and he may have partial command or may not have it at all on the family resources which would inhibit the entrepreneurial trait.

e) Social participation - This determines how much influence the entrepreneur will be able to exert outside his immediate family

circle. The mixing up with the people around, the so-called social participation, also leads to social consciousness. The entrepreneur can better understand and appreciate the contours and reasons of socio-economic backwardness and significance of employment and individualisation in the light of social change.¹¹ This would make him a successful entrepreneur. This is how the success of entrepreneurship depends on the entrepreneur's social participation.

3. Human Resource Factors - Human resource factors are the in-built qualities in the individual. These are rather qualitative aspects of the entrepreneur which are either inherited or acquired. The human-resource factors do play a decisive role in entrepreneurial success. The following are a few important human resource characteristics for entrepreneurial success.

a) Achievement motivation - Any venture must accompany some motivation to achieve something, particularly profit. Entrepreneurs have high desire and activity level and struggle to achieve that goal which they regard as their accomplishment. Mc Clelland has emphasised motivation as a prime factor in entrepreneurial supply and stressed the point that economic development depends mainly on the development of entrepreneurial talent.¹²

b) Risk taking willingness - One of the qualities of entrepreneur established by the researches is that they challenge but not ready to take extreme risks. Challenge here means such tasks in which there is reasonable chance of success and where they are sure that these efforts can influence their success. According to Mathai (1978), a rural entrepreneur is subject to the following risks.

i) Technical risk - The entrepreneur has to start the enterprise with the risk of not knowing the technical details and therefore, not being able to overcome them. It may also happen that a new technology has introduced a new commodity and new demand is created leaving the commodity produced by the old technology of the entrepreneur undemanded. The entrepreneur, thus, should be prepared

to face such risks arising out of technological change.

ii) Economic risk - It implies the risk of market fluctuation and change with regard to the availability of raw materials and demand for finished product. It may well happen that the entrepreneur has incurred a huge expenditure to start with a new venture of producing a given product. But due to the sudden change in taste the demand for the product has surprisingly gone down. Such a risk is always there to start with any new enterprise.

iii) Social risk - There are risks in the development of new relationships within and outside the villages.

iv) Environmental risk- Such a risk in the social environment of the entrepreneur may arise as an outcome of new activity.

These are the four types of risks that a rural entrepreneur perceives in the new activity. They may all not occur at the same time. An entrepreneur faces them from time to time and situation to situation.¹³

c) Personal efficacy- One of the important psychological dimensions in contributing to the successful entrepreneurship is the sense of effectiveness. It has been noticed that the entrepreneurs try to project themselves as persons steering towards goals that involve action. They see themselves as the problem-solvers rather than the problem avoiders, as initiative takers rather than the followers. The way they project themselves is likely to reflect sense of confidence, a capacity for action-orientation and problem solving. Such characteristics denote the personal efficacy of the entrepreneur. And these efficacies vary from person to person. According to Pareek and Rao (1978), personal efficacy is the general sense of adequacy in a person and it has been conceived as an important factor contributing to the entrepreneurial behaviour of an entrepreneur.¹⁴

d) Aspirations - Aspirations refer to the goal statements concerning future level of achievement. Experimental studies revealed

that individuals with lower socio economic background have a higher discrepancy between their aspiration and achievement than individuals from a better background. This means that low socioeconomic groups are unrealistic in their aspiration levels. A potential entrepreneur would therefore, have a reasonable level of aspirations.

4. Support System - This includes the activities or policies of govt. and non-govt. organisations to promote the entrepreneurial aspect. This is also considered to be an important factor for making the entrepreneurship a success. The necessity of the direct support is absolutely felt mainly in the backward areas. Also, the entrepreneurial ventures of people belonging to economically weak need special attention. In the rural areas the support system is essentially required. Even the ventures like handloom industry in the hills of Darjeeling district requires the support system in the form of training facilities, facilities for raw materials and finance creating markets for finished products, monitoring and follow-up actions after the training etc.

7.2 : Profile of Female Entrepreneurs in the Household Industry in Hill Areas of Darjeeling District

Quite consistent with the scenario of other parts of our country, entrepreneurship in the household industry is overwhelmingly dominated by the men in Darjeeling hills. By virtue of their status, the risk taking ventures are under their control and domination. Inspite of such male domination, there are some ventures where female entrepreneurship is slowly growing up. The enterprises having female entrepreneurs in the hills are generally characterised by the requirement of artistic skill and finishing excellence. As such, the female entrepreneurship in the household sector is observed in carpet weaving, knitting of woollen garments, painting and patchworks, scrool and embroidery works and lepcha weaving. In some other ventures like food preservation and various drink preparation (country liquor in particular) it is very difficult to say who is the "actual"

entrepreneur. It is observed that the major decisions are taken by the females although males are perhaps the nominal owners of the units. These ventures are very much informal in view of their small scale of operations, use of less capital and their inaccess to institutional credit, the marketing difficulties and the lack of any unionism among the workers.

The following table shows the number of male and female workers engaged in the household and non-household industry from 1961-1981. The workers of the non-household sector are, in fact, the "artisan workers" in the sense that they are the wage-earners. They work in the establishments owned or run by some private individuals, or voluntary organisations or govt. The workers of the household industry, on the otherhand, are the owners cum entrepreneurs, in the sense that there is some degree of risks to be undertaken in all such activities.

Table 7.1 : Male and Female Workers in the Household((HH)) and Non-household(NHH) Industries in Darjeeling Hills : 1961-1981

Subdivisions	1961				1971				1981			
	H.H.	M	N.H.H.	F	H.H.	M	F	N.H.H.	H.H.	M	F	N.H.H.
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Darjeeling												
Sadar	1106	112	99	-	1106	802	2099	313	1392	381	*	*
Kalimpong	1204	345	159	14	751	187	847	89	783	254	*	*
Kurseong	512	41	53	-	350	69	736	44	411	93	*	*
Darjeeling												
Hills Total	2822	498	311	14	2107	1058	3682	446	2586	728	*	*

Source : District Census Handbooks, Darjeeling District 1961, 1971, 1981

* In 1981 census report, the workers in non-household industry has not been shown separately.

The male entrepreneurs in the hills declined from 2822 in 1961

to 2107 in 1971 and increased slightly to 2586 in 1981. The number of women entrepreneurs, on the other hand, first increased remarkably from 498 in 1961 to 1058 in 1971 but fell to 728 in 1981. The number of artisan workers increased significantly for both the male & female between the period 1961 and 1971. Although the figure for 1981 is not available, it is expected that the male and female artisans have further increased in numbers.

The phenomenon of decreasing female entrepreneurship accompanied by increasing participation of artisans indicates that the women prefer to work as wage-earners rather than having their own enterprise. This is applicable also for the men. Co-operatives play a vital role in strengthening the entrepreneurial attitude of the workers. A group of workers when assemble under a co-operative with the common objective of starting an enterprise, the responsibility is distributed equally. Also it is the policy of the government to execute every development plans meant for a particular class of artisans such as weavers, knitters, embroidery workers, painting and patch workers etc. through the co-operatives. With these objectives a number of co-operatives for the women weavers, knitters and tailors were formed during the last decade in Darjeeling hills. But unfortunately, these co-operatives failed miserably leading to the withdrawal of artisan women from entrepreneurship. At present only 7 co-operatives of women artisans are running that too at a much unutilised capacity.

In this section, we would make an attempt to identify the factors for the lack of which the female entrepreneurship in the informal sector household industry has reached a standstill point.

The reasons for such discouraging phenomena are many. There may be lack of entrepreneurial traits in the artisans themselves or lack of government support or the return from the enterprise may be too low to continue with and so on. Hence, let us develop the following hypotheses.

- 1.a) Null Hypothesis (H_0) - The female artisans of the hill

areas of Darjeeling district have no entrepreneurial traits; they are not willing to take any risk nor they have any efficiency. Hence, instead of being entrepreneurs themselves, they are joining the class of wage-earners.

b) Alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) to the null hypothesis (H_{01})

- The female artisans have the required attributes of a successful entrepreneur but are deprived from proper supportive system. Hence, they are joining the class of wage earners.

In this context of entrepreneurial behaviour study of the female workers in the informal sector household industry, we would also test the established hypothesis that the immigrant entrepreneurs in every corner of our country have better managerial capability and better business insight thus emerging out as successful entrepreneurs.¹⁵ Darjeeling hills have two distinct classes of both male & female entrepreneurs. The Tibetan community, migrated from Tibet during the 50's and 60's, is mostly engaged in the household industry of producing carpets and Tibetan handicrafts and the native entrepreneurs are engaged mainly in the weaving, knitting, embroidery and painting cum patch works. The hypotheses developed for the purpose of having a comparison of the success of the two groups of entrepreneurs are -

2. a) Null hypothesis (H_{02}) - The immigrant entrepreneurs have not proved more successful than the native.

b) Alternative hypothesis (H_{12}) to the null hypothesis (H_{02})

- The immigrant entrepreneurs do have better managerial capabilities and thus get more success than native entrepreneurs.

These hypotheses would be examined in the subsequent analysis and various reasons for their acceptance and rejection would be discussed accordingly.

7.2.1 : Survey findings about the Women Entrepreneurs (engaged in weaving, knitting, embroidery works, noodles manufacturing & liquor production)

The nature of functioning of women entrepreneurs in the household sector are subject to many constraints in Darjeeling hills. For studying the various problems of this entrepreneurs only the household sector enterprises have been considered. Entrepreneurship in the non-household sector industry has not been considered since the non-household sector industry (weaving and knitting in particular) is mainly run either by the charitable organisations or non-govt. organisations with the help of hired artisans or in some cases with the help of residential artisans (as found in the weaving and knitting centre of Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre in Darjeeling).

The study has been carried out in two phases. In the first phase, informations were collected through questionnaire survey method and analysed. In the 2nd phase, selected cases were studied in depth, to unveil the problems from the point of view of the entrepreneurs.

For the purpose of the study, 50 samples were taken from the household sector female entrepreneurs. Although, the entrepreneurs were selected at random, efforts were made to take every shade of manufacturing work in the survey to make it as far as practicable. The following are the general findings of the survey.

A. Socio-Personal Factors :

Age - The average age of the respondents was found to be 36 years which was higher than the average age of the women workers engaged

in other informal sector works. 82% of the artisan entrepreneurs were in the age group 30 - 50 years. The adolescent girls were yet

Table 7.2 : Age Distribution of the Women Entrepreneurs

Age group	No.of entrepreneurs (f)	Percentage	Mid point (x)	fx
16 - 20	01	02	18	18
21 - 25	04	08	23	92
26 - 30	07	14	28	196
31 - 35	15	30	33	495
36 - 40	12	24	38	456
41 - 50	07	14	45.5	318.5
51 - 60	04	08	55.5	222
above 60	00	00	-	-
Total	50	100.00	-	1797.5

Source : Field survey; $\bar{X} = 35.95$

to start ventures of their own. It is due to the fact that the entrepreneurial work requires experience and some degree of expertise in the particular work. It had been observed that among the female artisans engaged in weaving, knitting, painting, scrool and embroidery works the participation of the adolescents and children workers were virtually absent. Even the participation of the relatively younger women (below 30 years in age) is less in these enterprises. The lower percentage of participation of the workers in the age-group of 16 to 30 years both as entrepreneurs and simple artisans is a matter of serious concern to the future of these household enterprises, since it implies that the youngsters are no longer attracted by these professions. The

age distribution of the female artisans engaged in carpet weaving, cotton weaving and knitting in the non-household sector industry [as found in Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre, Darjeeling] was further discouraging. Most of the female weavers were in the age group of 50 plus. The youngsters sheltered in the centre are encouraged to go for higher studies and thus crowd in the formal sector job market. In the near future, the centre may face the labour problem in the weaving section.

Caste - Of the total respondents 74% belonged to SC and ST communities. Among the knitters and tailors most of the respondents were SCs, whereas the weaving (both cotton and carpet) was dominated by STs. It, therefore, appeared that the backward classes and the household industry are closely associated with each other.¹⁶ The interlinkage of the SC & ST women with manufacturing units implies that in order to improve their economic condition, the cottage industries should be given special concession and protection by the govt.

Table 7.3 : Caste Distribution of the Female Entrepreneurs

Caste	No. of entrepreneurs	percentage
Scheduled caste	12	24
Scheduled tribe	25	50
General	13	26
Total	50	100

Source : Field survey

Educational status - Table 7.3 shows that among the female entrepreneurs, the illiterates constituted only 24%. 76% of the women manufacturing entrepreneurs had gone to school. Of the total respondents 24% had the primary education only. 6% of them had the

Table 7.4 : Level of Education of the Women Entrepreneurs

No.of entrepreneurs	Illiterate	Literate	Primary	Middle	High school	Higher
50	12	38	12	16	7	3

Source : Field survey

education beyond the high school leaving standard. Entrepreneurship without education and training is difficult to think of. Still a significant percentage of them were illiterate ; the experience in the particular field had compensated for the education.

Nature of settlement - The composition of the female workers has a great variety in Darjeeling hill areas. In fact, Darjeeling district as a whole, has sheltered a good percentage of immigrants from the places like Bangladesh, Assam, Tibet and Nepal. Whereas the immigrants from Bangladesh and Assam have preferred to settle in the plains of Siliguri subdivision, Tibetan refugees had poured into the hilly regions. The Tibetan women had participated in the economic activities equally with the men. And the women had excelled in the production of handicraft items including woolen carpets and garments. Their presence is very much felt in the manufacturing sector and trade in the hills. Out of the 50 respondent women artisans, 18 were immigrant while the rest were all natives.

Size and type of the family - Most of the entrepreneurs' families had heavy dependents. Table 7.5 shows that 72% of the respondents' had family members more than five heads. Another feature noted was that 62% of the families were joint and only 38% were nuclear.

Table 7.5 : Family Size of the Female Entrepreneurs

Family members	Number of Entrepreneurs	Percentage
1 - 3	3	6
4 - 6	20	40
7 - 9	24	48
above 9	3	6
Total	50	100

Source : Field survey

Working hands - Working hand is a very important determinant of the entrepreneurship. In the household industry, the knitters, tailors and the weavers do take the direct help from the members of their families. The table below shows the pattern of working hand in the families of the 50 respondent entrepreneurs. It is seen that

Table 7.6 : Working Hands in Entrepreneurs' Family

Proportion* of child	Proportion of adult	No.of entrepreneurs	Percentage
25%	75%	25	50
30%	70%	10	20
40%	60%	9	18
50%	50%	6	12
above 50%	less than 50%	-	-

Source : Field survey

*Child = less than 11 years.

50% of the entrepreneurs had 75% of the family members as helpers, 20% had 70% of the family members as helpers, 18% had 60% of the family members as helpers, and the rest had 50% of the family members as helpers.¹⁷

B. Material Resource Factors :

Duration of entrepreneurship - It implies how long the female entrepreneur is running the venture. It is seen from table 7.7 that 74% of the entrepreneurs were in the business for more than six years. No one had reported to have started the venture 1 or 2 years back. This helped us to derive the conclusion that the growth of female entrepreneurship in recent years had stopped.

Table 7.7 : Duration of Entrepreneurship

Years	No.of entrepreneurs	Percentage
1 - 2	Nil	00.0
3 - 4	03	06.0
5 - 6	10	20.0
7 - 8	18	36.0
9 - 10	11	22.0
above	08	16.0
Total	50	100.0

Source : Field survey

Annual turn-over - It was very difficult to find out the exact annual turn-over of the entrepreneurs because of the fact that the sale of their products did not have the same pattern and thus for the entrepreneurs it was not always possible to maintain the average turn-over per month. The estimation difficulty was further accentuated by the general tendency of the respondents to hide their annual turn over as well as their income levels. In view of this, a general 20% had been added to what the entrepreneurs had revealed. By doing so, the estimation of the annual turn-over had been made as practicable as possible. Table 7.8 gives the distribution of the annual turn-over of the 50 respondent female entrepreneurs. It appears from the table

Table 7.8 : Annual Turn-over of the Entrepreneurs

Amount (Rs)	No. of entrepreneurs	Percentage
upto 12,000	3	06.0
12,000 - 24,000	17	34.0
24,000 - 36,000	13	26.0
36,000 - 48,000	10	20.0
48,000 - 60,000	4	08.0
above 60,000	3	06.0

Source : Field survey

that only 14% of the respondents had the annual turn-over of more than Rs.48,000. In carpet weaving 2 female entrepreneurs had the annual turn-over of more than Rs. One lakh.

Annual income - The picture of annual income earned from the enterprise was somewhat different from the pattern of annual turn-over. The level of the net income was not directly proportional to the turn-over they had. This variation was caused by the different cost conditions in various enterprises. For example, the cost was minimum in the country liquor production; but the same was very high in carpet weaving since the cost of the raw materials used (the cotton yarn and the woolen yarn) was very high. Also the wages paid to the weavers were also high. The rate of return thus was much less in carpet weaving than that in wine-production. In our sample of the female entrepreneurs 38% had the annual earning of less than Rs.12,000. These group has been categorised as low-income group. 36% earned between Rs.12,000 and Rs.24,000 a year, 20% earned between Rs.24,000 and Rs.36,000 a year. Those who earned between Rs.12,000 and Rs.36,000 per annum have been put in middle income - group. The moderately high income earners constituted only 6% of the Sample. Table 7.9 below shows the distribution of the annual income of the entrepreneurs in the household industry sector.

Table 7.9 : Annual Income of the Women Entrepreneurs

Income group (in Rs.)	No. of entrepreneurs	Natives	Immigrants
less than 12,000	19	12	7
12,000 - 24,000	18	12	6
24,000 - 36,000	10	7	3
above 36,000	3	1	2
Total	50	32	18

Source : Field survey

Working days and reasons of discontinuity - The respondent entrepreneurs did not work for the whole year. As reported by them, 28% of them worked for 6 to 7 months, 48% for 8 to 9 months and only

Table 7.10 : Average Working Days Per Annum of the Entrepreneurs

Months in the year	No. of Entrepreneurs	Percentage
less than 6 months	3	6.0
6 - 7 months	14	28.0
8 - 9 months	24	48.0
more than 9 months	9	18.0

Source : Field survey

18% had worked for more than 9 months. In fact, in the three hill subdivisions, the winter becomes intolerable and quite a remarkable size of the population leave their place of work and stay in the plains during the winter. This is one of the reasons why the work was discontinued. There are other factors too. Following table clarifies it.

Table 7.11 : Reasons of Discontinuity

Reasons	No. of artisan entrepreneurs who had tick-marked the particular cause	Percentage
Lack of finance	38	76.0
Lack of demand	15	30.0
unbearable cold	26	52.0
Marketing difficulty	28	56.0
Low rate of return	32	64.0

Source : Field survey

52% held the unbearable cold responsible for the discontinuity of their works. 76% considered lack of finance as their main problem. The low rate of return, difficulty in marketing their produce and lack of demand were also considered equally responsible for the discontinuity of the entrepreneurial work.

C. Human Resource Factors¹⁸ :

Personal Efficacy - Personal efficacy of the female entrepreneurs engaged in weaving, knitting, embroidery work, painting and patch work, school work etc. has been measured by a modified version of Potter's "locus of control" which has been defined as the tendency in the person to attribute success or failure to external factors. According to Rao & Mehta, a person who scores high on external control is like a fatalist and believes that things happen automatically and that the entrepreneur does not have any control in building the environment as he/she wants. On the otherhand, a person scoring high in the internal control believes fully in his/her capacity to control and shape the environment.

Ten pairs of statements were developed for this purpose. Each pair has the internal and external locus of control. The statements representing internal control were given a score of 2 and the external control were given 1. Thus an individual locus of control scores ranged

between 10 and 20 (Annexure - III). A respondent at the maximum can score 20 and at the minimum can score 10.

In our case, the highest score obtained by any female respondent was 18 whereas the minimum was 10. However, only one respondent was found having no efficiency at all (scoring 10). The average score obtained in personal efficacy test was 14.46 representing a fair level of efficiency of the artisan entrepreneurs in the hills.

Table 7.12 : Scores Obtained by Respondent Entrepreneurs in Personal Efficacy Test.

Score (X)	Number of Entrepreneurs (Y)	XY
10	1	10
11	0	0
12	4	48
13	9	117
14	11	154
15	12	180
16	9	144
17	2	34
18	2	36
19	0	0
20	0	0
N = 50		$\Sigma xy = 723$

Source : Field survey; $\bar{x} = 14.46$

Aspirations - It has been already mentioned that aspirations are the goal statements concerning future level of achievement. Entrepreneur's concept of his/her future prospect and self-motivation are measured by the aspiration level.

To measure the aspiration level, questions covering certain areas of individual aspirations regarding the education of son and daughter, income and other material possession etc. were developed, in the line of Muthaya (1971). The respondents were then requested to indicate their aspirations. Standard scores were then calculated following Garret (1969) for each of the three areas of individual needs (Annexure - IV).

The respondent women entrepreneurs were found to have quite a high level of aspirations. The table below shows that 100% of the respondents scored above 171, the standard score suggested by Garret. 30% scored in between 177 and 196; 36% scored between 197 and 216; 22% between 217 and 236; 10% between 237 and 256 and 2% scored above 257.

Table 7.13 : Scores Obtained by Respondent Female Entrepreneurs in the Test of Aspirations

Score group	no. of entrepreneurs	Percentage
137 - 156	0	00.0
157 - 176	0	00.0
177 - 196	15	30.0
197 - 216	18	36.0
217 - 236	11	22.0
237 - 256	5	10.0
257 and above	1	2.0

Source : Field survey

Risk-taking willingness - Starting an enterprise requires the entrepreneur to take up the challenges in an unsuitable position and the entrepreneur has to strive for some additional pay off. To what extent and how successfully the entrepreneur can meet the challenges is measured by his/her risk-taking willingness.

The behaviour of an entrepreneur is guided by his/her subjective estimate of the degree of risk involved in the venture. Two persons may view the same venture as involving different degree of risk. In order to measure the risk-taking willing of the women entrepreneurs in the household industry sector, the "choice dilemma" procedure used by Wallach et al (1962) has been adopted here.¹⁹

The risk situations in a venture have been identified and depicted in a story-form to evoke responses from the women artisans.

Two stories formed for the purpose (Annexure - V) presented varying degrees of probability of success. These were given to the respondents and they were told to choose a course of action which best-represented their desire to achieve success in the given situation. And for quantification of the responses, a scoring key, according to the risk involved in the answer was used. The possible maximum score out of these two stories is 8 and the possible minimum score is 2.

The scores of the 50 respondents have been represented in table 7.14.

Table 7.14 : Scores Obtained by the Respondent Women Entrepreneurs in the Test of Risk-taking Willingness

Score-group	No.of entrepreneurs	Percentage
2	8	16
3	11	22
4	16	32
5	8	16
6	7	14
7	0	0
8	0	0

Source : Field survey

As evident from the above table, most of the female entrepreneurs were willing to take risk at a level below the average. Only 30% of our respondents had scored about 4 in the risk-taking willingness test. It may be accounted to the fact that the women entrepreneurs being concerned also with family-welfare, they are, in general, risk avoiders.

D. Govt. Support System :

It is often said that entrepreneurs are born, not made. But research studies suggest that through proper training entrepreneurial qualities can be acquired and developed in individuals.²⁰ The need for providing proper environment for entrepreneurship is of vital

importance, particularly in case of women entrepreneurs. Such conducive environment can be developed by providing them with adequate support. The govt. designed scheme of supporting female entrepreneurs include :

i) Marketing - The Govt. programmes for opening marketing outlets of the products of female entrepreneurs in Darjeeling hills are divided into three parts : (a) In 1981-82, Co-operative Sales Emporium was set up at the Darjeeling Bazar for marketing of handicrafts at fair prices; (b) Manjusha, a Govt. of West Bengal Undertaking, is the notable 2nd unit engaged in marketing the handicrafts of hill areas.²¹ Manjusha secures order in bulk for woolen garments from N.B.S.T.C., Calcutta Police, Fire Brigade, Forest Departments and some other organisations and purchases these from local wool-knitters; (c) under the patronage of the District Industries Centre, Darjeeling and the DGHC occasional exhibitions for marketing the carpet-produce of the women entrepreneurs are arranged. They also have introduced prize awards for the best produced carpets in the locality. Besides these, every year a scheme of 20% rebate is given by the DGHC these days for the promotion of sale of hill handicrafts and carpets. On average Rs.3 lakh per year is spent on this account from the DGHC.

ii) Training - Training is an essential step for imparting the technical knowledge to the women entrepreneurs engaged in handicrafts production. In connection with this, govt. has given emphasis on Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) which, in turn, develops opportunities for small scale industries and accordingly, develops opportunities for self-employment. The training of rural people (irrespective of men or women) in this direction is arranged under IRDP, TRYSEM Programme. DWCRA is the developmental programmes meant particularly for the women and children.

Under different training programmes from 1966 onwards, about 12 training centres in wool knitting have been set up for the purpose

of skill formation among women entrepreneurs.²² The DIC & DGHC, in co-operation with the Hayden Hall Institute arrange the training programme for the women carpet weavers. Altogether 110 women weavers have benefited during the last three years from such programmes.

It is a matter of great concern that after receiving the training programmes most of the weavers and knitters have not been able to start with their own ventures; at the best they are found working as artisans on wage basis on other's ventures. As a result, the motto of EDP in building up female entrepreneurship has failed. It is the lack of follow-up action and monitoring that resulted in such failure. Some of the officers of the DIC, Darjeeling, on the otherhand, were of the opinion that the beneficiaries are interested only in white-colour jobs and not in self-employment. They further added that the loan provided for purchase of equipments and raw materials were frittered away by the young women.

Unfortunately, in the hills, there is no research and development centre of any of the agencies for the development of new design or new technology. Neither the govt. agencies have undertaken any programme to impart knowledge to female entrepreneurs in new design of the carpets and woolen garments nor have distributed modern equipments to them. Further, the DIC, only govt. agency to promote the entrepreneurship in the district, itself suffers from many organisational loopholes. As a result, monitoring and follow-up activities are not being supervised properly; neither it has been able to widen up its activities.

Thus, we conclude that the supporting agencies are not effective in the hills. Had they worked effectively and implemented the govt. policies, it was possible to expand the base of women entrepreneurship. To make the system effective, the findings indicate a need to provide training to the officials with an objective of inculcating in them, (a) a confidence in their client's abilities to develop into entrepreneurship; (b) a development orientation conducive

enough to shake them off the procedural compulsions. The study also suggests the need of a separate monitoring and follow-up cell for the systematic monitoring and follow-up actions of the projects to be undertaken by the implementing agencies in the rural as well as in the urban areas.

7.2.2 : Regression Analysis

In order to have a better understanding of the major determinants of women entrepreneurship in household industries in our study area, a multiple regression analysis has been carried out. The model offering the explanatory power was linear and of the form

$$Y = a_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + b_6x_6 + b_7x_7 + e.$$

where

Y = Annual turn-over of the sample units. (This is considered to be an indicator of successful entrepreneurship).

x_1 = Annual family-income of the entrepreneur; (also represents the asset possession of the entrepreneur)

x_2 = Duration of entrepreneurship;

x_3 = Family size of the entrepreneur;

x_4 = Literacy of the entrepreneur;

x_5 = Aspiration of the entrepreneur;

x_6 = Personal efficacy of the entrepreneur;

x_7 = Risk-taking willingness of the entrepreneur;

and e = the error term.

Table 7.15 presents the regression analysis of annual turn-over (the success of entrepreneurship) for the 50 sample women entrepreneurs in the household industry.

Table 7.15 : Regression of Annual Turn-over of the Women Entrepreneurs

Explanatory Variables	Coefficients	t -statistics
Constant	$a_0 : -45399$	-0.837
x_1	$b_1 : 5.316$	10.708*
x_2	$b_2 : -1290.3$	-0.871
x_3	$b_3 : 71443$	2.795*
x_4	$b_4 : -7823$	-1.755**
x_5	$b_5 : -120.02$	-0.616
x_6	$b_6 : 1392$	0.589
x_7	$b_7 : -8136$	-2.377*
R^2	.833	

* Significant at 5% level.

** Significant at 10% level.

It is observed that 83% of the total variation in the dependent variable is explained by the regression line ($R^2 = .833$). And as calculated F (with degrees of freedom 7 and 42) = 29.87 is much higher than the table value of F at 5% level of significance, it can be said that regression is also significant. The values of t-statistics of the coefficients, however, suggest that out of the 7 independent variables considered affecting the female entrepreneurship in the household industry, only four of them viz: the annual income (the asset possession), the family size, the level of education, and the risk-taking willingness are found to be statistically significant. Thus, although the non-material and non-economic factors constitute the basic ingredients of entrepreneurship, the material and economic factors are proved to be the essence of women entrepreneurship in Darjeeling hills :

It appears from the study that women entrepreneurs of Darjeeling hills have moderate level of risk taking willingness and

have all other traits favourable, except some other economic and material resource factors like the family income asset possession, finance, housing etc. The facilities of the supporting system are inadequate and not well co-ordinated. Given the timely and proper support to them entrepreneurship in the household industry can be expanded. Hence, our hypothesis H_0 i.e. the women entrepreneurs of Darjeeling hills have no entrepreneurial traits is unacceptable. And the alternative hypotheses i.e. the hill women entrepreneurs have the required entrepreneurial traits and given the adequate support, entrepreneurship can be developed, is acceptable.

7.2.3 : Immigrant Entrepreneurs Vs. Native Entrepreneurs

In order to test our second hypothesis that the success of the female entrepreneurship in household industry and the migratory status of the entrepreneur are not associated, we make use of the table no. 7.9 representing the annual income of the entrepreneurs and their corresponding breakup as immigrants and natives. For the statistical analysis, we produce this table in the form of a contingency table and calculate the data through chi-square (χ^2) method. The following is the χ^2 table.

Table 7.16 : Classification of the Women Entrepreneurs on the Basis of their Domicile Status and Income Level

Income groups	Native	Immigrant	Total
	entrepreneurs	entrepreneurs	
Middle Income Group	20	11	31
Lower Income Group	12	7	19
Total	32	18	50

Expected frequencies are calculated as :

	Native	Immigrants	Total
Middle Income Group	12.80	3.96	31
Lower Income Group	7.68	2.52	19
Total	32.00	18.00	50

$$\text{Thus, } \chi^2 = \frac{(20-12.8)^2}{12.8} + \frac{(11-3.96)^2}{3.96} + \frac{(12-7.68)^2}{7.68} + \frac{(7-2.52)^2}{2.52}$$

$$= 26.96$$

$$\text{Degrees of freedom} = (2-1) (2-1) = 1.$$

Tabulated value of χ^2 at 5% and 1% level of significance for 1 degree of freedom are 3.84 and 6.63 respectively. Since, the observed value of χ^2 exceeds tabular value even at 1% level of significance, it is highly significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, we conclude that immigrant women entrepreneurs get more success than natives.

There is yet another suggestion implicit in the finding and it is that culturally marginal groups are more successful industrial entrepreneurs irrespective of their sex.²³ Merchant class in India may constitute the biggest chunk of the entrepreneurial class but they are relatively less successful in achieving economic success as compared to those who assume a marginal position in Indian social system. It has also been observed that most of the successful establishments are owned by Khatris and Punjabis who belong to a minority business group in India.²⁴ In Darjeeling hills too, Tibetans although are in very small numbers but they have proved to be more successful entrepreneurs than the majority natives. The finding thus also supports Haggen's thesis regarding the role of minority group in industrial entrepreneurship.²⁵

7.3 : Some Typical Case Studies of Women Entrepreneurs in the Informal Sectors of Darjeeling Hills

The previous section has dealt in presenting the scenario of women entrepreneurship in the household industry in Darjeeling hills. For a further close study and deeper understanding of entrepreneurs, a few cases of female entrepreneurs are thoroughly studied. Cases are analysed and the conclusions are drawn thereby. This section

represents these case studies.

Case I : Miss Dechen Wangdi, 29, an unmarried energetic and educated handloom entrepreneur, is a resident of Darjeeling town. She had lost her father at an early age and was brought up by her mother. At present, they are five members in the family. She did her graduation with honours in political Science from St.Joseph's College, Darjeeling and did her post-graduation from Delhi. During her stay at Delhi she was inspired by her Delhi-based uncle to take up the venture of carpet weaving. After coming back to Darjeeling, in 1988, She started with the handloom in two big rooms of her residence. Initially she invested a capital of Rs. 30,000 which she got from her family. She did not go for any loan from the banks nor from any other financial institution. At present, she has 16 standard size hand woven looms and has employed 24 women weavers out of which 14 are professionals and 10 are the trainees. Most of her artisan weavers are housewives and, at the same time mothers too. They come from the outskirts and can not devote more than 5 to 6 hours a day in weaving. According to Dechen, unmarried weavers are fashion conscious and instead of devoting themselves in the work fully, they are inclined to spend the extra time with their boy friends. The wage Dechen gives to the weavers depends on the amount they weave. In general, the wage per carpet of 6'X3' size comes around Rs.450. One artisan, in general, weaves one carpet a month in this factory.

Dechen thinks that quality control is an important aspect of carpet manufacturing. She herself looks after the quality and the marketing as well. Only 10% of her produce is sold in the domestic market and the rest she exports most of which go to Switzerland. The local demand generally comes from the local people only ; the tourists as such have no demand for carpets at all. The sale price of her standard size carpets in the local market is around Rs.2200 whereas she gets around Rs.4000 from every piece she exports. Of course, she has to spend extra on transport, packing and handling etc. for the exportable

carpets.

The annual production in her centre comes around 120 -130 standard size carpets plus a sizeable number of cushions. The raw materials i.e. the woolen yarn, cotton yarn required are generally brought from Punjab and Delhi. She purchases the readymade wool and cotton. By doing so, she has been able to avoid the difficult tasks of spinning and dyeing the yarn. These days, the quality of the yarn has become a matter of concern to her and accordingly it is very difficult to maintain the standard quality of her product. Large metal looms are not available in the state and very recently she has been compelled to bring one big metal loom from South India; all other looms in her possession are wooden.

When asked about her desire to join any govt. service, her answer was in negative. She is satisfied with her earning and likes to meet the entrepreneurial challenges in carpet industry. Her devotion and hard work have fetched her the fame and reward as well. She was awarded a silver medal by the DGHC for being 1st at a handicraft exhibition at the district level in 1990. Even at the state level, she was awarded a special prize the next year. An organisation of NRI's had also felicitated her for her expertise and excellence she had shown in carpet manufacturing. In 1991, At Kathmandu, Nepal, K. P. Bhattacharai, the then Prime Minister of Nepal, on behalf of the International Friendship Society, handed over a certificate of excellence to her.

Case II : Mrs. N. Ghissing, 41, mother of two children is another lady entrepreneur engaged in carpet manufacturing at Darjeeling. She was encouraged and inspired by her husband in taking-up this venture. Incidentally, her husband imparts training to the women weavers at Hayden Hall Institute, Darjeeling. The enterprise was started in 1988 with only 4 looms and 6 weavers. At present Mrs. Ghissing has 10 looms and 15 women workers work with her. However, due to the lack of raw-materials, all 10 looms could not be utilised for quite a long-time. Also, most of the women weavers attached with her

are part-time weavers. The nonavailability of full time weavers is another reason for the underutilisation of the capacity.

Like Dechen, she also considers marketing is the main problem she faces. Initially she had opened a show-room in Darjeeling but due to the lack of local demand she was compelled to close it and now-a-days she has come to a contact with Manjusha - a Govt. of West Bengal Undertaking-dealing in local handicrafts. She receives cotton and woolen yarn from manjusha and weaves carpets in her looms. The production at an average comes around 6 - 8 pieces a month. The weavers receive a wage of Rs.450 for one standard size carpet. Generally, two weavers at an average weave one and a half carpets in her establishment. As such, an artisan earns around Rs.340 a month. She, on the otherhand, gets a price of Rs.85 per square feet of the carpet (if it fulfills the quality criterion). Hence, for a standard size carpet, she earns Rs.1530 for which the raw-material alone costs Rs.514 (6 kg woolen yarn @ Rs.128 per kg. and 1/2 bundle of cotton yarn @ Rs.260 per bundle required for one 6'X3' carpet). She has other costs - transport cost, coolie charges, establishment costs etc. to incur. As a matter of fact, the return she gets from one good quality standard size carpet is only around Rs.400.

Initially finance for this purpose was received by her from the Central Bank. She has repaid the loans she had received. Her husband, Mr. Ghissing helps her in every respect to make the enterprise a success.

Case III : Pushpa Gupta, a 38 year old lady from Bagdhara Road, Kalimpong, is a mother of 2 children. After the completion of the weaving training at the CADP training centre in 1989, she decided to take up weaving as a pass-time venture. Both of her children are school going and her husband is a petty businessman. As such, most of the time she has to stay alone and thus she thought of having a loom where she can utilize her skill. She has only one loom at her disposal at present and with the help of her friend, Mrs. Madhu Sarki, she manages to weave

one carpet a month. The initial investment of Rs.3,000 for the installation of the loom was given to her by her husband. She purchases the raw materials from CADC office, situated 1 Km. away from her residence. To her advantage, CADC gives the raw materials on credit. It also purchases carpets from Mrs. Gupta. Hence, she does not have to think about the marketing and free from dealing with the customers. Supplying a carpet of 6'X3' size to the CADC, she earns around Rs.1,000 from which she pays Rs 300 to Madhu.

Mrs. Gupta is a full fledged housewife. And recently She has bought a cow too : with the objective of having pure milk for the children. She has to look after this cow after all household works are done. In fact, these days she can not put more than 4 hrs. a day in weaving. Furthermore, weaving is not done all throughout the year. It is a nine month affair, as the weaving comes to a halt during the winter. Asked about the design plan and quality control, she said that she has no idea about new designing and she has never been told about the quality improvement by the CADC office.

Analysis :

The following are a few important points that are apprehended from the three cases of women entrepreneurs in carpet-weaving. That

- 1) the handloom is commercially viable and it gives self-employment status to women.

- ii) Obtaining of quality-yarn is a problem to weaver entrepreneurs.

- iii) Marketing of the product is the main problem faced by them. Local market is very small due to the limited demand. It requires a lot of extra effort if the product is to be exported. Govt assistance in this direction is very limited.

- iv) The entrepreneurs are suffering from the lack of trained and skilled artisan weavers.

- v) Design is an area in which the women entrepreneurs need

training.

vi) The equipments used by the women entrepreneurs are mostly indigenous and obsolete. Metal loom is not easily available to them.

vii) The carpet manufacturing at the household sector is not continued all throughout the year. During the Winter, production is virtually nil.

Case IV : Mrs. Tashi Dolma is a resident of Lebong Cart Road, Darjeeling. She is 59 years old and is a proud mother of two sons and two daughters. All her sons and daughters are married. Her eldest son is employed in the central excise and is posted at Cooch Behar. Hers is now an economically sound family now but she has not yet left the noodles manufacturing venture. She still remembers those days of plight when she came along with her parents from Tibet in 1959. She was quite young then and got married soon. The husband and wife took noodles manufacturing as their livelihood since 1968. Her husband is no more but she is still continuing it. According to her making noodles is not that easy. Flour should be mixed with a permitted yellow colour and transformed into a paste in such a manner that a thick plane is formed. Now, it is ready to be put into a hand-machine which would cut the plane into very thin and long noodles. After that, hanged on to a stick, they should be dried up at least for 3-4 days before the necessary packing is done. She said that she had never faced any problem in marketing her noodles. A decade ago, her production used to be around 100 kg a month which has reduced at present to 60-65 kg. only. Asked about the competition from the instant noodles like Maggi and Wai-Wai etc., she told that still there is sufficient demand for the local noodles since its price is much less than the prices of other instant noodles. These days she can not even fulfil the order of the 3 retailers of the market with whom she has contact since past several years. She laments that she does not get the assistance and help from her family members in making this enterprise a success. She is afraid that the family entrepreneurship might not be continued in her absence.

Case V : Manmaya Roka, a 46 year old women from Raniban, Darjeeling is the liquor (country liquor - the local name is raxi). Her husband is a chowkidar (guard) at the ropeway station, Singamari. Being economically weak and having felt the need to supplement the family income, with no capital in hand, she found no other way than to go for it. She knows that raxi is harmful for the society but survival of the family with 4 children is what she is more concerned about. According to Manmaya, the process of making liquor is very simple. The grain (rice or millet) is boiled and the root of a plant called agaichito (in some other places also known as marcha) is mixed with it; it is left for ferment for two days in a nearly dry state; water is then added, and the whole allowed to stand for 3 or 4 days, then the liquor is ready. This liquor has a high demand in the locality and many food stalls do take the liquor directly from her for sale. She has the provision of selling it directly to the consumers also at her own residence. She says, in this context, that many a times awkward situations have arisen after the consumers get drunk. In order to avoid such unwanted incident, these days she entertains only her permanent customers. Her earning from this enterprise is more than what her husband earns from the service. But to run such an enterprise, she says, all such liquor-makers are required to pay "hafta" to the policemen.

All her children have grown up. Her two daughters have married the men of their choices and now she is looking for a bride for his eldest son. The younger son goes to St. Michael's school. Thus, nowadays she has a happy family. She does not want her sons or daughter-in-laws, in future, to continue this venture. She would be glad if they lead simple life being absorbed in some service or the other.

Case VI : Geeta Mothay, 43, is the owner-cum-master tailor of a ladies tailoring shop at Kurseong. She has the fame and goodwill in tailoring. She admits with pride the supportive role her husband played at the beginning of this enterprise. Initially, the tailoring shop was not meant for ladies only when Sri Mothay used to run it. Sri Mothay

realised the need for a ladies tailoring and if started it would have no competitor at all. Accordingly, he encouraged Smt. Mothay to get the necessary training in cutting and tailoring. And then she changed the old tailoring shop into ladies tailoring in 1983. At present, she has six sewing - machines and six women tailors in her workshop. Very recently, she has started the embroidery works too. Sri Mothay works as the supervisor and the main brain-man behind her.

Smt. Mothay has 3 children - the eldest daughter is studying at B.A. 2nd year class in Kurseong College. Both the two sons are studying at class X in Pushparani Roy Memorial School. Mr. & Mrs. Mothay, work hard and have saved money. They have held a profession which is theirs by birth and caste. The family is still living at a rented house and Smt. Mothay's dream of having their own house would be materialised very soon. The construction has been started. Her ambition is to educate the children and help them establishing themselves in the society. She is content being a mother and a wife and seems to be ready to shouldering all sorts of responsibilities. The 6 women tailors in her workshop do not have any complaint about their mistress's attitude. In fact, she is very friendly to them. She has a desire to open a tailoring-cum-embroidery school in Kurseong in the near future.

Analysis :

From the case studies of these three women entrepreneurs engaged in various small enterprises like noodles manufacturing, liquor-making and tailoring-cum-embroidery works, it is commonly observed that

- i) The economic compulsions have "pushed" the housewives in those entrepreneurial activities which require less capital.
- ii) The women entrepreneurship in household industries is not yet independent. Most of the women entrepreneurs directly or indirectly are patronised by the male-members of the families. For the

married women, husbands are there to support them. And it is certainly a healthy sign for the hill economy.

iii) The entrepreneurs are suffering from financial stringencies. They haven't approached (due to the lack of adequate knowledge of the financial intermediaries), the financial organisations for the finance ; neither the govt. has taken any initiative.

iv) Marketing of the produce like noodles, liquor or the embroidery items is not at all a problem. The local demand for noodles and the country liquor is very high.

v) There is a feeling among the liquor-makers that production of such intoxicant is harmful for the society but due to economic insecurity, they do not want to stop this enterprise. However, the entrepreneur does not want the family members to continue it in the future.

vi) The employer-employee relation is very cordial in these establishments.

vii) The younger generation is not attracted by these enterprises.

Case VII : Anju Paryar is a 36 years old embroiderer from Kalimpong. Anju's Parents struggled for a better life during Anju's childhood. Deprived of higher education, at an early age, she was compelled to learn embroidery and patch work in cardboard and cloth in the Arts & Craft Centre, Kalimpong. After the training period, she worked as a piece-rate worker at the centre. In the meantime, she got married but unfortunately the conjugal life could not last long. They were separated . She went back to her parents. She was put in a further trouble when the Arts & Craft Centre got burnt during the Gorkha-land agitation in May, 1988. The piece-rate artisan workers in the handicraft centre lost the job. This was, however, a blessing in disguise. Anju decided to continue her own enterprise. She came in contract with Manjusha, the only authorised govt. of West Bengal

Undertaking to procure the local-made handicraft items in Darjeeling. With the little bit servings she had, she started this embroidery and patchwork in card board and cloth. Anju, along with a few other artisan entrepreneurs, [to name a few, Pramila Tamang (deals in standing doll, far-yak riding), Deokala Paryar (doll hanging and doll patch work), Menaka Karal (Scrool embroidery)] gives quotations with samples to Manjusha and after the approval from the purchase committee of Manjusha, supplies the final product. Her average monthly turn over is approximately Rs.1500 from which she earns around Rs. 750 per month. Not being able to maintain a smooth living, she at times does the hand-knitting too.

Case VIII : Anita Rai, aged 28 is a wool-knitter from Lower Gumba Hatta, Kalimpong. At this age, she has established herself as the principal bread-winner of the family of 7 members. She is attached with the CADC, Kalimpong since last 5 years. Anita says that it is CADC in the area which has played a key-role in developing entrepreneurship among the skilled women. She has only one knitting machine which she obtained from the District Industries Centre at monthly instalment payment scheme. She said that she is happy now as the machine completely belongs to her. She knows that many who received the machine at the higher purchase scheme, have not repaid the loan. She said she liked to be clear to her conscience. Marketing and the raw materials are no problem to her. The cashmillon is supplied by the CADC & marketing of the woollen garments is completely undertaken by CADC itself. What she is much concerned about are the design and quality. She has to compete with others only in these two aspects. She knits 18-20 kg. wool a month and for this purpose she has to work 7-8 hrs. daily in average. She earns around Rs.1200 per month from knitting. Anita got married only three years back and she has one child. She does all the household work. The enterprise being run at home, she does not face the difficulty in doing the household job as well as the child care.

Case IX : Mrs. Dolma, 50, is an established entrepreneur

dealing in woolen garments, fancy carrybags, vanity bags, jackets etc. in Darjeeling. She has a number of knitting and sewing machines in her workshop where two women knitters and three male tailors are employed. She has a nice show-room for the scale of her products. An enterprise run since last 20 years has a good demand for its product. But recently she has to face the competition from the Delhi-made products, particularly the bags and jackets. The comparatively cheaper Delhi made items have compelled her to introduce new designs and colour combinations. Mrs. Dolma is often helped by her husband and her children. She says that this workshop cum showroom is the only source of the family's livelihood. The increasing competition has led her to diversify the products at her show-room. These days, she has started dealing in some foreign goods as well as in Tibetan handicrafts.

Mrs. Dolma has two daughters and a son. All of them got educated from the local English medium schools. The two daughters have already graduated from Darjeeling Govt. College. As such, hers is a happy family.

Analysis :

i) Women entrepreneurs in knitting and other household ventures like embroidery, doll making and scrooling etc. suffer from acute crisis of finance.

ii) The intermediaries have played crucial roles in developing the women entrepreneurship in household industry in the hill areas by supplying raw materials and making the necessary marketing arrangements for their products.

iii) The growing competition among the entrepreneurs has led to the diversification of the commodities produced.

iv) Whereas for the native entrepreneurs even the survival is a problem; the immigrant entrepreneurs on the other hand are flourishing. In other words, the immigrants have proved themselves more efficient and successful entrepreneurs.

v) The women entrepreneurs of the informal sector are very much concerned of their children and therefore most of them have put their children in English medium schools for study.

7.4 : Summary

Right from the beginning |of the eighteenth century, 'entrepreneurship' has been defined in variety of ways. In spite of so many definitions, the basic underlying concept has remained the same. It implies innovativeness, the urge to take risk in the face of uncertainties and the intuition of the individual or a group of individuals involved in production. The factors affecting the success of entrepreneurship are categorised as (i) economic factors, (ii) socio-personal factors, (iii) human resource factors and (iv) support system of the economy.

Informal sector is characterised by the limited growth of entrepreneurship in it. In view of this the growth of women entrepreneurship in the informal sector has never been a focal point in the policy prescriptions in our country. But when one looks deeply into it, it is surprising to discover the potentials of the entrepreneurship among women working in the informal sector. The hill areas of Darjeeling district is characterised by a high participation of women in economic activities. They are seen to play a crucial role in the development process of the hill economy. And these women engaged particularly in the household and cottage industries are observed to be successful entrepreneurs too.

This study of their problems in entrepreneurship highlighted the fact that they have the entrepreneurial qualities such as the achievement motivation, risk taking willingness and the psychological dimensions to bear with the pressures and risks of the business. But the support system such as the marketing outlets, training facilities, availability of institutional credit, availability of good quality raw materials etc. on which their success as entrepreneurs depends is very

limited. The supporting govt. and non-govt. agencies if are made to work effectively, the base of women entrepreneurship in the hills can be expanded.

In this chapter, a linear regression of the success of their entrepreneurship in the study area has been done. This shows that the asset possession of the entrepreneurs, their level of education, risk taking willingness and the family size are the important determinants of their success. Again a chi-square test has given us the result that the immigrant women have got more successes than the natives in the entrepreneurship. The suggestion implicit is the finding is that the culturally marginal groups more successful entrepreneurs.

The case studies undertaken in this context of women entrepreneurship in the informal sector in Darjeeling hills have helped us to understand the problems more deeply and draw the conclusions accordingly. A few observations made from the case studies are that women entrepreneurship in household industries is not yet independent. Among their problems marketing of their produce, lack of training and knowledge in designing, crisis of institutional credit and the male dominations are the acute ones.

At the end, it must be kept in mind that in developing countries like ours where women are not given respect and due recognition, only the determination and the endeavour to establish themselves as of equal power and potential with the men in the society have put the women entrepreneurs at such positions in the occupational hierarchy of the hill economy.

Notes and References :

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16. The study of Jitesh Ch. Chaki on cottage industry workers in West Dinajpur district also had the same finding. See Jiksh Chandra Chaki, op. cit., p. 145
17. For the sake of simplicity, all the members above 11 years in age of the family are assumed to extend the helping hand in one way or the other to the women artisan of the family.
18. Human resource factors are the inherent traits in individual entrepreneur. In order to quantify these traits viz. personal efficacy, risk taking willingness, aspirations of the entrepreneurs etc., we have followed the procedures suggested by Rao & Mehta (1978), Wallach et al and Muthaya (1971) along with Garret (1969) respectively. These methods were also used by Jitesh Ch. Chaki, op. cit., pp.217-222
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Chapter VIII

A Taxonomy Of the Urban Informal Sector of Darjeeling Hills: Institutional Features and Earning Determinants

Urbanisation in developing countries has been accompanied by many glaring manifestations of poverty. Notable among them is the widespread business activity in informal sector. The socio-economic analysis of the women workers in various informal occupations in the last few chapters clearly showed that the informal sector of Darjeeling hills can be characterised as having two forms of employment systems. In marginal service activities and micro production units, women are mostly self-employed and work in highly competitive environments. Even in comparatively larger units requiring some technology or management, as in homebased handicrafts production, the informal labour markets exist. On the basis of the detailed discussions in the last few chapter, this chapter now explains the institutional features of the urban informal sector of Darjeeling hills in the first section and then explains the determinants of the informal sector earning of women in Darjeeling hills.

8.1 : Institutional Features of the Urban Informal Sector

The study of women workers viz. the construction workers, domestic servants, the women petty traders and the entrepreneurs & artisans engaged in knitting, weaving etc. gives us the following important features of the urban informal sector.

i) Economic activities by women either as an individual or as a group in the urban informal sector of Darjeeling hills are operated in physical and working environments considerably more hostile than those in rural areas.

A comparison of the urban informal labour market with the rural ones can be made in this context. The villages as umbrella institutions

afford all members the equal privileges of countervailing powers. The villages provide equal amenities to both rich and poor. But the administrative machinery in the urban areas is geared mainly toward the civic needs of the organised sector. The welfare needs of the poor is deliberately ignored. The informal sector which absorbs significantly large number of women giving very useful services, at best, is regarded as serving a peripheral role of urban economic life, and so contracting possibilities for consumption credit become limited.

The physical environment of haphazard settlements, where the poor workers of the informal sector have to find shelter in the towns of Darjeeling hills is invariably unhealthy with poor drainage, inadequate sanitation and no water supply connections at all. The high density of population and the simultaneous existence of the use of alcohol by the male members compound these problems.

Working environments are equally harsh. Many of the activities in the informal sector flout the civic or labour laws. Unlike rural activities, which are simply extralegal, these urban activities have in addition some illegal elements, leading to constant harassment from civic and police authorities. This picture of urban informal sector seems to be the same everywhere in India and abroad.¹

ii) The informal contracting processes in the towns of Darjeeling hills are considerably greater in both number and complexity. This reflects a diverse nature of opportunities to earn a living.

For example, even for an uneducated and unskilled women labourers, there are scopes like that of domestic service and roadside foodstalls where they can be put to work. Similarly many activities have close links with production and consumption in the formal sector. For instance, a vegetable vendor may be selling her products to a set of impersonal urban consumers; or the knitters and weavers depend completely on the demand that come from the formal sector consumers. These are the examples where micro units of self-employed females

interact directly with the formal sector.

A number of activities is also generated within the informal sector in Darjeeling hills without many linkages with the established formal sector. These meet endogenous service requirements of consumption, housing, and the credit. Obviously the larger the urban informal sector, the greater will be the requirements of housing, food and entertainment for its members, so diverse opportunities arise within the informal sector when the towns expand. This has what exactly happened in Darjeeling towns.

iii) Another important feature is that in urban areas of Darjeeling hills, locational considerations are of great significance in the context of the informal sector activities of women. Market demand for goods and services in urban areas have different densities across sections of geographic space. Even when explicit demand is not present, there could be potential markets at specific locations waiting to be tapped by an entrepreneur.² For example, during the tourist seasons, a potential market for selling tea, cold drinks and other light snacks, curio items, picture cards etc. is created at the frequently visited spots like Zoological Park or Tenzing rock, or Batasia loop in Darjeeling or the Mirik Bus stand etc., to speak of a few. The start-up cost of these activities is obviously very low and also the opportunity cost of supplying these services is low enough. Accordingly such vocations have become attractive to the women workers. Because of the lack of adequate earning capabilities of the women, such low-investment activities are considered to be profitable by them. This feature of urban informal sector is typical to Darjeeling hills. In other big cities like that of Calcutta and Bombay a multitude of small and marginal establishments concerned mainly with food items, fruits, cold drinks and sweets have sprung up near heavily populated public places such as govt. offices, railway stations, major shopping areas and industrial areas, mainly to exploit and monopolise the available locational rents. The rapidity of such business activities

in the urban areas contrasts sharply with the relatively slow pace of economic life of rural hills.

8.1.1 : Urban Informal Groups and Locational Rents : An Illustrative Model of Territorial Control

As the population is more and the hill stations being visited by a considerably large number of visitors from abroad and from within the country, a potential market exists in a large number of activities in the urban centres. These sources of livelihood can be tapped if suitable methods can be devised to prevent excessive competition. For this purpose, a person or a group of persons must have exclusive access to locational rents which means the earning from the use of a location competing others out for the same. For the purpose, social groups can utilise a set of existing conventions to informally contract with each other, and collectively maintain control over such geographical locations. The process adopted for the purpose has been termed as a " defense technology" with the help of which one can preserve territorial control with or without any assistance from the legal system.³

This idea of "defense technology", in the line of Jagannathan, is explained below with the help of an illustrative model and for the purpose we proceed with the following assumptions in the setup of a typical Darjeeling hill street vending done by the women.

- a) The activity considered in the informal sector is very simple ; one like selling tea and snacks by a woman.
- b) The tea and snacks seller is a price taker in the sense that the woman seller can not control the competitive price for tea & snacks. If she charges a higher price, she loses the buyers as they will switch over to the other one selling the same items in close proximity. On the other hand, charging a lower price is irrational. Hence, she has to accept the ruling price.
- c) Labour is considered to be the only important factor of

production. Selling hot tea & snacks at a particular crowded spot requires very little investment. The woman seller may require at the best a small stall made either of bamboo or cheap wood, a woven, a small table and one big cattle along with a few cups and plates. Thus, credit requirement for such a stall is also low. In fact, the only important requirement is long hours of presence at the site.

d) Accordingly, the cost of production is mainly in the nature of expenses incurred in acquiring the tea leaves and sugar and the snacks. This is obviously very small and can be assumed to be a constant proportion of total sales. However, the seller, in this case, has another significant cost to incur. This is the cost which she has to bear in order to keep potential competitor out of the market.

e) The woman tea vendor is too poor to use other material aids like that of advertising in order to increase her sales. The only way by which she can increase her sales is by decorating her stall or shouting to attract attention or by wearing up to date and fashionable dresses.

f) To begin with, the tea-snacks-seller controls the entire space. Whenever the potential demand exists in the locality some people have to take on the role of entrepreneurs, to discover and exploit it. It is assumed that one such woman has acted as the entrepreneur and set up the tea-stall and the entire space has come under her control.

g) Even if she has full control over the space, she does not have the legal status to do so.

Now, so long the seller-woman has the full control over her territory, she maximises her sale over the area. But she then faces one problem which has to be resolved. As the activity requires her presence at one spot, it becomes difficult for her to exploit the potential demand located further away from the stall. This would certainly attract other competitor sellers who will thus become the potential rivals of the 1st seller.

Obviously, the 1st seller would then have to spend something to prevent a given territory or turf from being encroached upon. The level of effort or energy she is required to spend to maintain her turf is her opportunity cost. As a rational-being, she can be expected to take measures to minimise her "defence costs" by reducing the level of effort that she has to expend. And this can be done with the help of informal contracts with others by which the group mutually agrees to keep others out.

Informal contracts with other vendors, preferably in a complementary trade or even in the same trade operating from a different location are found to be convenient solutions in Darjeeling hills. Very often local police and civic officials also offer these protection services on the payment of weekly or monthly bribes to them. Many cautious women sellers are found to have calculated this "defence cost" as a part of their total costs. Thus, an intruder, therefore, has to face not only the existing seller's wrath, but also a combined action from the group with whom the seller has informally created "defence arrangements".

It thus follows that in the urban informal sector of Darjeeling-hills, in the frequently visited spots by the tourists and in other spots of high population density, the tea-vendors and other hawkers are united as a group to collectively protect their extralegal rights. Secondly, as such informal contracts are easier to work out among groups having common social and cultural backgrounds, ethnic homogeneity in trades and vocations becomes a commonly observed feature. This so happens because persons belonging to common social groups are likely to be less opportunistic. That is why, it is seen that the street vendors dealing in second hand garments and woolen garments are mostly the Tibetans while most of the street vendors dealing in tea-snacks & other dry food items in the selected tourist spots are Nepalese.

Through such informal contracts the women vendors are able to

effectively generate for themselves extralegal property rights, even on public property in Darjeeling hills. These contracts create restrictions within the informal sector, and prevent universal access to earning opportunities. Hence, although the entry of the workers are assumed to be free in the informal sector, the upcoming development of restrictions imposed by the group of self-serving workers is the new phenomenon in the urban centres of Darjeeling hills.

Now with the expansion of the towns, the value of the locations begin to increase. It has been observed by this researcher in Darjeeling that during the last ten-year period, the areas which were thinly populated, have been crowded by the people migrated from the rural areas. And the value of the locations has increased significantly. The sales of such tea-vendors have grown; and in the business additional help is often required. In these activities, trust has to be given a high premium because a hired helper, in no times, learns the trade, and there is always a danger that the hired helper may decide to set up her own independent stall quickly and thus becomes a rival. This has led the existing sellers become more practical. A member of the immediate family of kinship group is encouraged to become the helper; by doing so they check the opportunism too. If sales continue to increase, the assistant may even be allowed to set herself up independently. Work sharing thus becomes a predictable feature of this model. These processes of work sharing in informal sector are common also to other big cities in India.

The type of evidence required to confirm the model suggested above is explained in the chapter where the status of domestic servants has been explained. It is also a typical character of Darjeeling town that the water-carriers have allocated the territory clearly demarcated by the competing groups. Except for a few weak carriers, other women water-suppliers have allocated sites from which they operate.

The interesting features of these contracting procedures is

that free-rider problems are not likely to emerge because of the nature of the informal contracts. These arrangements are used as a substitute for law, and the workers know that a breach of contract would lead not only to confusion but also to the disappearance of the earning opportunity. It thus follows that entry into these informal sector activities in the urban area is selective. Also using such methods groups can exploit any prospective rent seeking opportunity in the towns.

8.2 : Determinants of Urban Informal Sector Earnings of Women

It has been discussed in the previous chapters that women workers due to certain economic and cultural compulsions along with the restrictions on their entry imposed in the formal sector have actively participated in various spheres of informal activities in Darjeeling hills. In the rural areas, agriculture is the only source in the informal sector where they have been toiling either as cultivators, or agricultural labourers. The urban informal sector, on the other hand, is heterogeneous and also exhibits a wide diversity of incomes.

It is a well known fact that when people are asked to reveal their income in sample surveys they have a systematic tendency to underestimate it. In our survey too, we faced the same problems from the respondent women. It was very difficult to calculate the exact earnings of these workers. It was, however, possible to estimate the earnings of the domestic servants and the construction workers but for the self-employed and artisan workers, as there was a clear underestimation, we have added 20% more on their earnings to make the earnings more acceptable and correct. The following table reports the monthly earnings accruing to the women in various informal sector activities of Darjeeling urban centres.

It is seen that the construction works in the service sector has offered the lowest rewards, partly perhaps because of the low capital and skill intensity followed by the employment of the women

in construction sector at an average of six months only per annum. The manufacturing sector offers a moderately higher income

Table 8.1 : Average Informal Sector Income of the Women by Activity

Activity	Average Income (in Rs.)	Respondents (N)
Knitting	235	15
Weaving	1308	15
Other homebased Prodn.	1220	20
A. Manufacturing total	953	50
Small restaurants (food stalls)	563	84
Vending in green vegetables and other similar items	511	99
Retailing in woolen and 2nd hand garments and other varieties items	1116	46
Retailing in grocery	640	47
Others	1036	24
B. Petty trading total	681	300
Domestic service	239	200
Teaching in nursery schools	609	12
C. Services total	260	212
D. Construction works	176	332

Source : Field survey

level of Rs.953 per month. The sub-sector that appears especially rewarding in manufacturing is the weaving. In weaving, however, there is a clear cut division between the entrepreneurs and artisan weavers. Whereas the artisan weavers in no case are found to earn more than Rs.1,000 per month, the entrepreneurs earn handsomely. Other homebased production which includes the production of country liquor, handicrafts

items and tailoring cum embroidery have also provided better income-earning opportunities to the women in urban areas.

In trade, the retailing of woolen and the 2nd hand garments and other varieties items etc. are found to be profitable. As expected, the earnings of the street vendors (roadside food stall owners and green vegetable sellers) are relatively low. The very lowest incomes are concentrated among the construction workers, knitters and the domestic servants. Also, these averages mark a wide variation in the distribution of earnings within each sector of activity. Now, let us move to the question, what are the determinants of the earnings of women in the urban informal sector of Darjeeling hills?

Informal sector studies since mid-70's have been undertaken in many of the developing countries in Africa and Latin America. In these countries, the problem of rapid urbanisation due to high rates of in-migration and very slow growth of formal sector jobs is widely known. Researchers, accordingly, have studied the importance of informal sector as employment generating sector although the earnings from informal sector has been found less than that offered by the formal sector employment. The established notions about the determinants of informal sector earnings are as follows:

- i) The human capital theory suggests that educational attainment and work experience are important determinants of earnings in the formal sector. The employment in the formal sector puts some restrictions on the basis of a stipulated minimum education and skill level attainment for the job-seekers. It is, on the other hand, argued that human capital has no effect on the earnings of employees in the informal sector. The advocates of dualism theory argue that employers hire workers without educational screening and provide little subsequent on-the-job training. Thus, the effect of educational attainment on the earnings in the informal sector is predicted to be insignificant and the workers are expected to exhibit a flat profile of earnings across age-groups.⁵

ii) Another predictable result from the human capital theory is that informal sector earnings are positively related to the workers' age. Workers who are older have a higher marginal product because of the skills and experience accumulated with age.⁶

iii) According to the dual market model, the migration also plays a crucial role in determining the earnings in the formal and informal sectors. The model suggests that the rural migration is inversely related with employment in the formal sector.⁷ This implies that migrants are less likely to be employed in the formal sector. This compels them to be available for work even at a very low wage-rate at the lowest - earning informal sector. The native workers, on the other hand, are more likely to be employed in the formal sector. Hence, they can exercise their choices in selecting the informal sector jobs. Thus, the earnings in the informal sector is expected to be influenced by the domicile status of the workers.

iv) Family background has also been considered while estimating the informal sector earnings by many researchers. In fact, in India the position of individuals in the social hierarchy is traditionally defined by their caste. The caste ranking is also clearly associated with economic position. The scheduled castes in most places in India, lie at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy. Studies carried out in different parts of India have found that the proportion attending school is lower and the likelihood of dropping out is greater among them than among the middle and upper castes. In addition, the performance compared to students of other castes is generally poorer.⁸ Tilak, in this context, has argued that the scheduled castes find it difficult to adjust to the curriculum and methods of teaching because they are glared to the requirements of children of the more privileged groups. The schedule castes are also the victims of deliberate discrimination and oppression by other castes.⁹ In view of these facts, the scheduled castes and the tribes may also find it difficult to penetrate established networks to obtain

jobs in the informal sector. Thus, the scheduled castes and tribes women may have lower earnings than others in the informal sector.

v) The employment status of the informal sector workers is considered to be one of the important factor in determining the informal sector earnings by Friedman and Sullivan.¹⁰ Their opinion is that the distinction between manual and non-manual workers is not at all important in the informal sector.

8.2.1 : Regression Analysis of the Informal Sector Earnings

An attempt to identify the factor determining the urban informal sector earnings of women workers of Darjeeling hill areas has been made here now by employing multiple regression analysis. The model offering the highest explanatory power is linear and of the form:

$$Y = a_0 + a_1 E + a_2 A + a_3 EXP + a_4 CASTE + a_5 NONMAN + a_6 DOMNAT + e$$

where

Y = the annual earnings of the women workers of the informal sector;

E = the education level of the women workers. For the sake of simplicity, we have numericalised the education level in the following way : 0 = education nil, 1 = education below primary level, 2 = education is primary and above but below middle (= class viii), 3 = education is middle and above but below matric, 4 = education is matric and above but below H.S., 5 = educations H.S. & above but below graduation, 6 = graduation and above.

A = A proxy for total work experience, measured by age in years.

EXP = A proxy for work-experience in the present informal-job, measured by length of service, in years.

CASTE = A dummy variable, equal to 1 if belonging to scheduled caste/tribe, 0 if otherwise.

NONMAN = a dummy variable, equal to 1 if the work is non-manual,

o if otherwise i.e., manual.

DOMNAT = a dummy variable, equal to 1 if the worker is domicially native, 0 if otherwise ie. migrated.

e = the error term.

We had a sample of 894 female workers from various urban informal activities. The various sectors such as the manufacturing, petty trade, domestic service and the construction works were not represented equally. The sample observations varied from 50 to 332 in these activities. Hence, in order to have a somewhat balanced representation and to make the regression controllable and manageable, we chose 125 samples through random selection. The sub-sample set constitutes 14% of the first hand sample we had. This seems to fairly represent our first hand sample. The sub-set now consists of 125 urban women workers of whom 50 are from petty trade, 30 from domestic service, 30 from construction works and 15 from homebased manufacturing artisans-cum-entrepreneurs. Even now, sectorial representation has not been fairly equal. But this was so done in view of the relative importance of the different activities. In the sub-set of 125 samples, petty trade is little bit over represented simply because of the fact that this activity displays greater heterogeneity in the urban informal sector in Darjeeling hill areas.¹¹

Table 8.2 presents the regression analysis of earnings from informal sector activities by the women workers.

Table 8.2 : Multiple Regression Analysis of Earnings of Women of Urban Informal Sector in Darjeeling Hills

Variables	Coefficients	t-statistic	Significance*
constant	$a_0 : -376.88$	-	-
E	$a_1 : 1442.90$	4.8775	1
A	$a_2 : -89.001$	-1.5164	20
EXP	$a_3 : 961.15$	5.9278	1
CASTE	$a_4 : 994.50$	1.2594	--
NON-MAN	$a_5 : 2976.20$	3.1180	1
DOMNAT	$a_6 : -2226.10$	-2.2701	5
R^2	0.565		
F	25.590		
Residual			
Sum of Squares	.21414E+10		

*This column indicates the level at which the corresponding coefficient is statistically significant, e.g., an entry of 1 = significance at the 99% level.

The selected equation explains 56.5% ($R^2 = .565$) variation in the earnings of the women workers in the sample, which is very reasonable for cross section data.¹² The regression results presented in the table above are quite interesting. Contrary to the assertions of dual labour market hypothesis, education and work experience are found to be the important determinants of women's earnings in the informal sector. However, age of the worker is not significant in determining their earning. Education certainly is not a criterion for entry into the informal sector but it plays a vital role in selecting a particular activity within the informal sector itself. For example, the women with certain level of education in Darjeeling hill's urban centres are mostly absorbed in non-wage activities like household

manufacturing and small & petty business; but majority of workers with no educational background at all are found to be compelled to work in the informal wage-sector as domestic servants, construction workers and coolies etc.

The statistically significant relationship of work experience with earnings in the informal sector suggests, contrary to the popular belief, that jobs in this sector involve on-the-job training. This appears to be quite plausible considering that at the time of selecting the sub-set of 125 samples for regression analysis, 50% of the informal sector women consisted of production and trade workers. A considerable part of them were working as helpers and assistants. They learned the insights of the jobs by observing the senior workers and in weaving and knitting activities, in particular, the trainee assistants were shown how to operate the looms and knitting machines by their senior co-workers. In due course, they were likely to be shouldering the entire responsibility of the jobs. Another factor responsible for higher earnings with experience is that in informal jobs like construction work and wage-earners in weaving, the employers paid their employees on a piece-rate basis. Under such a scheme, inexperienced workers earned less, as their productivity was lower and quality of work was inferior.¹³ Another important reason, suggested by Dore, is that long service workers, in the informal sector may be paid a loyalty premium by their employers.¹⁴

It might look contradictory, to some extent, to see that age factor is less significant in determining women's income in the urban informal sector of Darjeeling Hills. The apparent contradiction can be explained by the fact that the women involved in particular manual work were not sticking to a longer time in that. The frequent change of the jobs was, therefore, a constraint to acquire the experience in a particular line for them. The work experience in a job thus is not consistent with the workers' age. Equally important reason is that the aged women in arduous manual works were less efficient and less

productive. Accordingly the employers paid them less. The negative coefficient of age-factor support this explanation. Consideration of all categories of the informal works, however, showed that the total earning is almost to be independent of the age of women workers.

The caste factor in Darjeeling hills in no way, affected the earnings of women workers in the informal sector. This certainly proves that the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are not subject to deliberate discrimination and oppression as found by many researchers in other parts of our country. This idea is supported by the fact that petty trading in Darjeeling hills is mainly controlled by the SC and STs. Also, already explained is the fact that the Tibetans belonging to ST category have proved themselves as successful entrepreneurs.

The structural variables - NONMAN and DOMNAT both are found to be statistically significant at 1% and 5% level respectively. This is not surprising as non-manual jobs are characterised by the extensive use of human capital as well as physical capital. On the other hand manual jobs are characterised by the extensive use of labour power only (i.e. domestic service, construction worker and operative works in manufacturing etc.). As expected the rate of return to the use of capital and education is also higher for non-manual employer than for manual employer. A striking feature of the pattern of earnings of the female workers in the sample is that the average monthly earnings of the non manual workers were 222% higher than those workers in the manual work. The former earned on the average Rs.9565 per annum compared to the meager earnings of Rs.2964 for the latter. This clearly rejects the Friedman Sullivan hypothesis that the distinction between manual and non-manual work is not important in the informal sector.

Likewise, the average earnings of native women and migrated women of urban informal sector was calculated. It was found that the native women on the average had earned Rs.7371 per annum against Rs.4060 earned by the rural migrants. The native women in informal sector earned 81% higher than that earned by the rural migrants. It

must be mentioned in this case that while enlisting the earnings of the women-workers, particularly of the residential domestic servants, the real earning in terms of free shelter, free food and free clothing have not been taken into account in view of the problems in determining their imputed value. Even if it is included, the conclusion would not change.

It is thus seen that the earnings of the women workers in Darjeeling informal sector do not follow the established pattern as mentioned by the researchers. Many of the established facts are contradicted by the typical character of the informal sector activities of Darjeeling hills.

8.3 : Summary

The urban informal sector of Darjeeling hills are characterised by the growth of typical informal contracting processes among a homogeneous group of workers. These contracting processes present problems as well as some promises. Through the mutual understanding with fellow workers or with the help of muscle power the workers (inclusive of women workers) erect entry barriers to prevent others from encroaching on their earning sources. These barriers are essentially poverty alleviating institutions that deprived outsiders from a chance of seeking employment opportunities in the urban areas.

This sector, on the other hand, has proved itself to be full of resources which are being exploited by the so-called 'exploited' of the urban society. They have been successful in tapping all potential markets at all corners of the urban centres and the scarce capital is put to its most productive use.

However, the earnings of the women workers from the various informal sector activities are different depending on the nature of the works. The determinants of these earnings are also found to be different, to some extent, from those established by various researchers in the context of third world countries. A linear

regression analysis to find the determinants of the earnings of these workers from informal sector activities in Darjeeling hills undertaken in this chapter has shown that education and work experience of the workers along with the attributes like the non-manual characteristic of the work and the domicile status of the workers themselves have significant affect on the earning potentials but the caste or the age factor of the workers have no impact at all.

Notes and References :

1. See William J. House, "Nairobi's Informal Sector : Dynamic Entrepreneurs or Surplus Labour?", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol.32, No.2, Jan.1984, p.279, for a description of some of the forms of harassment. For the Indian experience, see Alfred de Souza, (ed.) *the Indian City*, South Asia Books, New Delhi, 1977. and S. Gothoskar, (ed), *The Struggles of Women at Work*, Vikash, New Delhi, 1992.
2. N. V. Jagannathan, *Informal Markets in Developing countries*, OUP, 1987, p.60
3. ibid, p.61
4. See Biswajit Banerjee, "Social Networks in the Migration Process : Empirical Evidence on Chain Migration in India", *Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol.17, Jan, 1983, p.185-196, for an analysis of these processes in the urban informal sector in Delhi.
5. Biswajit Banerjee, *Rural to Urban Migration and the Urban Labour Market*, Himalaya Publishing House, 1986, p.188
6. William J. House, op. cit., p.297
7. M. B. Tannen, " Labour Market in North East Brazil : Does the Dual Market Model Apply?", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol.39, No.3, April 1991 p.578
8. Biswajit Banerjee, op. cit., p.192
9. Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, "Inequality in Education in India", *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol.14, No. 3, January, p.417-436
10. John Friedman and Flora Sullivan, "The Absorption of Labour in the Urban Economy: The Case of Developing Countries", *Economic Development and Cultural Change* Vol. 22, No.3. April, 1974, p.385 - 413
11. Table 8.1 shows that the trade sector reflects the most heterogeneous type of works where the earning from different trading is higher than earned by the women absorbed in informal service sector.
12. For the support, see William J. House, op.cit.,p.289..
13. Biswajit Banerjee, op. cit., p.203.
14. Dore Roland, "The Labour Market and Pattern of Employment in the Wage Sector of LDCs: Implication for the Volume of Employment Generated", *World Development*, Vol.2, No.4 & 5, April - May 1974, p.1

Chapter IX

Organisations in the Services of Women Workers of Informal Sector

In the hill areas of Darjeeling district, as discussed in the earlier chapters, the growing informal sector activities like the homebased production units such as knitting of woolen garments, weaving of carpets, tailoring, embroidery works, paints and patch works etc. along with service works such as domestic service, road and building constructions and the independent petty trade in the urban areas have absorbed the bulk of women workers. The majority of women workers in these occupations suffer from social tensions of insecure common law marriage, bigamy, desertions, male alcoholism and in some cases physical assaults too. In spite of all these, they are compelled to join economic activities and shoulder the responsibility of the household works and child care. Many women although not widowed or destitute are found to be the main food providers to the dependents because their husbands are either casually employed or do not contribute fully to family income. But the social attitude of the male-dominated society has been so developed that in spite of their equal contribution in the development of society, culture and civilisation their role seems to be less recognised. In real life, these women of informal labour market are very weak and are ill-treated in the family and in the society as well. It is the general picture of these workers everywhere in India.

To help them gain their status and establish themselves as the economic agents of equal importance of their male counterparts, their mobilisation is of utmost importance. And this can be done through their own organisations which are very rare in our country. Despite tremendous problems, poor women

workers at various corners of the country have slowly begun to organise to cooperatively improve their conditions and treatment within their house, the market and the community. Side by side, voluntary organisations have also come up in the country to utilise their experiences in mobilising and educating the women workers and also to help implement the various plans and programmes meant for them as announced by the govt. time to time. This chapter makes an attempt to highlight the role of a few important women's organisations of our country which can be the examples in the direction of organising the large number of exploited women of the informal sector in our study area. In this connection, we would also evaluate the role played by the govt. organisations and a few non-govt. organisations devoted to the upliftment of the status of women workers of both the rural and urban areas in the hills of Darjeeling district.

9.1 : A Few Important Organisations Solely Meant for Women Workers in India

I. Working Women's Forum (WWF) - WWF in South India has become interesting development model for the country as a whole for several reasons : first its size and rapid rate of growth at very low funding levels; second its grass root character and the absence of elite women, with poor women taking an organising and leadership roles; third its exclusive women focus and strident inter caste ideological stand; and lastly, its primary emphasis on income generating activities rather than on social welfare services.¹ The idea for WWF arose from the frustrations of a few women political party workers in Madras, who eventually became the organisation's founders. In the process of mobilising poor women for political rallies, the leaders observed the low economic and social status of women and noted that the govt. programmes are too minimum to uplift their position in the society. Tired of asking for women's political support, yet

failing to provide them with any return, Mrs. Jaya Arunachalam, a noted women politician, left the women's front of the congress party and brought together several co-workers in order to build a truly responsive women's organisation based on self participation with leadership coming from the poor women themselves.² The result was the WWF. The Madras base of the organisation was started with 800 members in 1978 and by now it has nearly 50000 self employed petty traders and producers, lace makers, bidi workers, food vendors and homebased producers with an extended network to the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The forum avoiding contacts with political parties, seeks to empower women at home and in the community through the exclusive mobilisation of theirs. In order to overcome the barriers to the mobilisation of women caused by the divisions of caste, religion and politics, the forum has taken a strong anti caste position and encourages integration among different castes and religious communities in the composition of neighbourhood loan programmes. Also worthy of credential is that under its encouragement, the entire loan programme, training and education activities are operated and controlled by the women themselves.³

The unique of its all activities is its loan programme. Under the loan programme, the organisation acts as an intermediary between women workers and the nationalised banks in securing loans for business investment purposes. The loan programme has resulted in a significant number of jobs for unemployed women, in the transition of a large number of low paid piece-rate workers to a more remunerative self employment and in substantial increases in the earnings of women traders previously exploited by money lenders or middlemen creditors.

Examples of a few important loan programmes undertaken by

the Forum are as follows. In Dindigul, 500 landless women have received Forum loans and a govt. subsidy to purchase milk buffaloes. Previously the women were under-employed as seasonal agricultural labourers earning Rs. 60-80 per month. Now, after the loan programme these women earn a stable monthly income of Rs.160-200.⁴

In Vellore, women's access to low interest credit through the Forum has enabled bidi rollers to purchase materials directly and by pass three layers of middlemen who each pilfer a portion of the contracted supply. Instead of earning Rs 5. 50 per day under contract system, they are now earning Rs 7. 50 per day.⁵ In Adirampattinam, access to Forum credit has eliminated the dependence of fisherwomen on middlemen fish suppliers who charge high interest rates and weigh fish falsely. The women fish marketers are now able to purchase fish directly from the seashore and obtain a high profit.⁶ In Bangalore, agarbatti workers have utilised their loan money received through the Forum to bypass middlemen suppliers and purchase their inputs more cheaply through bulk orders, thus increasing their earning potentials.⁷

Thus WWF, through its marvellous work, has become a leading organisation in the country in mobilising the women workers and helping them to come out of the chain of obstacles in various informal sector activities.

II. Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) - Another organisation of women workers of informal sector that has established itself to be a pioneer in injecting the determination, coordination and self respect in them is SEWA. Initially started in Ahmedabad, under the leadership of Ela Bhatt, the general secretary at present, its area of functioning has extended to the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The target group of the women workers that SEWA gives priority in

the field of organisation are the street vendors, domestic servants, papad makers, vegetable vendors and so on. Its role is not only confined to an association which helps in arbitration on matters related to their jobs, SEWA helps in the establishment of alternative economic structures such as cooperatives, schemes for functional literacy and credit & saving facilities through the Mahila SEWA Sahakari Bank.⁸

SEWA believes that struggle is an essential part of development. In the process of development, there are many cases when injustice has to be effectively opposed, struggled against. When a policeman beats and kicks a helpless vegetable and fruit vendor, it has to be opposed. When an employer makes garment-stitch-labour work for 10 hours a day and earn only a minimum, a struggle has to be launched. When a *bidi* worker dies without any medical treatment, a voice has to be raised for them. When a cart puller breaks her legs in a street accident, someone must be held liable.⁹ And in all such cases everywhere SEWA has reached to help the women workers, in the right direction. Very recently, to stop the police atrocities on the poor street vendors of Ahmedabad, after much discussion, SEWA decided that since the root of the problem was the vendors' illegal status, SEWA will try to get licenses for the vendors.¹⁰

SEWA has also kept itself free from any political control over it. Over the years, side by side of the struggle for women workers, it has succeeded in receiving the grants and aids from the govt. institutions and at the same time, it has made the arrangements for supplying the small women entrepreneurs with credit. It has undertaken projects to impart vocational training to them. SEWA organises workers' education classes for vegetable vendors, teaching them simple accounting procedures to supplement their sharp intuitive calculating abilities.¹¹ SEWA thus has indicated that with certain amount of direction, organisational

skill and plenty of determination, women are able to bargain for better wages as well as learn to save in the cooperative bank.

III. Hamal panchayat—This is a typical women's organisation of Pune. The women coolies of Pune city are known as "Hamals". They are generally involved in the transportation of goods by carrying head loads or pushing handcarts from railway wagons to godowns and from godowns to shops as well as to the residence of customers. In addition to carrying of goods, they are responsible for sorting, grading, weighing and arranging goods and repairing gunny sacks used for transportation.¹² This particular set of women workers are the lowest paid and suffer from "utter destitution and starvation".¹³

With the objective of bringing these exploited hamals together so that they can bargain for higher wages and thus fight for their existence, their organisation called "Hamal Panchayat" was formed in 1970. Although, the panchayat has not been so successful to uplift the status of its women members, the hamals have loyalties to their leadership. The hamal panchayat has succeeded in introducing the wage standardisation, at least of the hamals. A minimum rate has also been fixed by the association. The members do not expect to benefit directly from its activities but they are happy to know that there is an organisation to fight for their rights. The existence of an organisation of their own, thus gives mental strength for the continued fight for their existence.¹⁴

IV. Domestic Servants' Organisations --- Domestic service all over the world has been considered to be a job meant solely for women and accordingly it has absorbed large number of women. These servants are subject to a variety of exploitations in this sector starting from low wages to mal-treatment by the employer to the mostly untold stories of sexual harassment. In view of their increasing demand and the deteriorating employer-

employee relation in the cities like Delhi, Calcutta and Madras, voluntary organisations have been set up to deal with the upcoming problems. Few such organisations working solely for the women domestic servants are as follows.

a. Delhi Domestic Working Women's Forum - A new phenomenon in the city life of Delhi is the creation of Delhi Domestic Working Women's Forum (DDWWF). It has 1500 members till date and it runs three centres in Delhi, members of which meet every Sunday to discuss problems faced by the member domestic servants. Each of these centres has a coordinator who meets the would be employees, interviews them, assess their financial position and then gives them suitable household. The Forum has been able to arrange for a weekly holiday for the maids and only 8 hours of work everyday. The Forum also tells the maids what their rights are and what kind of legal action they can take in case of harassment by the employers.¹⁵

b. The Religions of Mary Immaculate, Delhi - It is, in fact, a welfare organisation for the maids of Delhi. The institute acts as an employment agency. Besides stepping in to resolve problems of sexual abuse or the maids not getting along with employers, the institute also negotiates salaries for the maids and gives them vocational training classes in English conversation and typing to the domestic servants of Delhi.¹⁶ Such training to the would be domestic servants has proved to be very useful as this would increase their capabilities.

c. The Housemaids Service Home, Madras - This home at Madras imparts three months training to its members before they are considered suitable employees. During this period, they are taught how to conduct themselves, how to deal with the employers and how to operate modern household gadgets. After the training, they are employed with the 4000 odd registered employers. The home negotiates the salaries for the maids and for the first few

months, they are asked to deposit their salaries with home, which in turn deposits them in bank accounts in the maids' names.¹⁷ The home, thus, serves the interest of both the employers and the employees.

d. Helpful Hands, Calcutta - Gayatri Chopra, a famous air hostess is the organiser-cum-chairperson of the agency, Household Hands at Calcutta. In view of the increasing crimes occurred through the maid's help in Calcutta, Helpful Hands was started with to protect the interest of both the employer and the employee maids. It has 200 plus registered servants in its jurisdiction. A maid servant who wants to become a member is required to get some form of identification (ration card, landlords' rent receipts etc.). The identities are verified by the local police and the persons registered. They are then placed in various categories such as cooks, general maids, part-timers etc. and helping hand makes sure that they get employment in areas which suit the individual servant's requirement and they are placed accordingly as per their abilities and the budget of the employers.¹⁸

e. Pune Household Maid Servants Union-All the four organisations above work for the betterment of the maids but they are not the unions of their own. Pune Household maid servants union is the only union of women domestic servants in the country. This was set up in 1991 under the banner of Lal Nishan party and at present has a 3000 odd strong members. They had even organised two hartals, when one of their members was fired for being absent from work for one day. After the agitation, the maid was taken back by the employer. The union has worked out a charter of demand which are being followed up by the employers in Pune. Their demands include an increase of Rs. 30 to Rs. 50 a year to neutralise the inflationary effect, a minimum wage of Rs. 20 for per sweeping and mopping one room and Rs. 30 per person

for washing clothes and utensils, besides a yearly bonus.¹⁹

All these organisations and the agencies although have separate entities, they have some common goals and all have played crucial role in mobilising and educating the women workers of the lowest social strata by addressing critical economic needs and supporting feminist and human rights issue. Accordingly, they have succeeded in building up leadership and self confidence among poor women and brought visible changes in women's treatment and progress in the community. With more and more domestic help realising that they are finally getting a better salary, it does not come as a surprise that most of them have become upwardly mobile. Also the standard of living of these maids in the big cities have improved. In a country like ours it is only through such organisation that the workers of the informal sector can be made aware of their duties, rights and importance.

9.2 : The Role of Govt. and Non-govt. Organisations in Mobilising Women Workers of Informal Sector in Darjeeling Hills

Darjeeling hills in the state of West Bengal although caters a large informal labour market for the poor women, it still suffers from the virtual non-existence of women's organisations as such. The concept of trade union among the women workers of the informal sector has not developed at all. In fact, trade union movement in the informal sector is very difficult to organise. Here the difficulties arise mainly because of the following reasons;

- i) There is no permanent work force in any particular informal occupation. The workers always try to move from a lower to upper hierarchy of the occupation structure in the informal sector.
- ii) Workers do not have common interest as the nature of

the work is not the same in various occupations.

iii) Most of the workers being less educated, the awareness to form a union is lacking among them.

iv) The workers of the informal sector do not have the spare time.

v) Trade unions in the formal/organised sector have indulged in so much of violence that the workers of informal sector, particularly the women, have a strong distaste for trade union.

However, since the inception of the sixth plan in the 80's, special measures have been launched by the govt. to uplift the status of the women workers especially of those working in the informal sector. A few agencies have been set up for the execution and implementation of the programme measures. Apart from these, some non-govt. organisations (NGOs) within their limited capacity have played appreciable role in promoting the socio-economic development of the women workers of both the rural and urban areas of Darjeeling hills. The following are a few govt. agencies in our study area serving the women workers of informal sector; engaged mainly in weaving, knitting and tailoring.

I. West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation (WBCADC) - WDCADC (a govt. of West Bengal undertaking), Kalimpong project was established in the year 1976 with an objective to develop farmers particularly in the category of agricultural labourers, share croppers, marginal farmers and small farmers in a comprehensive pattern. It also felt, besides animal husbandry, agriculture and allied activities along with basic needs programmes, small scale industries could also play a pivotal role for the economic development of the rural people,

particularly women of the area. Accordingly for creating gainful employment for unemployed women, the corporation started a programme for knitting of winter garments in the year 1979-80 involving skilled rural women of the project area in Kalimpong subdivision. It started the project only with 9 women artisans and by the end of the year 1992-93, the number of wool knitters attached to it had increased to 180. Necessary arrangement for training of prospective knitters, helping to obtain machines by them through bank finance, supply of raw materials which the corporation brings from Ludhiana, Punjab have been made by the corporation. The knit-wears are generally marketed all throughout the state by "Tantusree" and "Tantuja", the govt. undertaking enterprises. The corporation also secures order in bulk for woollen garments from N. B. S. T. C, Calcutta Police, Fire brigade, forest departments and some other organisations.

CADC has made its presence felt in the locality in such a way that about 60% of the knitters' families attached to it are completely dependent on this project. Progress, achievement and mandays generated by the corporation during the last ten-year period has been shown in the following table which itself would speak about CADC's success.

Table 9.1 : Year Wise Production and the Progress of the Small Scale Industry of the Corporation : 1983-84 to 1992-93

Year	Production	Sales	Wages paid	Mandays	Employment*
	(Rs.lakhs)	(Rs.lakhs)	(Rs.lakhs)	created	generation (No.of artisans)
1983-84	8.85	8.52	1.77	15330	138
1984-85	10.87	10.07	2.18	18820	144
1985-86	10.42	10.35	2.35	29460	199
1986-87	14.34	14.40	3.23	16150	220
1987-88	6.98	8.26	1.57	8727	220
1988-89	6.59	7.23	1.49	7450	225
1989-90	13.91	12.14	2.78	13900	237
1990-91	15.94	17.35	3.33	16681	274
1991-92	20.59	19.74	4.63	23150	292
1992-93	18.85	15.99	4.10	20500	292

Source : Annual Report of WBCADC, Kalimpong Project, 1992-93

*The employment here means the total number of the women knitters enrolled that year. The drop out cases are not shown. In 1992-93, excluding the drop-outs, the effective number of women knitters were 180.

The plus point of the corporation which attracts the local knitters is that they are not required to work at the CADC work-shop. They are given the raw materials and they knit the different size woolen garments at home. The wage the corporation pays to the knitters varies according to the type of knitting. For example, the rate of wage for leverage knitting is Rs.55 per Kg, for designed knitting Rs. 65 per Kg and for hand-knitting Rs. 70 per Kg. According to the project director, a full dependent

artisan draws about Rs. 2000 or more per month whereas the part time knitters earn around Rs. 300 - Rs. 400 per month.

The CADC, thus has played a crucial role in improving the economic condition of a number of women knitters. The finance for the purpose of installing knitting machines has been supplied by the co-operative bank. The problem that has arisen during the last couple of years is the deliberate non-repayment of loans by the artisans. In view of these problems, CADC has decided not to hand the new machines over to the newly enrolled knitters. Considering the increasing demand of the knitwears, it has a plan to install 50 more knitting machines at its centre at Kalimpong and the knitters would be required to work in these machines at the centre's workshop.

The CADC is involved in creating the alternative income earning opportunities to the skilled knitters of the locality. But the network of the corporation has not been extended to a large mass of the artisan women outside Kalimpong subdivision. Also it is not an organisation to redress the grievances and employment hazards of the women workers.

II. District Industries Centre (DIC) – DIC is the highest level organisation set up by the govt. in every district of West Bengal to help mobilise and patronise the small scale and cottage industries in the urban areas as well as in the rural areas. The DIC, Darjeeling, according to its project director, suffers from all kinds of infrastructural difficulties thereby restricting its capabilities in fulfilling its target in the hill areas of Darjeeling district. The centre has a large number of posts, in its office, lying vacant for years. Due to the lack of manpower and the resulting coordination among them, it has not been able to extend its network to the grass root level. The office is situated in such an old unhygienic building without the provision of an urinal even that the employees have enough excuses for not

remaining in the office, during the office hour. Their grievances seem to have some reasoning once one happens to be at the newly built DIC office at Siliguri. Many people find the step-motherly attitude of the govt. in setting up a separate centre in Siliguri by neglecting the old one situated at the district headquarter..

The facts mentioned above are sufficient to make one understand the role DIC plays in patronising the artisan workers in the homebased industries. With its limited resources, the centre, however, every year conducts training programmes for women knitters, weavers and tailors. In 1993, DIC had successfully completed eight such programmes. As a feedback, after the training it has presented a few knitting and sewing machines to those women who did excellently well during their training. It has also initiated the women weavers to form co-operatives. Over the years in Darjeeling hills, 4 weavers co-operatives, one embroidery centre and 8 other co-operatives of women are functioning under the direct supervision anf financial help of DIC, Darjeeling. In order to create local markets for the products of co-operatives and other private entrepreneurs, DIC every year arranges the exhibition of their products.

Needless to say, DIC could do much better and help establish the small scale' and cottage industries in a more productive manner, if some extra care and initiative were taken. The entire hill area has enough potential among the women. They can be used as efficient knitters, weavers and embroiders as the hill women have the inherent qualities and skills in these artistic jobs. What they need is the timely financial support, the know-how and the inspiration.

(iii) Manjusha --- It is a govt. of West Bengal undertaking that deals in the local handicrafts. Manjusha, Darjeeling is the only one branch authorised to procure the local made handicraft items. This branch is so empowered with a view

to promoting the homebased industries and the attached workers with these in Darjeeling hills. It arranges for the supply of raw materials and the marketing of the produce. With this objective in mind, it had taken the initiative of forming the cooperatives of women artisans in the locality. Since 1980, 9 such women cooperatives were formed in the rural and semi-urban areas under its direct patronage. Although Manjusha had taken the responsibility of supplying the members of these cooperatives with raw materials as well as the marketing of the handicrafts produced (for example carpets and knitwears etc.), the cooperatives have failed miserably. At present only two women cooperatives - (i) Sonada Mahila Galaicha Bunai Sahakari Samity and (ii) Bijanbari Mahila Galaicha Bunai Sahakari Samity are somehow functioning with only 6 to 8 members in each. Both these cooperatives have excess capacity and underutilised resources. Over the years, both these cooperatives are found to weave only three pieces of 6' x 3' carpets per month at the average. It is calculated that the members of these cooperatives earned hardly Rs.320 per month from carpet weaving whereas Manjusha retains nearly Rs.600 as the profit from the sale of one such carpet received from the cooperatives.²⁰

It also procures embroidery and other handicraft items from a few self-employed women of Kalimpong. Besides these, 15 women knitters from Darjeeling villages are affiliated to it. They are being supplied with the raw wool by it and they are required to work for Manjusha at various wages. The wage rate paid by Manjusha to these knitters varies from Rs.100 per kg for 4-ply wool knitted, to Rs.80 per kg for 6-ply wool knitted, to Rs.45 per kg for machine and kurshi knitting. These 15 knitters at an average knit 25 to 26 kgs of wool per month.

It is thus seen that Manjusha has not been able to expand its network to the large mass of the women artisans of Darjeeling

hills. Only a negligible section of them have been able to avail of the Manjusha Employment Generation Programme. No positive steps so far have been taken to revitalise the defunct cooperatives. It has rather been found to be interested to expand the business. As such, the objectives to mobilise the women workers of the informal sector have remained unfulfilled.

The voluntary and charitable organisations (the NGOs) in the hill areas of Darjeeling district have outplayed the govt. organisations in serving the poor, and helpless women workers of the informal sector. In many recent plan documents published by the planning commission, Govt. of India, the role of voluntary organisations in promoting rural development and in implementing the various women development programmes has been emphasised. The voluntary organisations are supposed to be potentially superior to official agencies in at least three respects. These are

(i) Their workers can be more sincerely devoted to the task of reducing the sufferings of the poor than the govt. staff.

(ii) They can have a better rapport with the rural poor than the salaried govt. employees and

(iii) Since they are not bound by rigid bureaucratic rules and procedures, they can operate with greater flexibility, they can readjust their activities quickly and continuously as they learn from experience.

The leading voluntary organisations serving the women workers of the informal sector in Darjeeling hills are:

I. The Hayden Hall Institute (HHI), Darjeeling—The HHI, a Christian motivated organisation, was established during the 60's. The record of almost three-decade services rendered by the HHI is unique in the history of the growth of the voluntary organisations in West Bengal. It has developed into a Human Development Centre with a view to attaining the goal of total,

integrated, human development at the organisational and the grass root levels to help not only women workers but all kinds of people and not just implement projects.²¹

The HHI raises funds for the purpose from abroad through the simple system of correspondence. There are private benefactors who believe in the motive behind the works of HHI but who cannot themselves become involved in such activities; they send in their contribution to the head office in Canada, which in turn is channelised through the Jesuits of North Bengal. The local resource groups like Lion's club and govt. have always come forward to give aid. Bigger social service agencies like Indo German Social Service (IGSS), GOAL, CARITAS and CRS have also been extending financial help to materialise the various welfare and developmental programmes undertaken by HHI in the hill areas of Darjeeling district.²²

Of the various programmes the HHI has undertaken over the years, functional Literacy programme is solely meant for the women artisans of the informal sector. Functional literacy of HHI implies that the programme is directed towards making the needy and backward women of the society functionally more competent by imparting them with vocational skills in weaving, knitting and embroidery. For this purpose, women's weaving co-operative society had been formed under the HHI in 1972, where the women are trained systematically. At the same time, HHI has undertaken the responsibility of marketing the handicrafts items produced by the trainee women. HHI has its own showroom in its own building at Darjeeling. The total number of beneficiaries of the functional literacy programme and the corresponding sales of their products (viz. carpets, jute bags, woolen garments etc.) over the last three year has been shown below.

Table-9. 2 : Number of Beneficiaries under Functional Literacy Programme and Gross Sales Proceeds from the Handicraft Items

Year	No. of beneficiaries in various categories				Total no.of beneficiaries	Gross sales (in Rs.)
	Carpet weaving	Cotton weaving	Machine weaving	Hand knitting		
1990-91	35	54	08	13	110	328061
1991-92	35	61	08	25	129	336922
1992-93	40	33	10	07	90	339276

Source : Hayden Hall's Annual General Reports

The artisan women are given a free meal a day and a stipulated wage too by the HHI. The organisational network of the women-oriented programmes works under the able and efficient supervision of Miss N. Dunne. She knows that unless the children of these trainee beneficiaries are looked after carefully, it is not possible for them to concentrate in their work. And accordingly, HHI has made the arrangement of "strive" and "creche" for the children of the women workers. In strive, the children ranging from 2. 5 years and above receive regular pre-school education, along montessory lines. They are served with regular meals a day and the necessary medical care. In the creche, children of working mothers of HHI ranging from a few months to 1. 5 years in age are fed, bathed and medically treated. However, for the smooth running of these "strive" and "creche", mothers of these children are required to contribute one working day per week there for their children.

HHI extends help to other organisations too. The social education department has trained its teachers at HHI and has also fallen back on the adult education section for its primers and follow up books. HHI has participated in the ICDS also at Mirik. In the weaving section, the govt. avails of all expertise of HHI

from costing to training of the rural women. Very recently, in view of the deteriorating medical services in the rural areas, it has trained a number of paramedics for the Diocesan Child Care Project. These paramedics are being sent to the interior villages for extending the medical help to the villagers, particularly for the working women mothers.

HHI has undertaken many other social welfare projects of which house building scheme for the home less, free medical services at its own clinic for the poor and the needy, old age home, income generating programmes through the formation of dairy co-operatives etc. are worth mentioning.

Another recent development towards serving the women by HHI is the formation of "Ama Samaj"²³ and "Nari Sewa Sangathan", composed of women primarily engaged in the various HHI programmes plus other women from the locality. The Ama Samaj till date has 449 members. This group is formed from a need for unity and solidarity among women and to help share common problems. On March 8, 1993, international women's day was celebrated by this organisation with the aim of creating awareness among the public and members of the community regarding the dignity of women, and of awakening the women themselves to their significant contribution to their own communities. Such an attempt was first of its kind in Darjeeling hills. The women's day has been celebrated also in 1994.

HHI also has established one "Mahila Mondal" at Phoolbari having 56 female members. The major goals of this women's group being integrated development of their community. It handles the Housing Resolving Fund of HHI and the loan grants and refunds. They gave loans upto Rs 13000 in 1992-93 which helped their members build 6 homes with the revolving seed money and interest.²⁴

Thus, HHI in Darjeeling hill areas is working mainly as

an welfare organisation giving special attention to the women. It has not yet involved itself in organising the women engaged in various self-employment jobs. But it can take a lead role to work as women's own association to fight for their rights and protect their interest as well as to raise their voices against exploitation. This has been proved by the Nari Sewa Sangathan by organising some big rallies of women in the hills. With proper direction and supervision, HHI's Nari Sewa Sangathan can be channelised to work in the model of WWF or SEWA.

II. Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre (TRSHC), Darjeeling -- Started on October 1, 1959 and registered as a charitable organisation in 1961, the sole objective of the TRSHC, Darjeeling was to provide the shelter and employment to the Tibetan refugees who came into Darjeeling after the Chinese aggression in Tibet in 1959. Started only with 4 members and a small room, today TRSHC has established itself as an important handicraft centre and the home of 650 plus refugees (including more than 300 women) taking food from a common kitchen.

The centre over the years has undertaken multifaceted activities ranging from the production of handicrafts such as famous Tibetan carpets, woolen garments, wood metals, leather items, footwears and the world famous Tibetans dolls. In all these activities more than 200 refugee women directly participate. These women are free from the hazards of housekeeping as most of the women everywhere are required to do. Moreover, the centre has a "creche" too where thirty babies of the women artisans can be looked after at a time. Three experienced baby-sitters mostly the old ladies from within the refugees are deputed in the creche. The researcher at the time of field survey for this purpose in November, 1993 found only nine children in the creche being attended. The women at the TRSHC, as a matter of fact , can devote more time in the works assigned to them.

The number of refugee women engaged in various artisan works in the centre was as follows:

Table 9.3: The Women Artisans at Various Works at TRSHC in 1993

Type of work	Number of women
Wool carding	10
Spinning	56
Carpet weaving	84
Cotton weaving	31
Knitting	08
Painting	01
Doll making	02
Composition in press	02

Source: Field Survey

These women workers are required to work for 8 hours daily. The wage payment system of TRSHC is somewhat different in the sense that these women along with others are served with one meal (i.e. lunch) daily and are given a basic pay ranging between Rs. 92 to Rs. 275 per month. The skilled weavers are paid incentive at the rate of Rs.18 per square feet of the carpet woven in addition to the basic pay. It was surprising here to note that the women workers engaged right from dyeing the yarn to the weaving of carpet or knitting of woolen garments were above 55 years in age and quite a few of them were even 70 years old or so. It apparently seemed inhuman to make such old ladies to work but Mr. Gan-dak-la, the Head Assistant of the centre, defended the centre by saying that old ladies were the expert weavers and they were retained in the work in order to keep them mentally and physically strong.

Side by side of the creation of employment opportunities for the refugee women in the centre, TRSHC runs other welfare activities which include the adult education programme, old age

home, primary education for children, shouldering the expenses of higher education for the youths of the centre. It also runs a hospital for the medical benefits of the refugees. The local people can also seek the medical benefits from the TRSHC hospital.

The production of handicrafts continues to be the main activity of the centre. The total sales during the financial year 1989-90, had reached a total of Rs 2390000 in 1992-93, more than of which represented foreign exchange earnings from export sales. To date, the centre has been exporting its handicrafts to 36 countries all over the world. The increasing fame of the products of TRSHC all over the world has automatically expanded its market and these days it takes 6 months for the centre to fulfill the order once placed.

In traditional Tibet the market for fine handicrafts was generally limited and hence master craftsmen who had long periods of apprenticeship were few. Even fewer had managed to escape from Tibet and hence for the centre, it is of utmost importance for the future of the Tibetan handicrafts that the skill and expert knowledge of the master artisans would be passed into a new generation of workers. Thus right from the start, the TRSHC laid great stress on training new workers, particularly the women. During its 35 years of existence, the centre has trained 1600 persons (both men and women) in various crafts.²⁵ The result is the growing entrepreneurship among their women in Darjeeling hills. It was observed (as discussed in the previous chapter) that the Tibetan women have proved themselves more successful entrepreneurs than the native women. This is how the TRSHC has succeeded in promoting the entrepreneurship among a selected group of women in Darjeeling hills. It should be mentioned, in this context, that TRSHC stands for their own community only and although it has played a crucial role in developing

entrepreneurial traits among the Tibetan women, it has not worked as the spokesman neither a true association of the women workers irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

III. Bikash Kendra, Kaijalay --- Bikash Kendra, a registered non-govt. organisation has started functioning at Kaijalay, in Bijanbari block of Darjeeling Sadar Subdivision since 1990. It is being sponsored by the Jesuit Society of North Bengal, a minority Christian organisation having the base at St. Joseph's School, Darjeeling. The area being agriculture based, Bikash Kendra was started with a view to helping the poor people of the area in producing cash crops like orange, ginger and other green vegetables etc. For this purpose, from the very beginning it has started with the programme of distribution of the HYV seedlings among the cultivators. During this 4-year period, the seedling distribution has received a mixed response from the local people.

The programmes of Bikash Kendra for the development of women workers of rural areas have evoked great response from the locality. Its role in mobilising the women workers of rural areas for the need of saving is quite appreciable. Kendra has deputed two sisters for this purpose at Kaijalay. Under their guidance and inspiration, so far 200 odd women workers of Bijanbari, Lodhama, Kaijalay and Rammam have opened their recurring deposit accounts in the Central Bank, Bijanbari branch. The working women members of Bikash Kendra are required to deposit Rs 2 per day at Bikash Kendra and are given the receipts and Kendra in turn takes the responsibility of depositing the collection every month in their respective accounts at Central Bank. This has kept the busy workers free from going to a distantly situated bank and the hazards of paper works in connection with the deposits. The Kendra has achieved a great success in motivating the women to set aside a part of their earning for saving.

In Kaijalay area, Kendra has started playing a key role in implementing the various employment generation programme too. The block agencies are being helped and well supported by the Kendra in implementing the schemes like DWCRA and TRYSEM. In the absence of panchayats in the DGHC areas, the role of such organisation has its typical relevance in the village based hill economy indeed. The recognition of Kendra's contribution is given through the responsibility it has been told to shoulder. Institutional credits to the women are being supplied through the Kendra. The institutional credit, previously was being granted whimsically and therefore the trickle-down effect of credit was not visible at all. But after Kendra has been involved, the channelisation of credit is being done in the proper way. And accordingly, the earnings of the women have noticeably increased in the locality.

Besides, Bikash Kendra has undertaken some other women oriented welfare programmes too. Very recently, Kendra has successfully launched the making of smokeless woven for the village kitchens. And with the co-operation from the women, it has been able to distribute nearly 50 such wovens to the housewives of the area. Keeping in mind, the need for education and entertainment of the children, Kendra had started with two "bawaldies" and a primary school at Kaijalay under its direct supervision. Altogether 80 children are getting benefits out of these. As most of the women workers in the rural informal sector are mothers, it has launched the mother and child care project. The mothers are taught how to care a child, what precautions they should take at the time of pregnancy etc. This project has become quite popular and helpful.

Father Cherian Nampeli, S. J. is the chief co-ordinator of the Kendra. During an interview in connection with this research work, he was asked about the reasons for the Kendra not

undertaking any functional literacy programme. He said that they differed from other voluntary organisations in the sense that others were basically welfare organisations; they impart training to the women but cannot take the support measures to help them establish their own enterprises. But Bikash Kendra from the very beginning has dealt in with the schemes which would directly help uplift the status of the rural people, the women in particular. As such, Kendra does not emphasize on the functional literacy programmes.

The Kendra, however, had to cross a series of hurdles before it has reached this performance at present. Being run by a Christian religious minority, it faced continued difficulties in mobilising the workers belonging to other faiths, at the beginning. Also it had to face frequent resentments from the beneficiaries. Till its establishment at Kaijalay, the loan programmes were at a mess. The needy people were neglected and those who received the institutional credit had misused it. But once Kendra stood as a mediator, between the loan receivers and the bank, the loans have been sanctioned to the needy people and encouraged them to invest in useful and productive ventures such as poultry, piggery, beekeeping etc.. The interest of the so called middlemen and moneylenders got hampered. The affected groups at times have worked against the Kendra and its workers.

But once the members have realised the importance of such an organisation, Bikash Kendra has moved steadily forward to their help. A healthy atmosphere has been created. The kendra has just taken the initiative; the area network is also very limited. It still has miles to go before it can establish itself as the saviour of the women workers of the rural informal sector in Darjeeling hills.

IV. Nari Kalyan Samiti, Kurseong - Nari Kalyan Samiti, Kurseong is the only apolitical organisation run by the women and

is devoted to the social works in the locality. The samiti was established in 1992 and at present has a membership around 300. The fund for the organisation is generally raised from the membership fee and the initial admission fee. And at times it organises lottery from which it earns something to be used for its smooth functioning. At present, each member has to contribute a monthly subscription of Rs 5 as membership fee. So far, this samiti has confined itself in the social works such as keeping the subdivisional hospital clean, giving legal protection to the poor and destitute workers in case of police harassment, raising social consciousness about the increasing drug-abuse in the society etc.. Very recently, it has decided to spread its work ward-wise at Kurseong municipality and for the purpose is organising its members to organise ward-committees. According to the secretary, Smt. Nirmala Lama such a decentralisation of the leadership would help them to function in a more effective way. In course of discussion with her, she said that they had to face varieties of obstacles and the local people had hardly stood behind them. Not only this, the members very often have to withstand the apathy and zeal from the male chauvinism too. The samiti suffers from inexperience and lack of proper guidance. The secretary admits that they would welcome any suggestion and guidance to make the samiti work for the oppressed people and the needy women workers of informal sector. The devotion and sacrifice of the members and the office -bearers of Nari Kalyan Samiti, Kurseong can be put to organise the women workers of the streets and the self-employed as well, if proper guidance and support extended to them.

V. All India Women's Conference (AIWC) – The organisation of women meant for the welfare of women workers under the patronage of congress party was started in Darjeeling in 1958. AIWC, in the hills, at a time was so active that for its smooth

functioning it constructed a 4-storied building with the facilities of a "creche", a "bawaldy", a conference hall, two classrooms for the women trainees coming in various vocational training programmes undertaken by it, a two-room flat for the instructor, a guest-room and a number of ordinary rooms in the ground floor lent out to businessmen which is still the main source of income of the association. Having endowed with such infrastructural facilities, AIWC is generally expected to render valuable services for the general welfare of a large number of poor and exploited women workers in the hill areas.

But with a handful of its members, the association is virtually non-existent. At present, its women oriented activities are restricted to the occasional cutting and tailoring training. During the last two-year period four such training programmes were conducted and altogether 120 women from various classes of the society availed of the opportunity. The researcher in 1993 November found eighteen children (below 5 years in age) of the women coolies and construction workers being looked after in the creche free of cost. One matron is appointed in the creche for the purpose. These children are given a free meal a day. Of the children put up in the creche, a few receive the pre-school education at the bawaldy. The general sanitary condition of the "creche" and "bawaldy" was found to be unsatisfactory. All other resources of the association are left unused for years.

Over the years, AIWC Darjeeling unit has suffered from the lack of leadership, lack of communication network and overall mismanagement. It is high time now to avoid politicising the welfare programmes and initiatives should be taken in the right direction to utilise the unused resources of AIWC for the benefit of the hundreds of needy women workers in the informal sector of the locality.

It is thus observed that the existing organisations have

the resources but in many cases, particularly the govt. agencies, they are not utilised properly for the purpose. The go-slow attitude of the govt. employees and the lack of the feeling have so far made many programmes meant for the women workers ineffective. The NGOs, on the other hand, with their limited resource and man power have tried to reach the women beneficiaries. What they need is the continuous support from the govt. and the cooperation from the beneficiaries themselves. The organisations of the workers themselves is also of vital importance.

9.3 : Summary

Trade union of workers engaged in informal sector is very rare in our country. As such their power to fight collectively against wage-exploitation and for better service condition is too minimum. In fact, they are at the receiving end having no real power to bargain with. To speak of the women workers in general, they are subject of easy exploitation and less recognition and many other problems even in the formal sector where they are protected by labour laws and supported by trade unions. Quite understandably their plight in the informal sector is inexplicable. In view of the acute social and economic exploitation in the informal sector, a few women's organisations in the recent past, have been set up. Among them WWF in South India and SEWA in Gujarat and Maharashtra have been able to stand firmly behind their members. The welfare activities, the institutional credit programmes and the struggles of these organisations led to the self employed women to undergo a remarkable change in their economic status . Similarly the association of women domestic servants in the Metropolitan cities in our country have played pivotal role in launching the movements advocating fair working conditions for them and have succeeded in making the maids conscious and realise that there is

dignity in what they are doing.

Needless to say the women workers of informal sector in Darjeeling hills are not so fortunate. They do not have any association of their own. A few voluntary and charitable organisation like Hayden Hall Institute, Tibetan Refugee self help centre, Bikash Kendra etc. are working in Darjeeling hills and most of them have emphasised in welfare activities. Efforts have been made to some extent to create alternative employment opportunities for women. But they have not taken any positive step to empower women in their struggles for existence and against inequality and exploitation, nor to render 'invisible' women 'visible'. GNWO - the women's wing of the GNLF party having the largest base in the hills, with a large number of women members stands for mobilising poor women for political gains; it has little time to think for the problems faced by the working women in the informal sector and the corresponding upliftment of their status in their society.

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18. ibid, p.54
19. ibid, p.50
20. For weaving a carpet, two weavers are required to work simultaneously. Six women weavers from each cooperative are found to work with 18 Kgs. of woolen yarn and 1.5 bundle of cotton yarn for producing 3 carpets of standard size a month. The price of woolen yarn is Rs.128 per kg and that of Rs.260 per bundle. Manjusha pays them Rs.85 per square feet per carpet woven. Thus for the three standard size carpets the earnings of the six members of the cooperatives comes around Rs.4590 from which the cost of raw materials Rs.2758 is deducted. Manjusha, on the other hand, sells these carpets at a rate between Rs.2000 to Rs.2200 a piece.
21. C. B. Rai and R. L. Sarkar, Developement of Human Resources in Darjeeling Hills : Case Study of the Impact of the Hayden Hall Programmes on the Weaker Sections of Population, I. I. H. E, 1986, p.6
22. ibid, p.18
23. The society of mothers, in the local language, is called the "Ama Samaj".
24. The Mahila Mondal takes loan from HHI and grants loan to its members for housebuilding and also for the purchase of cows by the Mahila Mondal Milk Cooperative. As per the annual report of HHI, 1992-93, the Mahila Mondal had taken a loan of Rs 10, 000 from HHI out of which Rs 1800 was repaid at the end of the year. For the purchase of three cows, the Mahila Mondal had taken the loan amounting Rs14500; during the year the net, income of the Mahila Mondal was Rs21000 from the milk cooperative.
25. Report of Tibetan Refugee Centre, designed and produced by Computers Unlimited, p.7

Chapter X

Concluding Remarks and Suggestions

10.1 : Concluding Remarks

This socio economic study of the women workers of the informal sector in Darjeeling hill areas in West Bengal indicates that there exists three categories of the urban informal activities.

(i) One type corresponds to the section which is attached or tied to the formal sector. This includes the dependent units such as the knitting, tailoring and weaving which are generally found to be the feeder units for the formal sector. The formal sector establishments subcontract to these small units who are able to produce and sell more cheaply than the formal sector sources of supply. On the other hand, these informal units depend heavily on the formal sector units for the marketing of their produce.

(ii) The second type represents the unattached units to the formal sector. This mainly constitutes the self employment units, having an independent production cum exchange system which include the petty shop owners, the street vendors and repair personnel etc..

(iii) The third category corresponds mainly to the wage sector where the labourers do sell their labour power at a relatively low wages. The examples of such activities which absorb the women workers in large numbers in exchange of wages are the domestic services, road and building construction works, carrying luggage for the tourists and others.

It has been mentioned that rural to urban migration has

greatly led to the growth of informal sector in the hill urban centres. But a deeper look at the female workers' participation has led us to restate that the rural migrants although do not have any entry restriction to any field of the informal sector, the lack of required minimum capital and the tremendous competition have made their presence less felt in the self employment units unattached to the formal sector. The rural migrants with artistic skill have rather preferred the attached to formal sector informal jobs. The full time wool knitters, individual weavers, the embroiders etc. are mostly the migrant workers. The indigenous female artisans mostly have preferred to go for these on part time basis. Both the indigenous and migrant artisans obtained the raw materials and even the instruments, in some selected cases, from the formal sector enterprises. But the prices of the finished products and the wages etc. for them are fixed by the raw material suppliers who are the buyers of their produce too. Even the govt. agency like Manjusha meant for the marketing of the finished products of these informal sector women artisans is found to pay the minimum possible prices. As a result, the artisan workers attached with formal sector enterprises have not been able to earn more than the bare subsistence level.

Again, the informal service sector, like the road and building construction, domestic service and coolie works at railway station and bus stands is crowded by the migrant female workers and have been subject to wage discrimination, excessive works and unfavourable working conditions. In spite of these, rural-urban migration is continuing which implies that the rural sector cannot offer even such subsistence earning jobs to them.

Hence the second and third categories of the informal sector works in the urban centres in Darjeeling hills are found to be exploitative in character whereas the independent informal

units are lucrative and economically viable. The independent workers in this sector are doing well in terms of earning a livelihood, but their contribution to employment is very small.

To speak in other terms, so long the informal sector units and the establishments stay away from the clutches of formal sector, they flourish but once these establishments are directly or indirectly under the control of the formal sector, they are compelled to face the hardship. Thus, it is not the linkages with the formal sector but the independence that counts for the growth of the informal sector.

Further, it is generally believed that the migrants and the local entrants in the labour market enter the informal sector with ultimate objective of securing a berth for themselves in the formal sector. But so far the women workers of the informal sector in Darjeeling hills are concerned, it has been observed that they do not have much justification in retaining such hopes. Most of the aged women workers are there in the informal sector for more than 12 to 15 years. A relative slack in the growth in the major organised sector activity during the last couple of decades seems to have drastically reduced the opportunities for such movements.

As a matter of fact a special trend seems to have set in to a certain extent. A comparison of employment status of the female workers in the beginning of the career and at present suggests a movement from the casual and the lowly paid informal jobs to that of a comparatively stable and promising independent works in the same sector. Also it was surprising to observe that more than half of the informal sector women workers do not aspire for a change. Thus this sector viewed by many researchers as 'vestibule' or 'apprenticeship' hypothesis of the informal formal sector labour interaction, is not found applicable in our study area. It has rather established as an alternative of the formal

sector works.'

In this context, it appears interesting to refer the NSSO survey report of 1992-93 about the unemployment situation in India. Contrary to the popular perception, the report states that the rate of unemployment in the country is low rather than high and has been declining since the 1970s and 1980s. Many have raised the question about the report and a few have gone to the extent of saying that the survey is faulty, misleading and baseless. But what the critics have not considered is the fast growth of informal sector activities all throughout the country. While the preponderance of self employment of women is the new development in the urban areas, movement away from agriculture and the migration of the dispossessed small peasant and landless rural poor is the upcoming feature in the rural areas. This move away from agriculture happened towards urban informal sector works and the unorganised services rather than the big factories. As such, rising rates of unemployment have not occurred,. Thus, so long one does not find how much the worker is earning or whether he/she has worked for the major part of the year, the unemployment would be declining in the wake of growing urban informal sector.

It has, however, to be admitted that the growth of the informal sector establishments in the urban areas have accentuated public nuisances, crime and other illegalities. Examples of established traders' tension from the growing competition from the informal trading, increasing police atrocities in the pretext of the illegal status of the informal sector workers and the use of even muscle power in restricting others from encroaching the sources of their earnings in our study area have been given earlier. Recent study of Sm. Ishita Mukhopadhyay about Calcutta's informal sector has highlighted the interesting fact that the communal violence of December 1992 in

Calcutta arising out of demolition of Babri Mosque at Ayodha was sparked off mainly in those selected pockets where the informal sector manufacturing units were located.¹ This negative aspect of the growing informal sector has become a matter of concern to the administration.

Keeping this fact well in mind if we consider the scope, opening and the advantages of small scale office operations as well as its labour intensity, informal sector establishments can be viewed as the last resort of the unemployed. The importance of this sector would further increase in the light of the observation that the number of job opportunities in the formal sector everywhere in our country falls short of the targets in every plan. With the massive growth of population, the problem of reserve army of the job-seekers is indeed daunting but the rate of unemployment has been kept at its limit by the continuous openings in the informal sector.

At the end, we can thus conclude that the informal sector may not have satisfied every worker it has absorbed; the workers may be lowly paid; they may be deprived of the legal status; may be subject to numerous exploitations; may be liable for increasing civic nuisances but this sector has stood as the constant source of employment to them without which they would have been thrown in a precarious state. P. A. Samuelson's famous statement seems to be very much applicable in this context. While explaining the superiority of trade situation over an autarkic situation he had in one sentence summarised it as "some trade is better than no trade". In the same line we also can summarise the importance of the informal sector as some productivity is better than no productivity, some income activity is better than no activity and some income thus earned is better than no income at all.

10.2 : Suggestions to Improve the Conditions of the Women Workers of Informal Sector

It has been observed that in Darjeeling hills employment, in any form, of poor women is indispensable for the survival of individual families as well as for the maintenance of the wider socio-economic system. The women workers of informal sector contribute substantially to the family income and in addition to it, they are largely responsible for the material and non-material needs of their children, husbands and other kin folk. But over the years, no positive efforts have been made to help and encourage them by the policy makers. The question generally arises in this connection is --- if the development of this particular section of the economic agents is to be seriously thought what efforts are to be pursued then?

Obviously, the first step is to educate them. The women workers of the informal sector should be made aware of the fact that whatever work they perform, there is dignity in it. Its not the economic hardship only when they should come out for work but to have equal status and to enjoy the equal right their spontaneous participation in economic activity is a must.

'Organising' the women workers of the informal sector is also equally important. All these workers are dispersed and work as individuals. They have to be brought together to work collectively at improving their situation. As the problems of workers in a particular activity or trade are similar they can understand their common plight. Hence, the most suitable way to 'organise' the workers is around the trade groups. A homogeneous group around a common work activity can be developed. In India, it is a common feature that most occupations are caste based. Darjeeling hills too follow the same principle. Therefore, a caste consideration also comes to the surface when 'organising' women workers around informal occupations.

Nevertheless, 'organising' is possible if issues is relevant to the workers are being tackled. The issues relevant to all the women workers of various informal occupations are sufficient raw materials, capital, tools and equipments, space to work, markets, competition from mass produced goods, remunerative prices for goods, training to procure raw materials, training in marketing, costing, accounting and taking responsibilities for one's own economic activity. If the women workers are to be helped then it is obvious that a package of inputs which deals with all the above is very much necessary. Help in one or some aspects is not sufficient. Poor self employed women need help on all fronts to be able to come out of their poverty. Help in only one or two fronts can sometimes be counterproductive because workers become disillusioned. Unfortunately this has been the general pattern so far in our study area. For instance credit to a small extent is provided to a small section of self employed women but help in procuring raw materials, ensuring availability of raw materials at reasonable prices, and help in marketing finished products are not given. The women are left to deal with the problems of their own. The competitiveness of the economy makes it very difficult for them to enter on their own and be successful. So they use credit injudiciously, expensive raw materials are purchased at retail prices, stocks of finished products pile up. This has happened in case of local handicrafts in Darjeeling hills. Sufficient cash flow is not maintained and hence the artisans have not been able to make the anticipated returns from their activities. The repayment of loan has become a burden; their credit worthiness has been affected thereby. Policy makers thus concluded that credit to the poor is not productive. These experiences make the poor women workers of the informal sector disillusioned with the efforts to help them and sometimes they stay away from receiving such helps. It is, therefore, very necessary to provide a package of inputs dealing with all fronts

of their economic activity.

Apart from the economic help, supportive services from legal aid, health care, housing, education, child care, maternity benefits, life insurances are also needed.

It has been found that quite a large number of skilled women in Darjeeling hills are absorbed in the homebased enterprises of weaving, tailoring and knitting. The potential of developing entrepreneurship in these areas although is realised, measures have not yet been effectively taken. According to the estimate of 'Shram Sakti', a national commission report, Darjeeling hills only have a wide market of woolen products worth about Rs.4 crores per annum. This market has been largely captured by the products of Ludhiana and Hosiarpur. If a proper care was taken, this prospective market can well be captured by the local women producers themselves. The artistic women of the area just require the training in right direction and the continuous supply of woolen yarn. Design technology is also another important aspect in which the knitters should be given the up-to-date knowledge.

From the point of view of the women entrepreneurs, as also of assisting agencies, more attention is required in methods like streamlining of the assistance required, coordination of procedure and evolving a better code for assistance agencies. The setting up of a single agency of govt. to look into the requirements of all the entrepreneurs who invariably are not fully conversant with various laws, formalities, regulations etc. would save a lot of botheration to both the parties.

It has also emerged that dropouts, who had a background similar to that of successful entrepreneurs, failed because of poor management. Experience has to go with good management. Skills such as technical knowledge, marketing ability etc. have to be supplemented by managerial ability. It is essential that

women entrepreneurs of informal sector who have necessary technical skill receive a good grounding in management too.

Last but not the least, incentive for mobilisation and utilisation for savings from the women workers of this sector are also of vital importance. There is no doubt about the possibility and potential of the generation of additional savings of these workers. But our observation is that in Darjeeling hills the saving habit of the women workers has not been developed although cases of some informal savings are there. These women should be motivated to save for their own betterment. And it is a fact that if steps were taken informal sector can well be made a bright source of saving too. Bangladesh Gramin Bank can be cited as example in this particular direction. It has inculcated a spirit of self-reliance among them and has set aside that time killing and complicated procedural hazards of banking business for them. It should be kept in mind that the mopping up of the hard earned savings of the poor women should be used for promoting their welfare and not for meeting the need of finance for various schemes meant for urban rich, nor for meeting the increasing deficit between the govt.'s current expenditures and revenues.

In this context, the suggestion of Prof. Arun Ghosh is also worth mentioning. He says, this savings need to be protected through avoidance of inflation.² Unless their savings are protected from inflationary effects, all measures to mobilise for savings for their own betterment may prove meaningless.

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ANNEXURE-I

Decadal Change in Distribution of Population of Darjeeling District

Sl. no.	Police Stations	1971			1981		
		Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1	SUKHIAPOKHRI	29137	29137		28975	28975	
2	PULBAZAR	41147	41147		44746	44746	
3	DARJEELING	82002	39129	42873	104371	46786	57603
4	RANGLI RANGLIOT	51825	51825		51225	51225	
5	JOREBUNGLOW	41096	41096		52029	52029	
6	KALIMPONG	102236	78806	23430	118548	89663	28885
7	GARUBATHAN	32302	32302		40178	36645	3533
8	KURSEONG	71714	55289	16245	81882	52836	29046
9	MIRIK	28519	28519		29420	29420	
10	NAXALBARI	50799	50799		81175	72467	8708
11	SILIGURI	134392	36908	97484	232610	78232	154378
12	PHANSIDEWA	71885	71885		107464	107464	
13	KHARIBARI	44723	44723		51646	51646	
TOTAL		781777	601565	180212	1024269	742116	282153

Source: Darjeeling District Census Hand book, 1981, p.10

ANNEXURE II

QUESTIONNAIRE

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Age _____
2. Caste : SC/ST/General
3. Level of Education Nil Upto Class IV
Upto Class VIII Above Class VIII
4. Marital Status Unmarried/Married/Widowed/Divorced
5. Family Status Joint/Unitary
6. Earning Status Sole/Joint
7. Place of Residence Village/Town (Name.....)
8. Place of Work Urban/Rural
9. Commuting Distance _____
10. Frequency of Visits _____
11. Mode of Transportation
to work Bus/Train/Others
12. Cost of Transportation _____

B. FAMILY PROFILE

13. Number of Dependents in family _____ 14. Family Income _____
(average per month)
15. Contribution from the respondent _____
(average per month)
16. If Married, Number of Children _____
17. School Going Children _____ 18. Employed Children _____
19. Who Cares for Minor Children
During Your absence from home ? Siblings/Relatives/Neighbours
20. Do you take any minor children
with you to work? Yes/No. Number _____

C. RESPONDENT PROFILE

21. Do you perform domestic
chores ? Yes/No. Cooking/Washing/Fuel Collection/Fetching Water

22. Do you have any regular rest day at work? Yes/No. Day _____
23. How long since you entered
the employment market? Years _____ Age at entry _____
24. Did you have any other employment
prior to this? Yes/No. (Specify.....)
25. Reason for leaving that occupation. Infrequent Work/Low earnings/
General Inconvenience/others
26. Do you have any saving? Yes/No.
27. Motivation for savings -- Family assets/personal assets/wedding
of daughters/expenses on children/capital assets
28. Have you been ideal in last six months? Yes/No. Duration _____
29. Given an opportunity,
would you switch over to a regular job? Yes/No.
30. How do you regard
your present employment? Major source of livelihood/transitional
employment
31. Why are you in employment? Economic compulsion/Income
supplementation/utilisation of ideal time.

D. CATEGORY PROFILE

(i) Domestic Service

32. How many households do you serve ?

Nature of Service : Full time/Thika/Residential

33. Total monthly earnings _____ 34. Hours of work _____
35. Nature of work : Household cleaning/Washing dishes/washing
clothes/cooking/minding the children

36. Are you provided the following by the employer ?

Refreshments/Meals/Clothes/Annual Increment/Pooja Bonus/Any Incentives.

37. How do you receive your pay? Cash/Kind/Full Saving

38. Do you think that over the years, the following changes have taken
place? Improvements in working condition Yes/No.

Improvements in pay Yes/No. Better employer-attitude Yes/No.

39. How did you secure your present employment? Own effort/fellow workers help/other.

II PETTY TRADE

40. Nature of shop/activity _____

41. Status of the shop: permanent/road-side/mobile/pukka

42. Investment breakup: in establishment _____ in stock _____

43. How was the capital raised? personal saving/family saving/private loan/institutional loan.

44. Place of purchase of stock _____ Distance _____

Frequency of visit _____

45. How many hours of work do you put daily? _____

46. Turnover:daily _____ Monthly _____ Annual _____

47. What is the main reason engaging in trade? Better earnings/independence/no other employment opportunity

III CONSTRUCTION LABOUR

48. Nature of activity _____

49. Recruitment through: Labour Sardar/Co-Worker/Own Effort

50. Nature of employment Very short term/short term/midium term

51. Do you belong to a labour gang? Yes/No.

52. Are you often idle? Yes/No. Average Length _____

53. When idle do you enage yourself in other employment ? Yes/No.

54. How long have you been in construction works? _____

55. Your earnings from the work? _____

56. Mode of payment? Daily/Weekly/Monthly

57. Do you receive any sort of coverage

against risk of accidents? Yes/No. (Specify _____)

58. What is your main reason for engaging in this work?

Better earnings/Frequent work/no other alternative employment/any other reasons.

IV ARTISAN AND ENTREPRENEUR

59. Nature of activity Knitting/Weaving/Bag making/any other

60. Investment Breakup In establishment _____ in materials _____

61. How was the capital raised? Personal savings/Family saving/Private
Loan/Institutional loan
62. Hours of work _____ 63. Productivity _____
64. Nature of marketing : Directly to consumers/to dealers
65. Helping hand : no. of children _____ | no. of adults _____
66. Average working days per annum : Less than six months/six to seven
months/eight to nine months/more than nine months
67. Reasons of discontinuity
- (a) Lack of finance
 - (b) Lack of raw materials
 - (c) Limited market
 - (d) Severe cold
 - (e) Any other reason

ANNEXURE III

Test Material for Personal Efficacy Test

INSTRUCTIONS

Ten Statements having two choices each are given below. Please choose one which reflects your correct feelings/ideas putting a tick(✓)mark.

I strongly believe that

- i)a. Most of the tragic incidents in one's life happen because of ones hard luck.
- b.Most of the tragic incidents happen due to lack of courage and effort.If proper efforts are made these can be avoided.
- ii)a.Usually, I see that whatever will be,will be.
- b.I believe that my life is in my own hands and one shapes his own life.
- iii)a.Success depends on hard work and destiny has nothing to do with it;if at all to a very small extent.
- b.It is very important to have good luck to succeed in anything.
- iv)a. Having a recommendation is very important to get a job or some work done.
 - b.Qualification and skill is very important to get a job.
- v)a.Getting help from govt. officials will depend on their mood.
 - b. Getting help from govt. officials depends on how one presents his/her case.
- vi)a. People get their due respect sooner or later.
 - b.Whatever one may do,one's personal qualifications are never respected.
- vii) a. It is not possible to be an influential leader without getting right opportunity.
 - b. Capable people do not wait for opportunities but create them and become influential leader.
- viii) a. Masses can affect the government decision.
 - b. Political power is limited in a few hands and masses cannot do anything about it.
- ix) a. Political corruption can be routed by sincere efforts.
 - b. Corruption will remain in this country whatever one may do.
- x) a. Whatever happens to me is the result of my own doings.
 - b. I feel that I do not have full control of my life

Scoring Key:

- | | | | |
|----------|---------|-----------|--------|
| i) a=1 | iv) a=1 | vii) a=1 | x) a=2 |
| b=2 | b=2 | b=2 | b=1 |
| ii) a=1 | v) a=1 | viii) a=2 | |
| b=2 | b=2 | b=1 | |
| iii) b=1 | vi) a=2 | ix) a=2 | |
| b=1 | b=1 | b=1 | |

ANNEXURE IV

Test Material For Aspiration Test

INSTRUCTION

All of us have some expectations in life. Given below are some questions, which are closely connected to your expectations. Please state, without hesitation, your aspirations in this connection.

ASPIRATIONS

a. We all want to educate our children but the level may be different. To what level would you like to educate your children?

Education Level	Son	Daughter
Primary	:	
Middle	:	
High school	:	
College/University	:	
Technical/Professional	:	
Others	:	

b. All of us earn something for our Livelihood. We also try to increase our incomes in many ways. As compared to earlier years, to what extent would you like to increase your income in coming years?

In one year	Rs.
In two years	Rs.
In three years	Rs.

c. In next three years what are the household items that you like to purchase?

Year	Item	Value
Next two years		
Next three years		

d.you must have been thinking and trying to expand your sources of income. Please mention, to what extent, you wish to expand your source of income.

Year	Expected Increase
Next one year	
Next two years	
Next three years	

Scoring Key

i) Education of son: iii) Increase in income in 3 years

Level	Score	Below Rs. 1000	1000- 2000	2000- 3000	3000 and above
High school	34	score 38	50	56	64
Graduate	48				
High school profession	57				
Graduate profession	69	Upto Rs. 5000-	10,000-	15,000-	
		5000	10,000	15,000	20,000

ii) Education of daughter:

No. education	29	score 36	50	54	59
---------------	----	----------	----	----	----

Possible:

middle	34	Highest score - 269
High school	49	Lowest score - 137
graduate	52	Standard score - 171
Middle professional	58	
High professional	67	
Graduate professional	77	

ANNEXURE V

Test Material for Risk Taking Willingness

INSTRUCTION

Given below are few situations, which most of us go through in our life. Putting yourself in the particular situation, please state your decision from the choices given.

a. Mr. X has a job which gives him a income of Rs. 400 per month. A friend advises him to take up a business, which does not require much investment. If the business does well he will earn Rs. 1000 per month, if it fails he would not earn anything and would also forego his job.

- i) If chances of failure are 80% should Mr. X take up the business -- yes/no.
- ii) If chances of failure are 60%, should Mr. X take up the business - yes/no
- iii) If chances of failure are 40% should Mr X take up the business - yes/no
- iv) If chances of failure are 20% should Mr. X take up the business- yes/no

b. Mr. Y is a potter who earns Rs. 2400 every year by making 200 pots per month. He does not makes pots in July because of monsoon. Once he gets an order to supply 4000 pots to a farm in the month of July. If he is able to meet the order, he would earn a total income of Rs.3000 in that month. This is possible, only if he replaces his old wheel with a new ball-bearing potters wheel. The cost of the wheel is Rs. 2000 for which he can get a loan. With the new wheel, he could earn extra income and can also repay the loan and thus own the wheel. This would also increase his earnings. But there is a risk in it. If it rains at the time of putting the mud pot in the furnace, the pots will be completely destroyed. In that case it will be difficult to repay the loan and business could also fail.

- i) If the chances of rains destroying pots are 80% should Mr. Y take the order. — yes/no
- ii) If the chances of rains destroying pots are 60% should Mr. Y take up the order —yes/no
- iii) If the chances of rain destroying the pots are 40% should Mr. Y take up the order—yes/no
- iv) If the chances of rain destroying the pots are 20%, should Mr.Y take up the order – yes/no

Scoring Key

Risk Level	Score
0-20	1
20-40	2
40-60	3
60-80	4
Maximum possible score –	8
Minimum possible score –	4

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