

On the basis of the constructive comment made by an examiner of the thesis in order to improving thesis quality for final approval of publication an attempt has been undertaken to follow up the recommendations of the expert in the field. Meanwhile the thesis has been enriched and duly shaped into five research papers which have been accepted for independent publication in *Social Change (Forth Coming)*, *Social Action*, *Indian Journal of Labour Economics (Forth Coming)*, *The Indian Journal of Economics and Journal of Social Sciences*.

List of Publications

- Sarkar,S: "Extending Social Security to the Informal Sector in India", *Social Change(Forth Coming)*.
- Sarkar, S: " Theorizing in Informal Sector: Concept and Context", *Social Action (Accepted)*.
- Sarkar,S: "Female Labour Participation Bidi Rolling", *Indian Journal of Labour Economics(Forth Coming)*.
- Sarkar,S: "In Search of Predictive Model of Human Resource Valuation in the Informal Sector", *The Indian Journal of Economics(Accepted)*.
- Sarkar,S: * "Women as Paid Domestic Workers", *Journal of Social Sciences (Accepted)*.

[* Primary draft of the paper has been published in an edited book entitled "*Women, Empowerment and Employment*" from Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2004]

Re: Comment 1

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The references cited at the end of the each chapter have been ignored.

Re: Comment 2

Over last few decades, there has been tremendous growth in the number of female employed in India with majority of them being associated with the informal sector of the economy. Since the number of female workers in the informal sector in India has gone up considerably, it implies that employment opportunity for them in the formal sector have become restricted. On account of easy availability of low paid labour in the informal sector, there is every possibility of more and more economic activity in the sector. The jobs in the informal sector are more or less irregular and wage rates for female workers are comparatively lower than their male counterpart with equal qualification. There exist a fair number of girl child labourers who are not able to take the facilities of growing educational opportunities. The socio-economic study of female domestic and bidi workers in Cooch Behar district discloses that limited opportunities of immobility for female workers has forced to accept them low paying jobs like domestic service and bidi making, which are exclusively suitable for women workers. As far as the higher paying jobs in the formal sector are concerned, education and training is indispensable. Since most of the female workers in the informal sector are illiterate and lack proper vocational training among them, they are under compulsion to stay in the informal sector.

The women in the informal sector in Cooch Behar district are on the rise. They are mainly engaged in bidi rolling, mat weaving, construction and bricks kiln industry and certainly in domestic services. Although the district Cooch Behar is predominantly an agricultural region and most of the women workers of the district are engaged in agricultural pursuits, a good number of women workers are also engaged in bidi rolling and domestic servant. Since the informal activities of the women workers in the district help in the process of employment generation, there is an urgent need to organise such women workers to get their proper right in the informal sector.

As the number of female workers in the informal sector in India has gone up considerably, it implies employment opportunities for them in the formal sector have become restricted. On account of easy availability of low paid labour in the informal sector, there is every possibility of

more and more economic activities in this sector. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this study to trace out the problems associated with the process of women participation as well as the manner in which workingwomen's lives in the informal sector in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal are being affected by the process of economic development and social change.

The objectives of the study are to examine the level of women labour participation in domestic services and bidi rolling. An effort has been made to reveal the socio-economic conditions of paid domestic servants and bidi workers in the district. It has also been tried to examine the general nature of working conditions of women domestic and bidi workers, their special problems and how they combine wage work with domestic responsibilities in the district. A comparative analysis of female domestic and bidi workers has been made for the decision making purpose. Further the study is extended to prescribe some policy implications in regard to informal sector activities, namely, domestic services and bidi rolling.

The study of women at work in the informal sector with special reference to female domestic and bidi workers in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal is an empirical one. The study is based on survey research technique. The various informations on female domestic and bidi workers in the informal sector have been gathered from extensive survey of field investigation. Since, working women in informal sector of Cooch Behar district constitutes a heterogeneous group, stratified sampling method has been undertaken while collecting the sample workers. Besides these primary data few secondary sources namely, various issues of district census handbooks and other public documents have been used.

This study, however, is not free from its limitations. The data is based on the respondents estimate and memory recall. Since, most of the women workers in informal sector are illiterate, their inability to provide precise information put in trouble in generalising the case. Some respondents were unwilling to disclose their exact earning and they had no idea regarding their expenditure patterns. These limitations may have affected the survey result to some extent. Despite these limitations, the researcher has taken utmost care in analysing the problems.

An effort has been undertaken to evaluate the socio-economic status of female paid domestic help and bidi workers. Moreover, a comparative analysis of these two types of workers has been attempted for decision-making and policy formulation purpose. An economic model has been built up for valuation of human capital in the informal sector taking into account of present value of future earnings of the female workers. The study is divided into six chapters as follows:

Chapter – I, which is introductory in nature and presents concept of informal sector, concept basic characteristics of informal sector, formal–informal sector dichotomy, social security and minimum wages for informal sector, classification of workers in informal sector, legislative measures for welfare of the workers in informal sector, women employment in informal sector, review of related literature, objective of the study as well as methodology and limitation of study.

Chapter – II, “Working Women in the Informal Sector: The District Profile” gives a brief overview of Cooch Behar district, its salient features and women labour participation in Cooch Behar district.

Chapter – III, “Women as Domestic Workers” highlights on paid vs. unpaid domestic work, problems faced by domestic workers at work place, work and wages of domestic workers, domestic workers’ organisation in India, findings of the survey of field investigation and few typical case studies of female domestic workers.

Chapter – IV, “Female Labour Participation in Bidi Rolling” focuses on economic significance of bidi industry, bidi industry - a major employer, bidi workers in India, work and wages of bidi labourers, findings of the survey of field investigation and few typical case studies of female bidi workers.

Chapter – V, “A Comparative Study of Female Domestic and Bidi Workers” examines the general comparative status of domestic and bidi workers, specific comparative status of domestic and bidi workers, regression analysis of earnings of domestic and bidi workers and economic model for valuation of domestic and bidi workers.

Chapter – VI, “Concluding Remarks and Suggestions” presents the summary of conclusions and recommendations based on the study.

Re: Comment 3

On the basis of the report of an examiner of the thesis the following table shows page number of the thesis, errors committed and duly rectified.

Page number of the thesis	Errors committed	Errors rectified
i	Concept of informational sector	Concept of informal sector
ii	Objective of study	Objectives of study
4	comprises with	comprises of
9	shows	show
9	exit If	exists if
10	the	in
39	point no.2.4 unprinted in the thesis	2.4 Summary
40	unpaid domestic works	unpaid domestic work
56	176993.62	176(93.62)
65&66	leaved	left
76(b)	Cooch Behar Sadar	Cooch Behar
87	also	to
95	E	e
99	Although,	Although
107	have been joined	have been joining
110	Buster,X and Chany,E (1985)	Buster,X and Chany,E.M (1985)
120	ILO (1998/1999)	ILO (1999)

Re: Comment 4

It has been observed that the main concentration of female domestic workers in Cooch Behar district was in the middle age group. The survey reveals that the demand of the young adults as domestic help was on the rise among the employers. It has been found that few of the sample domestic servant immigrated from Bangladesh. The general educational level of female domestic workers was very low and a few of them had education beyond the primary level. In most of the cases, the domestic maids after getting married continue to stay in the labour market and they were married to person who also works in informal sector. The separated and widow domestic workers had been deprived of on account of either remarriage of their husband or mental torture by other family members respectively. The majority of the domestic workers preferred to work as thika maid than full time or residential workers. However, a good number of employers preferred to appoint adolescents maids on the assumption that they are easily directed and motivated for household work. It is further observed that while the thika and full time workers lived in nearby locality, most of the residential maids migrated from different regions of North Bengal. So far as the recruitment procedures of the domestic workers are concerned, they had been appointed either through employer's own effort or through worker's own effort. The study discloses that worker's own effort and fellow worker's effort together constituted a major percentage than other mode of recruitment. There were two types of domestic maid identified from the survey. One group of workers started working for income supplementation while other group worked to earn their livelihood. Economic compulsion was the main reason behind taking the job as domestic servant. The workers were found to come from nearby village or location to commute daily to work place. Many workers had to travel on foot to reach work place. Most of the domestic maids were aware of their child education. It has been found that domestic maids did not want their children to engage in labour force and they always wanted to educate their children. It is observed that apart from the employer's sundry household tasks, maids had to do a lot of task for their own families and majorities of the household task were to be carried out by the maid herself in their own house. The study disclose that domestic maids were often tortured

by their respective husband for more earning as well as irregular attention to children and other family work. It is found that some workers had to do allied jobs in the employer's house such as daily marketing, ration drawing and even childcare activities with a minimal additional cash wages. Most of the female domestic workers contributed their earning to their household and a few workers were very much concerned about the potentiality of saving.

Besides, it has been found that the main concentration of female bidi workers was also in middle age group. There were to some extent child labour in bidi making. The old female bidi workers did not take participation in bidi rolling because of their eyesight problems. As far as the general education level is concerned, it is interestingly noted that young adults had more educational status than the other women. The majority of child workers were school goers too. The study reveals that among the workers, presence of maiden, widow and separated women was relatively low. Most of the female bidi workers hailed from the families having more than three members. It has been identified that principal employer or contractor recruited bidi workers. However, the demand for contract employment was on the rise because of limited opportunity to work as factory labour. It is further observed that economic compulsion was the main reason of the workers behind taking up bidi rolling as their livelihood. A few workers, however, entered the informal labour force for passing out idle time. Most of the child labourers engaged as bidi roller for meeting their educational expenses. It is found that female bidi workers had been suffering from health diseases like tuberculosis, asthma and eyesight problem. The workers had to manage simultaneously their own household task. They had to combine bidi rolling with their domestic responsibility. Apart from the large bulk of sundry task, some workers had to help their husband in agricultural activities too. The workers contributed a portion of their earning to the family. In most of the cases the status of the female bidi workers was similar as that of their husbands. The factory workers had to save compulsory to provident fund and some workers saved certain amount of money at their home. No worker in the study was found who had savings account in post office or bank.

The comparative study of female domestic and bidi workers shows that earnings and mean weekly hours of work of bidi workers is more than the domestic workers. There was statistically significant difference between the mean hourly wage rates of female domestic and bidi workers.

It is found that mean hourly wages rate for bidi workers was almost twice than the mean hourly wage rate for the domestic workers. Moreover, the difference between the highest and lowest hourly wage rates was largest in case of bidi workers. The regression analysis of earnings of the domestic and bidi workers shows that R^2 was always less than 15 per cent in both cases. It is found that the educational level, age and caste factors do not affect the earnings of the workers in the informal sector. An economic model for valuation of human resource in the informal sector taking into account of present value of future earnings of the workers reveals that the present value of domestic workers is Rs. 84,27,044, while the present value of bidi workers is Rs.89,54,854. The model will obviously help in formulation of minimum wages for the workers in the sector. The benefit of the model is that it will serve purpose by identifying human resource as valuable asset of the society, which facilitate in prevention of misuse and under use of human resource in the informal sector.

The female domestic workers are subject to variety of exploitations starting from low wages to maltreatment and sexual harassment by the employer. Besides, the bidi workers are deprived of the minimum wages and the benefits of welfare provisions in the existing legislation. However, it is observed that female domestic and bidi workers in Cooch Behar district have been joined the workforce mainly because of economic compulsion. They can never earn enough to become financially independent due to their minimum cash wages. With a view to improving the working conditions of female domestic and bidi workers the following suggestions are recommended.

[A] Recommendations for Female Domestic Workers

Firstly, fixing wages to keep pace with other paid work in the informal sector.

Secondly, providing support service like day meal to all domestic workers irrespective of their nature of work.

Thirdly, providing the workers some degree of flexibility in working hours.

Fourthly, minimising degree of command over the workers by the employers and imposing acceptable workload on the workers.

Fifthly, building up proper understanding between workers and employers over worker's failure to attend at work.

Sixthly, setting up formal domestic workers unions, which can look after their interests.

Seventhly, providing equitable extra wages for extra workload due to arrival of employer's guests on holidays and festivals.

Eighthly, providing annual incremental benefit to all workers.

Ninthly, providing minimum leave facilities to the workers.

Lastly, passing out legislations for the welfare of the workers.

[B] Recommendations for Female Bidi Workers

Firstly, imparting proper health education among the workers.

Secondly, providing minimum wages as fixed by the government.

Thirdly, providing standardised raw material and sufficient quantity not falling short of actual requirement by the employers.

Fourthly, implementing statutory social security schemes like Provident Fund and Insurance for all workers.

Fifthly, prohibiting rejection of bidis within normal limit.

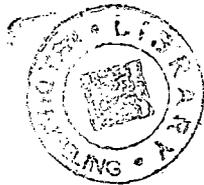
Sixthly, imparting vocational education for child bidi labour.

Seventhly, minimising gulf gap of wage rate between direct workers and contract workers.

Eighthly, making aware of different bidi welfare schemes and location of health dispensaries at far-off places among the workers.

Ninthly, relaxing welfare provisions in the existing legislation for workers to avail full access to the benefits of schemes.

Lastly, encouraging saving potentialities amongst the workers.



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15/6/2004
Signature of the Candidate

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