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## UNIT 8 UNEMPLOYMENT

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### 8.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit deals with the problems of unemployment in India. After reading this unit you should be able to:

- examine the problems in creating employment;
- discuss and define unemployment;
- analyse the nature and extent of unemployment among the educated and its social consequences;
- explain the schemes introduced for tackling unemployment problems in India; and
- narrate the constitutional provisions of right to work and its implications.

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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This is the first unit of this Block. In this unit we shall be discussing the various aspects of unemployment problems in India. This unit begins with a discussion on the socio-economic context of the problem of unemployment, problems of identifying unemployment and present an estimate of this problem in India. The various types of unemployment viz. the seasonal, disguised etc. are discussed here. The problems of educated unemployment are discussed in great

length in this unit. Various government policies related to unemployment are also discussed in this unit. Lastly we discussed the concept of right to work and its implications. Now let us begin with the socio-economic context of this problem in India.

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## **8.2 UNEMPLOYMENT: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXTS AND DIMENSIONS**

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The problem of finding employment for all able-bodied persons willing to work is common to all countries, developed as well as developing. Every country wants to provide employment to all its citizens. However, this is not always possible. Even developed countries like England and the USA face problems of unemployment. There are a large number of people who want to work but are unable to get jobs. In developing countries the problem is more serious because the number of unemployed are usually very large. Hence it may not be possible for the state to provide employment for these people in a short period of time. Moreover, a developing nation, being poorer than the developed countries, may not be in a position to give employment to a large number of people within the given economic infrastructure.

### **8.2.1 The Socio-economic Context**

In India unemployment is a major problem. There are already a large number of unemployed people in the country. At the same time, because of the high rate of population growth, there are more and more people seeking employment. Therefore we find all major programmes to provide for employment for all fall short of expectations.

Employment basically means work. If more people work there will be greater production of goods and services in society. Similarly, in a society where there are a large section of people ready to work, but only few people get the opportunity to work, there will be less production. Greater production of goods and services ensures that these are available to a larger number of people. Hence more and more people are able to improve their standard of living. Employment, therefore should not be viewed merely as a means of livelihood for people. It also means that if more people are employed in a country, the more prosperous it is: because it is able to produce more and provide more goods and services to the people as a whole.

Therefore we can argue that the best way for a country to develop is to provide employment for all. Only then can there be economic advancement. This is of course true but it is easier said than done. Developing countries face several constraints and the most important is the lack of resources. For example, a person can work either in agriculture or in industry. For work in agriculture you require land. But this is not enough. You also require implements (plough, bullocks, tractor etc.). Therefore, for work on land you require all these investments, which we call capital. Similarly for work in industry factories have to be set up. Most developing countries do not have the resources to invest in creating employment in this manner. They have either to get loans or aid from developed countries or they have to plan their resources in such a way that the maximum number of people get the benefits with minimum investment. We shall discuss these problems in a later section in this unit.

Unemployment has several dimensions. The most evident is that a person who does not have work has no income and he is unable to support himself/herself and his/her family. Moreover, as we have discussed earlier, unemployment means that the country is unable to use the labour power of a large number of people and this results in low production. These are mainly economic consequences of unemployment. There are also serious social consequences of unemployment which makes it not only an economic problem but a social problem. For a person unemployment means that he is unable to meet his basic needs. He has to depend on others for these. This makes him insecure or frustrated. Such people can take resort to anti-social activities in order to get some income. We will discuss these issues in another section of this unit. However, before we proceed any further let us first try to understand what do we mean by unemployment. We will see that there are various types of unemployment and it is not easy to identify them.

### 8.2.2 Problems of Identifying Unemployment

For many of us the notion of unemployment is one of those who do not have a job or, are paid no salary. This is partly correct but not wholly. Such a notion would apply largely to the educated people who are not able to find work or to those in urban areas who come to seek employment. We will leave out a large section of people, in fact the majority, who are engaged in agriculture and who may not be paid wages. For example, a person cultivating a small piece of land which he owns is also employed, though he is not paid a wage. He is more known as self-employed in agriculture. Similarly there are vast number of people in rural and urban area who do not get wages for the work they do. These are farmers, artisans, petty shop owners, small and big industrialists, taxi drivers, mechanics etc. These people are also regarded as being employed. All these people as well as those drawing salaries are regarded as being “gainfully employed” because they get some material rewards (in cash or kind) for the work they do. Those who are not gainfully employed are unemployed.

The next problem is of identifying the unemployed. This is not an easy task. Normally in our country we regard those people who are between the ages 15 and 58 as being “economically active”. In other words these people have the potential of being gainfully employed. Therefore those who are not gainfully employed in this age group are unemployed. This supposition will again not be fully correct. There could be a large number of people in this age group who do not wish to seek employment. They could be students or people who can depend on other people’s earnings and they do not wish to be employed. Till recently women were considered in this category since a large section of women (married women mainly) do household work. However, in recent years, this has been considered as economic activities. The Census of 1991 and 2001 have taken this into consideration.

### 8.2.3 Estimating Unemployment

Assessing the extent of unemployment is a very important, but difficult task. The government needs this information so that it can formulate the plans to ensure that maximum people find some employment. It is also necessary to assess where employment is needed. For this we have to assess the situation in urban and in rural areas, among various sections of the population, namely,

male, female, agricultural workers, industrial workers, educated people and illiterates etc.

The number of unemployed persons has increased tremendously in India since Independence. In 1983 the number of unemployed in Indian was 21.76 million. In 1999-2000 there absolute number has increased to 26.58 million. However, the rate of unemployment had decreased over the year from 8.30% to 7.32% (Planning Commission of India 2002). However a very recent estimate shows that the unemployment rate in India is to the extent of 9%. The past and present scenario of employment and unemployment and their state wise variations are shown in table no. 1 & 2

**Table 1 : Past and Present Macro-scenario on Employment and Unemployment (CDS basis)**

(person years)

	(Million)			Growth per annum (%)	
	1983	1993-94	1999-2000	1983 to 1993-94	1993-94 to 1999-2000
<b>All India</b>					
Population	718.20	894.01	1003.97	2.00	1.95
Labour Force	261.33	335.97	363.33	2.43	1.31
Workforce	239.57	315.84	336.75	2.70	1.07
Unemployment rate (%)	(8.30)	(5.99)	(7.32)		
No. of Unemployed	21.76	20.13	26.58	-0.08	4.74
<b>Rural</b>					
Population	546.61	658.83	727.50	1.79	1.67
Labour Force	204.18	255.38	270.39	2.15	0.96
Work Force	187.92	241.04	250.89	2.40	0.67
Unemployment rate (%)	(7.96)	(5.61)	(7.21)		
No. of Unemployed	16.26	14.34	19.50	-1.19	5.26
<b>Urban</b>					
Population	171.59	234.98	276.47	3.04	2.74
Labour Force	57.15	80.60	92.95	3.33	2.40
Work Force	51.64	74.80	85.84	3.59	2.32
Unemployment rate (%)	(9.64)	(7.19)	(7.65)		
No. of Unemployed	5.51	5.80	7.11	0.49	3.45

Source : Planning Commission 2002.

Table 2 : Employment Scenario in States

Unemployment

(CDS Basis)

Sl. No.	Selected States	Employment ('000) 1999-00	Employment growth) 1993-94 to 1999-00 (% p.a)	Unemployment rate		Employment elasticity 1993-94 to 1999-00	GDP growth (% per annum) 1993-94 to 1999-00
				1999-00 (%)	1993-94 (%)		
1.	Andra Pradesh	30614	0.35	8.03	6.69	0.067	5.2
2	Assam	7647	1.99	8.03	8.03	0.737	2.7
3	Bihar	30355	1.59	7.32	6.34	0.353	4.5
4	Gujarat	18545	2.31	4.55	5.70	0.316	7.3
5	Haryana	5982	2.43	4.77	6.51	0.420	5.8
6	Himachal Pradesh	2371	0.37	2.96	1.80	0.052	7.1
7	Karnataka	20333	1.43	4.57	4.94	0.188	7.6
8	Kerala	8902	0.07	20.97	15.51	0.013	5.5
9	Madhya Pradesh	28725	1.28	4.45	3.56	0.272	4.7
10	Maharashtra	34979	1.25	7.16	5.09	0.216	5.8
11	Orissa	11928	1.05	7.34	7.30	0.262	4.0
12	Punjab	8013	1.96	4.03	3.10	0.426	4.6
13	Rajasthan	19930	0.73	3.13	1.31	0.104	7.0
14	Tamil Nadu	23143	0.37	11.78	11.41	0.052	7.1
15	Uttar Pradesh	49387	1.02	4.08	3.45	0.185	5.5
16	West Bengal	22656	0.41	14.99	10.06	0.056	7.3
<b>All India</b>		<b>336736</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>7.32</b>	<b>5.99</b>	<b>0.160</b>	<b>6.7</b>

Source : Planning Commission 2002.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- i) Why is higher level of employment necessary for the country? Answer in about six lines

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- ii) Tick whether the given statements are true or false:

i) Employment means having a permanent job. True/False

ii) Those performing gainful economic activities are employed. True/False

iii) Unemployment is much lower in urban areas as compared to rural areas. True/False

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## 8.3 TYPES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

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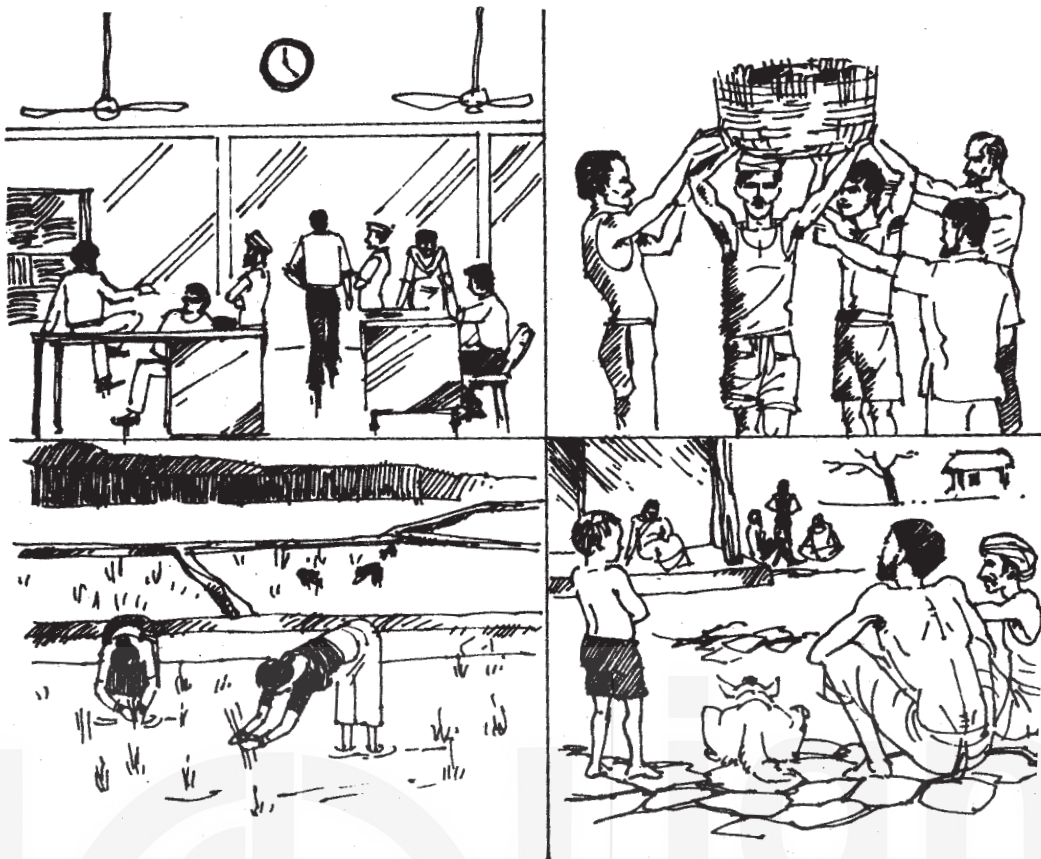
We have seen so far that though employment is a serious problem it is not always easy to identify. The figures on unemployment quoted in the previous section show what is actually known as visible unemployment. There are other types of unemployment which are not very visible. A person can be employed but he may be actually unemployed. How is this possible? Let us try and find out. Hence we shall be discussing the typology of unemployment to understand this phenomenon.

### 8.3.1 Seasonal Unemployment

Normally when we talk of employed people we mean those who have work throughout the year. But this may not be possible for all. In agriculture, work is seasonal even though agricultural activities are performed throughout the year. During the peak agricultural seasons (when the crop is ready for harvesting) more people are required for work. Similarly in the sowing, weeding and transplantation period more labour is required. Employment therefore increases at this time. In fact we will find that there is hardly any unemployment in rural areas during these peak agricultural seasons. However, once these seasons are over the agricultural workers, especially those who do not own land or whose land is not sufficient to meet their basic requirements (these are landless labourers and marginal farmers respectively), remain unemployed. This type of unemployment is known as seasonal unemployment. This also means that the persons who get seasonal employment are unemployed for the rest of the year. If these workers move away from the villages in search of employment elsewhere then there will not be sufficient people to work during the season and this will lower productivity. Hence it is necessary to find work during the season and this will lower productivity. Seasonal employment is most common in agriculture but it can be found in industries as well. There are some industries, such as tea, sugar, jute etc., which are agro-based and they too employ people during the peak seasons of their operation. Seasonal employment results in large scale migration of the agricultural labourers from agriculturally backward regions to that of the developed regions.

### 8.3.2 Disguised Unemployment

There are also instances where we find too many people working when so many are not required. In agriculture we may find that all members of the family work. It is possible that 3-4 people can do a given work in the farm, but we find that the whole family of say 10 people doing the job. This may be because the excess people are not able to find employment elsewhere, so rather than remain unemployed they prefer to do the work along with others. This is known as disguised unemployment. This occurs when more than the necessary number of people are employed for the specified work. Disguised unemployment is found in agriculture because of the lack of employment opportunities elsewhere. Similarly disguised unemployment can be found in industry and offices as well. It is not uncommon to find a lot of staff in some offices who have very little or no work to do. In some factories also we find that many more people than required are employed. We may think that given the present situation of high unemployment, there is nothing wrong if more people are employed. However, just as employing too few people for the job



Types of Unemployment

reduces productivity, employing too many also has the same effect. Understaffed government offices may be inefficient as the staff cannot cope up with the given work load. Similarly overstaffed offices can also be inefficient because there may be overlap of work because the same work is done by many people.

In agriculture disguised unemployment means that the excess workers are being paid or they are taking a share of the agricultural products without actually helping to increase production. With the result the surplus viz. the amount remaining after those involved in actual production take their share, is reduced. For example, 10 people are required to work on a piece of land which will yield, say around 100 quintals of grain. The requirements of these 10 will be met by 50 quintals of grain. Now if instead of 10 we have 15 people working on the same land and they produce around 100 quintals of grain the requirements of the 15 will be 50% more than that of 10 i.e. 75 quintals. Hence only 25 quintals will be surplus whereas in the earlier situation 50 quintals was surplus.

In industry if more people than necessary are employed then the wage bill will increase and the profits of the unit will be lower. This will also mean that the industrial unit will have less resources to reinvest in improving production (e.g. new machinery, better raw materials etc.). Therefore disguised unemployment or surplus employment may look attractive in the short-run as a means of providing more employment, but in the long run it can become a cause for concern.

We can thus see that the problem of unemployment has several dimensions. First of all we have to identify who the unemployed are. This as we have seen occurs at two levels. Those who do not have gainful employment and who are

seeking it. The last is the active factor for determining the unemployed as there may be people who are not gainfully employed but they may not be seeking employment for various reasons. Disguised unemployment and seasonal employment are two such instances. Let us now turn our attention to another problem of unemployment which affects most of us, namely, educated unemployment.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

- i) Seasonal employment is:
  - a) found only in agriculture
  - b) found only in industry
  - c) most common in agriculture but it can be found in the industries as well.
- ii) We find disguised employment where:
  - a) less people are working when many are required
  - b) too many people are working when so many are not required
  - c) people are employed as per the requirements.

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## **8.4 EDUCATED UNEMPLOYED**

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The problem of educated unemployed is serious in our country. There are a large number of young educated people who are unable to find employment or even if some of them do they are engaged in work which require less qualifications. This means that these people accept work which does not give them the income which persons with similar qualifications get elsewhere. For example a person holding a Ph.D degree works as a lower division clerk in an office, or a highly trained engineer working as a sales assistant in a shop. We find though the overall picture of employment in India has shown an improvement, the situation among the educated unemployed has remained the same.

### **8.4.1 Extent of Unemployment**

There has been enormous increase in the rate of unemployment among the educated in India. The number of graduate unemployed increased from 9 lakhs in 1965 to 5.6 million in 1977 with an annual growth rate of 21%. During 1980-88 there has been an annual growth rate of 23% of the graduate unemployed. The number is much larger for matriculate, higher secondary, and undergraduates. However, one has to take into account that many of these people may not be looking for employment as they would be engaged in higher studies. It seems strange that in a country like India where only a fraction of its population has had college education there should be difficulty in finding employment for these people. Let us try and find out the reasons.

The recent data available from the 939 employment exchanges in the country indicate that as on September 2002, the number of job seekers registered with the employment exchange (all of whom are not necessarily unemployed) was to the order 4.16 crore out of which, approximately 70% are educated (10<sup>th</sup> standard and above). The number of women job seekers was of the order of 1.08 crores (26% of the total job seekers). The maximum number of job seekers waiting for employment were in West Bengal (63.6 lakh), while minimum were



in the union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli (0.06 lakh) and in the state of Arunachal Pradesh (0.2 lakh). The placement was maximum in Gujarat. (Indiabudget.nic.in).

Growth in education is linked with economic development. As a country develops it requires larger number of educated people to meet its requirements for running the administration, for work in industry at different levels. As the services sector (also known as the tertiary sector) expands, and the requirement for educated, trained personal also increases. Graduates are required for work in offices of these various organisations. Moreover the teaching profession expands as there is a greater number of schools and colleges. Education therefore contributes to production as it supplies the requisite manpower. However, problems arise mainly because of the slowing down of economic growth that results in the surplus supply of the trained/educated manpower. This results in a situation where there is educational development but the growth in the economy does not keep pace with it. This results in unemployment among the educated.

There is also lacunae with the education system in contemporary India. Our education system is not producing the required manpower as per the need of our society. Thus it is producing a large number of educated manpower whose knowledge and skill are not fully used at the present juncture of the transition of the society. They have remained as surplus educated manpower, unemployable and unemployed. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) pointed that there is a wide gap between the contemporary education system and practical need of the nation at present.

#### **8.4.2 Consequences of Educated Unemployment**

The social consequences of the educated unemployed are quite serious. We will find that people with superior qualifications are doing jobs which could be done by less qualified people. This results in under-utilisation of one's capacity. We can find graduate engineers doing jobs which could be performed by diploma holders. Similarly there may be clerks and typists with post-graduate qualifications where perhaps matriculates could do the work. This is because people with lesser qualifications (matriculates) are unable to find jobs so they go for higher education with the hope that they will be in a better position to qualify for the same jobs. We therefore find that there are over qualified job seekers. This ultimately leads to the devaluation of education. An eminent educationist, A.R.Kamat, sums up the situation: "Education here is not so much an investment in human capital as a quest for a credential which will yield preference to its holder over those who do not possess it".

Apart from this, the educated unemployed become more frustrated than the uneducated unemployed because their aspirations are higher. An uneducated unemployed person may be willing to do any type of manual work but a graduate would not be willing to do this even if such work is freely available. In fact doing a job which is not suitable for one's qualification is not only frustrating but it is also a waste of national resources. An engineer working as a clerk because he is unable to find a job in his profession will make him frustrated. In addition it also means that the investment made in making him an engineer has been wasted. Similarly a graduate working as a coolie or as a taxi-driver does so in most cases not because he prefers the work but because he has no other option. This makes him feel frustrated. It also means that the resources

spent on his education has been wasted because one does not need such high qualifications for these jobs.

As mentioned earlier, unemployment makes the person feel insecure. He may out of frustration take to anti-social activities. Many thieves, pickpockets, smugglers, drug traffickers etc. take up these activities because they are unable to find gainful employment. What is worse is that once they are in these professions it is very difficult for them to take up respectable work later even if it is available. They have been branded as anti-socials and no employer would like to offer them jobs.



Social Consequences of Unemployment

Moreover the existence of a large number of unemployed in any country can challenge the stability of the government. Not all the unemployed take to crime as an alternative means of livelihood. In fact the vast majority of them search for legitimate work. If they do not get work they become frustrated. Their families too are unhappy. This means that the dissatisfaction of not having work is not confined to only the unemployed but to many more people. If there is large-scale unemployment, this may lead to the accumulation of discontent against the government. This discontent usually manifests in the form of uninstitutionalised action and mass mobilisation. This is why we find in our country that any government or political party which wants to be in the government makes eradication of unemployment as one of the main planks of its programmes. At the same time the government tries to start schemes which are employment oriented and also provides some aid to the unemployed in order to contain the discontent of the people.

The increase in educated unemployed is therefore a threat to the harmonious working of the economic system and to the political system. The social impact of educated unemployed results in deviant behaviour. As mentioned earlier,

educated people have higher ambitions for work and rightly so. If these are not fulfilled they may take to drugs, crime etc. The drug problem among the youth in our country is largely due to the bleak employment prospects. The unemployed youth are frustrated and they take recourse to drugs or alcohol to overcome their frustrations. Even the students when they find that jobs will not be available for them when they pass out try to overcome their depression through narcotics and drinks.

The frustrations of unemployed youth can also lead to terrorism. The highly educated unemployed have anger against society for their state of affairs. They feel that if this system cannot meet their aspirations for getting proper jobs it should be destroyed. This leads them to take to organised violence against the state. Terrorism in Assam and in many other parts of the country is largely a result of the large number of educated unemployed youth in these states, among other factors. Though Punjab is the most developed state and Assam one of the more economically backward states both have the common problem of a large number of educated unemployed youth. Punjab is agriculturally the most developed. This has led to spread higher education among its youth. However its urban-industrial sector and the educated are unable to find suitable jobs.

Therefore the need to provide proper jobs to the educated is not just an economic problem. It is also a social problem which perhaps is more dangerous than the economic dimension of waste of resources.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- i) Explain in five sentences how growth in education is necessary for economic development. Answer in about six lines.

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- ii) Show how unemployment is linked with anti-social activities. Answer in about six lines.

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**8.5 GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON UNEMPLOYMENT**

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We have seen how unemployment is a severe restraint in our economy and society. In order to overcome some of the problems created by unemployment,

the government has tried to formulate some programmes. These are directed towards creating avenues for gainful employment for the unemployed.

There are a number of programmes for counteracting unemployment. It is neither possible nor realistic to have only one scheme because, as we have seen, there are different types of unemployment. We have educated unemployment, unemployed among women, people in rural areas who are unable to find secured work and so on. The features of each of these sectors are different and hence each requires a separate scheme. Let us examine some of these schemes.

### **8.5.1 Schemes for Educated Unemployed**

There are mainly two approaches to help the educated unemployed. Some states such as West Bengal, Kerala etc. provide stipends for unemployed for a limited period. In most cases the minimum qualification is matriculation. The amount varies from Rs.100 to Rs.200 per month for three years. It is expected that persons availing of this scheme will be able to find employment within this period.

The other scheme is aimed at promoting self-employment among unemployed graduates. This is known as the Graduate Employment Programme. Here the government provides loans to graduates to start small industries or business with the help of the District Industries Centre. Preference is given to groups of graduates (3-5) who come together with a viable scheme. One can find a large number of them in the transport sector. The state government usually gives them priority in allotting route permits and license to set up industries. Unemployed engineers, both graduates and diploma holders, are encouraged to set up small industries or take up civil contract work after they form cooperatives. They are able to get loans at low rates of interest and they are given priority in getting government contracts. Various training centers have also been open by the government to promote the entrepreneurship and self-employment among the youth.

### **8.5.2 Schemes for Rural Areas**

The educated are not the only ones who face the problem of unemployment in the urban areas. There are large numbers of people in the rural areas who do not have a high level of education and who are unemployed. There are two main schemes for tackling this problem. These are the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY). Under these schemes the government creates public works programmes such as road building, construction, land reclamation, irrigation work etc. which provide employment to the rural poor. The advantages of such schemes are that firstly they are located in or near the villages of the unemployed so that they do not have to migrate out of their villages to seek work. Secondly they help overcome the problem of disguised unemployment and seasonal unemployment. The excess workers in agriculture can be drawn out and given work in these schemes.

There is another scheme for rural youth known as Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment (TRYSEM). This operates in selected development blocks. It imparts skills to rural youth so that they can start employment generating activities. These include weaving, training as mechanics, fitters etc.

### 8.5.3 Schemes for Women

Apart from the above schemes which cover both males and females, there are schemes which are directed mainly towards women. These schemes attempt to provide self-employment to women through home-based work. The Khadi and Village Industries Corporation (KVIC) provides various schemes for this purpose. These include spinning and weaving, making papads, agarbattis and other consumer products. The raw material is supplied to the women and they make the final products in their homes. The KVIC pays them their labour costs and markets the products. These schemes help increase the family income of the rural poor.

#### Activity 1

Interview a self-employed youth of your area. Try to find out the problems faced by him or her in starting his/her activities. Also try to find out the reasons for their being opting for self-employment. Prepare a note of around 20 lines and if, possible, exchange it with your co learners in the Study Centre.

## 8.6 RIGHT TO WORK AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The growing rate of unemployment in our country is a serious problem which has been the focus of government policy. In order to ensure that government takes this up seriously it has been argued that the right to work should be included as a fundamental right to work for its citizens. The Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution however are the guidelines on which government policies should be formulated. They do not have legal backing for implementation. Hence if the right to work is made a fundamental right then every government will be forced to take measures which ensure that people get work. What exactly is meant by right work? Essentially it means that every adult citizen should have the right to do physical labour for eight hours a day, at the minimum wages. It does not mean that every citizen has a right to government employment. Nor does it mean that a person must be provided employment of his/her choice. In other words the right to work is like an employment guarantee scheme. In order to achieve the right to work it will be necessary to go in for large scale rural employment. This would essentially mean that our investments have to be directed to this sector. It would mean ensuring that artisans, craftsmen and the small farmers get enough inputs in the form of credit and raw materials so that they do not have to leave their work in the villages and join the unskilled unemployed in the cities. This will help reduce urban unemployment. In order to achieve this goal the infrastructure in the rural areas has to be improved. There has to be irrigation facilities so that there is water for land cultivation. The communication network has to be built up, roads have to be constructed and transport improved so that the farmers and the artisans can get a wider market for their product.

#### Box 1

##### Constitutional Provisions for Right to Work

The Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution speak of the right to work for Indian citizens. Article 30 reads “The state shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing – (a) that the citizens men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.”

Article 41 especially speaks of the “Right to Work, to education, and to public assistance in certain cases” It reads: “The state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in case of unemployment.”

Other facilities have to be improved as well. People can work hard and produce more only if they are healthy. Therefore health facilities and proper nutrition has to be ensured. Moreover the vast section of illiterates can be made to learn new skills only if their illiteracy is removed. Hence education and schooling facilities must be expanded to cover the entire population.

These are some of the requirements for ensuring that all able bodied people get work. To achieve this it requires not only ore investment in the rural sector but also a change in the orientation of our planning. Perhaps this is why most governments promise to take steps to ensure the right to work but do not translate this into reality.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- i) Right to work is included in the:
  - a) Directive Principles of the State Policy
  - b) Ninth Schedule of the Constitution
  - c) Article 370 of the Constitution
  - d) Article 356 of the Constitution
- ii) Right to work means every citizen has the right to:
  - a) government employment
  - b) non-government employment
  - c) semi-government employment
  - d) do physical labour eight hours a day at the minimum wage.

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### 8.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have covered various aspects relating to unemployment in our country. We have first of all discussed the meaning of unemployment and its dimensions. We have tried to identify the unemployed on this basis. This has led us to define unemployment and then discuss it in all the aspects, namely, visible, invisible, seasonal etc., and its consequences.

We have also discussed at length the problem of educated unemployment and why it is so common in our country. The social consequences of unemployment have also been discussed. We have seen that there are over-qualified job seekers which results in a wastage of resources. Educated unemployment causes frustration and frequently leads to anti-social activities.

We have examined some of the schemes initiated by the government to overcome unemployment. There are separate schemes for the educated, for the unemployed rural poor and for women. Lastly, we have also examined the meanings and implications of right to work in Indian context.

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## 8.8 KEY WORDS

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- Disguised unemployment** : a situation in which more than the optimal (required) number of people are employed to undertake certain tasks. Hence the excess people are actually unemployed as they are not doing required work though they may be paid.
- Educated unemployed** : in most cases (unless notified otherwise) a person who has finished schooling (metric) and is on the look out for employment is regarded as educated unemployed. The important period here is that the person must be actively seeking a job, because there will be a large number of cases where matriculates may not be interested in being employed as they will be engaged in higher education.
- Seasonal employment** : a situation in which employment opportunities exist during some parts of the year but in regular annual cycles. In other words employment is available during the some few months every year. This happens mainly in agriculture.

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## 8.9 FURTHER READINGS

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**Behari, B.** 1983, *Unemployment, Technology and Rural Poverty*, Vicaes Publishing House: New Delhi.

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## 8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) Employment basically means work. If more people work there will be greater production of goods and services in society. The greater production of goods and services ensures that these are available to a larger number of people. It will help improve the standard of living. The country will also be more and more prosperous.
- ii) a) False  
b) True  
c) False

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) c)  
b)

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) Growth in education is linked with economic development. As a country develops it requires larger number of educated man power to meet its requirements for running the administration, work in the industry etc.

**Structure in Transition – II**

The service sector also expands and the requirement for the educated trained man power also increases. Hence education contributes to the growing needs.

- ii) Unemployment makes the person feel insecure. He may out of frustration take resort to various anti-social activities. Many thieves, pickpockets, smugglers, drug traffickers etc. take up these activities because they are unable to find gainful employment. They may also be involved in violence.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- i) a)
- ii) d)



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## **UNIT 9 LABOUR : INDUSTRIAL**

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### **Structure**

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Industry and Industrial Labour
  - 9.2.1 Features of Industrial Labour
  - 9.2.2 Industrial Labour in India
- 9.3 Labour in the Organised and Unorganised Sectors
  - 9.3.1 Organised Sector
  - 9.3.2 Unorganised Sector
  - 9.3.3 Linkages Between Organised and Unorganised Sectors
- 9.4 Labour Welfare Measures in India
  - 9.4.1 Responsibility of the State and Labour Laws
  - 9.4.2 Regulation at Work and Social Security in the Organised Sector
  - 9.4.3 Labour Welfare and Women Workers in the Organised Sector
  - 9.4.4 Labour Welfare in Unorganised Sector
- 9.5 Labour Unrest
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  - 9.5.2 Forms of Labour Unrest
- 9.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.7 Key Words
- 9.8 Further Readings
- 9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### **9.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This unit discusses the various problems of industrial labour in India. After going through this unit you should be able to:

- discuss the features of industrial labour and the process of their emergence in India;
- explain the major problems of the industrial labour working both in the organised and unorganised sectors;
- describe the various aspects of labour welfare measures; and
- examine the nature and forms of labour unrest in India.

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### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In this block, as stated in the objectives we shall be discussing the various problems of industrial labour in India. In Unit 26 of ESO-04 we discussed various dimensions of urban working class in India. Since that unit is directly related to our present discussion you may like to refer that unit as and when it is required.

In this unit we begin with a discussion on the important features of the industrial working class and the processes of their emergence in India. Various important

problems faced by the workers in the organised and unorganised industrial sectors are discussed at great length in this unit. We have also explained the linkages between organised and unorganised sectors. Labour laws are an important aspect of the labour welfare in India. We shall discuss this aspect in reference to industrial labour in general and women industrial labour in particular. We will also discuss the trade union activities and the forms of labour unrests in India.

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## **9.2 INDUSTRY AND INDUSTRIAL LABOUR**

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Before we discuss the major processes related to the emergence of industrial labour force in India let us begin with the basic features of the industrial labour force in general.

### **9.2.1 Features of Industrial Labour**

The term industry is normally associated with the use of machine technology. In industrial societies production is largely done through machines rather than solely through the physical labour of human beings. Another characteristic of industrial societies is the marketing of human labour. This means that labour can be bought and sold. In real terms we can translate this as, people sell their labour and are paid wages in return. The worker here enjoys two types of freedom. Firstly the freedom to work or not to work and secondly freedom to work where he/she wants to work. In reality of course the worker may not be in a position to exercise either of these freedom. If he/she does not work he/she will starve. Moreover he/she can exercise his/her choice of working where he/she wants to only if jobs are available.

The above types of freedom may be notional but this system can be contested with the earlier feudal and slave societies. The slave had no rights of his own. He had to work for his master irrespective of his will to do so. In the feudal system the tenant worked on the land of his landlord. He could not leave his landlord to work elsewhere even if the terms and conditions were better. It is in this sense that industrial worker enjoys comparatively greater freedom. Apart from this we can see in the present times that industrial employment offers better prospects than employment in agriculture. Workers in large factories or offices get good wages, job security and other facilities. But not all those who leave their homes in their villages to find work in industries are able to find such jobs. In fact an overwhelmingly large section is able to find only low paid jobs where the work is tougher than in the better-paid jobs. Therefore in industry we find two sector. These are the organised and the unorganised sectors. The organised sector consists of workers in the larger factories and establishments where workers are employed following laid-down procedures and their terms and conditions of work are well defined by the laws of the land. These include all services under the government (central and state), local bodies, public sector undertakings and factories using power and employing at least 10 workers or those without power and employing at least 20 workers. The unorganised sector consists of casual and contract workers, workers in small industries and the self-employed ventures. (e.g. petty shopkeepers, skilled artisans such as carpenters, mechanics etc. who are not employed in factories but work on their own, unskilled manual labour such as porters, home based workers etc.). In this sector usually no laid-down procedures or laws are

followed/required to be followed while employing workers up to certain numbers.

## 9.2.2 Industrial Labour in India

In Unit 26 of ESO-04 we discussed the emergence of urban industrial working class in India. There we mentioned that the urban working class was a product of the eighteenth century Industrial Revolution in Europe. India was one of the colonies of England at that time and she served to quicken the process of Industrial Revolution of her master-country. The imperialist rulers plundered the natural resources of India to maximize their industrial production. The prolonged colonial administration and intensified exploitation reduced a large section of Indian people to miserable impoverished mass. Their rule amounted to destruction of self-sufficient village community, traditional village and cottage industries, displacement of rural artisans and craftsmen and migration of a section of impoverished rural people to the urban areas.

In India the early phase of industrialisation started in the 1850s which coincided with the emergence of industrial working class. Cotton and jute mills and mines gradually flourished in various parts of the country. Between the two world wars there was a phenomenal increase in the demands of factory products in India. However, the British government made no serious efforts to foster the growth of capital goods industries. It was only after Independence that the Government of India made conscious and deliberate efforts for industrialisation through its successive Five Year Plans. Between 1960 and 1965 the rate of growth of employment in the factories was 6.6% only. However in 1970 the factory employment absorbed only 2% of the labour force. In India since 1951 there has been a marginal shift of workers in favour of the industrial and recently the services sector. The following table will elaborate such a shift.

**Table: Sectoral employment growth (CDS basis)**

Sector	Employment (in million)				Annual growth (%)			
	1983	1987-88	1993-94	1999-2000	1983 to 1987-88	1987 to 1993-94	1983 to 1993-94	1993-94 to 1999-2000
<b>Agriculture</b>	151.35	163.82	190.72	190.94	1.77	2.57	2.23	0.02
<b>Industry</b>								
Mining & quarrying	1.74	2.40	2.54	2.26	7.35	1.00	3.68	-1.91
Manufacturing	27.69	32.53	35.00	40.79	3.64	1.23	2.26	2.58
Electricity, gas and water supply	0.83	0.94	1.43	1.15	2.87	7.19	5.31	-3.55
Construction	7.17	11.98	11.02	14.95	12.08	-1.38	4.18	5.21
<b>Services</b>								
Trade, hotels and restaurant	18.17	22.53	26.88	37.54	4.89	2.99	3.80	5.72
Transport, storage and communication	6.99	8.05	9.88	13.65	3.21	3.46	3.35	5.53

Financial, insurance, real estate and business services	2.10	2.59	3.37	4.62	4.72	4.50	4.60	5.40
Community, social and personal services	23.52	27.55	34.98	30.84	3.57	4.06	3.85	-2.08
<b>All sectors</b>	<b>239.57</b>	<b>272.39</b>	<b>315.84</b>	<b>336.75</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.67</b>	<b>1.07</b>

Source : NSSO-Different rounds.

Website : indiabudget.nic.in

**Activity 1**

Try to interview 10 to 12 industrial or agricultural or plantation labourers. Collect information on the terms and conditions of their employment. Now compare and contrast your findings with the feature of the industrial labourers as described in section 9.2.1. If possible exchange your note with your colearners at the Study Centre.

## 9.3 LABOUR IN THE ORGANISED AND UNORGANISED SECTORS

Our industrial sector may broadly be categorised under two broad headings: organised or formal sector and the unorganised or informal sector. There are different sets of norms and conditions of work for these two sectors.

### 9.3.1 Organised Sector

Workers who are employed in the organised sector enjoy some privileges which make them different from those in the unorganised sector. These workers enjoy permanent employment. Their jobs cannot be terminated by the whims of their employer. Once a worker is permanent he has certain rights and privileges. His/her employer can terminate his/her employment only on legal grounds (i.e. if he/she has violated the laws governing his/her employment). The privileges which the worker enjoys are granted to him/her by law and not merely by the good-will or charity of his/her employer.

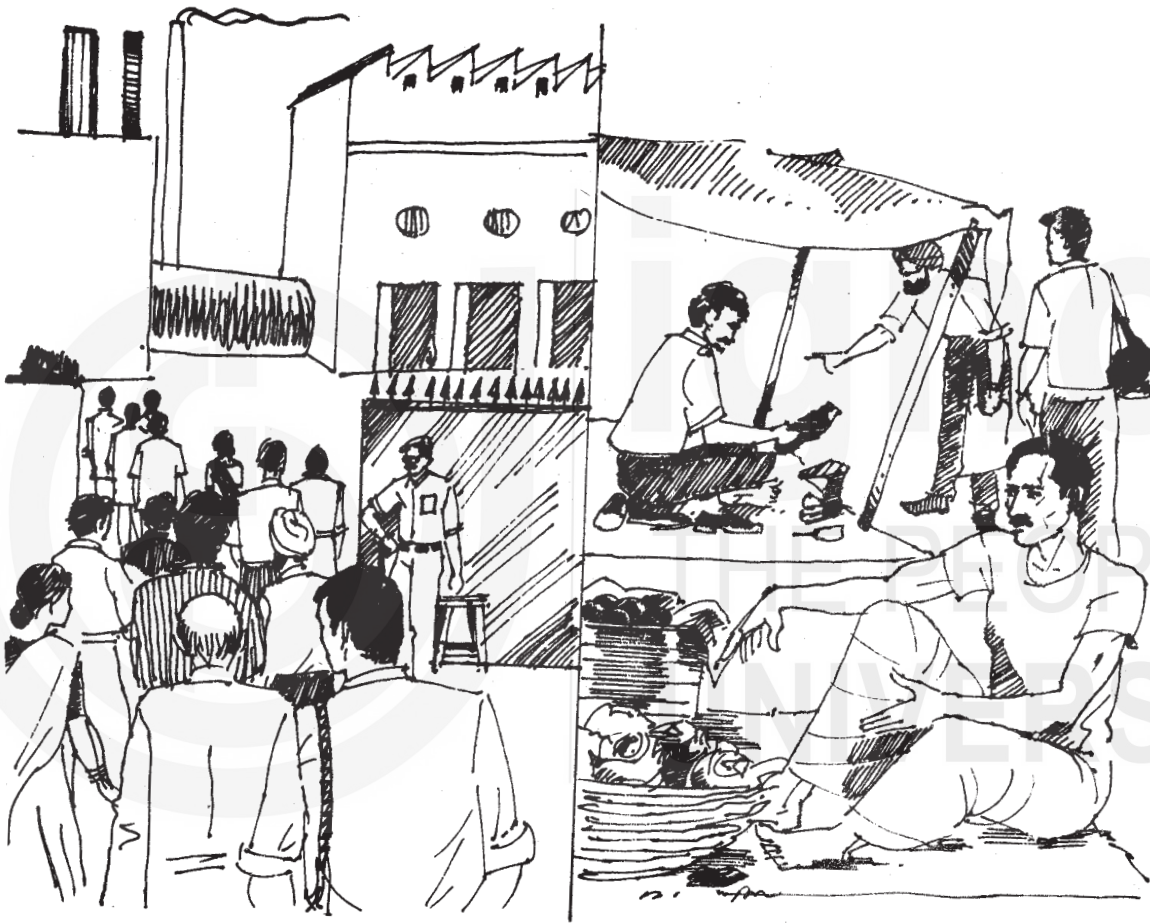
#### i) Protective Laws

There are a number of laws governing work in the organised sector. Two of the most important laws in this respect are the Factories Act of 1948 and the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947. The Factories Act in fact defines the organised sector (as mentioned above). Any factory coming under the scope of the Act has to abide by certain rules governing regulation of working hours, rest, holidays, health, safety etc. For example, the Act lays down that a worker cannot work for more than 48 hours in a week and not more than 9 hours in a day. He/she has to be given a rest interval of at least half an hour after 5 hours of work. The worker is also entitled to a weekly holiday and leave with pay.

The Industrial Disputes Act provides protection to the worker in case of disputes arising from his work (e.g. The amount of wage, nature of work, termination or suspension etc.). There are a number of other Acts such as the Minimum Wages Act, Payment of Bonus Act, Provident Fund Act., Employees State Insurance Act etc. which provide protection and some facilities to the workers.

## ii) Trade Unions

Apart from getting government protection through these various Acts, the workers in the organised sector are able to form trade unions. This is a very important aspect of this sector. Trade unions unite the workers to defend their rights. They ensure that the various legal provisions are implemented. It would be difficult for workers in the organised sector to secure the rights granted to them if there were not trade unions. The government alone cannot protect the workers. The formation of trade unions is a very important aspect of this sector. We shall see while discussing the unorganised sector that even if laws are passed to protect workers they are ineffective if the workers are not able to collectively ensure their implementation.



Workers in the Organised/Unorganised Sector

### 9.3.2 Unorganised Sector

Apart from workers in small factories and establishments there are a large number of workers in the organised sector who do not enjoy the same privileges as the regular workers. These workers are employed as casual labour and contract labour. They too come in the unorganised sector. There are some problems in this sector which are reflected in the terms and conditions of employment, work security etc. of workers. Let us examine these aspects.

#### i) Casual Labourers

We have seen earlier that workers in organised sector enjoy a number of privileges. This means that the employers have to spend more, besides their

wages, for employing them. In many cases the employers try to cut down their costs by employing casual workers i.e., workers who are not permanently employed but are employed for a limited number of days. In most cases the government rules prescribing permanent employment state that a worker who has been employed for more than a certain number of days (180 in most cases) have to be treated as permanent workers. The employers try to dodge this law by breaking the service of the workers for a day or so and reemploying them again. In this way the worker is not able to complete the minimum number of days after which he/she can become permanent. The existence of casual labour in organised industry ensures that the costs are reduced. These workers are usually granted no rights, except for their minimum wages. They have very little security of employment and they can be removed from employment at any time.

ii) **Contract Labourers**

There is another category of workers who are in the organised sector but, like casual labour, are not a part of it. These are the contract labourers. The employers in this case get workers not through direct employment but through labour contractors. Here too the workers is deprived of the advantages of permanent labour, even though he/she may be performing the same type of work as a regular worker. The contract worker at times is employed by a contractor who in turn is engaged by the employer to undertake certain types of work.

iii) **Work Security of the Casual and Contract Labourers**

Casual and contract labour forms a fairly large proportion of the workforce. In several cases we can find in a factory as many casual workers number as much as the permanent ones. Therefore we can see that within the organised sector there exists an unorganised sector. The employment of these types of workers is not restricted to the private sector alone. In the public sector undertaking too they are frequently employed. The contract labour Regulation and Abolition Act lays down that such workers (contract) can be engaged only in certain types of work. However we usually find that even in the public sector the Act is openly violated and contract workers are made to work in the same manner as the regular workers, but get less wages.

The common features of the workers in the unorganised sector, whether in small scale sector or as casual and contract labour, are that they enjoy little or no job security, they get low wages and their working homes and working conditions are largely unregulated.

The unorganised sector is also known as the informal sector. The sector can in many ways be contrasted with the organised sector. The informal sector, by implication, means a sector which is not guided by rules. The industrial establishments in this sector are small in size and they employ a small number of workers. As such they do not come under the purview of the Factories Act. Hence the workers here do not get the facilities and protection given by this Act. They are however under the purview of some of the other Acts such as Minimum Wages Act, Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition Act. However, as we shall discuss later that many of these Acts remain only on paper as far as the workers are concerned. Therefore, for all practical purposes the workers here are unorganised and helpless.

#### iv) **Low Wages to Women and Child Labour**

This sector also employs a large number of women and children because they are cheaper. The employment of women in the organised sector has declined. We shall discuss some of the reasons for this in a subsequent section on labour welfare. Since the scope for female employment has reduced in the organised sector, women are to depend largely on the unorganised sector for work. Since there is little regulation in this sector it makes it easier for the employers who are unscrupulous to employ women and children for work at low wages so that the profit margin increases.

#### v) **Expansion of Low Paid Employment**

Because labour is cheap and the investment required is small, the unorganised sector has expanded rapidly. It also offers more scope for employment. Estimates show that the unorganised sector generates two-thirds of the national income. The positive contribution of the unorganised sector with regard to employment is that it is able to provide jobs to unskilled workers who would have otherwise been unemployed or in low paid and more exploited conditions as agricultural workers. In estimating the potential of this sector let us take the example of the textile industry. There are three sectors here, namely the large textile mills in the organised sector, the powerloom sector and the handloom sector. The latter two are in the unorganised sector. In terms of employment, the textile industry in Maharashtra has a little more than 2,00,000 jobs in the textile mills. The powerlooms provide over 5,00,000 jobs and the handloom sector much more. Another positive aspect of the handloom sector is that it provides jobs in the villages. On the other hand it is also a fact that the total wage bill of the 5,00,000 powerloom workers is less than the wage bill of the 2,00,000 textile mill workers. Moreover workers in the powerlooms work for as long as 10 to 12 hours a day while the textile mill workers have regulated work hours. Therefore though the unorganised sector offers more scope for employment, the conditions of its workers are a matter of serious concern for the policy planners, social workers and the academicians as well.

### **9.3.3 Linkages Between Organised and Unorganised Sectors**

We have seen so far that the organised and the unorganised sectors have distinct features which contrast with each other. This may give the impression that these sectors are independent of each other. However, there are strong links between these two sectors. In fact one can even argue that they are dependent on each other in many ways. Let us examine how this is so.

In the case of the unorganised sector which exists within the organised sector, namely contract and casual labour, it is clear that there is a strong link between the two. Contract and casual labour, as mentioned earlier, are cheaper to employ than permanent workers. The employers have fewer responsibilities towards these workers as they do not come under the purview of many of the Acts. The employers are therefore able to decrease their costs and subsequently increase their profits.

A more or less similar principle is followed in the linkages between the large (formal) sector and the small scale (informal) sector. The large factories do not manufacture all the components they require for the final product. They usually buy these from other industries which specialise in manufacturing the

needed components. Usually it is the small factories which provide these services. For example a factory manufacturing automobiles never manufactures all the parts required for making a car. It has been estimated that 60% or more of the components required are made by other manufacturers, usually in the small sector. The large factory assembles these components. In other cases, as in any large and reputable consumer goods such as shoes, garments, hosiery, etc., the entire product may be manufactured by the small sector and it is marketed under the brand name of the large sector company. This process is known as ancillarisation. The small unorganised sector factories act as ancillaries to the large company. They manufacture parts which are sold exclusively to the concerned factory. In other words the small factory has its market in the large factory and it does not seek a market elsewhere.

One can therefore see that a large factory provides scope for setting up smaller units which employ larger number of workers. For the small sector this arrangement may be beneficial because it saves them from the problem of marketing of their products as they do not have the resources to do so. In many cases the large factories give loans or momentary advances to these small industries so that they can meet the costs of production. The organised sector benefits from this arrangement because it saves the trouble of manufacturing these components at a higher cost. By buying them at low costs it is able to cut down its total production costs.

On the other hand we can argue equally strongly that the linkages between the two sectors are in effect an exploitative one. The informal sector, in this arrangement, is tied down to the formal sector and because it cannot find its own market, it has to accept the prices offered by the buyer. Since the formal sector is at an advantage, it can fix prices which are low and the informal sector too will accept it as it has no other alternative. In order to maintain their profits (which in any case may be low) they too have to cut down costs and the most effective way to do so is to reduce wages and increase workload. In this way more is produced at less cost. Therefore the organised sector exploits the unorganised sector which in turn exploits its workers. Finally, in spite of the low prices at which the components are brought the process of the food sold by the organised sector are high. Usually the cutting of costs through manufacture in the small sector only adds to the profits of the organised sector because it does not lead to lower prices. Hence even the consumers do not benefit through this method.

### Check Your Progress 1

Tick mark the correct answer.

- i) Workers in the organised sector consists of.....
  - a) all services under the government,
  - b) local bodies and big factories
  - c) factories employing 10 workers or more with power or 20 workers or more without power.
  - d) All of the above.
- ii) The workers in the unorganised sector consists of.....
  - a) casual and contract workers,
  - b) workers in the cottage and village industries.



- c) the self-employed  
 d) all of the above
- iii) The unorganised sector within the organised sector comprises
- a) permanent workers  
 b) contract and casual labourers  
 c) both of the above categories of workers  
 d) none of the above categories of workers.
- iv) State whether true or false.
- a) The Factories Act covers all factories in the country.  
 True  False
- b) The workers in the organised sector enjoy greater job security  
 True  False
- c) Workers in the unorganised sector get no legal protection  
 True  False

## 9.4 LABOUR WELFARE MEASURES IN INDIA

The above sections discuss the nature of the employment in different sectors of industry. We find that there are unequal relationships within the industry and within the labour. Let us now turn to another important aspect of labour, namely, its welfare. We will now discuss the measures which have been taken to ensure labour welfare.

### 9.4.1 Responsibility of the State and Labour Laws

In any form of employment it is the obligation of the employer to provide decent living and working conditions for their employees. When employers fail to do so the government steps in to safeguard the interests of the workers by enacting legislations. Labour laws are therefore passed mainly to ensure that the employers fulfil their obligations to their employees. India has had a history of labour laws stretching to around 150 years. However it was only after Independence that several new laws were passed by the Central and State Governments which covered a wide range of workers in different types of industries. Many of the old laws (e.g. Factories Act) were amended to make them more effective.

The change in the government's attitude towards labour was mainly because the post-Independence government took a positive stand as far as the welfare of the workers was concerned. Moreover the trade union movement developed and it pressurised the Centre and State Governments to take a positive stand regarding labour.

Merely passing laws is not enough to protect workers. It is more important to ensure that the laws are implemented. The employers are of course expected to implement the laws but they do not do in many cases. In such instances the government is expected to ensure that they are implemented. The Government at the Centre and the States have the labour department which has labour officers, assistant labour commissioners etc. who have been entrusted with the

task of ensuring the implementation of the Laws. The employer can be prosecuted in a court of law if he/she is found violating the laws. However in spite of various efforts, Government finds it difficult to perform its task efficiently. This is mainly because factories are widespread and large in size and the government machinery is not large enough to cover all cases. There is another important organisation i.e. the trade union which tries to ensure that the laws are implemented. The trade union organisation mainly tries to protect the interests of the workers. In doing so it tries to ensure that the laws are implemented.

Since labour is in the Concurrent list of the Constitution of India, both the Central and State Governments have the right to pass laws for protection of the workers. There are a large body of legislation on this matter. We have mentioned some of the more significant ones earlier which cover the organised sector as well as the unorganised sector.

### 9.4.2 Regulation of Work and Social Security in Organised Sector

We can divide these legislations into two groups, one dealing with the regulation of work and the other dealing with social security. In the first group we can place the Acts such as Factories Act, Industrial Disputes Act, Minimum Wages Act, Shops and Establishment Act, Workmen’s Compensation Act, Contract Labour Regulation and Equal Remuneration Act and so on. Acts such as Payment of Bonus Act, Employees provident Fund Act, Employees Family Pension Scheme, Employees State Insurance Act, Payment of Gratuity Act and other fall in the second category. There are other Acts too which cover workers in specific industries such as the Plantation Labour Act, Mines Act, Motor Transport Worker’s Act etc.

**Box 1**

**Workmen’s Compensation Act, 1923**

This act provides for payment of compensation to workmen and their dependents in case of injury by accident including certain occupational diseases arising out of and in the course of employment and resulting in disablement or death. The Act applies to railway servants and persons employed in any such capacity as is specified in Schedule II of this Act. The Schedule II includes persons employed in factories, mines, plantations, mechanically—propelled vehicles, construction works and certain hazardous occupations. Minimum rate of compensation for permanent disablement and death have been fixed at Rs.24,000 and 20,000 respectively. Maximum amount for death and permanent total disablement can go up to Rs.90,000 and Rs.1,14,000 respectively depending on the wage of worker.

These Acts ensure various facilities and protection to the workers and they embrace all aspects of the workers lives. Acts such as the Factories Act, Industrial Disputes Act, Workmen’s Compensation Act, Minimum Wages Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Shops and Establishment Act, Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition Act are effective at the work place. They protect the workers against high handed oppressive actions of the employers. The other Acts provide security to workers outside their place of work. For example the Employees State Insurance Act provides for medical facilities to the workers and is based on a nominal contribution made by the employer and the employee. The Payment of Gratuity Act ensures that a worker gets an amount of money on retirement. The pension Scheme and the Provident Fund Act are designed to help the workers financially on their retirement.

We can see from the above that the industrial workers enjoy a fairly extensive measure of protection. We can contrast this with the welfare facilities to agricultural workers (discussed in the next unit). However the laws may appear attractive on paper but they come of use only if they are implemented. We have pointed this out earlier. This becomes evident when we compare workers in the organised and unorganised sectors. And when we look at women and child labour. In fact we find that it is only the worker in the organised sector who is able to enjoy some of the welfare facilities mentioned in these acts. This is because they are able to organise themselves into trade union and are able to pressurise their employers to enforce the laws. Those who are unable to do this are forced to depend on the good offices of the government or on their employers. Let us briefly look at the problems of woman in the unorganised sector.

### 9.4.3 Labour Welfare and Women Workers in the Organised Sector

We have mentioned earlier that women workers are found less and less in the organised sector. This is partly caused by the protection granted to them in this sector. There are various Acts which seek to regulate and protect women workers in the industry. The Factories Act lays down that women cannot be employed in the night shift. The Mines Act also prevent employers from making women work underground. In the case of children, the Factories Act lays down that those below the age of 14 cannot be employed in factories. Moreover above 14 who are employed cannot be given work for more than 4½ hours a day. Pregnant women are to be given four months of maternity leave with full pay for the leave period. The employers have to provide for creches at the workplace for the children of the working mothers. The Equal Remuneration Act (discussed in Unit 11) provides that there should be no discrimination between male and female workers if the nature of the work they perform is similar.

Implementation of these laws causes additional expenses for the employers. Hence they try to see that these workers are gradually removed from employment. Unfortunately the trade unions do not put up a strong resistance to this form of retrenchment. This is perhaps because the unions are male oriented and in the present situation of high unemployment they look at retrenchment of women workers as a way of providing employment to make worker in their place. Therefore with little resistance from the workers themselves, women find little employment opportunity in the organised sector and they have to seek employment in the unorganised sector.

#### Box 2

##### Abolition of Bonded Labour

The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976 abolished the bonded labour system all over the country. This Act envisages release of all bonded labourers and simultaneous liquidation of their debt. The New 20 point programme stipulated full implementation of laws abolishing bonded labour system which implies: (i) identification (ii) release, (iii) action against offenders, (iv) constitution and holding of regular meetings of vigilance committees at district and subdivisional levels... etc. With a view to supplementing efforts of state governments, a centrally sponsored scheme has been in operation since 1978-79 under which state govts. are provided central financial assistance for rehabilitation of bonded labour (India 1990 : 651).

### 9.4.4 Labour Welfare in Unorganised Sector

We have mentioned earlier that the workers in the unorganised sector are less protected legally than workers in the organised sector. There are a few Acts which cover the workers in this sector (Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Minimum Wages Act etc.). In most cases since the industrial units do not come under the purview of the Factories Act, the working conditions mostly remain unregulated. Workers also do not get facilities like provident fund, gratuity, medical facilities, compensation, or in most cases paid leave.

Even the Acts providing for some regulation in their work are not implemented. The biggest drawback that the workers face is that they rarely have trade unions. They are thus unable to ensure that the existing laws are used in their favour. The workers are thus helpless and accept the unregulated exploitative work conditions because there is no other alternative.

In looking at the situation one can see that if the workers here were able to form trade unions and if the government's supervision over the employers was more effective, they would be better off. Trade unions usually shy away from organising unorganised sector workers as it is more difficult to do so. They instead prefer to concentrate on the organised sector as the workers are easier to organise. However, we can see that the unorganised sector needs the help of trade unions more than any other sector. Hence, till this help comes, the workers' position will remain unchanged.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- i) Explain in about five lines the relationship between the small scale and the large scale sector.

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- ii) Name the two major groups of laws protecting workers.

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- iii) Describe in about five lines on the regulation of work for women workers.

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iv) Explain in about five lines the main causes for the failure to implement laws in unorganised sector.

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v) State whether true or false

a) Trade unions are more active in the unorganised sector.

True

False

b) Wage discrimination between male and female workers is banned.

True

False

c) Children of any age are allowed to work in factories.

True

False

d) The organised and unorganised sector are independent of each other.

True

False

e) The central government is solely responsible for passing labour legislation.

True

False

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## 9.5 LABOUR UNREST

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We have seen so far that workers are able to get the benefits accrued to them only when they are united in their action and are organised into trade unions. In this section we shall be discussing the importance of trade union in an industrial set-up and forms of labour unrest and protest. Let us begin with the trade union.

### 9.5.1 Trade Union

In the unit on Urban Class Structure I of ESO-04, we discussed the important facets of the growth and characteristics of urban labour movements in India. You may like to read section 26.4 of that unit. Here we shall be dealing with the importance of trade unions in solving the labour problems in India. In normal cases workers are able to put forth their demands through their trade unions to the management. These demands are discussed by the two parties (management and workers) and the management may accept some of the demands. Trade union therefore help to chanalise the grievances of the workers in an institutional manner. The management also benefits because it becomes aware of the worker’s problems through the trade union. In the absence of trade unions the management may not be aware of what these problems are. If

workers have no common platform for putting forth their demands, it is possible that they will resort to individual acts of violence. In the earlier stages of industrialisation in India and in England workers were not allowed to form trade unions. They had no means to air their grievances. At times when their grievances increased they resorted to violent acts such as beating up their supervisors or destroying machinery. Trade unions therefore helped to prevent these types of acts. At the same time they proved to be effective in protecting the workers' interest.

Labour unrest is to be viewed in the above background. It would be incorrect to say that trade unions are the cause of labour unrest. The causes can be traced to the dissatisfaction among the worker on certain issues relating to their work or work life. Trade unions give vent to this dissatisfaction and in the process they organise the workers to collectively put forth their grievances before the management. This is why labour unrest is seen more often in the organised sector than in the unorganised sector. It is not that the unorganised sector workers have less grievances. In fact they have more grievances than workers in the organised sector. However, they are unable to put forth their demands because they lack a collective forum to do so. In such a situation it is not unnatural to find workers in this sector take extreme steps by resorting to violence when they are unable to express their grievances effectively.

### **9.5.2 Forms of Labour Unrest**

Labour unrest can take different forms. The only weapon the workers have in combating the might of the employer is withdrawal from work. Similarly for the employer the most effective weapon is lock-out or suspension of the workers. Unrest is usually centred around these means. When negotiations between the workers and the employers fail or are restrained, initially the workers may express their dissatisfaction by holding demonstrations or dharnas. These actions are directed towards demonstrating their solidarity and it is expected that the management will take note of this. Usually if this does not have the necessary effect on the management workers find ways to withdraw their labour (i.e. stop or slow down work). They can resort go-slow, where they report for duty but do not complete the work allotted. In such a situation workers' wages cannot be deducted because they are not absent from work but production is nonetheless affected. Another version of the go-slow is work-to-rule. Workers claim that they will work strictly by the rules and if there is even a slight change in the work situation they refuse to work. In normal conditions workers overlook certain shortcomings. For instance, most of the public buses have some damaged parts. Their rear view mirrors may be missing or the speedmeters or fuelgauges are not functioning. Under normal conditions bus drivers drive the vehicle in spite of these lapses. In case of work-to-rule the drivers would refuse to drive the buses because they are not functioning well. This would result in slowing down work or in bringing it to a total standstill. The difference between go-slow and work-to-rule is that in the former workers deliberately slow down the pace of production but in the latter they work strictly according to the rule.

The most effective form of labour unrest is the strike. This means that the workers totally withdraw their labour by refusing to work. Production thus comes to a standstill. Normally unions resort to a strike as a final attempt at confronting the management. This is an extreme step and it may have adverse effects on the workers if it is unsuccessful. During the strike period workers



Labour Unrest

do not get their wages. This result in hardships for them. The extension of a strike depends to a large extent on how long the workers can sustain themselves without their wages. Labour unrest is therefore a part of the industrial system. It reflects the changes taking place in industrial relations. Workers no longer blindly follow the orders of the management. They are aware of their rights and they want them to be implemented. At the same time unrest is not a healthy sign for industry and it should be avoided. It causes strain in labour-management relations and it affects production. Therefore it is necessary for both sides, labour and management, to take into account the changing situation and adapt to it.

### Check Your Progress 3

Tick mark the correct statements

- i) Trade unions helps to channalise the grievances of the workers
  - a) in an unistitutional manner
  - b) in an institutional manner
  - c) both are correct
  - d) none is correct
- ii) Trade unions help
  - a) the labourers to express their dissatisfaction
  - b) the managers to be aware of workers problem
  - c) both are correct
  - d) none is correct

- iii) The only weapon the workers have in combating the might of the employer in is organised way
- a) attacking the employer
  - b) breaking the machine
  - c) withdrawal from the work
  - d) none of the above.

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## 9.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have covered various aspects of industrial labour. We have compared and contrasted the two major sectors in industry, namely, the organised and the unorganised sectors. We have found that labour in the unorganised sector is not only more in number than that in the organised sector but it is much worse off in terms of job security and work regulation. There are few laws governing work and social security and even these are not properly implemented. The main problem with workers in the unorganised informal sector is that they are usually not organised into trade unions. They cannot collectively ensure that granting them protection are enforced. They have to depend on the benevolence of their employers or on the government for this.

The two sectors are linked to each other as they depend on each other in their production process. The organised sector gets inputs and components at cheaper rates from the unorganised sector while the latter depends on the former for marketing its products. At the same time the large number of casual and contract labour in the organised sector shows that there is an unorganised sector within the organised sector. Though the two sectors are linked to each other, their relationship is not on equal basis. The unorganised sector and its labour are in a weaker position.

Finally we examined the steps taken for labour welfare and found that during the post-Independence period a number of laws granting protection and social security to the workers have been passed. Their implementation depends largely on the initiative of the government and the steps taken by the trade unions. Labour unrest is largely linked to these problems.

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## 9.7 KEY WORDS

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<b>Primary Sector</b>	: Primary sector of economy includes agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting and plantations.
<b>Secondary Sector</b>	: It includes mining, quarrying, household industry, other than household industry and construction.
<b>Tertiary Sector</b>	: It includes trade and commerce, transport, storage communication and other services.

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## 9.8 FURTHER READINGS

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Holmstrom, H. 1987. *Industry and Inequality*, Orient Longmans: Delhi.

Ramaswamy, E.A. & U. Ramaswamy 1987. *Industry and Labour*, Oxford University Press: Delhi.



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## 9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) d
- ii) d
- iii) c
- iv) a) False, b) True, c) False

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) The small scale sector manufacturers components for the large scale sector at a cheaper rate. The large scale sector benefits as it gets a market for its products.
- ii) One group deals with regulation of work. The other group deals with social security outside the work place.
- iii) Women workers in factories are not allowed to work in the night shift in factories. In mines also they are not allowed to work underground.
- iv) Firstly there is very inadequate government supervision to ensure implementation. Secondly the trade union movement is weak therefore workers cannot pressurise their employers to implement the laws.
- v) a) False, b) True, c) False, d) False, e) False.

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) b
- ii) c
- iii) c

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## **UNIT 10 LABOUR : RURAL**

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### **Structure**

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Rural Labour in the Pre-British and British Period
- 10.3 New Measures and Rural Labour in the Post-Independence Period
  - 10.3.1 Land Reforms
  - 10.3.2 Agricultural Modernisation
- 10.4 Problems of Non-Agricultural Labourers and Artisans
  - 10.4.1 Pre-Independence Period
  - 10.4.2 Post-Independence Period
- 10.5 Rural Unrest and Labour Welfare Measures
  - 10.5.1 Rural Unrests: An Over View
  - 10.5.2 Status of Labour Laws
  - 10.5.3 Welfare Programme for the Rural Poor
- 10.6 Contemporary Social Processes and Rural Labourers
  - 10.6.1 General Impact on Agricultural Labourers
  - 10.6.2 Impact on Female Labourers
- 10.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.8 Key Words
- 10.9 Further Readings
- 10.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### **10.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this unit an effort is made to introduce to you the changing status of rural labourers in the country. After reading this unit you should be able to:

- explain the situation of agricultural labour during the British rule;
- examine the changes brought about by the Indian government through various land reforms and welfare measures;
- discuss the changing status of village artisans and other non-farm workers;
- describe the nature of conflict in rural areas in the context of agrarian social structure;
- explain the policy formulations for alleviating various problems of agricultural labourers, tenants and artisans; and
- discuss the impact of broad social process on the rural labourers in general and rural female labourers in particular.

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### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In this unit we shall discuss the social problems of rural labour in India. Rural labourers constitute a distinct component of rural labour force. However, the

socio-economic position of rural labourers has not been the same over the broad historical periods. Hence, besides making a brief historical over view on the issues of the agricultural labourers, this unit also presents various dimensions of the problems of rural labourers. This unit begins with a discussion on the rural labour force in the pre-British India and the emergence of a new labour force in the British period. The problems of the rural labour of contemporary India are discussed at great length here with special reference to land reform and agricultural modernisation. The problems of non-agricultural labourers and artisans are also discussed in this unit. Rural unrest is an integral part of rural labour problems in India. An over view of the rural labour unrest in India and also the major labour laws and welfare programme for rural poor are presented in this unit. Lastly we have placed the socio-economic position of the agricultural labourers in general and female labourers in particular in the context of the broad social processes in India.

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## 10.2 RURAL LABOUR IN THE PRE-BRITISH AND BRITISH PERIOD

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India is predominantly an agrarian society with three-fourths of her population living in villages and depending mainly on agriculture and related occupations for its livelihood.

### i) Pre-British Period

Traditionally, the dominant Hindu society was divided into hierarchical caste groups. Village based occupations were linked with caste groups where mostly the upper castes owned and controlled the land. They wielded economic and political power over all low castes and tribes and acted as patrons of the social and ethical codes of the entire village. The landless groups over a period of time were reduced to serving castes at the farms or related work places of higher castes. The **jajmani** system, under which hereditary patron-client relationships were maintained, provided minimum security to the serving castes. The result was that the serving castes lived a life of want and misery. As the control of land mainly decided the productive relationship among various sections of village population, the low caste groups remained a deprived section of the rural population.

The above types of land relations were associated with the subsistence nature of agriculture with low production and subsistence economy. Each village lived almost an independent and self-sufficient life. It represented a relatively closed society governed by caste and community rules.

### ii) British Period

These traditional relationships in land experienced a steady transformation during the British rule in the country. The colonisers introduced private property in land through the new land system and thus created class of landowners, tenants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers (see Units 24 and 25 of ESO-04). Without modernising the agriculture and by appropriating the surplus land, the British rulers inflicted untold miseries particularly on the marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. There were instances of tenant-cultivators fleeing from the land once they were unable to pay the rent or clear the debt. Wherever the commercial crops were introduced, their benefits went to the middle-men

and land owners. The conditions of tenant-cultivators and agricultural labourers in prosperous agricultural zones, instead of showing any improvement, deteriorated. Thus the British rulers in India not only disturbed the age-old self-sufficient village economy but also created land and property relations which proved to be disadvantageous to the rural poor. Another set-back to the village economy was the destruction of the artisan class by colonisers by turning India into a dumping ground for the finished products manufactured in their home land.

Thus in due course of functioning of British land policy the rural society of India emerged to be highly stratified. It led to the concentration of land in the hands of a few while many of the poor peasants lost their land. Many of these poor peasants who lost lands, because of poverty etc. were resettled on these lands as sharecroppers. And those who were not resettled joined the army of agricultural labourers. Many of the displaced artisans and craftsmen also joined the army of agricultural labourers. In this period the volume of rural labourers increased enormously.

Thus prior to Independence, Indian agriculture had a large class of poor peasants and landless labourers, the two groups together forming the majority within the agricultural sector. With the deterioration of the rural economy the survival condition of these groups of people became highly precarious. They were exploited by the landowners. Indeed they were under utter insecurity and misery.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Who were the serving castes in traditional India? Write a note on their socio-economic positions in about six lines.

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- 2) Tick mark the correct answer.

In the British period the colonisers introduced

- a) community ownership on land
- b) only subsistence crop cultivation
- c) private ownership in land
- d) none of the above.

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### **10.3 NEW MEASURES AND RURAL LABOUR IN POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD**

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In this section we shall be discussing the major facets of land reform and agricultural modernisation, that have enduring impact on rural labour in India. Let us begin with land reform.

### 10.3.1 Land Reforms

When the country became independent, it was faced with the major task of removing inequality and exploitation in the agrarian socio-economic structure. The most exploited group—agricultural labourers and marginal farmers—had to be the main focus in such efforts. The land, being central to village economy, needed redistribution. In the First Five Year Plan itself the land reform policy was concretised at government level. Hence the main objectives of the land reform have been: (a) abolition of intermediaries, (b) imposition of ceiling restrictions on landholding, (c) distribution of surplus land, (d) tenancy reforms and (e) increase in agricultural production. As the first and major step, the various state governments passed acts to abolish zamindari system and redistribute surplus land to the tenants and poor peasants. Most of these acts were passed in the early 1950s. As a result of these measures the governments assumed direct responsibility for revenue administration. However, these measures met with several set-backs. The zamindari interests used every means at their disposal to prevent, delay or dilute the legislation. In some parts of the country, they managed to acquire ownership rights on vast extent of land by claiming them to be their personal estates. Large number of tenants were evicted in the process. Overall, the abolition of zamindari did not make significant impact to improve the position of share croppers and labourers. Many of the tenants, however, get ownership rights of the lands. In view of the above the land reform policies were radicalised again in early 1970s. Some of the states enacted various progressive laws. Mobilisation of rural poor was also initiated in various parts of the country for the implementation of these laws. You may see Unit 24 of ESO-04 for further details.

As regards the protection of tenant from forceful eviction by the landlord and also the transfer of ownership of land into the hands of tiller at reasonable terms the outcome was quite disappointing. In many cases, the reform resulted in forceful eviction of tenants by their landlords. This happened mainly because the landlords exercised economic and political power over their tenants. In areas where the zamindari system existed revenue collection rights were already in the hands of government. The cultivators automatically became the owners of land.

#### Box 1

##### Tenancy Reforms

It is an inseparable part of the land reform programme. You are aware that the old agrarian social structure was not very conducive to modernisation of agriculture and needed to be replaced by a more egalitarian social structure. The land reform programme has, therefore, been designed to break the old feudal socio-economic structure by abolishing the intermediary system of land tenure, distributing surplus vested lands among the rural poor and protecting the interests of the tenants. Under the tenancy reforms legislative provisions have been made in most states providing ownership rights and security of tenure to the tenants or sub-tenants or to the sharecroppers. For example, under Operation Barga (a tenancy reform programme) in West Bengal arrangements are made to give sharecroppers permanent tenurial security, 75% of the produced crops as their share, institutional facilities required to cultivate the land etc.

### 10.3.2 Agricultural Modernisation

Other than the agrarian reforms there were several factors which influenced

the rural society in the last four decades. These could be listed under two categories—institutional efforts and general changes. Under the first category, Indian government which committed itself to a democratic system, introduced several schemes for the welfare of rural poor. Particularly the landless labourers and non-farm workers. Government also invested heavily on the modernisation of agriculture. Several irrigation schemes were taken up and improved seed and technology were introduced.

The thrust of the government to change village economy was based on a technological perspective which was best reflected in the Green Revolution experiment in Indian Agriculture. India adopted modernisation of agriculture by improving technology and other inputs. The Punjab-Haryana Western U.P. experience of dramatic growth in agricultural production and rural incomes is often cited as evidence of the validity of the perspective. Such experiments have shown very encouraging results in these states and part of Andhra. The country today is in a position to produce more than 170 million tons of foodgrains.



#### Agricultural Modernisation

However, some experts are skeptical about this ‘technological thrust’ of agricultural growth. For instance, about the Punjab-Haryana success story, G. Parthasarthy, an agricultural economist, observes: “It fails to note the unique circumstances particularly the substantial public investments in irrigation in Punjab agriculture, the relatively large size of holdings and relatively low demographic pressures, etc. Technology spreads in high resource areas and on richer farms by sucking the resource of the poor areas and of the poor people.”

It is also worth noting that the higher productivity and more income to big

landlords do not necessarily bring better rewards to the farm labourers whose share in the increase is negligible as compared to the gains of landlords. High-technology cultivation reduces the intensity of labour absorption. Equally relevant is the fact that for attaining some kind of equity in the distribution of productive resources Indian government needs to allocate more and more funds for the backward regions where the condition of marginal farmers and farm labourers is pathetic. Overall, the present trends of development in agriculture shows a highly unequal distribution of resources with its benefits mainly going to some regions only. The rural or are the critical manifestation of this growing imbalance. Several experts have brought out the fact that in the early years of agricultural growth, in few prosperous zones like Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh, wages in real terms had declined over a period of time. Though the situation shows a positive change in the eighties when the real wages increased steadily, the quantum of increase particularly in backward agricultural zones is less than satisfactory.

Equally disturbing is the fact that due to more and more privatisation of land, the common property resources (bachat land, grazing grounds, forest land, etc.)—which mainly used to benefit the poor rural families—have been diminishing fast. This has deprived them of free access to fuel and grazing grounds for their cattle. (for further information see Unit 24 and 25 of ESO-04.)

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What are the major objectives of the land reform laws in India. Answer in about five lines.

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- 2) Write a note on the impact of agricultural modernisation on the rural labour in India in about five lines.

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## 10.4 PROBLEMS OF NON-AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS AND ARTISANS

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The non-agricultural labourers and artisans constitute an important segment of rural labour force since ages. However, their socio-economic position has not been uniform in nature over a period of time. Hence, let us know their position in the pre-independent and post-independent India.

### 10.4.1 Pre-Independence Period

The artisans formed the base of village and urban economy in India during the pre-colonial and early-colonial periods. All members of an artisan family were usually involved in production with specific division of labour for males, females and children. Numerous lower caste families have traditionally been engaging in various crafts and agriculture-related non-farm activities. The main among them were those of carpenter, blacksmith, potter, weaver, leather worker and basket maker. In addition to these, non-farm labourers used to perform jobs requiring special skills spread in various regions of the country—depending on the availability of particular raw materials or nature of cultivation. All these skills and activities were limited to the extent of either manufacturing articles to meet the local requirements or to provide technical services to the local population. The artisans' products usually remained out of the modern market economy—confining to the poor village consumers. Most of them worked at subsistence level of economy and usually did subsidiary jobs to supplement their earnings. Indeed the jajmani system formed the backbone of the rural society of that period. It gave them substantial socio-economic security in daily life.

In spite of many odds, village artisans and craftsmen enjoyed a reasonably good social status in the society. However, the socio-economic condition of these artisans and craftsmen deteriorated sharply with the introduction of British rule in India. Because of the import-oriented British Policy these artisans and craftsmen lost their traditional market. Many of them also lost these traditional avenues of employment. This displaced labour force was in search of alternative employment. They were extremely insecure in the rural economy. Many of them joined either the army of the agricultural labourers or migrated to the urban areas for the mainstay of their livelihood. Only those who remained in their old occupation tasted the pains of insecurity, exploitation and alienation in the society.

### 10.4.2 Post-Independence Period

The post-Independence period changed the situation further. The growth of urbanisation as a manifestation of the linkages between society and modern technology resulted in the weakening of traditional bonds of society. Equally significant was the creation of new opportunities in non-farm occupations. Many of the traditional artisans and craftsmen either migrated to urban areas for improving their incomes, or shifted from their traditional occupations to non-farm employment. This further weakened the traditional 'jajmani' system and caste linkages of occupations.

Due to the sharp increase in rural population, it is considered necessary to relieve agriculture from the pressure of excess labour. This would check decline in the land man ratios and thereby increase labour productivity in agriculture. It is also being realised that urban areas cannot absorb the growing migratory rural labour force due to the ever-growing number of job-seekers in both formal and informal sectors. Therefore, it becomes essential to promote non-agricultural employment in rural areas. Several studies show a slow but steady increase in the proportion of non-farm labourers in the total rural workforce.



**Table: Work Participation in India by Rural and Urban areas**

**Labour : Rural**

State Code	India/State /Union Territory*	Total		Total Workers (Main +Marginal)	Category of workers (Main +Marginal) with percentage to Total Workers			
		Rural	Persons		Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Workers in Household Industry	Other Workers
		Urban	Males	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	INDIA	Total	Persons	402,512,190	31.7	26.7	4.1	375
			Males	275,463,736	31.3	20.8	3.0	44.9
			Females	127,048,454	32.5	39.4	6.4	21.7
		Rural	Persons	310,655,339				
			Males	199,199,602				
			Females	111,455,737				
		Urban	Persons	91,856,851	3.2	4.7	5.1	
			Males	76,264,134	3.0	3.4	3.8	90.1
			Females	15,592,717	4.3	11.0	12.9	71.8

**Source:** Census of India 2001

Government has intimated a number of schemes through which the artisans and non-farm workers are trained in various trades or skills and are helped financially to improve their earnings. There are efforts to organise them under cooperatives so that they could be freed from the clutches of middlemen. Also, several research and development schemes have been implemented in order to raise their productivity and to make their products competitive in the market. For those non-farm labourers who are engaged in seasonal works, efforts are there to provide them gainful employment during the off-seasons. It is more and more felt that the integration of non-farm manufacturing activity with the farm activity can only create a viable economy absorbing the surplus man power in rural India. There is a need for taking up an appropriate combination of farming activities with animal husbandry, priggery, poultry, duckery and fish farming. Such an approach has taken deeper roots and is extensively practiced with substantive social and private profitability in China and in a number of South-East Asian countries.

**Activity 1**

You may have come across some artisans or craftsmen working in your neighbourhood. Collect information from them on the items produced and problems faced by them for the marketing of their products. Now based on your observation and discussion write a note in about two pages on the problems and the prospects of the artisans and craftsmen in your area. If possible, exchange your note with your colearners at the Study Centre.

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## **10.5 RURAL UNREST AND LABOUR WELFARE MEASURES**

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In this section we shall be discussing the important of rural unrest and welfare measures initiated by the government. Let us begin with an over view of the rural unrest.

### **10.5.1 Rural Unrest : An Overview**

As stated in the introductory remarks, traditionally village India remained a self-sufficient, closely maintained. Well-knit society. The prevalent hierarchy in socio-economic relations was primarily based on the caste system, with the dominant castes controlling power and acting as guardians of the serving castes. Such a static village, once in a while, experienced dissent from the peasants when it became almost impossible for them to survive against the odds such as inadequate crops and ruthless exploitation by kings, their middlemen and moneylenders. The British rule polarised the landowners against the landless groups on one hand and weakened the traditional power of caste panchayats on the other. The isolation of the peasantry from the ruling class was well manifested in repeated insurgencies by peasants. Ranjit Guha, a well known historian, has cited as many as 110 known instances of such uprisings between the period, 1783 to 1900.

In Unit 25 of Block 6, ESO-04 we talked about the important facets of rural revolt in India. In the pre-colonial period there had been numerous rural revolts against the tyranny of the rulers. You may be aware that in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the Marathas of today's Maharashtra, the Jats and Rajputs of Rajasthan, Sikhs of Punjab revolted against the Mughal rule on the issues of rack renting and allied agricultural problems and religious persecutions. The latent discontent of the poor peasantry against the colonial rule were manifested through their participation in the revolt of 1857. In the independent movement the issues of the peasantry viz. the racks renting, indebtedness, growth of poverty, decline of rural industries etc. were the major concerns of the leaders. Thus the peasant movements in Champaran (Bihar), Kheda and Bardoli (Gujarat), Oudh and other places of U.P., Bihar, Chirla and Perala in Andhra and the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha became the integral parts of the Independence Movement. The discontents of the rural labour were also manifested in vehement out burst of the radical peasant movements viz., the Tebhaga Movement 1946-47, Telangana 1948-52 and in the Naxalite Movement 1967-1971. For details you may like to go through the above mentioned Unit.

In the post-Independence period, village India has no more remained a harmonic system. Various socio-economic and political changes have created conflict of interests within the village community. Traditionally, the higher castes used

to receive obedience and marked difference from their tenants and agricultural labourers—mostly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes—but are now finding them to be ‘disobedient’ and ‘defiant’. Due to a high proportion of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribe among landless labourers, a conflict between landowners and labourers can easily turn itself into an inter-caste conflict. Such conflicts many times turn violent resulting in inhuman torture particular of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and their families. Mass murders, rapes, burning of houses and eviction of tenants from land, are the outcome of such growing intolerance among higher castes towards the serving castes.

Efforts to organise farm and non-farm labourers by voluntary social groups or political parties have resulted in their intimidation by the employers. Wherever the labourers have become conscious of their rights and try to assert themselves against injustice and exploitation, the feudal elements try to suppress this new awakening among them with increased brutality. Social oppression in its worst form is rampant in almost all parts of the country. The Scheduled Caste workers are discriminated in getting employment, their women are criminally assaulted, their holdings are destroyed and properties looted. The distressing aspect is that such oppression is often aided and abetted by public officials who are usually linked with the rural rich. This way the law sides with the powerful. Looking into the causes of such state of affairs, A.R. Desai observes..... “The genetic causes of numerous struggles in rural areas are the existing land relations whereby a handful of landlords own a sizeable land and the left out majority—the sharecroppers or labourers—live below the poverty line. Wherever there are mobilisations, the conflict is bound to occur. Many times, as the ownership of the land is on caste lines, such initiative take the shape of caste struggles”.

### 10.5.2 Status of Labour Laws

Though officially rural labourers are covered under the Minimum Wage Act of 1948, it by and large remains on paper. One often sees reports in newspapers about rural workers agitating to get the minimum wages. As compared to industrial workers, only a few labour laws exist for agricultural labourers and those also supply to a few sections of them. Leaving aside a few activities like tea plantations which have a history of the organised labourers, in majority of the categories the affected workers never get benefits under these Acts: In reality, a majority of them are not even aware of such legal measures which protect their interests. The main factors which make it difficult to organise the workers are:

- the large number of employers (land holders), dispersal of workers over a large geographical region,
- uncertainty of employment (seasonal in nature),
- rapid growth of rural population resulting in surplus man power,
- family labour substituting for the hired labour, and overall low productivity in agriculture.

There are other factors too which contribute towards their backwardness. The continuance of the caste system results in a form of patron client relationship. Here the worker feels obligated to his master who usually belongs to a higher caste. This prevents the worker from taking any independent decisions. The

various forms of social backwardness is further enforced by widespread illiteracy. This keeps the agricultural labourer backward and isolated. All these ultimately result in their loss of self confidence. They are therefore unable to organise themselves against the exploitative relationship perpetuated by their masters. However, in spite of all these limitations rural labourers of India are organised under the auspices of various peasant organisation and political parties in various parts of the country. Their organisational ability and strength have been manifested during organised mass mobilisations and peasant movements. These mobilisations are usually directed against the landlords, businessmen and the administrative apparatus of the state.

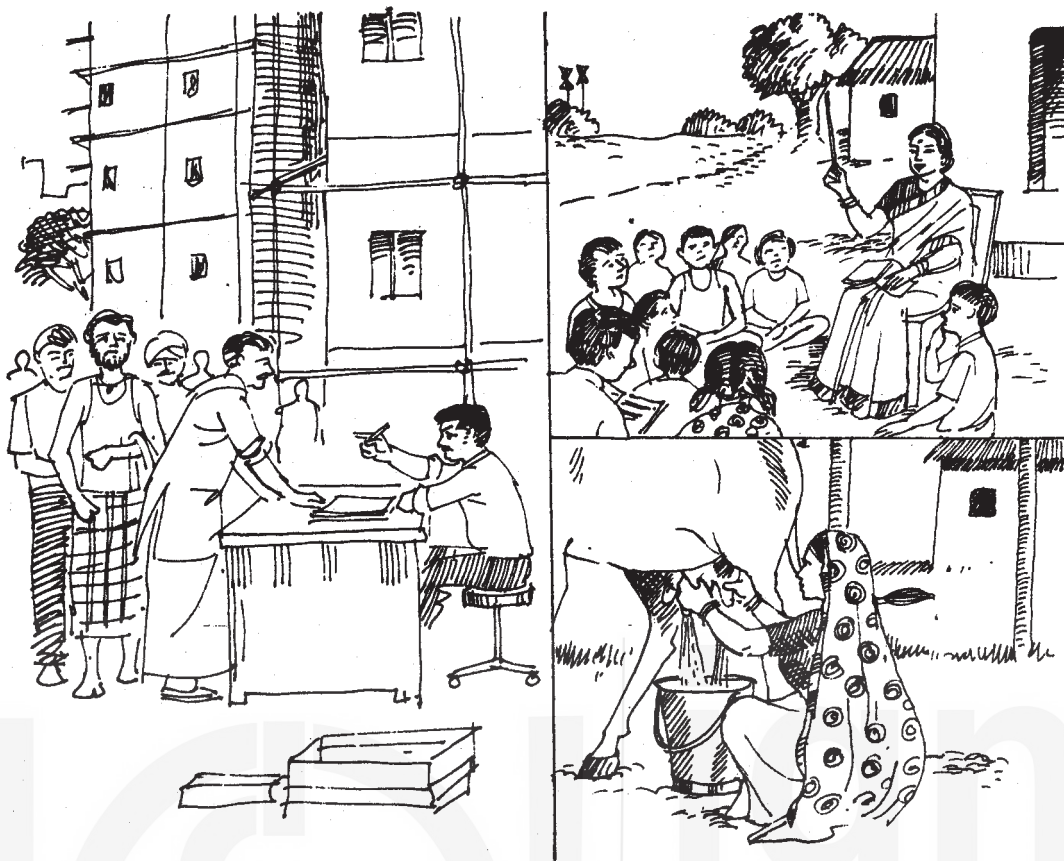
### 10.5.3 Welfare Programme for the Rural Poor

We have discussed so far the problems faced by the weaker sections in rural society. These are mainly a result of uneven and unbalanced development in the rural economy. Therefore in order to protect the rural labourers and marginal farmers the government launched several anti-poverty programmes. Some of these programmes, such as the NREP, JRY and TRYSM, have been discussed in Unit 8. There are other schemes such as the Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP) which operated at the level of the development block. This programme identified the weaker families in the villages and provides them loans and subsidies for obtaining inputs which would help improve production or create self-employment. The selected families are provided seeds, fertilisers, milch or draught cattle, pigs, looms etc. according to their needs. A major part of the cost of procuring these inputs are covered by government subsidies and the rest is through bank loans at low interest rates.

Besides the IRDP, there is the Indira Avas Yojana which provides homes and house-sites for the rural poor. The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) seeks to improve the mental physical growth of the children. It provides for crèches, **balwadis**, **anganwadis** nutrition programmes and mother and child care programmes.

These programmes are initiated at the national level but operate through the various state governments. Some more programmes are run by some state Rajasthan started the **antyodaya** programme in 1978 through which five of the poorest families in every village are provided special assistance to improve their economic conditions. This state and some others have the Drought Prone Areas Programme for providing development activities to overcome draught and the Desert Development Programme. West Bengal introduced the Food-for-Work Scheme in 1977 where the rural unemployed were provided work and were paid partly in food grains and partly in cash. Maharashtra during the same time started the Employment Guarantee Scheme in rural areas which is similar to the NREP. The objective of all these development schemes is to provide some form of employment or inputs to the rural poor so that they are not left to the mercies of the exploiting sections.

Several official and unofficial evaluations of these programs have been done. One major criticism is that a majority of them are independent of the agricultural activity—without direct linkage to agriculture and allied sectors. The beneficiaries of these programmes are not necessarily the most needy. This is mainly because of the malpractices and inefficiency of the implementing agencies. Programmes are devoid of creating a sustainable activity, and



Labour Welfare in Rural Area

therefore, are more relief-oriented than development-based. In some states like West Bengal and Kerala the results are more encouraging as compared to many other states. An observation on the IRDP, states that at the end of seven years of operation of the IRDP, only about 3 per cent of the poor households in rural India have been helped to rise above poverty, and that too only for a while. This programme attempts to provide assets to the rural poor which are labour intensive and it helps in marketing the products. In order to ensure continuity the recipient (the poor household) has to be assured of continuous institutional credit (i.e. from banks or other sources). If this is withdrawn then there is every chance of failure.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Tick mark the correct answers.

With the introduction of British rule in India the economic conditions of the rural artisans and craftsmen

- improved enormously
  - declined sharply
  - remained unaffected
  - none of the above.
- 2) A rural development programme, started in 1978 through which five of the poorest families in every village are provided special assistance to improve their economic conditions, is known as
- Balwadis Programme

- b) Employment Guarantee Scheme
- c) Desert Development Programme
- d) Antyodaya Programme.

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## 10.6 CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROCESSES AND RURAL LABOURERS

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Other than the institutional efforts for raising life standards of agricultural labourers, several changes have been occurring in both rural and urban societies which have also influenced their life.

### 10.6.1 General Impact on Agricultural Labourers

Regions close to the command areas of agricultural growth have been experiencing exodus of manpower, which in turn, hikes the wages of farm labourers. Similar situation has emerged in regions which are in contact with industrial growth centres. Earlier studies on the consumption pattern of rural poor showed that over three-fourths of their income used to be spent on food items alone. Such a trend is on the decline and wherever wages of labourers show an improvement, they spend more on durable items like purchasing a bicycle or a transistor, or improving housing. There is also evidence of change in food habits in some regions—from the coarse grains to wheat and rice.

Though in the areas of health or education no appreciable change are witnessed, the fact cannot be denied that in prosperous agricultural zones, farm labourers show improvement in their health or education. Conditions of farm and non-farm labourers also show improvement in a state like Maharashtra which has a long history of socio-religious reforms, or a state like Kerala which has successfully implemented several welfare schemes for the poor. In contrast, in states like Bihar, Orissa and eastern Uttar Pradesh, the rural poor remain a victimized lot. Particularly the Harijan labourers become the main target of social oppression. The situation of tribal is equally appalling. Commercialisation and market integration of tribal areas coupled with the replacement of collective land tenure system by individual holdings has led to growing landlessness, loss of food security and diminishing access to forest produce. These developments are slowly dividing the traditionally egalitarian communities into class-based social groups.

Wherever there are mobilisations of the rural poor by voluntary organisation or political parties, a new consciousness has emerged among them against their age old exploitation and about their rights. This has earned them social pride and economic relief. It is also a fact that such organised groups have to face the wrath of rich landlords and dominant caste groups. Traditional caste system is also going through several changes which has affected the rural poor. Rigid caste discriminations against the lower castes are slowly losing their effect. Caste based occupations are no more a binding. Caste groups are taking shape of 'interest groups' in order to mobilise resources against other competing groups. Even political mobilisations are more and more on caste lines. This is bound to create caste tensions and intolerance.

Thus, several interrelated changes are occurring in rural (as well as urban) society which are bound to create impact on the lives of farm and non-farm labourers. Their outcome is again uneven without substantial gains to the deprived sections of rural population.

### 10.6.2 Impact on Female Labourers

Traditionally females have actively been participating in the farm activity. They look after the cattle, domestic work and even part of the farming activity. In paddy cultivation, for instance, operations like weeding, harvesting and post-harvest operations require active participation of females—whether labourers or working on their own farms. In a male dominant society like India, it is well expected that female share the main burden in the deprived agricultural families. They are also discriminated as farm labourers against their counterparts. A few case studies show evidence to this effect. According to the NSS data the average daily earnings (of females) are found to be lower than those of male labourers in all the states and in various age groups. Punjab and Haryana, where the overall earnings of male labourers are higher, have higher female earnings. However, there are gender differential in earnings. The reported differences in the daily earnings of male and female agricultural labourers are a clear indication of discrimination against the latter. Women also suffer from a higher instability in employment. It was found that more than 50 per cent of the male workers are cultivators, while more than 60 per cent of women workers are agricultural labourers in the rural sector.

For improving the work conditions of female labourers, experts suggest measures like training of women for unconventional jobs, provision of land rights, permanency in jobs and equal wage for equal work. To achieve this, the need is felt of educating women against their victimisation on all fronts of life. Several voluntary organisations which are working among the rural poor have their programmes for the upliftment of women. Recently action groups exclusively of women have emerged which are spearheading the cause of emancipating the women from exploitation in a male dominated society.

#### Check Your Progress 5

Tick mark the correct boxes

- i) In the rural India caste based occupations are no more binding.  
 True  False
- ii) In rural India no political mobilisation takes place on caste line.  
 True  False
- iii) In prosperous agricultural zones farm labourers show improvement in their health and education.  
 True  False
- iv) In tribal areas commercialisation of agriculture and rapid spread of market forces have led to landlessness among the tribal people.  
 True  False

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### 10.7 LET US SUM UP

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This unit began with a brief discussion of the present status of agricultural and non-agricultural labourers in the country. The discussion was spread in six main sections which covered issues like condition so agricultural labourers in the Pre-Independence and Post-Independence period, role of agrarian reforms,

general changes influencing their lives, condition of female labourers, status of non-farm labourers and artisan, and scope for their improvement, peasant unrest during pre and post-Independence periods, and need of appropriate policies and strategies for improving socio-economic status of farm and non-farm labourers. All these put together should give us a general profile of their life conditions.

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## 10.8 KEY WORDS

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- Green Revolution** : It is also widely known as the new strategy for agricultural development. Under the influence of Western economies, India adopted the modernisation of agriculture by improving technology and other inputs. The Punjab, Haryana, Western U.P. experience of dramatic growth in the agricultural production is popularly known as the 'green revolution' in India.
- Jajmani System** : In traditional rural India, the producing castes were treated as 'jajman' by the serving castes or groups (like agricultural labourers, carpenters and washermen), who used to get payments for their services in cash or kind from the producing castes. Such a system of giving and taking of services in rural areas is known as 'jajmani system'.
- Ryotwari System** : Prior to the British rule in India, the collection of revenue by a king from his peasantry was practiced mainly under two systems—the 'Ryotwari' system and the 'Mahalbari' system. Under the 'Ryotwari' system, the king directly collected revenue from the peasantry by appointing revenue officials. In the British period Ryotwari system was operational only in some parts of the country.
- Tenancy Act** : The main purpose of introducing Tenancy Acts by the governments was to confer permanent, heritable and transferable rights on the actual tillers of the land.

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## 10.9 FURTHER READINGS

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Desai, A.R. 1978. *Rural Sociology in India (Vth edition)*. Popular Prakashan: Bombay.

Thorner, D. and A. Thorner 1962. *Land and Labour in India*. Asia Publishing House : Bombay.

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## 10.10 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The landless low caste people formed the bulk of the serving castes in traditional India. Through the jajmani system they were tied up with the upper castes of the village which provided them minimum security of life. Indeed, they lived a life of want and misery. They remained a deprived section of the rural population.
- 2) c)

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The major objectives of land reform in India are as follows : (a) abolition of intermediaries, (b) imposition of ceiling restrictions on landholding, (c) distribution of surplus vested land, (d) tenancy reforms, and (e) increase in agricultural production.
- 2) The technological modernisation has helped tremendously to enhance agricultural production in India especially in the Punjab, Haryana, Western U.P., parts of A.P. etc. places. However, experts are of the opinion that technological modernisation has not helped the rural poor improve their economic lot. It has led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, while the majority of the rural poor remained in altered insecurity and poverty.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) b)
- 2) d)

### Check Your Progress 4

- i) True
- ii) False
- iii) True
- iv) True

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## **UNIT 11 LABOUR : WOMEN**

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### **Structure**

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Extent and Nature of Women's Work Participation
  - 11.2.1 Women's Work Participation
  - 11.2.2 Nature of Work Done by Women Workers
  - 11.2.3 Categories of Women Labour
  - 11.2.4 Factors Affecting Women's Work Participation
- 11.3 Women Workers by Various Sectors of Employment
  - 11.3.1 Unorganised Sector
  - 11.3.2 Organised Sector
- 11.4 Labour Laws for Women Workers
  - 11.4.1 Equal Remuneration Act
  - 11.4.2 Minimum Wage Act
  - 11.4.3 Maternity Benefits Act
- 11.5 Women's Work Participation : Challenges and Response
  - 11.5.1 Mobilising and Organising Efforts
  - 11.5.2 Institutional Efforts : Anti-Poverty Programme
- 11.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.7 Key Words
- 11.8 Further Readings
- 11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### **11.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After going through the unit you should be able to :

- describe the nature and extent of women's labour force participation;
- explain reasons for the 'invisibility' and under enumeration of women's labour contribution in the home and outside;
- examine reasons for over concentration of women in certain sectors of economy;
- discuss various legislations for the protection of women labour;
- narrate the need for organising the poor rural and urban women; and
- analyse the various policies for training and income generation for poor women.

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### **11.1 INTRODUCTION**

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This unit aims to introducing you to various dimensions of women's labour and factors affecting their productive roles in the Indian society. The unit discusses the nature and extent of women's involvement in key sectors of

economy, socio-economic determinants of women's labour force participation, their access to productive resources, and opportunities for skill development through training and education within the family and outside. The unit also looks into government interventions and direct measures to alleviate poverty and responses of the rural and urban women's organisations to improve their access to resources and bargaining capacities.

The unit begins with an analysis of the context of women's paid and unpaid labour within and outside home. It also analyses the socio-cultural, developmental and locational (rural-urban, agro-climatic zones) factors responsible for variations in women's labour utilisation patterns. In the units on Women's Status and Women and Work in Block 7, ESO-02, we discussed at length about various facets of women's work participation. In this unit we shall look into those issues in relation to social problems in India. You may like to look into those units before start working on the present one.

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## 11.2 EXTENT AND NATURE OF WOMEN'S WORK PARTICIPATION

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Women play an important role in the Indian economy and are engaged in a variety of occupations in rural and urban areas. The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) pointed out that "the status of any given section of population in a society is ultimately connected with its economic positions which (itself) depends on roles, rights and opportunities for participation in economic activities".

The Report further observed that "sex inequality cannot in reality be differentiated from the variety of social, economic and cultural inequalities in India society". The inequalities inherent in our traditional social structure based on caste, community, class and gender, influence women's economic roles and opportunities. Their participation is also affected by the state of development and rural urban locations. In an earlier unit (ESO-12, Unit 31) Women and Work you have learnt that traditional role expectations, differential socialisation of girls and boys and sexual division of labour affect women's labour force participation. In this unit we shall begin with a brief discussion on the nature and extent of women's work participation.

### 11.2.1 Women's Work Participation

Accurate data regarding the extent and nature of women's work is limited because of the limited definition of 'work' in the Census which excludes much of the work women do within the household for the family's survival and maintenance. The data is also not comparable because of changes in the definitions of 'worker' from Census to Census and lack of uniformity in the classification of workers by age, sex and educational levels. Earners and earners' dependents have been classified differently in various census. Again, the 1971 census used the labour time disposition criterion over the reference year, and defined workers as only those who spent the major part of their time in economic activities. Thus all irregular, marginal and part-time workers come under the category of non-workers. However, the marginal, irregular workers were more likely to be concentrated among women, children and aged persons. Therefore, the census report does not give the real picture (Chattopadhyay, M. 1982:44).

The Labour Bureau has brought out a document titled Statistical Profile on Women Labour. Many of these sources underestimate women's labour

contribution in so far as the work that women do on family farms and home-based family occupations remains unpaid and ‘invisible’ to data collectors. No economic value is given to work such as collection of fuel, fodder and water, collection of minor forest produce for subsistence and household maintenance activities as it does not come under the purview of market economy. Sexual division of labour relegates women’s primary responsibility to providing goods and services to the family. For the poor women, all work is for subsistence and survival of the family.

Even if one does not take into account the above mentioned aspect of the women’s contribution to the economy there exists a difference in assessing the workforce participation of women.

**Table 1: Workforce by Gender and Rural-Urban Location: All India, 1993-94 to 1999-2000**

Population Segment	Usual status crude worker Population ratios (per 1000)	
	1993-94	1999-2000
	(in '000)	
<i>Rural</i>		
Males	553	531
Females	328	299
Total	444	419
<i>Urban</i>		
Males	520	518
Females	154	139
Total	347	337
<i>All Areas</i>		
Males	544	527
Females	283	254
Total	418	395

**Note:** Usual Status = principal status + subsidiary status.

**Source:** Sundaram, K., ‘Employment and Poverty in 1990s: Further Results from NSS 55<sup>th</sup> Round Employment—Unemployment Survey, 1999-2000, Economic and Political Weekly, 11 August 2001, pp. 3039-49. cf. India Development Report. 2002.

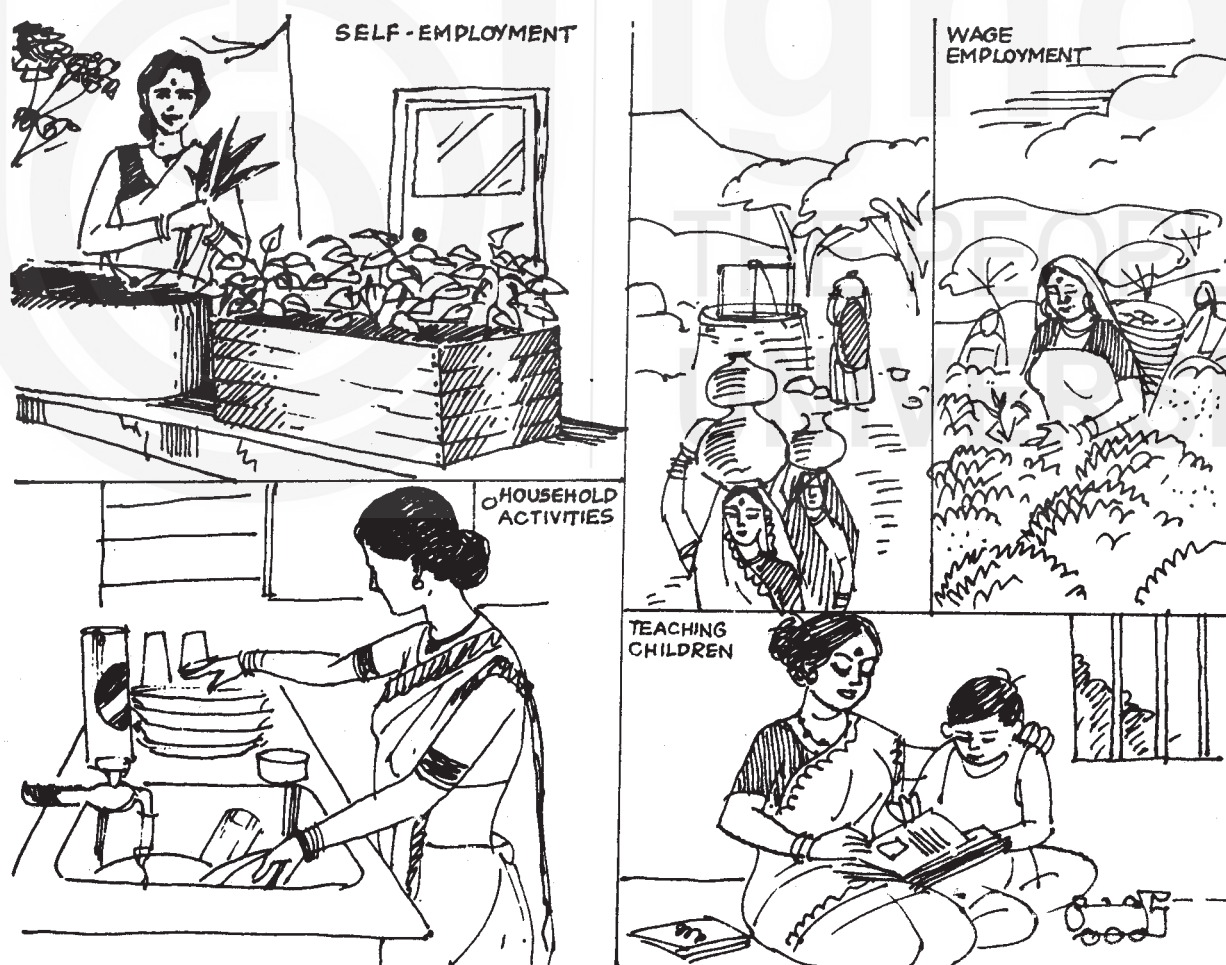
Majority of the women workers are employed in the rural areas and in agriculture. Amongst rural women workers 87% are employed in agriculture as labourers and cultivators. Amongst the women workers in the urban areas 80% are employed in unorganised sector like household industries, petty trade and services, building and construction etc. The employment of women in the organised sector (both public and private) as on March 2000 was about 4.9228 million. This constitutes 17.6% of the total organised sector employment in the country. The distribution of women employees in major industries reveals that community, social and personal services sectors continued to absorb the majority of women employees. The lowest employment of women was noticed in electricity, gas and water sectors. In the factory and plantation establishment women workers constituted 14% and 51% respectively of the total workers in 1997. In mine establishments, women workers constituted 5% of the total workers (India 2003). According to the Human Development Report in South Asia female labour force constituted 32% of the total labour force in India in 2000.

According to 2001 Census of the total female population 25.7% are workers (main and marginal). Again of the total workers 32.5% are cultivators and 39.4% are agricultural labourers, 6.4% work in the household industry and 21.7% are other category workers.

According to Dr. Asok Mitra 'the under-reporting of female work force participation rates in the Census varies from 30 to 40 per cent'. The measurement and analysis of female labour force participation suffers from underestimates, inadequate attention to unpaid work at home and outside, and lack of support services to reduce their drudgery i.e. provision of drinking water, fuel and fodder, childcare etc. All these have adverse impact on the status of women labour force.

### 11.2.2 Nature of Work Done by Women Workers

In the unit on Women and Work in ESO-02 we discussed in detail the nature of women's work participation and work done by women workers. It was pointed out that women's work had been subjected to invisibility because of the census bias and conservative estimate of work done by women. Here let us describe the nature of work done by women.



Women and Work

The NSSO has identified the following household activities in which women are regularly engaged. Maintenance of kitchen garden, orchards etc, work in household poultry, work in household dairy, free collection of fish small game, etc., free collection of firewood, cattle feed. etc., husking paddy, preparation

of gur, grinding of foodgrains, preparation of cow dung cakes for use as fuel, sewing, tailoring, tutoring of children, bringing water from outside the household premise, bringing water from outside the village.

However, a major part of the work done by women in the household is not recognised as work since these are not paid in the economic sense and not visible in the public eye as well.

### 11.2.3 Categories of Women Labour

On the basis of their work status, women labour can be grouped under the following three categories:

- **Self-employed** both within and outside home.
- **Wage Workers** outside home e.g. agricultural workers, construction workers, factory workers, contract workers etc. and inside home (home-based workers engaged in work on out put basis)
- **Unpaid Family Labour** on their own farm or family occupations like weaving, pottery, handicrafts etc.

Let us discuss these categories in detail.

#### i) Self-employment

They constitute the predominant sector of employment in our country. According to the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 1987, 57.3 per cent of total workforce was absorbed by this sector. The choice of activity depends on family situation, women's control over the means of production, skills, technology and work organisation.

A significant number of self-employed women are working outside the home (57 per cent) with irregular income and many a time operating from the pavements (vegetable sellers, vendors, hawkers etc.).

The distribution of female work participation by status of employment indicates that there is a pronounced declining trend in the importance of the self employed category in both rural and urban areas and an overall increase in the casualisation of the women work force from 31.4 per cent in 1972-73 to 40.9 per cent in 1997 in rural India with a marginal decline to 39.6 per cent in 1999-2000. In urban India there is a reversal of this trend with an increase in work participation rates of females under regular employment category and a decline in casualisation. Further, as per the NSSO 55<sup>th</sup> Round on Employment and Unemployment in India 1999-2000, women tend to enter the labour market later than men. Work participation of males is considerable higher in the age group of 15-29. In rural areas female work participation rate has been the highest at 58.6 per cent in the age group of 40-44 and is above 50 per cent in the age group 30-54. In urban areas female work participation rate is highest at 28.5 per cent in the age group 35-39 and is 38.3 per cent in age group 40-44. Early marriage and multiple child bearing depress the female work force participation rates in the 15-29 age group. In most developed and developing countries, the age group 15-25 exhibits a peak in women's work force participation rates.

In the construction sector the proportion of casual labour is high. The proportion of women workers has increased from 9.1 to 9.91 per cent during 1971-1981.

The increase is primarily in rural areas as numerous public works programmes for employment generation were taken up under anti-poverty programmes of the government.

**Box 1****Wage Disparities**

**The average earnings of female casual workers** are extremely lower than the average earning of regular wage earners and salaried workers. The wage inequality between men (Rs. 10.27) and women (Rs. 4.49) is higher in rural areas than in urban ones. Women workers are mostly employed as piece-rate workers doing manual work for contractors and middlemen. They provide cheap labour to industries and contractors.

**Average Wage Salary Earnings Per Day for Casual Wage Labour (in Rupees)**

	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-5-14	5.68	3.57	5.19	3.50
15-59	10.53	5.11	5.11	5.30
60+	9.35	3.77	9.94	4.65
All ages	10.27	4.89	11.09	5.29

Source : NSSO, 1987 (Quoted in National Commission on Self-employed Women, 1988)

**Usual, Weekly and Daily Work Status by Sex**

	Male	Female	Male	Female
Usual Status	2.12	1.41	5.86	6.90
Weekly Status	3.72	4.26	8.69	7.46
Daily Status	7.52	8.98	9.23	10.99

Source : NSSO, 1987

It is again to note that the incidence of unemployment and under-employment is higher among women casual workers than among men.

An important category of working women, is home-based workers. They are engaged in a variety of activities like bidi-making, food processing, garment making, agarbati making, spinning, toy making, fish processing, pottery, cane and bamboo work, lace making Zari work etc. No reliable statistics are available regarding the number of home-based women workers as their work is not always 'visible'.

Home-based workers fall in two categories: the self-employed, and those engaged in piece-rate work.

There is a large section of women who are doing piece-rate work. The employers have tremendous advantage in giving out work to women on a piece-rate basis as they don't have to invest in tools and machinery or any extra cost for providing the work benefits. There are not trade unions and hardly any legislation to protect their rights relating to wages, social security benefits (health and maternity benefits) etc. A lot of child labour is used in home-based

production activities. The industrial units specially smaller ones have financial advantage in not employing them directly. You will read more about child labour in the next unit (Unit No. 12).

iii) **Unpaid Family Workers**

Women provide unpaid labour on family farms, home-based small industries, family maintenance activities. The average hours of unpaid work done by women within and outside home varies from 6-8 hours per day. Women from poorer households have a heavier burden of work.

**11.2.4 Factors Affecting Women’s Work Participation**

Women’s work participation rate in general has been declining over the decades. The decline has occurred due to several factors:

- a) Absence of a comprehensive and rational policy for women’s development aiming at improving their employability through education, training and improving their access to resources (land, credit) and technology.
- b) The perception of ‘male as the bread winner’ of the family conceals the fact that in low-income households woman’s earning is crucial for the sustenance of the family. This perception adversely affects investment in women’s education and training. Employers also visualise women workers as ‘supplementary earners’.
- c) Structural changes in the economy e.g. decline in traditional rural industries like pottery, blacksmithy, weaving and handicrafts due to competition from modern industries have increased the dependence of women on agricultural sector and have adversely affected the status of women workforce.
- d) Lack of assets (land, house) in their own name in order to have access to credit and self-employment opportunities has been the important hurdle in the upward mobility of women workers.
- e) The heavy demand on the time and energy of women for subsistence tasks (fuel, fodder and water collection) and burdens of child-bearing and rearing in addition to participation in labour force, leave them little time for education, training and self development. Besides working as labourer, they spend 6-8 hours per day on collection of fuel, fodder, water, child care and other domestic chores. Efforts to reduce women’s drudgery have been highly inadequate.
- f) Division of labour between women and men and technological changes in the production system also work against women. They are the first to lose their jobs and the last to be hired. Higher illiteracy and low skill development among women also result in low wages and insecure or casual employment.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- i) What are the different categories of women labourers? Use about five lines to answer.

.....

.....

.....



.....  
 .....  
 ii) Tick mark the correct box (true or false)

a) In India most of the women workforce are self-employed.

True

False

b) More women are employed in the non-agricultural sector.

True

False

c) Men and women get equal wages in all sectors of employment.

True

False

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### 11.3 WOMEN WORKERS BY VARIOUS SECTORS OF EMPLOYMENT

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Almost 90% of women workers are in the primary sector which include agriculture (87%) and livestock, forestry, fishing, plantation and orchards (1.8%). Agriculture remains the major sector of women's work.

Women engaged in agricultural operations work on an average about 12 hours a day on the farm in taking care of the cattle at home. There is a division of labour between the tasks men and women do in agriculture. Although it is not rigid and there are regional variations, however, some patterns are uniform. Women do not plough the field due to social taboos. Women are mainly engaged in sowing, weeding, transplanting and spraying chemical pesticides. In agriculture, women work mostly as casual labour. As agriculture labourers they comprise 60% of all agricultural workers.

Other activities where the number of women workers exceeds the number of male workers are cashewnut processing, cotton and wool spinning and weaving, manufacturing of bidis, tobacco processing, canning and preservation of fruits and vegetables.

#### Activity 1

Identify about 20-25 workers in your neighbourhood and place their work in the different types of economic activities as discussed in earlier sections. Analyse the gender differentials. If possible, exchange your note with your colearners at the Study Centre.

Let us examine the nature and extent of women's work participation in terms of various sectors of employment. You may be interested to know about the unorganised sector first.

#### 11.3.1 Unorganised Sector

The nature and extent of women's work participation in the rural unorganised sector is qualitatively and quantitatively different in the rural areas from that of the urban areas. Hence we should discuss the rural and urban areas separately for a better understanding.

### i) **Rural Unorganised Sector**

A little over 87 per cent of women are employed in the unorganised sector in rural and urban areas. Employment in this sector is characterised by lack of job security, low wages, long hours of work; and unhealthy working conditions. There are very few workers' unions to bring pressure on employers to provide more humane conditions of work. Inadequate legislation for these workers and totally ineffective enforcement of the few legislations enacted to protect their interests further aggravate their situation.

Women workers in this sector are mostly illiterate. They are drawn from the poorer sections and they lack opportunities to improve their skills through training and education. A large share of work in the rural unorganised sector is done by women.

Government programmes to increase employment and productivity are focused more on men; and women are seen as beneficiaries rather than active participants. The predominantly male bureaucracy and extension workers are not very sensitive to women's needs and problems. Land ownership and division of labour often works to women's disadvantage.

### ii) **Urban Unorganised Sector**

A large number of women are engaged in services. Forty per cent of the self-employed women are in the service sector and 30% are in petty trades. Eight per cent of the women are engaged in construction activities. A majority of the self-employed women are in petty business selling pan-bidis, fruits and vegetables, leaf, cane and bamboo products and sale of firewood etc. A significant number of self-employed women (57%) are working outside the home with irregular income and many a time operating from the pavements. Domestic service is another area where a large number of women workers are engaged as part-time or full-time workers.

In manufacturing, the percentage share of female workers in traditional industries i.e. food, tobacco and textiles has not changed. In some industries like cashew processing, coffee curing etc. it has declined due to mechanisation. Women have been employed more where 'putting cut system' is common like garments, engineering products, plastics, rubber and tobacco processing.

## **11.3.2 Organised Sector**

The organised sector (both public and private) accounts for about 13.0 per cent of the female labour force. In the public sector as well as major industrial groups in coal, iron ore and metal mining, women's employment during the last two decades has either remained static or has declined. There has been a sharp decline in the number of women workers in coal mining, particularly after the nationalisation of the industry. There are reports that the public sector coal mines have encouraged women to 'retire voluntarily' after nominating a male from the family for the job.

In both public and private sector there is an extensive use of women contract and casual labour with a view to avoid provision of labour laws i.e. providing child-care centers, minimum wages and maternity benefits.

Here we can sum up the main characteristics of female labour working in various sectors of economy as follows:

- i) Low overall participation rate of women vis-a-vis men.
- ii) Regional variations in female work participation rate.

- iii) Large concentration of women workers in the agricultural sector and household industries in all states.
- iv) Majority of women i.e. 87% are working in the ‘informal sector’ which is characterised by low wages, non-unionisation, bad working conditions and irregular work.
- v) Women are mostly engaged in low productivity and lowpaid occupations. Wage discrimination is widely prevalent in such jobs. About 89% of women in rural areas and 69.48% of women in urban areas are unskilled workers.

The entry of majority of women from socially and economically disadvantaged section into the labour market as unskilled workers had to be understood in terms of the factors leading to it.

In the units on Women’s Status and Women and Work of Block 4. ESO-02, you have learnt that not only that women’s labour within the home is unpaid and undervalued but also traditional role expectations, differential socialisation of boys and girls and gender role stereotyping have an adverse impact on women’s roles and educational opportunities. Society’s perception of their contribution and value of caste and community also have a significant influence on women’s labour participation.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- i) Which are the activities where women exceed the number of male workers? Use about three lines to answer.  
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- ii) What are the employment characteristics of informal sector? Answer in about four lines.  
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- iii) Mention a few important occupations for women in the informal sector in the rural areas. Use about four lines to answer.  
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**11.4 LABOUR LAWS FOR WOMEN WORKERS**

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Invisibility of women’s work, marginalisation of women workers by the process of development and their concentration in the unorganised or informal sector (about which you have learnt earlier) make it difficult for women to benefit from labour laws enacted to protect them and regulate their working conditions.

Labour laws are enacted to provide safe working conditions like health and maternity benefits prevent their exploitation and regulate wages.

Since majority of women are in the unorganised sector, we will discuss the legislation which affects this group of women workers.

### 11.4.1 Equal Remuneration Act

This Act states that there should be no wage discrimination between male and female workers when they are engaged in the same type of activity. In other words men and women would get the same wages if the nature of work is similar.

The Act applies to workers in the organised sector, it has been largely ignored in the unorganised sector. Women in agriculture, construction, household industry etc. continue to receive lower wages than men. However the Act has been effective in the organised sector, especially in plantations where nearly half the workers are women and also in mines and factories. Wage differences between the sexes have been abolished in these industries.

### 11.4.2 Minimum Wages Act

For workers in the unorganised sector, this law provides a mechanism for fixing up minimum rates of wages which should reflect the basic minimum needs of the workers.

While notifying minimum wages, certain types of work done by women are classified as ‘light work done by women’ and ‘heavier work done by men’. This is one of the methods to fix lower wages for women.

In addition women in the organised sector are entitled to maternity benefits. Employers are also expected to provide creche where more than 30 women are employed.



### 11.4.3 Maternity Benefits Act

This Act provides that women workers are entitled to 24 weeks of leave with full pay during pregnancy. Usually the female worker is allowed to take leave for 4 weeks before the birth of the child and 8 weeks leave after the birth of the child. They are also allowed to take leave for 6 weeks for abortion.

It is usually being argued that one of the reasons for the decline in the employment of women in the organised sector is that the employers have to pay maternity benefits to female employees. Since the number of women employed in the organised sector is very small, the amount paid as maternity benefit is very low in comparison to other social security benefits paid to male employees.

The National Commission on Self Employed Women suggested that maternity benefits and child care should be recognised as a package and a fund should be created to provide necessary assistance to women. Various women's organisations have been demanding that child care should be included under the basic needs programme of the government and suitable steps should be taken to implement it.

#### Activity 2

Interview 10-15 working women engaged in the informal sector and find out if they are aware of any of the three Acts we have discussed. If possible exchange your note with your colearners at the Study Centre.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- i) Write a note on Equal Remuneration Act in about four lines.  
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 .....  
 .....
- ii) The Maternity Benefit Act provides that women workers are entitled to:
  - a) 12 weeks of leave without pay during pregnancy
  - b) 12 months of leave without pay during pregnancy
  - c) 12 weeks of leave with full pay during pregnancy
  - d) 12 days of leave with full payment.

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## 11.5 WOMEN'S WORK PARTICIPATION : CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE

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In recent years there have been significant efforts to organise women workers. Efforts have been also made by the government to launch various programmes. Let us discuss the efforts made and initiatives undertaken for the mobilisation and upliftment of poor women who form the bulk of the workforce in our country.

### 11.5.1 Mobilising and Organising Efforts

Increasing emphasis is now given to organisation and mobilisation of unorganised women workers in order to give them voice and collective strength for the improvement of their working conditions and wages. A few organisations like Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA), Ahmedabad, Working Women's Forum (WWF), Madras, Annapurna Mahila Mandal (AMM), Bombay and several grassroots organisations have mobilised urban and rural poor women workers in order to strengthen their bargaining capacities and improve their access to credit and other resources. SEWA is a trade union of over 40,000 poor women workers in Gujarat. WWF has a membership of 15,000 women and has now spread its activities to Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Women have struggled for land ownership, minimum wages, access to forest produce, water resources, rights of hawkers and vendors etc. The revitalisation of women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s, has resulted in an increasing awareness about women's rights and their participation in local and larger struggles.

Housing, water and sanitation are the other major concerns of poor women workers. They have also organised for legal and policy changes and against sexual exploitation of women workers. The Report of the National Commission on Self-employed Women, widely known as Shram Shakti has observed that "today we are witnessing the gradual rise of a movement of poor women organising on issues, asserting themselves, articulating their needs and bringing themselves to the forefront of our political consciousness..... It has been possible only because of many earlier movements and attempts to organise by these women." Such example are however, few and far between. Some of the trade unions and most of the political parties have also set up women's wing within their organisations.

The attempts of poor women to organise themselves are often met with strong oppositions by vested interests in both rural and urban areas. The National Commission on Self-employed Women recommended a strategy to promote organisations of women and suggested that the government should play an active and positive role by insisting that all government project, schemes and programmes for the poor should have a component of organising as this will help in building a people's base.

### 11.5.2 Institutional Efforts : Anti-Poverty Programmes

Anti-poverty programmes were launched by the Government in the Fourth Five Year Plan. It was much later in the Sixth Five Year Plan that a separate strategy was considered for employment and income generation for poor women. The report of the CSWI (1974) stressed the fact that the 'poor' are not a homogeneous group. Since then several studies have highlighted the unequal burden of poverty on women due to their familial responsibilities and the need to provide for the subsistence needs of women.

The major anti-poverty programmes in the country are as follows:

- i) **Programmes for providing self-employment** through loans for productive assets. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) has fixed a target of 30% women beneficiaries to be covered under the programme. In 1982-83 a separate programme for Development of Women

and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was taken up to provide self-employment to rural women.

- ii) **Programmes of wage-employment** like National Rural Development Programme, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme. The employment generated under this programme is mainly through public works programmes like repair of roads and construction activities.
- iii) **Special Programmes** for tribal areas, hilly areas and drought prone areas.
- iv) **Training Programme** for upgrading or imparting new skills for generating self-employment (Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment);
- iv) **Distribution of surplus land to the poor.** In these schemes under the land reform programme mostly male head of the households have been given land.

One of the major problems with anti-poverty programmes was that poor women, handicapped by illiteracy, socio-cultural factors (as most of them are SC/ST) and inability of these agencies to imaginatively plan and implement these programmes, could not benefit from these schemes. Due to predominantly male ownership of land and other productive assets, women were not able to give bank guarantee and take advantage of the credit schemes.

There were also programmes in identifying viable activities and adequate planning for economic programmes for women and giving them support in terms of technology, training, raw material and marketing of goods.

The government estimates of surplus land distributed to the landless poor show that a very small portion has been acquired and distributed except for West Bengal and Kerala. Most of it is uncultivable or needs lots of input like fertilisers, irrigation and good soil management etc. The land was distributed to the 'male heads of households' ignoring the fact that many households were headed by women and they play an important role in marginal and landless households. It is estimated that about 30-35 per cent of households are headed or managed by women where men have migrated to towns.

#### Check Your Progress 4

Tick mark the correct answers.

- i) Which one of the following is not an organisation involved in the mobilisation of working women?
  - a) Self-employed Women's Association
  - b) Working Women's Forum
  - c) Annapurna Mahila Mandal
  - d) None of the above.
- ii) The Committee on the Status of Women recognises that
  - a) poor women are a homogenous group
  - b) poor women are not a homogeneous group
  - c) poor men bear more burden of poverty than women
  - d) none of the above is correct.

- iii) Which one of the following is responsible for not giving women sufficient access over the anti-poverty programmes launched by the government?
- a) Illiteracy
  - b) Predominantly male ownership of land
  - c) Inability of the agencies to plan imaginatively
  - d) All of the above.

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## 11.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have acquainted you with the major problems of the women workers in India. The unit began with a broad discussion on the nature and extent of women's labour force participation in India. There we discussed the various categories of women labourers, nature of work done by women labour, and the socio-economic factors affecting their work participation. Problems of women workers working both in the organised and unorganised sectors are discussed in this unit. There are various labour laws viz. Equal Remuneration Act, Minimum Wage Act, Maternity Benefits Act. We also discussed these laws in relation to contemporary women's work participation in India. Lastly we discussed the efforts made to organise the poor women workers and the broad welfare measures undertaken to improve women's work condition and work participation in India.

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## 11.7 KEY WORDS

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- Home-based Production** : Commodity produced based on family labour mainly.
- Self-employed** : Those who occupied independently in their own economic activities are categorised as self-employed. They may be the cultivators, artisans, vendors, petty shopowners, businessmen etc.
- Wage earners** : Those who work to receive wage for their work from their employers are categories as wage earners viz., agricultural labourers etc.

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## 11.8 FURTHER READINGS

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Jose A.V.(Ed.), 1989. *Limited Options : Women Workers in Rural India*. Asian Regional Team for Employment Promoton, ILO : New Delhi.

Singh Andrea M. and Anita K. Vitanen (Eds.), 1987, *Invisible Hands: Women in Home-based Production*, Sage Publications: New Delhi.

SinghaRoy, D.K. 1992. *Women in Peasant Movements: Tebhaga, Naxalite and After*, Manohar; New Delhi.



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## 11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) Women workers can be categorised under three broad headings: (a) Self-employed both within and outside home; (b) Wage workers outside home and (c) Unpaid family labour work on their own farm or family occupations like weaving, pottery and handicrafts etc.
- ii)
  - a) False
  - b) True
  - c) False

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) According to a report prepared by the Government of India, Women outnumbered men in the following activities: dairying, small animal husbandry and handloom.
- ii) Employment in the informal sector is characterised by lack of job security, low wages, long hours of work and unhealthy working conditions.
- iii) Agriculture, dairying, fisheries, animal husbandry, khadi and village industries, handicrafts, sericulture, handloom etc.

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) This Act states that there should be no wage discrimination between male and female workers when they are engaged in the same type of activity.
- ii) c)

### Check Your Progress 4

- i) d)
- ii) b)
- iii) d)

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## UNIT 12 LABOUR : CHILDREN

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### Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Definition, Estimates, Literacy Level and Social Background
  - 12.2.1 Definition
  - 12.2.2 Estimates
  - 12.2.3 Literacy Levels
  - 12.2.4 Socio-Economic Background
- 12.3 Causes and Conditions of Child Labour
  - 12.3.1 Rural Areas
  - 12.3.2 Urban Areas
- 12.4 Constitutional Provisions and Government Policies
  - 12.4.1 Constitutional Provisions
  - 12.4.2 Committee on Child Labour
  - 12.4.3 Legislations on Child Labour
  - 12.4.4 Problems of Implementation
- 12.5 The Challenges of Meeting the Basic Needs of Children
- 12.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.7 Key Words
- 12.8 Further Readings
- 12.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through the unit you should be able to:

- Explain who is a child labourer;
- Discuss various reasons for child labour;
- Describe various sectors where child labour is employed;
- Narrate the conditions of child labour; and
- Explain the application of policies and legislations enacted for the regulation of child labour.

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### 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this course there are two units on children. One is on child labour and the other (in Block 5 Unit 14) is on the general problems of children. This unit discusses the problems of child labour in India. It begins with a discussion of its definition, and then gives the estimates and social background of child labour in India. The nature of employment of the child labour in the rural and urban areas has also been examined in this unit. This unit also goes into the various constitutional provisions and legislations on child labour in India. And finally the unit tells you about the challenge of meeting the basic needs of children.

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## 12.2 DEFINITION, ESTIMATES, LITERACY LEVEL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

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In this section we shall be discussing the conceptual aspect and social background of the child labour in India.

### 12.2.1 Definition

According to the Census of India definition a child worker is one who works for the major part of the day and is below the age of 14 years. There is no agreement about the definition of the 'child'. The 1989 UN Convention on the 'Rights of the Child' sets the upper age at 18. The International Labour Organisation refers to children as those who are under 15 years. In India children above the age of 14 years are old enough to be employed.

### 12.2.2 Estimates

Estimates of child labour vary widely. Children's work participation is higher in the less developed regions of the world than those of the more developed ones. While in 2000, the world average of the child work participation rate was 11.3%, their participation rates in the less developed regions and the least developed countries were 13% and 31.6% respectively. Child work participation has been eliminated from the more developed regions of the world. In India in 2000 child work participation was 12.1% (Children Data Bank 2001). As indicated there are varied estimates on child labour in India. The Human Rights watch (1996) estimates that there are 60 to 115 million working children in India. According to UNICEF this figures range between 70 to 90 million. According to ILO one third of the child labour of world live in India. The UNDP estimate says that there are more than 100 million child labour in India of which around one million work as bonded labour. The 32<sup>nd</sup> round of the National Sample Survey estimated that about 17.36 million children were in the labour force. A study sponsored by the Ministry of Labour and conducted by Operations Research Group (1985) puts the figures of working children around 44 million. Recent studies also suggest that Indian has about 44.5 million child labourers of whom nearly 7.5 million are bonded labourers. According to another estimate by Asian Labour Monitor every third household in India has a working child in the age group of 5-14. It is thus very difficult to arrive at correct estimates of child labour because of wide variations in different studies.

A large number of child workers are in the informal sector and many are self-employed on family farms and enterprises. The work participation rate of children in rural areas is three times more than in urban areas. According to 1981 Census there were 6.7 million male children and 3.5 million female children working in the rural areas for the major part of the year who were recorded as main workers. Their work participation rates were 9.2 per cent for boys and 5.3 per cent for girls. After including marginal workers the participation rate increased to 10.0 per cent boys and 7.6 per cent for girls. In other words child work participation rate was substantial among rural children as compared to urban areas. In the urban areas the work participation rate (including marginal workers) was 3.6 per cent among boys and 1.3 per cent among girls between 5-14 years.

Child labour makes a very significant contribution in arid and semiarid areas where families have to use maximum resources in traditional rainfed farming systems for about 3-4 months during the rainy season. A lot of child labour is used in collection of goods viz., fuel, fodder, minor forest produce etc. Child labour is an integral part of farmers' adaptive methods to cope with seasonal demands for labour. These situations usually do not encourage the children to go to school for study. This is more so for the female children. However, it is very difficult to make a correct estimate of these child labour.

### 12.2.3 Literacy Levels

Most of the studies have found a strong correlation between low literacy levels and work participation rates. In rural areas only 4.1 per cent boys and 2.2 per cent girl child workers were literate. Similarly in urban areas 7.0 per cent boys and 2.5 per cent girl child workers were literate. The main reason for not sending these children to school is the opportunity costs to parents who lose the wages earned by the child.

#### Activity 1

You may have come across a number of child labour working in your locality. Collect information directly from them about their educational status/levels of literacy. Based on your findings prepare a note of about one page, on their levels of literacy. Also explain the major cause of their illiteracy. If possible, exchange your note with your colearners at the Study Centre.

#### Box 1

##### Gender Differentiation and Child Labour

The process of gender differentiation and division of responsibility begins early in our society. Most of the children out of schools come from disadvantaged sections, and the majority of them are girls, as their parents do not see the relevance of educating them. In most economically disadvantaged families, the greater the poverty the more aggravated is the situation of the girl child. The unequal access to education, health, and nutrition, as compared to boys in the family, further restricts their growth and development. The situation of wage earning girls in the informal sector or in home-based work is even worse. As an invisible worker she is also required to look after younger siblings and do all the domestic chores in addition to helping mother in her work.

A study of girl ragpickers in Delhi noted that all the girls interviewed were from families which has migrated from Bangladesh and West Bengal. Besides ragpicking they were also engaged in preparing match sticks, domestic work, collecting fuel and water. Four years old girls used to go with their elder brothers and sisters for ragpicking. They are prone to catch intestinal infection and skin diseases.

The industries which employ a large percentage of girl children are glass works, gem cutting and polishing, match stick factories and fireworks. In these industries their work conditions are very bad.

### 12.2.4 Socio-Economic Background

You have earlier learnt in Unit 12 of Block 1, ESO-02, about the nature and extent of rural and urban poverty in India. The problem of poverty in India has been described in terms of social classes and castes. In rural areas landless agricultural labourers, marginal landholders, and artisans constitute poor

households. Landless labourers mostly belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In urban areas the poor people live in slums or in temporary hutments or on pavements. The problem of poverty in India has also been discussed in terms of its magnitude e.g. according to official figures about 40 per cent people in India live in object poverty. Rural poor unable to earn a living often migrate to towns in search of work. The face of urban India is changing, as 40 million people including 6 million children are living in slums. Millions of children from these poorer households in rural and urban areas are forced to work at an early age to supplement the family's inadequate income. Child Labour is used as a survival strategy by poor households. Thus, India has the largest child labour force in the world.

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) What are the reasons for child labour? Answer in about six lines.

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ii) Who is a child worker in India? Answer in about three lines.

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**12.3 CAUSES AND CONDITIONS OF CHILD LABOUR**

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Children, as we have seen, are employed in all types of work. We can examine the type of work they do in the rural and urban areas.

**12.3.1 Rural Areas**

Children work as wage earners, as self-employed workers and as unpaid family helpers. In rural areas children are often employed for grazing cattle, in agricultural activities, in home-based industries (bidi making, handlooms, handicrafts etc.). The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) analysis shows that the prevalence of child labour across India is related to:

- i) proportion (high concentration) of Scheduled Caste population
- ii) low levels of female literacy
- iii) low wage rates for adult workers
- iv) nature of (small) size of land holdings
- v) home-based production.

Higher wage rates for women had correspondingly lower participation of girls as they were retained by their families for domestic work. Hence the NSSO study also suggested that improving the working conditions of adult women and providing alternatives to employment of children, can reduce child labour. Various studies have shown that the number of child workers is large in rural areas. Most of the child workers are concentrated among the landless agricultural households, in agriculture and livestock activities and in home-based enterprises (food processing, weaving, handicrafts, bidi rolling, papad making etc.).

The demand for child labour is also determined by culturally prescribed division of labour by age and gender. Girls in the age-group of 10-14 work much harder than boys.



Child Labour

### 12.3.2 Urban Areas

In urban areas children work as wage earners in small industries and workshops such as bidi, match and fireworks, glass and bangle, carpet weaving, handloom, gem polishing, potteries, paper bags, plastic goods and fish processing. Match making and fireworks industries have a large incidence of working children of a very young age. They also work at construction sites, stone quarries or in loading and unloading operations.

They serve tea and food in dhabas (small roadside eating places and tea shops) and restaurants, sell vegetables and milk, work as domestic servants, car cleaners and newspaper vendors. Children from slums also work as porters and casual workers.

Children, in both rural and urban areas work as unpaid family helpers in employers' homes in contract work done by families on piece-rate basis or in families' own farms or small enterprises. The child gets no recognition or money for the work done at home. Usually the work done at home is considered to be less exploitative but many a times child abuse and long hours of work in difficult conditions takes place within the family.

Studies conducted in several parts of the country invariably show that child labourers are required to work for longer period of time for wage; and they are usually paid less. They are to work in many places also under inhuman working conditions, even without the minimum security to life.

### Activity 2

Collect information from 10 child labourers who have been working in your locality, on the nature of work done, working hours and wages received by them. Prepare a note on these and compare it with other students at your Study Centre, if possible.

A significant number of the child labourers in urban and metropolitan areas consists of street children. They are children who have no homes and they live on the pavements. In Delhi alone it is estimated that of the 22 lakh children, approximately 4 lakhs are working children and of these about 1.5 lakhs are street children. Often the harsh living conditions in rural areas and domestic conflicts force children to run away.

The run aways and destitute street children are the most vulnerable group of child workers. A study of child porters in a metropolitan city found that most of them came from large families with low family earnings. Violence was stated to be an important reason for leaving their homes. They mostly slept on the pavements or on railway platforms.

Most of the child labour of our country are in situation in which they are forced to work. They have to work not for their own survival alone but also for the survival of the members of their family. However, they have to work in very unhealthy and insecure work conditions which are detrimental to the total growth of a human being. They mostly remain illiterate and are sickly build. Today's children are tomorrow's citizen of the nation. Indeed, they are likely to grow up as illiterate, frustrated and unhealthy citizens.

As already mentioned, child labourers are from poor economic background. With the limited income they earn, it is not possible for them to satisfy their needs. Hence many of them resort to anti-social activities at a very low age. In the urban areas, taking advantage of their poverty, insecurity and ignorance as well many of the organised anti-social elements use these children for their crude purposes. Hence many of these children spend their childhood in despair. In long run, many of them become destitute children.

Every state, as a welfare institution, undertakes some measures for the prohibition of child labour as also for the well being of the children. Hence, it is essential for us to look into these provisions. In the next section we shall be examining these aspects.

### Check Your Progress 2

Tick mark the correct answer.

- i) Studies have shown that the number of child workers is
  - a) large in rural areas
  - b) large in urban areas
  - c) equal in rural and urban areas
  - d) None of the above is correct.
  
- ii) Briefly state the types of work done by child workers as paid workers in urban areas. Answer in about six lines.

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## 12.4 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

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In post-independent India several institutional initiatives have been undertaken to deal with the issues of children. Let us examine these briefly.

### 12.4.1 Constitutional Provisions

Prohibition and Regulation of Child labour has received considerable attention in the last few decades. The Constitution of India, in Article 24, provides that no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed in any factory or mine or be engaged in any hazardous employment. Article 39(e) and (f) of the Directive Principle of State Policy requires the State to ensure that ‘the health and strength of workers, men, women and tender age of children are not abused’ and ‘children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy climate, and are protected against exploitation’. The Constitution also provides that the state shall endeavor to provide, within a period of ten years from its commencement, free and compulsory education for all children up to 14 years of age.

### 12.4.2 Committee on Child Labour

The Report of the National Commission of Labour (1969) and the Report of the Committee on Child Labour (1981) examined the causes and consequences of child labour in India. Following the Report of the Committee on Child Labour (1981) the Government appointed a special Central Advisory Board on Child Labour under the Ministry of Labour. The Board reviews the implementation of existing legislations and suggests further legal and welfare measures. It also identifies industries/occupations where child labour needs to be eliminated.



In 1975, after the National Policy Resolution for Children was adopted, a National Children's Board was constituted with the objective of creating greater awareness about children's problems, promote their welfare and review and co-ordinate educational health and welfare programmes for children.

### 12.4.3 Legislations on Child Labour

In 1881 the first legislation was passed for regulating employment of children in factories. The Indian Factories Act 1881 prescribed the minimum age for employment as seven years and the working hours not to exceed nine hours. The 1891 amendment raised the minimum age of employment to nine years and maximum hours of work to seven hours. The Factories Act, 1948 prohibits employment of children below the age of 14 years.

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 is the first comprehensive legislation which prohibits employment of children below 14 years, and in some cases 15 years, in the organised industries and in certain hazardous industrial occupations like bidi and carpet making, cloth dyeing and weaving, manufacture of matches, explosives and fire works, soap manufacturing, leather tanning and building and construction industry. However the bulk of children are employed in nonformal sector.

### 12.4.4 Problems of Implementation

More than 80% of working children are in rural areas in the agricultural sector. A large number of them work in the self-employed and unorganised sector such as domestic servants, children working in small eating shops, at construction sites or as porters etc. which are not covered by any protective legislation.

The government subscribes to the view that child labour cannot be abolished but can only be regulated. The 1986 Act is totally inadequate to deal with the problems of child labour as they are rooted in poverty. The 1986 Act prohibits use of child labour in hazardous occupations and processes. Employers bypass the legislation by either not maintaining the muster roll or framing out work to smaller units or to home-based workers. Most of the children work in small industries which are not covered by legislation. Approximately 40,000 girl children working in Sivakasi match factories are below 14 years of age. In the growing carpet industries in eastern U.P., according to non government estimates, more than 25,000 child labourers work. Because of poverty many of them have migrated there from Bihar etc. places.

From employers point of view children are a source of cheap and docile labour and they do not have any obligations. Some of the employers even claim that they employ them out of sympathy and thus help poor families to supplement their income. They feel that if not employed, these child labour would be involved in anti-social activities and many of them would die of starvation. Employment of children keeps the cost of production low through low wages and thus the margin of profit increases.

Several investigative reports and documentaries have highlighted the abuse of child labour in glass and bangle industry in Ferozabad, match and fireworks industry in Sivakasi, carpet weaving industry in Mirzapur etc. Recently, in a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court put a ban on the employment of children

in bidi manufacturing. Despite legislations, exploitation of child labour continues.

**Check Your Progress 3**

i) Tick mark the correct box (true or false):

Article 24 provides for the employment of children below the age of 14 years.

True

False

ii) In India education is free and compulsory for children upto 14 years of age.

True

False

iii) Write in a few words, about the National Policy Resolution for Children. Use four lines to answer.

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**12.5 THE CHALLENGES OF MEETING THE BASIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN**

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The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the child sets universal legal standards of protection of children against neglect, abuse and exploitation at work as well as guarantees them basic human rights. The Convention contains 54 Articles which cover children’s civil, economic, social, cultural and political rights. Yet millions of children are denied their ‘right to life with justice and dignity’, and are forced to work under subhuman condition because they are poor and deprived. They are ‘children without childhood’. India had co-sponsored the UN General Assembly’s Resolution on the International Year of the Child and was the first country to adopt a National Plan of Action. The theme for the International Year of the Child (1979) was ‘reaching the Deprived Child’.

Universalisation of elementary education is expected to play a dominant and effective role in reducing child labour participation rate. However, it is the poverty which forces children to drop out from school. In order to develop his/her potential, a child has to be free from hunger, neglect, exploitation and abuse. Rights of children cannot be implemented through legislation alone, but will depend on a society’s commitment to improve the quality of life and particularly strengthen the economic roles of women from the poorer households.



Labour Welfare : is it Myth?

Children are the starting point of any development strategy. The Government of India's National Policy on Children (1974) emphasised that children are a nation's supremely important asset and declared that the nation is responsible for their 'nature and solicitude'. It also states that 'children's programmes should find a prominent place in our national plans for the development of human resources so that children grow up to become robust citizen.... Equal opportunities for development of all children during the period of growth, should be our aim, for this will serve our larger purpose of reducing inequality and ensuring social justice.'

Following the proclamation of this policy, a National Children's Board was set up in 1975 to ensure planning, monitoring and co-ordination of child welfare services i.e. nutrition, immunisation, health care, pre-school education of mothers etc. at the national level.

Despite these policy measures, the infant mortality rate in India remains very high (93 per thousand live births). Child mortality rates are higher for girls due to neglect and discriminatory treatment in terms of food, nutrition and health care. More girls than boys drop out of school or are not enrolled from low income groups as the girl child's labour is needed by the family to release her mother's work time.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has expressed their concern for the future of the girl child and suggested for the enlargement of the definition of the 'child' to include 14-20 age groups as the adolescent girl. However, this is neither reached by government programmes for children nor by those for adult women. The greater the poverty, the more aggravated is the situation of the girl child.

The SAARC countries had declared the 90s the Decades of Girl Child to achieve a universal coverage of education and health services for children and ensure their survival, growth and development. Hence effective economic and social policies are needed for the low income groups to bring about a significant improvement in the quality of life.

Women and children welfare is never high on the agenda of national governments. Sustained political will and united action is required by the government, international agencies and non-governmental organisations to ensure the protection and development of children.

#### Check Your Progress 4

Tick mark the correct answer.

- i) Which one of the following is expected to play a crucial role in reducing the child labour participation rate?
  - a) High wage
  - b) Good work condition
  - c) Universalisations of elementary education.
  - d) None of the above.
- ii) The 1990s was declared as the ‘Decade of the Girl Child’ by the
  - a) European Countries
  - b) Latin American Countries
  - c) African Countries
  - d) SAARC Countries.

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### 12.6 LET US SUM UP

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The problem of child labour is related to the problem of poverty in India. Most of the child workers come from the families of landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, artisans and migrants living in urban slums. There are no reliable estimates of child labour. However child labour is used as a survival strategy by poorer households. Children work as wage earners, unpaid family helpers and as self-employed workers selling various products. They are also employed in several hazardous occupations like match and fireworks, glass and bangle industries, carpet weaving etc. despite the legislation prohibiting their employment in such occupations.

Providing education, health care, nutrition and better living standards to millions of deprived children is the biggest challenge facing the country. To deal with all these aspects in this unit we have covered the social background and estimates and the nature of employment of child labour in India. We have also discussed the constitutional and legal provisions made in India to deal with the issues of child labour. Lastly we have discussed the challenges that need to be faced in meeting the needs of the child labour.

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### 12.7 KEY WORDS

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**Home-based Production** : Items produced exclusively using the labour of the family members.

- Informal Sector** : In India production activity can broadly be defined as formal and informal. The formal sector is governed by statutes enacted by formal bodies. By informal sector we mean various economic that are performed but no record is maintained as per the statutes. Their activities are scattered throughout the county. Most of the self-employed persons belong to this category.
- Piece-rates** : Wage given for per piece of work.
- Self-employed** : Persons employed in their own enterprise.

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## 12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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Gupta, M. 1987, *Young Hand at Work: Child Labour in India*. Atma Ram and Sons Publications: New Delhi

UNICEF, 1990, *Development Goals and Strategies for Children in the 1990s*. A UNICEF Policy Review: New York.

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## 12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) A significant proportion of Indian population live in poverty. Many of them are forced to migrate to urban areas in search of employment. Millions of children from poor households in rural and urban areas are forced to work at an early age to supplement the family's inadequate income.
- ii) According to census definition a child worker is one who works for a major part of the day and is below the age of 14 years.

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) a)
- ii) In urban areas children work as wage earners in small industries and workshops such as bidi, match and fireworks, glass and bangle, carpet weaving, handloom, gem polishing, potteries, paper bags, plastic goods and fish processing. They also work at construction sites, stone quarries and in loading and unloading.

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) False
- ii) False
- iii) In 1975, after the National Policy Resolution for Children was adopted, a National Children's Board was constituted with the objective of creating greater awareness about children's problem, to promote their welfare and to review and coordinate education, health and welfare programmes for children.

### Check Your Progress 4

- i) c
- ii) d

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