LABOUR MARKET AND HOUSEHOLD BEHAVIOUR: A CASE OF UNORGANISED SALESWOMEN

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Women constitute only a quarter of the total labour force in India though they form nearly half of the Indian population. The total workforce in the country is 314 million, of which 224 million are men, and 90 million are women. Workingwomen constitute only 17 per cent of the women folk in India. The percentage of female workers in the total working force is 31.5 and the percentage varies from state to state and from community to community. For instance the percentage of female workers ranges from 9.43 in West Bengal to 43.99 in Madhya Pradesh. In addition to the low work participation rate, women are largely concentrated in the unorganised sector. More than 90 per cent of the female working force is concentrated in the unorganized sector. They are concentrated in this sector due to the biased social value, less skills required for the job, ease of entry, traditional role assigned to them, technological advancements in the organized sector etc. The women labour in Kerala is no exception to this, though women in the state enjoy a high status compared to their counterparts in other states. In this context, it is necessary to have an overview of women employment in Kerala.

1.0   Women Employment in Kerala

Women's position in Kerala is far above that of women in other states of India in terms of Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI). High literacy rate, high expectation of life and low infant mortality rate due to greater access to educational and health care facilities along with a favourable sex ratio are the reasons for high PQLI. These are sometimes at par with European Countries. The North Indian situation of Excess Female Mortality (excess in relation to men) is quite less in the state. This is due to low mortality rate among female infants (i.e. the chance of the female babies facing premature death) and childbearing age-groups. Further, women, as a part of labour group, are more unionised in Kerala. Despite these impressive gains, Kerala women face many problems like low Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR), high unemployment, concentration in the unorganised sector, economic discrimination etc. which are crucial to women in other states. In the case of FWPR, Kerala follows the national trend. It has been quite low and falling over the decades. FWPR of India was 22.72 in 1991 as against 31.70 in 1901, while FWPR of Kerala was 16.9 in 1991 as against 33 in 1901. (See Table 1)

Table 1: FWPR in India and Kerala

Year	FWPR	
	India	Kerala
1901	31.7	33
1911	33.7	28.9
1921	33.9	25
1931	27.6	35.6
1941	NA	NA
1951	23.3	18.3
1961	28	19.7
1971	14.22	14.6
1981	19.67	16.6
1991	22.72	16.9

Source: Census of India

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The change of land tenure, the decline of traditional industries, technological advancements etc. are the important reasons cited for the low FWPR. In Kerala, cash crops gave greater chance for woman to earn an income. But the changes in land tenure have adversely affected women. It is also found that all the land and other legislations regarding property rights, marriage and inheritance were regressive for women (Saradamoni, 1981). The decline of traditional industries also adversely affected women.

Technological advancement is another factor affecting women's employment adversely. It is generally recognized that change in technology results in long-term trends of the decline in female employment (Banerjee, 1985; Savara, 1986). In Kerala, technological advancement leads to marginalisation and displacement. Marginality is more a female phenomenon because they are not economically active throughout the year. Whenever they are active, they are put in low paid occupations. However, it is also seen that female labourers instead of getting displaced absolutely from the industrial sector of Kerala gets integrated with it in new and complex forms. Such integration is exploitative and is against the interest of workers. In brief, the change in land tenure, decline of traditional industries and technological progress led to marginality and displacement of women labourers.

All these severely hit the condition of urban women more than rural women. In the rural sector, it results in an increase in the non-agricultural force; but in the urban sector, woman has little choice but to stay at home, though urban FWPR (11.76%) is higher than that of all India level (8.32%). Within Kerala, rural FWPR was higher than urban FWPR. Between 1971 and 1981, a 35.32 per cent increase in Rural Work Participation (RWP) was experienced. This was due to the increase in non-agricultural labour force. In fact, the proportion of females in regular employment in non-agricultural sector is much higher in Kerala, the share of which increased from 16 per cent in 1977-78 to 17.5 per cent in 1987-88. The pattern of employment of women, which is quite different from that of national trend, shows that secondary and tertiary sectors absorb a relatively higher percentage of female work force. Self-employment in non-agricultural sector also registered a relatively higher increase for females than men. In the urban sector, there was significant increase in female employment in public administration and education. Still, there is a mismatch between the supply of and demand for female labourers, especially in the case of educated women.

Several studies have made it clear that the problem of educated unemployment among them is crucial (Oommen, 1992; Prakash, 1988; Eapen, 1994). Out of the total labour force in he state, 25.9 per cent is unemployed. It is 43.6 per cent among women as against 17.8 percent among men. Further, in urban areas, unemployment among women is 58.7 per cent, but that of men is only 20.3 per cent. Women registrants in the Employment Exchanges of Kerala constitute 40 per cent of the total. High rate of employment along with the problem of displacement led to the concentration of women in low paid occupations both in the organized and unorganized sectors. It is observed that the employment of women is much more concentrated in the unorganized sectors of the economy in Kerala than in the country as a whole (Gulati, 1975).

Finally, women labourers are not equally unionised as men in Kerala, though Kerala women are more unionised compared to their counterparts in the country. In short, high unemployment rate coupled with less employment opportunities and the other problems mentioned above force women labourers to find their employment in low paid sectors. In other words, they are over crowed in the sectors where less skill is required and where there is

less competition from males. This leads to labour market discrimination: firstly, in the form of gender-specific occupational discrimination and secondly, in the form of wage discrimination. Moreover, the employed women are not getting much support from male members in the household, which again worsens their position.

2.0   Conceptual Framework and Focus

In the context of the above overview it would be important to study the problem of women workers deployed in the unorganized sector of Kerala. Importantly, excess supply of women and the resultant discrimination can be seen not only in the unorganized sector but also in the organized sector. It must be noted that many of the petty shops and business units are registered under the shops and Establishments Act[1], 1967, Kerala. Most of the studies concentrate on the problems of women labourers in unorganized sectors, paying less attention to the problems of unorganized women workers in the registered shops. In fact there are large number of women working as tailors in the registered ready-made garment units, and as sales workers in shops and establishments etc. Strictly speaking, they are coming under the category of unorganized labour when we adopt a scientific criterion for defining the unorganized sector. The present study adopts the term 'unorganised labour' to signify those who are active in the labour market but not entitled to get minimum wages and other benefits life provident fund etc. As such the women working in the registered shops also come under the category of unorganized labour along with the unorganized labour proper. The present study is an attempt to analyse the labour market of unorganized saleswomen (working in the registered as well as unregistered shops) in Ernakulam District.

3.0   Theoretical Framework

 The pattern of employment among women in Kerala differs from that of the country as a whole. The secondary and tertiary sectors in Kerala absorb a relatively higher percentage of the female work force compared to the primary sector. One out of twenty working women in the state is classified as cultivators, while at the national level it is one-third. Out of the female labour force, nearly 90 per cent is concentrated in the unorganized sector. Even in the organized sector, a large number of women are non-unionised and show the features of unorganized labour. As such women are overcrowded and underpaid. The Overcrowding Model and Exploitation Theory of labour are much suited to explain this phenomenon. The overcrowding model demonstrates that women wages are depressed because they are crowded into a few sectors. The exploitation theory shows that by paying low wages equal to subsistence level, a surplus value goes into the pockets of capitalists. Further, a majority of saleswomen comes from poor families and often being the sole earners in the family; they perform multiple roles as housewives as well as labourers. Time Allocation theory and discrimination theory developed by Becker (1957, 65) are suitable to explain this fact. While the former analyses the allocation of time to non-market, the latter explains the extent of discrimination in the labour market.

4.0   Objective and Methodology

The present study is on saleswomen in urban centers of Ernakulam District of Kerala. The broad objectives of the study are to analyse the earning along with its differentials across different activities, to assess the discrimination against saleswomen in relation to salesmen in the labour market in terms of wages and

discrimination in the household sector based on time-allocation theory. The aspect of migration and its process also form a part of the study. Finally, the changes in the labour market in the two time intervals (1991 and 2000) have also been looked into. The data were collected during June 2000 in order to have a fresh look at the market in continuation of the earlier survey held in 1991.

Primary and secondary data have been used for the study. For collecting primary data, a multistage sampling was followed on the basis of geographical location, the nature of business and the size of it. The selected shops were classified into four strata viz. textile shops, medical shops, ladies stores and other shops (such as audio-video shops, book shops, bakery etc.) The shops were further divided into large, medium and small. The shops having five or less number of employees were defined as small, those having six to ten workers were called medium and those with more than ten workers were considered as large shops. Lastly, a fifth stratum viz. door-to-door saleswoman was added. The number of saleswomen interviewed for the study was 150 in 1991, selected by using a proportionate sampling of 20 per cent of workers in each group. In 2000, it was possible to collect data from 60 saleswomen only. Care was taken to include the shops surveyed earlier as much as possible.

The tools used for analyzing the data are arithmetic mean, co-efficient of variation, multiple regression and opportunity cost technique. These are used to analyze the earning function and economic discrimination of saleswomen.

5.0 Dynamics of Labour Market

5.1 Profile of Respondents

At the outset it should be emphasized that the respondents interviewed were working in shops of various kinds like textiles, medical stores, ladies stores and others. The percentages of respondents selected for the study in these groups were 61, 19, 9 and 11 respectively in both time intervals. It should also be noted that the shops, in which they were working, were of different sizes like small, medium and large shops. Table 2 shows the details regarding the percentages of respondents interviewed in each category.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution Respondents by Size of Shops

Period	Size of Shop			Total
	Small	Medium	Large	
1991	65.7	15.7	18.6	100
2000	63.3	16.7	20	100

Source: Survey data

It is clear from the table that most of the respondents are attached with small shops but a good number of them are found to be working in the large establishments. What is more important in this context is not the nature and size of shops, but rather the profiles of respondents. We have analysed their profiles in terms of age, religion and caste, education and martial status.

5.1.1   Age

Employers preferred not only women to men but also a particular age-group of them as sales force to others. This is evident from Table 3.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Age-group

Age-group	Percentage of Rrespondents	
	1991	2000
15-20	19.33	20.00
21-25	52.00	58.34
26-30	18.00	10.00
31-35	5.33	5.00
36-40	2.67	3.33
41-45	2.67	3.33
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Survey data

It is clear from Table 3 that a good number of women entered the sector at a young age. The majority of the respondents belong to the age group of 21-30. The percentage of respondents in the age-group 15-30 was nearly 90 per cent in 1991 and 2000. The reason for low distribution in upper age group is that they are forced to leave the workplace before they reach 30 or 35 years.

5.1.2 Religion & Caste

Table 4 shows the information regarding the distribution of respondents by religion and caste.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Religion and Caste

Religion	Caste	Percentage of Respondents	
		1991	2000
Hindu	Brahmins	4.67	5.00
	Nair	8.00	11.67
	Ezhava	23.33	20.00
	Others	10.00	5.00
Sub Total		**46.00**	**41.67**
Christians	Latin Catholic	35.33	25.00
	Syrian Catholic	10.67	18.33
	Others	1.33	4.00
Sub Total		**47.33**	**45.00**
Muslim		**6.67**	**13.33**
Total		**100**	**100**

Source: Survey data

The table gives the inference that two castes, viz Ezhava and Latin Catholic constitute the largest categories in the sales workforce. It is reported that there are a large number of shops owned by these two castes in the study area. To see the relation in detail the percentage distribution of respondents by employers' religion and caste are worked out and it is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Owners' Religion and Caste

Religion of the employer	Same caste		Other caste but same religion		Other religions	
	1991	2000	1991	2000	1991	2000
Hindu	65	63	6	13	29	24
Christian	64	61	16	17	18	22
Muslim	80	85	-	-	20	15

Source: Survey data

Table 5 makes it clear that employers largely recruit women of their caste as sales force. It means that entry of women in the labour market is mainly determined by religion and caste. It is further made clear that there is increase in the women of 'other caste but same religion' in 2000 as compared to 1991. On the whole, the percentage distribution of respondents by employers' religion and caste is pronounced by three per cent.

5.1.3 Marital status

Marriage is a handicap to those women who want to enter this labour market and even to continue in the employment. Unmarried women of a particular age group are largely recruited as is evident from the data given in Table 6.

Table 6: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Percentage of Respondents	
	1991	2000
Married	18.67	10.00
Unmarried	69.33	83.34
Married and widowed	8.00	3.33
Married and separated	4.00	3.33
Total	100	100

Source: Census of India

It is clear from the table that married women constitute a small section. Their share has decreased further in 2000. Married women are largely found in the public shops because they are coming here with the expectation of becoming permanent in the near future. Still, a married woman of above 40 years was hardly found in this sector. It has been noticed that some women are coming to the labour market after their marriage as casual labourers. In fact, employers have succeeded in creating such an impression in their minds that they will not be absorbed after the marriage.

In private shops, it was found that there existed even a secret contract between the employees and the employer that they had to leave the job as and when they got married. The recent survey is a little bit different in respect of the contract. No respondent mentioned about the prevalence of such a contract; instead, they know that they are appointed only for a temporary period. It is also found that they are not willing to come to the work place after the marriage due to family compulsions. As a result it needs to be emphasized that women themselves are partially responsible for the temporary nature of employment. As regards certain private shops, the earlier survey showed that they were able to continue in the employment even after marriage under certain circumstances determined by what is called 'integration'.

Integration takes place in two ways; firstly the workers are moved from one shop to another of the same nature and of different employers. Secondly, they move from one shop to another of the same nature and of the same employer. The former is called 'inter-integration' and the latter 'intra-integration'. More than 30 percent of the women had previous experience in other shops, out of which 22 percent were working in the textile shops itself. Some of them had previous experience in more than one shop and many were working under the same employer. It is made clear further that intra-integration increased by 20 percent in 2000.

5.1.4   Education

Table 7 shows the educational level of women

Table 7: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

Educational Level	Percentage of Respondents	
	1991	2000
Matriculation completed and below 10	48.67	63.33
Matriculation passed +2 completed	46.00	25.00
Graduates	5.33	11.60
Total	100	100

Source: Survey Data

In Kerala, there is an oversupply of women who have completed matriculation. As there is no difficulty in absorbing them at the low wage level, employers prefer to recruit women with 'matriculation completed'. Of course, there are some graduates but they are recruited in dead-end jobs where the salary will be a little higher. Mill shops are showing a preference for them. In this respect, there is no significant difference to be noted between the two-time periods except the increase in the +2 candidates as saleswomen. While the percentage of +2 candidates was 26% in 1991, it increased to 43% in 2000.

From the above analysis it is inferred that unmarried women in the young age group with medium level of education, preferably members of the same caste are largely recruited in this sector. This feature has aggravated a little in 2000 as compared to 1991. as a result, what is existing is not a dualistic market but rather a 'fragmented market'[2]. It means that their entry to the labour market is determined by some 'pre-entry' factors and hence the 'fragmentation' in the labour market. The fragmentation is further substantiated by some other pre-entry factors like choice of gender, channels of recruitment as given in the ensuing section.

5.2   Choice of gender

It is found that majority of the employers prefer saleswomen to men in carrying out this peculiar type of work. It was estimated that women constituted more than 75 per cent of the workforce in 1991. This share of women in the sales force is increased to 86 per cent in 2000 as per data collected from the samples units and from labour office, Ernakulam. This is largely attributed to the employer's deliberate strategy than anything else. Employer's strategy, in turn, is shaped by their past experiences in this sector. It has been reported by the respondents that there were men employees only in this sector till the late 60s. But there was a prolonged strike of 90 days by salesmen's union in the early 70s for wage hike. Though the labourer's strike was put in vain, the employer's started to recruit women in their place so as to avoid any further labour problems. In fact this ultimately resulted in raising their level of profits. The employers had realized the fact the saleswomen could be recruited still at a lower wages so that their level of profit as well as surplus value could be raised to a higher level than before. In the 1991 survey itself, it was interestingly found that except in two shops where men only were recruited in the sales section, all others had largely recruited women.

5.3   Channels of Recruitment

Even if the candidates belong to the same caste the entry to the work place is not as smooth as one thinks. They are recruited in the workplace through recommendations from relatives, friends etc. There is little scope for getting employment through recognized screening methods. The details regarding the channels of recruitment are given in Table 8.

Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Source of Information for Job

Source of Information	Type of Shop									
	Textiles		Medical		Ladies		Others		Total	
	1991	2000	1991	2000	1991	2000	1991	2000	1991	2000
Friends and relatives	52.84	45.00	10.71	13.33	7.14	10.00	5.71	11.66	76.40	80.00
Advertisement	3.60	3.33	0.00	3.33	0.71	0.00	1.43	1.67	5.74	8.33
Employer	2.86	3.33	5.71	1.67	1.43	1.67	1.43	0.00	11.43	6.67
Own effort	2.86	1.67	1.43	1.67	0.00	1.67	2.14	0.00	6.43	5.00
Total	62.16	53.33	17.85	20.00	9.28	13.34	10.71	13.33	100	100

Source: Survey data

Table 8 makes it clear that women are being largely recruited through recommendations made by friends and relatives. Employers have also made it clear that they are not interested to follow any screening methods like interview, tests etc for the selection of employees. According to them, any one could learn the job and become efficient within a short period of time without much expertise, employees consider the qualities like trustworthiness, honesty, loyalty etc as important. They ensure appointing candidates with these qualities by appointing through recommendation and other similar techniques. As a result, there is strong loyalty among the

women workers towards employers. This puts them in a position not to demand higher wages and other benefits.

To sum up, women in the young age group with medium level of education, preferably member of the same caste, and recommended by relatives of friends are recruited as sales force in this sector.

5.4   Income and Skill formation

As per the first survey in 1991, the average wage of saleswomen was estimated at Rs,448/- per month which was half of the minimum wage (51%) determined on the basis of the criterion laid down in the Shops and Establishments Act, 1987 (i.e. Rs.881/- as on 31 December 1991) and the modal wage rate was estimated at Rs.300/-. This variation hints at the prevalence of a highly complex wage rate system in this sector. This was supported by the fact that the starting salary varied from Rs.150/- to Rs.500/- for the same kind of work.

The recent survey also establishes almost the same fact. As per the survey in 2000 the starting salary ranges from Rs.300 to 700/-. The average wage is worked out as Rs.1235/- which is only 57 per cent of the present minimum wage of Rs.2177.50. In relative terms the wage is increased by 176% over the period 1991-2000. When compared with the minimum wage, there is slight improvement by six per cent. To get a real picture, it is necessary to convert the wage into real terms. For this, we have deflated the absolute wage by consumer price index numbers for urban non-manuals (1984-85 as the base and the center being Trivandrum) and found that the real wages were Rs.294.74 and 350.80 for 1991 and 2000 respectively. Hence, an increase of 19 per cent is noticed over the period referred to. Further, we have deflated the minimum wage allowed by the Act by the same index and found that the minimum wages for the two time intervals are Rs.579.60 and Rs.618.61 respectively. Hence an increase of 6.7 per cent is noticed.

With the information collected on saleswomen's wage and on relevant variables such as year of service and year of schooling, multiple regression has been used to estimate the effect of each variable on wages. The earning function developed in the study indicates the extent to which all the variables taken together can explain the variation in wages. The statistical formulation of earning function is $Y=a+b_1X_1+b_2X_2$. In the equation, X_1 is the year of service and X_2 is the year of schooling of saleswomen. The resultant earning function is usually called the human capital earning function because the two independent variables are the two components of human capital theory. Though we have fitted the regression functions for two time intervals, they were not a statistically good fit. The value of the fitted regression equation for the year 1991 is given as follows:

$$Y=298.1449 + 29.8597X_1 + 5.113X_2$$
$$(87.61536)\quad(4.9612)\quad(7.2801)$$
$$(3.4029)\quad(6.0186)\quad(0.7024)$$
$$R^2=0.317509$$

The values in the first parenthesis give the standard error of variables and the values in second parenthesis show the 't' values. The value of the first independent variable is significantly related to the dependent variable. But the 't' statistic of second independent variable makes it clear that it is not related to the dependent variable.

However the value of R2 gives the idea that the correlation between earning and the two independent variables is not so strong as the latter explains only 31.75 per cent of the variation in the earning.

The earning function fitted supports the conclusion that year of service is more influential than the year of schooling. This is further supported by the correlation co-efficients that are $YX_1=0.453$ and $YX_2=0.021$ ($X_1X_2=.05891$). However the function fitted in 1991 was found to be significant at five per cent level.

The major reasons for less influence of education on earning is the over supply of matriculates (both passed and failed). There is an overcrowding of women of this category in the labour market for this peculiar job. Skill or efficiency in salesmanship is the factor considered by the employers. It also explains the low influence of education on earning. Investment in on-the-job training, another component of human capital, is almost absent since the new sales person learns with the help of experienced hands.

The working condition analysed in terms of duration of work, leisure etc. also exposes the fact that they are put in vulnerable conditions. It is almost similar in all types of shops in two-time intervals. They are supposed to work 10 to 11 hours a day. Rotation of work and promotions are quite absent in all shops. In most situations they are supposed to start their career as saleswomen and retire also as saleswomen.

In regard to other monetary benefits, bonus and sales incentive are the two benefits extended to them. There is no common rule for the fixation of bonus. It ranged from a half-month's salary to two month's salary. Sales incentive is given by a limited number of shops, for which no formula or a uniform pattern is followed. Medical and provident fund facilities are distant dreams to them. It is denied to them for the simple reason that they are not coming under the purview of the Act concerned. In short, low wage level, non-uniform bonus, negligible and non-uniform sales incentives, absence of provident fund and other fringe benefits expose the situation in which massive exploitation prevails in the sector.

5.4.1 Activity-wise analysis

In the light of the above findings, it is worthwhile to know whether the activities of shops influence the earnings of sales women. An attempt is made to see the relation between various activities and the earnings of sales women. The relevant data is presented in Table 9.

Table 9 Average Monthly Wage across activities (In Rupees)

Year	Nature of Shop				
	Textiles	Medical Shops	Ladies Stores	Others	Doors to Door Saleswomen
1991	473	449	281	418	490
2000	1409	1027	753	1450	1435

Source: Survey data

It is evident from the table that the position of all saleswomen has improved over the period. The relative increase is high in the case of those who work in 'others' like audio-video' shops etc. The sales women in ladies stores are severely hit by very low wages in two-time periods. The high level of earning by the door-to-door

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sales women is accounted for their nature of work, which is, based on commission. In this context it is necessary to have discussion on door-to-door saleswomen.

The job of a door-to-door saleswoman –the fifth stratum in the study – is more tedious as they have to move from house to house for selling out the product. They are constituted by two groups, viz. the self-employed and those who work on commission basis. Self-employed category sells out the products produced by themselves with the help of family labourers. It is estimated that their average daily income ranges from Rs. 75/- to 100/-. Normally they spend less time in the labour market because their profit margin is comparatively high. But the earnings of the self-employed were not found to be greater than others. The latter category sells out the product supplied by the recruiting agents, called 'Manpower Supplying Agencies' or popularises the new product for these agencies through campaign work. The sale of products like "Aerial", "Ultra Surf" etc. is a case in point. In most cases, these were 'entry' jobs. The women for campaign work had to cover a fixed number of houses, normally 40 houses a day, and the wage was Rs. 25 per a day in 1991. Discussions with the persons involved in it helped us to understand that it is Rs 60 in 2000. It was complained that the actual payment made by the company for this work was more than this wage.

Whenever the agencies did not have campaign work, they sold different products such as candles, tea dust, detergent powder etc. at the door through saleswomen, for which they were paid commission, which ranged from four percent to 20 per cent, depending upon the nature of the product. In the case of commission work, it normally helped to fetch Rs. 40/- a day in 1991 and Rs. 130 in 2000 but they have no fixed time of work. As a part of campaign work, these Agencies move along with the saleswomen, from one area to another, mostly from one district to another so that the mobility of these women is greater. It has been found that many of the working women with the Agencies are migrated labour. There are some migrated labour in the shops also. Though not substantial, a brief survey of the migrated labour of the sales women is also done.

Migrated labour constituted 9.33 percent in 1991. The figure is 8.5 per cent in 2000. The door-to-door saleswomen and seasonal saleswomen mainly constituted them. Migrated labour came to the urban city mainly through the recruitment agencies mentioned above. They came to know about these agencies through advertisement and their own efforts. Local sales women were also recruited in the shops through these agencies. It was seen that a number of saleswomen working in exhibition sales and in temporary shops, which were coming up during festivals, were recruited through these agencies on commission basis.

These agencies normally charge half-month salary as commission. Certain agencies charge even one-month salary as commission. It was found that a number of such sales women were working for daily wages in exhibition sales and in unregistered shops. They were even found working in the public shops throughout the year.

It was observed that the push factors played major role for the migration of saleswomen. Rampant poverty, low level of living and unemployment were the factors that pushed them to the city. They migrated to the city for supplementing the meager family income, or at least to maintain themselves.

5.4.2 Size of Shops and Status

Further, and attempt was made to see whether the employment in large shops, compared to the same in medium and small shops, helped to enhance the earnings of saleswomen. At this juncture it must be noted that though they are large units in the study, they are not, in practice, larger ones as per records but rather smaller or medium with five or six workers in the eyes of officials. They have always been succeeding in manipulating the fact relating to the number of workers so that the recorded number is less than the actual number in the registers of the officials. As a result, they are not supposed to pay provident fund benefits and other benefits to the employees since it does not come under the purview of the Act concerned. The situation is almost same in two time intervals. The arithmetic means of wages in these shops are given Table. 10.

Table 10: Average Wages across Various Size of Shops (In Rupees)

Size of Shops	Small	Medium	Large
1999	413	511	503
2000	1318	1460	1475

Source: Compiled from survey data

Obviously, the payment made by the medium shops was the highest in 1991. Hence using 't' test, it was found that at five per cent level of significance large and medium shops were paying a little higher wages than small shops; but in medium and large shops, there was not much difference in the payment of wages. In 2000, it is evident that the large shops are paying a little higher wages than medium ones. But in the percentage increase in wage over the period is higher in the case of small shops since the increase is 225% in small shops as compared to 193% in large shops and 186% for small ones. The close integration between employees and employers of small shops and the inclusion of certain mill shops in small sector accounted for this increase.

Despite the above stated fact, there is an impression among women in small and medium shops that the workers in large enjoyed more benefits. This definitely increases the status of saleswomen in large shops though the reality is a different one. The data collected and discussions held with employers and experts also made clear it that there is not only a high wage increase in small shops but also an increase in the employment provided by them over the time intervals referred to. It was found that the employment in the sector was increased by 36 per cent. The increase in employment that occurred during the period is largely attributed to the small sector. The study revealed that 85 per cent of increase in employment had occurred in small and medium shops.

5.4.3 In-group Analysis

As the textile sector presented a vividly complex structure, a further analysis was done by grouping them into public, mill and private shops. Public shops are those, which are owned and managed by Cooperatives, Corporations and Boards of Central and State Governments. For example, Co-optex, Hanveev, Hantex etc. Mill shops are exclusively for particular mill-made clothes, which are owned and managed by private individuals observing the rules and regulations of mills like Vimal, Raymonds, Bombay Dyeing Etc. Private shops are those, which are completely owned and managed by private individuals, which deal with cloth materials of different mills. The arithmetic means of wages paid by these shops are given in Table 11.

Table 11: Average Wage across Various Textiles Shops (In Rupees)

Textile Sector	Public	Mill	Private
1991	573	620	432
2000	1583	1700	1297

Source: Compiled from Survey data

Though the mean wage in mill shop is significantly high, using 't' statistic again, it was found that mill and public shops were paying higher wages than private shops. The difference in wages between mill and public shops were not statistically significant. The pattern is almost similar in 1991 and 2000. But the percentage increase in private shop is higher than others.

Comparative analysis of working condition shows that women in private shops are put in vulnerable conditions. The employees in mill shops get free uniforms, sales incentives and short duration training programmes. But the saleswomen in public shops get more leisure time and they are expected to be absorbed permanently (the study is not confined to the permanent workers in public shops). The study found that there were temporary sales women with even eleven years service in public shops; having faced break in every three months in order to discard their claim in the job. Moreover they are recruited for daily wages, which range from Rs 80/- to 100/-. As the promotional chances and sales incentives are provided only to the permanent employees of these shops, the problems of temporary workers are more crucial and severe than others. The problem of the casual nature of work, which has already been discussed, still worsens their condition. Further, appointing and retaining them as temporary workers has become the tactics of the public shops. Though they have a very good pay structure for employees including sales force, they are appointing saleswomen temporarily for daily wages. The daily wage is determined on the basis of the wage allowed by the shops and Establishments Act, which is lesser than the pay scale recommended by their Corporations. Awful! a tactics even unknown to private managements.

6.0 Discrimination in the Labour Market

Saleswomen are not only paid low wages but they are also discriminated against in the labour market. It was found that there existed both occupational segregation (Employer's discrimination) and wage discrimination (Employee's discrimination). Occupational discrimination existed in the sense that most of the women were recruited in the sales section. It was observed that a very limited number of them were engaged in accounts or clerical work. High rate of unemployment, less mobility and skills, absence of alternatives available to them, less competition from males in the sales job and thereby ease of entry, and above all prejudice of the employer led to occupational segregation[3] (Becker's, 1957).

As regards the wage discrimination, it was noticed that the supply of male labour did hardly affect the wage differences. Even if their supply was greater, employers were reluctant to recruit them because they feared that they would create more labour problems in the workplace. But whenever they were recruited, it was because of the employer's preferences and they were paid a higher starting salary. In order to show this, we have collected data from 28 male workers in 1991 apart from the data collected from the female workers about this. In 2000, we have updated the data by asking relevant questions to women themselves.

Wage difference was calculated on the basis of age-group and length of service, which are given in Table 12 and Table 13.

Table 12: Male-Female Earning Gap by Age-group

Age-group	Earning Gap (in Rs)		Earning Proportion (Female to Male)	
	1991	2000	1991	2000
15-20	53	125	86.91	83.50
21-25	54	160	89.91	81.10
26-30	100	200	82.01	85.04
31-35	327	500	58.92	82.30
36-40	342	450	61.68	89.60
41-45	210	300	76.85	87.20

Table 13: Male-Female Earning Gap by Length of Service

Length of Service (in years)	Earning Gap (in Rs)		Earning Proportion (Female to Male)	
	1991	2000	1991	2000
0-2	100	300	77.78	85.2
2-4	148	425	73.71	84.6
4-6	137	250	78.42	78.8
6-8	83	210	87.88	87.7
8-10	117	150	85.15	91.2
10-14	157	105	82.69	89.9

Source: Compiled from survey data

In 1991, it was calculated that the average earning of females was estimated at 78.47 per cent of male's wage but in 2000 it increased to 81.7 per cent. Hence there is a decrease in discrimination by 3.23 per cent. Further analysis made it clear that men's salary increased in proportion to the length of service while the women's salary was adversely affected. The same reverse trend could also be seen in the earning gap by age group in both the time intervals. It means that if they had continued in the workplace, discrimination could have been rooted out to a large extent. It was noted that saleswomen with higher qualification were also recruited for clerical job and hence paid a higher wage. But, whenever women with higher qualifications were recruited for the job of saleswomen-cum-clerk, they were paid a little higher wage, but this was never as high as that of men in the same category. Here, women, always get stuck in dead-end jobs as they were paid little more than their starting salary.

The reasons for wage discrimination are many. Firstly, there is an underestimation that women are temporary participants in this sector. It is actually a deliberate attempt on the part of employers to underestimate the women's probable length of stay in employment. In reality, they absorbed women permanently but it was found that they were permanent till the time of marriage only. Hence, the perception that women were temporary participants in the sales force was often cited as a rationale for paying low wage, though it was not the fact. It was also found that women themselves also underestimate their possible length of stay in the work place. Secondly, many employers cited low level of skill for the pay difference. Thirdly, it was observed that the absence of trade union activities among saleswomen was the major reason for wage discrimination. Lack of time and fear of losing employment were noted as the major reasons for their poor union activities. Traditional and

cultural values also stood in the way of their participation in union activities. It was quite interesting to note that Minimum Wage Act is effectively implemented in two shops where all the employees are men only.

Above all, saleswomen have to carry out the household duties after long working hours in the labour market. They are generally not getting much help from male members of the family for house work, though their role in decision making, especially those of married saleswomen, has improved. At the same time married saleswomen hardly get any assistance from male members to carry out the work in households. This gives an insight of another problem viz. discrimination in the households. This is very important because the status of women is the result of their role in work place and within the households.

6.1 Discrimination in the Household Sector

Discrimination in the household sector is not conventionally an area of economics. But now, household activities and thereby discrimination in the household sector have become part of economics, especially when one can quantify the household work. Attempts, though limited, were made to calculate the value of household services. One such exercise, estimated the money value of household work, using a sample data, of all Indian women. This yielded a value that constituted about 47 per cent of Net Domestic Product (Malathy, 1988). An attempt is made here to analyse the household work discrimination with the help of 'time allocation theory'. There have been a number of attempts to apply the theory of consumer choice to household decision making after the pioneering work by Becker (1965). This branch is called 'New Home Economics', a model of household behaviour[4]. The important contribution of this branch is the study of time as a productive economic resource that is subject to optimal allocation among its use. The implication of this branch of knowledge is that it can be applied to calculate the time spent by a person for household activities, which is not normally quantified. Since the household duties are largely done by women, it has special significance in this context. The relevant data have been collected to measure the money value of household work done by saleswomen

6.1.1 Time Allocation and Money Value

The analysis of the data on time allocation reveals that this was not rationally done as they were compelled to spend more time for housework also. Hence and attempt was made to estimate the money value of housework done by saleswomen. Data regarding the time spent by saleswomen for housework is presented in table 14.

Table 14: Time Spent for Household Work

Number of Hours	Percentage of Saleswomen	
	1991	2000
0-2	21.33	26.7
2-4	53.33	56.7
4-6	19.34	10.0
6-8	06.00	06.6
Total	100.00	100.0

Source: Survey data

The table shows the extent of discrimination against them in the household sector. The average time spent for the housework was 3.2 hours in 1991. This has slightly decreased in 2000 as it was worked out as 3.01 hours.

The money value of housework was estimated with the help of Regression Method and Opportunity-cost of Time Approach. According to the latter, the value of work done by saleswomen at home is set equal to their opportunity cost of time, which is the wage foregone by abstaining from market and choosing to remain at home.

To find the opportunity cost of housework, the wage per hour of the work for each and every saleswoman was calculated with the help of the estimates of the 'earning function'. As per 1991 data, this was Rs. 1.50 per hour, which was the opportunity cost of time spent for the housework for every woman. As a result, value of average monthly income forgone was calculated as Rs. 144. This was 32.14 per cent of their average of their average salary and 16 per cent of their family income. This is certainly not an insignificant amount. Hence it is clear that these women were subordinated and discriminated within the household sector by the so-called domestic ideology, apart from the exploitation in the work place. Even the migrated labour in the study was also not free from this problem.

7.0 Conclusion

Saleswomen as a "group" form a cheap source of labour for employers. Neither the trade unions nor any social organisation show keen interest in their welfare. Trade unions argue that women themselves are responsible for low wages and poor working conditions because they are not taking part in trade union activities. On the contrary, employers argue that women are temporary participants in the work place and hence accounts for low wages. Whatever may be the arguments saleswomen, who come from poor families, form a marginalised group and are forced to accept a poor wage packet along with stiff working conditions. The major findings of the study given below also support this.

1) The profile of saleswomen reveals the fact that saleswomen generally come from poor and middle-income families. The majority belongs to lower castes, though women from forward caste also nowadays join the sector. As regards the educational background, most of them completed matriculation only. In short saleswomen, in general, present a picture of social and educational backwardness.

2) The entry of women in this labour market is restricted by certain 'pre-entry factors' such as religion and caste, age, choice of gender, peculiar channels of recruitment etc. A young and unmarried group dominates the labour market. Most of them belong to 15-30 age group and 84 per cent of them are unmarried. They are unmarried because they would be terminated from the service as and when they get married. This is really the employers' strategy, which has been successfully practiced for a number of years. Sources of information for the job are normally friends and relatives. As they are recruited in the shops through recommendation, some type of loyalty is developed. This gradually results into close integration with the shops. Hence labour market of saleswomen forms a 'fragmented market' than a 'dichotomous' one. Time has aggravated this a little as it is more evident in 2000 than in 1991.

3) Coming to the wage aspect, they receive a very low wage packet. The average wage is just above half of the Minimum wage in 1991 (Rs 448/- i.e. 51%) and this wage in relation to Minimum Wage has

slightly improved in 2000 (Rs. 1235/- i.e. 57%). The real wage calculated by using consumer price index for non-urban manual employees as deflator shows an increase of 12 per cent.

4)   There exist wide earning differentials across the shops. It is evident from the starting salary itself which ranges from Rs. 300 to Rs. 700. Further, the highest wage offered was located as Rs. 3650 where as the lowest was Rs. 300/-. Activity-wise analysis substantiates that in 1991, door-to-door saleswomen received a high wage packet followed by those in textiles, where as in 2000 the credit of receiving high wage has gone to those in 'others' like audio-video shops etc. In 1991 and 2000, a low wage packet was offered for the same category viz. saleswomen in ladies stores.

5)   Analysis on the basis of the size of shops reveals the fact that wages in large and medium shops were more or less the same but it was too low in small shops in 1991 and 2000. But the increase in wage is high among employees in small shops. Not only the increase in wage offered by small shops is high but the employment opportunities provided by them are also large in 2000. Compared to 1991 there is an improvement in the employment size in the sector as a whole largely attributed to growth in employment in small shops.

6)   In-group analysis in the textile sector shows that Mill Shops paid higher wages both in 1991 and 2000 than private and public shops.

7)   The Multiple regression earning function fitted with the theoretical backing of human capital theory shows that the level of education has practically little influence on their wages. Higher wage is attributed to those who have long years of service, higher skills and efficiency. May be due to the abundant supply of matriculates, education is not rewarded in this sector.

8)   The working conditions of them are very poor. They are subject to long working hours-normally nine to eleven hours per day, with a short break for lunch and other purposes. Comparative low wage and poor working condition in private shops pull down their status to a low level. Though saleswomen in public shops are lucky in terms of fixed working hours, they face the problems of seasonal nature of work. Leave facilities are not given to employees. Rotation of work and promotion are quite absent in this sector.

9)   As regards other benefits, most of the saleswomen receive bonus, though the amount varies from one month's salary to two month's salary a year. Certain shops are giving sales incentive also to their so-called permanent employees. Practically no promotion exists. Most of the employers are not bothered about the training programmes for workers. There are occasional short period training programmes for workers. There are occasional short period training programmes in Mill Shops. The benefit of Provident Fund is given only in a few large shops. In fact many large shops deny this benefit by manipulating data regarding the number of employees.

10)   There exists discrimination in the labour market. Both occupational and wage discrimination are found to exist. The wage discrimination is reflected in the form of male-female earnings gap. As per 1991

data the average wage of a saleswomen is found to be 78.47 per cent of male. In 2000 there is marginal decrease in the intensity of discrimination by 3.23. As against this, occupational segregation has increased over the years. The employers recruit women as maximum as possible in this peculiar employment is evident from the statistics that 86 per cent of employees are women as against 75 per cent in 1991 in sample shops.

11) Discrimination against them is seen not only in workplace but also in the households. They are not getting much help from male members for household duties. It was seen that, on an average, they spent 3.2 hours a day for household duties. They could have earned Rs. 150/- more in a month, if this time was spent for their job. But in the decision-making area, the role of these women has increased. Compared to others, married women get equal status with men in decision-making area.

12) Involvement in trade union activities is practically absent in the case of saleswomen. Employers prefer to recruit women mainly because of this reason. Lack of time, fear of losing employment, temporary nature of work and close integration are some reasons for non-unionisation among saleswomen.

High rate of unemployment, reduction of employment opportunities in the traditional industries due to technological advancement and resultant displacement, and absence of other alternatives forced the women with medium level of education and poor family background to accept the job of a saleswoman, which offered them a low wage packet and put them in poor working condition. Not only is the wage packet low but also there exists occupational and wage discriminations in the labour market. The earning function developed in the study shows the low influence of education than experience on the level of earning. The occupational segregation exists due to employer's prejudice and their business strategy to avoid trade union problems. Wage discrimination can also be explained in terms of excess supply of women labour and poor trade union activities. It was also due to the perception that women are temporary participants in the labour force. The time allocation of saleswomen shows that overworked saleswomen spend a fair amount of time for housework. The role of married saleswomen, who are limited in number, in decision making has improved but they hardly get any help from male members in the family for housework. The value of housework quantified with the help of opportunity-cost-of-time based on their earning shows that it is not negligible and can not be brushed aside. In the midst of these problems, migrated labour, though a small fraction, are brought to the market mainly by Manpower Supply Agencies. The latter, in turn, exploit saleswomen in terms of low wage, long working hours etc. Expectedly, migration of women is the result of push factors rather than pull factors in this sector. The marginalisation is noted for all categories, but it is more crucial among seasonal and door-to-door saleswomen.

The effective implementation of Minimum Wage Act of Shops and Establishments along with the motivation for gradual and sustained involvement in trade union activities is the urgent remedy to improve the conditions of saleswomen. Healthy and competitive trade union activities, which should take into account the interest of employees and employers rather than militant activities, should be the right approach of trade unions for resolving many problems in this area. This is particularly relevant in the context where employment level of women has gone up, though it is partially at the expense of employment of men. The measures to continue in the workplace after marriage will help them not only in solving their economic problems but also to reduce the earning discrimination to a large extent.

End Notes:

1. The Minimum Wages Act for the employees in Shops and Establishments including hotels and restaurants was first enacted in 1967 and revised subsequently in 1977, 1987 and 1998. Employees in cloth shops and lodges also were brought under the purview of the Act in the year 1987. As per the revision in 1998, the basic pay of a salesman/saleswomen is Rs.871. The variable DA is Rs 1306.50 and thus total emoluments becomes Rs. 2177.50

2. There are various models developed with regard to urban economic structures and labour market segmentation. Among these, the most popular one is a two-way or a dichotomous classification, called 'Sector Approach'. The terms 'organised/unorganised', 'modern/traditional' and 'capitalist/subsistence sectors' have been used for analysing the urban economic categories. The 'formal and informal classification' is the latest to arrive on the scene and has had a wide clientele for over years. The major limitation of dualistic approach is that it fails to distinguish the internal differentiation with the informal sector (IFS). Hence, there are 'gradations', not 'water-tight compartments' within these two extremes. As a result some have replaced the term 'sector' by 'segment'. The substitute concept 'segment' also suffers from the basic limitation of the sector approach that it is highly aggregated. As a result, many had started to analyse the IFS in terms of certain characteristics. This approach is popularly known as 'Fragmented Approach'. It proposes the divisions of workforce into various fragments. Fragmentation takes place by various 'pre-entry factors' such as sex and age, religion, ethnicity and kinship, ties of origin and neighbourhood, education and union activities and modes of recruitment. Though the neo-dualists make a detailed description of informalisation in terms of certain characteristics, they fail to explain in full what it really is and what function it performs. Dissatisfaction with the sector, segment and fragmented approaches has led some writers to think of an alternative framework. They tend to dismiss the boundary between F S and IFS as theoretically dubious and empirically non-sustainable. This line of debate was led by Marxists and Neo-Marxists, of various degrees, emphasize the need for a change from characterization to analysis of the total system for a better understanding of the so-called IFS. Hence more relevant perspectives are the mode of production function approach. Strictly speaking, within this class, two types of literature can be traced; one due to 'Marginality theorists' and the other 'Petty commodity Production (PCP) theorists'. The latter group is popularly known as Neo-Marxists. The 'Marginality theorists' argue that IFS is a marginal pole. It acts as a reserve army of labourers, producing cheap, poor quality subsistence goods and facilitates capital accumulation in the F S. This is the conventional view. As against the above, the PCP is defined as a transitional form between non-capitalist and capitalist modes of production. The interest of the capitalists or employer's strategies is often the theme of fragmented and PCP approaches.

3. Becker's model of labour market discrimination treats the discrimination as resulting out of the employer's preferences and prejudices for and against certain groups of workers, is relevant here. In fact employer's strategies play a crucial role in the labour market discrimination against females.

4. The Model is based on one period, comparative static neo-classical individual utility maximizing work. Based on the theoretical front of the new home consumption theory reformulated by Gronau, (1977), many have developed economic model of household behaviour under different situations in India (Malathy, 1988,

1990;Duraisamy, 1992). The idea behind the model is that in recent years, economists increasingly recognize that a household is truly a 'small factory' which combines capital goods, raw materials, and labour to clean, feed procreate and otherwise produce useful commodities. This model is developed for analysing allocation of time to non-market work and leisure of saleswomen. Strengthening the neo-classical theoretical formulations, this approach states that the household maximises its utility not subject to a simple budget constraint but subject to its production function and a total time constraint.

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