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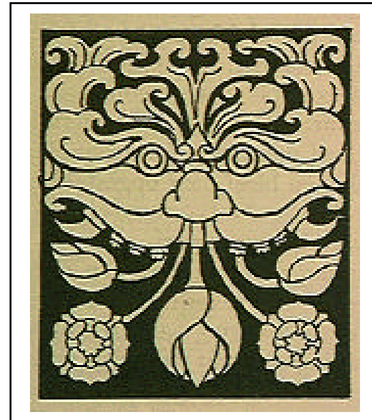

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Gender and Domesticity
Liberalisation in Historical Perspective

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In the early 1990s, the Government of India began to implement a fresh package of economic policies of the pattern put forward by the Bretton Woods authorities under the broad rubric of structural adjustment (henceforth SAP). Along side came new policies to reduce the state's interventionist and regulative role in the economy, which had been built up by previous governments as part of a 'socialist' rhetoric. Together the new economic policies were dubbed 'liberalisation' and were presumed to go hand in hand with broader processes of globalisation. For industry this entailed more emphasis on the 'market' in determining entry and exit and less protection against foreign capital and the multinational corporations (MNCs). So far as labour is concerned, there has been no agreement about the precise nature of the impact these policies may have had or will have in the long term. A great deal has been said, rather nebulously in many cases, about the adverse effect of these policies on women in particular. There is a growing apprehension that poorer women are the hardest hit by 'adjustments'. At a National Seminar on Policies and Strategies for Working Women in the Context of Industrial Restructuring (New Delhi, 1997), Gita Sen emphasised that the new economic regime creates two simultaneous disadvantages for poor women. On the one hand, they face increasing pressures to earn from petty self-employment, in the informal sector and in production for larger industries. On the other hand, crumbling social security systems force women to be primary care-givers and responsible for the well-being of their communities. This coincides with a regeneration of so-called 'Asian' values, which glorify women's multiple roles as mothers, wives, contributors to the family economy and good citizens. 'Globalisation' thus 'demands "squaring the circle" by making women "choose" to work within the home and in the informal sector'.[1]

Other speakers at the seminar emphasised a different aspect of the liberalisation question. They argued that liberalisation had exacerbated existing negative trends in the economy and that many of the so-called effects of SAP represented the outcomes of processes that were in place long before SAP was initiated.[2] In a vast country like India with its complex and varied economy, a variety of consequences and responses are to be always expected. It should come as no surprise if, as in case of many other policies, the new economic policies do not affect 'poor women' uniformly.[3]

However, some broad generalisations and some trends in particular sectors are emerging. Economists are generally agreed that a tighter labour market has adversely affected the poor -- men, women and children alike. They also agree that liberalisation and industrial restructuring will lead, inevitably, to an undercutting of organised labour.[4] So far, the tussle over 'down-sizing' and job loss has been most manifest in central public sector units (CPSU) and is overloaded with assumptions of inefficiency, industrial sickness and cynicism towards a hitherto privileged section of workers. The CPSU situation has attracted greater public attention in part because their powerful unions have resisted retrenchment and won the support of opposition political parties. The CPSU workers have wrested, through union and political

pressure, major concessions such as the National Renewal Fund (1992). Though the NRF was meant for retraining schemes as well, the largest part of its resources was utilised for paying compensation for voluntary retirement. While unions have had some success in cushioning workers against job loss in the CPSU, the larger federated unions are losing ground with increased retrenchment and mechanisation. Faced with a rapidly shrinking constituency, some of the traditional unions are beginning to re-orient their exclusionist strategy and to address hitherto ignored issues -- like that of women workers and workers in the informal sector. There is, however, as yet little recognition mainstream union policy of issues that the women's movements have sought to place centre-stage. The chief of these issues is the need to question the division between personal/political and home/workplace, a necessary step in understanding the crisis in the organised sector. Without such understanding, the present dilemma of traditional trade unionism is likely to deepen further. And this was clearly manifest in the late 1990s in the struggle in West Bengal vis a vis the federations of trade unions and the 'reformist' arm of the state government [led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist)].

The shift in the state government's attitude towards trade unions, even those affiliated to its own political parties, has been evident since 1998 in a series of crises in the private sector as in Dunlop and Bata. Indeed, in most industrial centres of India, there have been large-scale job losses in the private sector. Without state support, these private sector workers have not been able to negotiate for the kind of safety-net available to CPSU workers. Increase in the number of lock-outs began in the 1980s and 1990s and many companies have run successful voluntary retirement schemes (VRS). In a study of the electronics industry, which employed a substantive proportion of women, Amrita Chhacchi shows how the swiftly changing patterns in this industry led to large-scale forced and illegal retrenchment. She argues that the loss of better-paid and secure factory jobs impacted more on women since they were less able to find alternative livelihood. Self-employment, in particular, routinely offered as the panacea for industrial restructuring, is difficult for women even if they have skills and/or capital.[5] Socially held and internalised values of gender division of labour prevent women from setting up repairing shops or driving auto-rickshaws which are men's most preferred alternatives.[6]

Industrial retrenchment, however, impacts directly on very few women. The organised work force now stands at less than 9 per cent of the total. Women are a negligible proportion of organised labour. The majority of women suffer the threats to organised industry indirectly. This indirect impact is two-fold and in opposing directions. As members of male organised workers' households, women are likely to be affected adversely by the losses of jobs, security and/or income in that sector. Indeed some of them might be forced into the labour market, which they perceive as a misfortune since their work is likely to be in the informal sector and thus poorly rewarded, not fully compensating for the loss in male earnings. Moreover, their 'going out to work' involves a loss of status; and undertaking paid work cuts into the reproductive work they earlier undertook towards improving the family's standard of living.

The story of retrenchment and job loss needs to be qualified. While secure and privileged workers, women and men, in the more traditional manufacturing sector are under threat, in some new non-traditional export-oriented industries, women's employment opportunities expanded since the 1980s. These opportunities were availed by new categories of women, who were for the first time entering, in some significant numbers, the manufacturing labour force. This seemed to be the case in

the 'modern' gem-cutting industry in Tamil Nadu.[7] Parents delayed marriage of daughters and accepted their employment even when it involved long daily commuting or long-distance migration. Though the phenomenon was limited, there was a creation of a labour pool of unmarried young women. These and other married women, it was feared, would undersell their labour and erode the bargaining advantages won by organised labour through over a century of struggle. It is believed that MNCs and export-oriented industries are committed to 'flexible' working and will automatically gravitate towards the least organised, most vulnerable and most flexible element in the labour market, the women.

This paper discusses three issues raised by the above on-going debates. I will draw on my doctoral research on the jute industry in the colonial period to argue a case for treating these issues in a long-term historical perspective. The new economic policies did not start with a clean slate. They worked (and continue to do so) in tandem with other social and economic trends some of which were initiated long ago. It is difficult, often impossible, to isolate economic phenomenon that are exclusively related to SAP or liberalisation or any particular shift in policy. Quite possibly, there are areas in which there are no sharp breaks in the economic process or in the outlook of economic actors. It is always useful to take the long-term view because many critical developments began long before 1991 and appeared as established patterns or as 'tradition' encountering new change. It is plausible to argue, as some economists are doing, that some trends set in motion already were aggravated to more significant levels by liberalisation. In this paper I will focus on certain trends in women's work force participation which have shown long-term resilience and seem to be in danger of being aggravated by rather than radically altered by economic liberalisation or SAP. The first of these is the persistent and progressive exclusion of women from the organised sector, which reflects the general phenomenon of male monopoly over more rewarding occupations. The second related issue is the high degree of control exercised by the family over women's labour. As a result, the family is able to deploy women's labour as a buffer against changes in the economic situation. As male jobs become more rewarding and secure, women are withdrawn from economic activity as a signal of upward social mobility of the family. In periods of crisis, however, women's labour can be intensely exploited in the low wage informal sector, particularly in home-based work, as a means of household survival.

These issues have been discussed in relation to some of the debates outlined above and drawing on empirical evidence collected by a number of researchers in recent years. The paper will address, first, the much-discussed question of 'feminisation' of the work force. It will be argued that term needs to be, in the Indian context, examined in historical terms and against firmly entrenched processes which 'masculinised' organised labour. Second, the commonness of Senoconomics when applied to the case of women workers suggests that the effect of new economic policies will depend largely on the conditions of discrimination and deprivation from which they are forced to respond to these policies. It will be argued that, in the Indian context, women workers are a flexible resource, but for the household rather than for the employer. They relate to the labour market at a remove. Third, the significance of ideologies of domesticity in the determination of 'class' status and respectability and the non-negotiability of household work together create at times a 'preference' among poor women for non-working housewife roles. Much of the recent evidence suggests, however, that otherwise poor women value their wage-earning role: young unmarried women in particular but also older married women.

The 'Feminisation' thesis examined

The term 'feminisation' in relation to the labour force has been used in two different ways. It can indicate the employment of larger numbers of women so that the gender profile of the labour force, or a particular segment of it, actually changes in favour of women. It can indicate, however, a very different process whereby the nature of jobs change. From more secure and regular employment, the economy shifts to kinds of employment more associated with women, informalised, casualised, irregular, lower paid and insecure. In the latter case, both women and men workers are forced into this 'feminising' pattern.

The 1970s witnessed a clear case of the first phenomenon with the rise of the so-called New International Division of Labour. In the advanced industrialised countries of the west, technological advance made steady inroads into male craft-skills and allowed fragmentation of production processes. The rising transactional costs of labour in these countries led the MNCs to relocate their operations and to shift the labour-intensive parts of production to 'Third world' countries. In the latter, women, especially young unmarried women, provided not only cheap labour, they also offered the crucial flexibility that mobile international capital required to serve their volatile markets. Thus, in the seventies and eighties many East and South East Asian countries experienced a 'feminisation' of factory work. Employers depended heavily on the 'cheap' and 'docile' labour of young unmarried women. This has also been the case in the Bangladesh garment industry. Women constitute some 60 per cent of the total work force (while they are 7 per cent of the non-export-oriented industries' labour force). Researchers argue that a perceived traditional feminine skill in sewing, cheapness, flexibility and docility are the reasons why garment industry employers have shown a strong preference for a predominantly female work force.[8]

In many countries, SAP has resulted in women's employment in the manufacturing sector. What are the possibilities of such a 'feminisation' of the industrial work force in India? There was some sectoral expansion in women's employment in the seventies and eighties. First, there was a growth in non-agricultural employment (NAE) in the rural sector, crucial for rural development. Public sector spending in rural areas, both through development programmes and through a spread effect from spending by employees of the rural public sector, resulted in a wide range of NAE. Economic liberalisation resulted in a significant cutback on rural public sector spending and, according to Abhijit Sen, led to millions of jobs being lost. G.K. Chadha argues that the worst affected were low-income rural women, many of whom have been pushed back into low-paid casual agricultural work.

These conclusions can be questioned on one count. The term NAE is an umbrella one, covering the smallest household based unit to the large formal sector industries. The increase of workers in this expanded sector was more in the informal and unprotected end. It is not clear from which sectors within NAE job losses were the heaviest. Chadha, however, argues that even the low-paid NAE tends -- increasingly -- to be significantly better paid than agricultural employment. Thus, women's losses in the NAE and their return to casual agricultural work cannot but be detrimental.

There was also some increase in women's employment in other sectors. Upto the eighties, the MNC had a restricted career in India: the emphasis on the diversification of economic activity, centralised planning and state control were inimical to the flexibilities desired by international capital. But Nirmala Banerjee points out that while India's economy, under the leadership of a strong national bourgeoisie,

remained inwardly oriented and low in export earnings, there was a growing emphasis on export of non-traditional items like garments, leather, food products, toys and jewellery. India's labour laws compared well with advanced industrialised countries and the political power of organised labour was strong. But the main workers in the new sectors were unorganised, often piece-rated female labour in sweat-shops or in home-based work. In addition, the 1970s and 80s also witnessed an increase in women's employment in non home-based manufacturing.[9] (Table 1 below)

What effect did the new economic policies have on this kind of employment? In a few select industries like gem and jewellery, women were employed in lower paid and unskilled tasks since technological developments allowed reduction of skilled male workers. In the electronics industry, which is highly mobile, there appears to be job rotation between men and women. Generally speaking, the nineties saw a halting of the process of expansion of women's employment. This was partly an effect of a general slow-down but there were also some cases of substitution of women by men workers. In the plastics industry, trade unions in large and medium scale units signed an agreement with the management negotiating the fixation of tasks and designations. This has ensured that women are restricted to jobs in assembling and packing. As a result, they were removed from the machines they were operating.[10] Sujata Ghotosker shows how the expansion of women's employment in pharmaceutical companies (like Glaxo) was reversed when they decided to 'put out' some of their production to smaller scale units. These latter preferred to employ men.[11]

No one dominant trend emerges from the different case studies, though the tendency seems to be more towards loss rather than gain in women's employment. According to Nirmala Banerjee, there was not only no overall increase in women's employment in the manufacturing sector, but a sharp fall in the period immediately following the initiation of new economic policies both in rural and urban areas. Only in the urban tertiary sector have there been some discernible increase. She argues that there has been no radical change in the behaviour of the Indian economy after SAP, the major parameters affecting women workers have remained steady between 1981 and 1996. Earlier trends have been aggravated, however, leading to further deterioration in women's economic position.[12]

If we consider the urban manufacturing sector alone, there seems to have been an overall increase in women's employment in the decade of the 1990s. There was a small decline immediately after the introduction of SAP to be followed by an absolute and proportionate increase in women's employment in the private sector (the public sector remaining more or less constant).

Notably, there have always been some women, and in different industries at different points in time, who do not fit the stereotype of low-paid, irregular, casual workers. The stereotype is true for the majority of women, but in some industries, unionisation and workers' struggles have won better wages and security for women workers as well as the men. It is also important to note that the link between higher wages and job security no longer holds in all cases. Some women have found jobs in large units where employers invest in training and proffer higher wages and incentives but do not offer security. It is the more lucrative and/or secure jobs from which women are pushed out in periods of change or crisis. Such was the case in many industries across India (textiles and mining) in the 1920s and 30s, in the 1950s and 60s and is once again the case in the 1990s. It is women workers from this privileged section who

have lost their jobs as a result of restructuring to become either unemployed or move into the informal sector.

Table 1

Employment of Women in the Organised Sector
(household and non-household manufacturing and mining and quarrying only)

	Public sector			Private sector		
	Total (thousands)	Women (thousands)	Percentage of women	Total (thousands)	Women (thousands)	percentage of women
1971	988	36	3.6	4359	429	9.8
1981	2320	154	6.6	4675	163	3.4
1991	2851	174	6.1	4580	527	11.5
1995	2772	190	6.8	4809	501	10.4
1997	2639	168	6.3	5331	874	16.3
1998	2553	164	6.4	5324	942	17.6

Source: Manpower Profile. India Yearbook 2000, Institute of Applied Manpower research, New Delhi, 2000. Table 3.2.22 and 3.2.24 (pp. 334-339)

While men tend to monopolise the better paid jobs, when employment is tighter, they tend to take over the jobs women previously undertook, pushing the latter lower down the scale to even less desirable jobs. Neither the NIDL of the 1970s, nor the NEP of 1990s have had any transformative effect on this gender pattern of the labour market. Rather, a supposed stubborn 'tradition' or 'culture' of exclusion of women from the wage labour is routinely trotted out to 'explain' the exceptional male dominance of industrial work. Given the universality and the low age of marriage (which barely approaches the statutory minimum of 18), there is no equivalent 'pool' of young unmarried women who have been the providers of labour in the South East Asian countries. There has been no large-scale induction of women in factory industry, either under national or MNC auspices.

On the contrary, there has always been a clear preference for men in modern factory industry and as this sector tended to be more 'formalised' by state regulation and working conditions improved through 'organisation' of labour, they tended to exclude women more. Beginning in the 1920s and 30s and until the 90s, the 'traditional' manufacturing sector has continued to eliminate women from their work force.[13] From a study I undertook in July 1997 comparing a rayon mill and a jute mill, it appears that while an older 'crisis-ridden' industry could undertake this elimination relatively gradually, a more dynamic rayon mill, which had benefited significantly from liberalisation, was more hostile to employing women. [14]

Let us look at the case of the jute industry in more detail. The first jute mill was set up in 1855 in Hooghly near Calcutta. The industry took off in the 1870s and grew rapidly in the next few decades, it continued to be enormously profitable until it hit its first crisis in 1930s, recovered during the Second World War and then went into decline in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Since then it has been limping along, with periodic spurts of activity, protected by the state, often even subsidised by the state government. It is a labour-intensive industry employing very large numbers of workers and is localised in the suburban fringe of the city of Calcutta. In the 1950s, the workers numbered over 3 million. The political importance of this concentrated

labour force has been understood clearly by the state, the management of the mills and various political parties from the very beginning. Of this vast and significant workforce, the highest recorded proportion of women was about 20 per cent (towards the close of the nineteenth century). By the 1940s women constituted about 12-3 per cent of the work force. By the 1970s, they were reduced to a negligible 2 per cent and this has declined further in the 1990s. This decline has been part of a general trend in India -- in coal industry women started to lose their share of jobs when they were banned from underground work in 1928. In plantations, they retained their share (about half to start with) a little longer because of the perceived 'feminine' skill involved in low-paid plucking jobs. In the cotton textile industry, in Bombay and Ahmedabad, women's numbers and proportions declined from the 1930s. In all these industries, while labour became more heterogeneous in terms of caste, community and region, it also became discernibly more male.[15] The number of women in Indian industry almost halved between 1911 and 1971.

Table 2

Women in Industry

	Number of women employed (in thousands)	Percentage of total female labour
1911	6137	14.7
1921	5409	13.5
1931	5147	13.7
1951	4554	11.2
1961	6884	11.6
1971	3307	10.5

Source: Towards Equality. Report of the Committee on Status of Women, 1974, p. 153

There was a clear declining trend in the case of factories and mines.

Table 3

Percentage of Women (of total workers) in Factories and Mines

	FACTORIES	MINES
1951	11.43	20.1
1961	10.65	15.8
1971	9.1	11.9

Source: Towards Equality. Report of the Committee on Status of Women, 1974, p. 187

The manner of women's exclusion from factory industry begs a host of questions about the material and social reproduction of labour as well as entrepreneurial strategy. Industrial employers had, from the beginning, prioritised flexibility of labour. While labour in the formal sector became increasingly inflexible from the 1950s, state regulation or trade unions failed to cover the majority of workers. Researchers argue that in the 1990s, moreover, there was a 'blurring of the traditional distinctions between formal/informal and organised/unorganised sectors'. Apart from

the two poles of permanent-secure workers and destitute workers, there arose (and remains) a wide range and variety of work status.[16] In fact this has always been the case, even in the core organised sector. To achieve flexibility, employers exerted enormous pressure to casualise a large part of their labour. It has been always difficult to sustain (especially for the period before 1930s) any distinction between 'organised' and 'unorganised' labour either in terms of their condition of employment or in terms of their collective bargaining power. Even now, individual workers move between various sectors of the labour market and members of households are employed in widely varying kinds of economic activities. A strongly segmented 'dual' labour market never quite obtained, argues R.S. Chandavarkar.[17]

The jute industry's history is one of constant tussle between management and labour over issues of casualisation. Industrial employers were more concerned with flexiibility than with long-term labour settlement. They employed men who migrated for a period of their working lives from the neighbouring regions of Bengal. These employers could depend upon incessant migration to replenish this male workforce. Operating in a highly surplus labour market they could pass on the costs of social, physical and skill reproduction of the work force to the workers themselves. The industry had no need of individualised or proletarianised workers. Rather, single male migrants, who had a buffer in their 'rural tie' were best able to provide the casual labour the industry desired. Men, in particular, were both available and preferred. It were the men who had control over migration decisions in the household. Male heads of household were able to retain flexibility in the urban and industrial labour market by commanding more intensive work from women for lower allocation of resources. The legal and administrative apparatus of the colonial state aided this process by strengthening the position of the paterfamilias and increasing the male head of the family's control over women and children. As a result, women's migration operated within several constraints. They left their villages when rural resources were completely exhausted -- accompanying their families in times of acute scarcities or leaving their families when they were denied (adequate) access to household resources because of widowhood, barrenness or unchastity. Such women were less prone to periodically visit the village 'home' as male migrants routinely did. Certainly, most women migrants had less rural or household resources to fall back on by way of insurance. The men, by contrast, returned to the village in case of sickness, unemployment or at retirement. They were able to do so because the women and children (and some elder men) continued to procure subsistence from village resources. Thus, among the migrants, the women (rather than men) were more likely to be 'proletarianised' in the conventional sense -- and this constituted a disadvantage in the insecure urban labour market. Thus, gender played a constitutive role in the making of the jute working class.[18]

A sudden acceleration of 'single' male migrants from Bihar, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh at the turn of the century began the process of women's marginalisation in the jute industry. Their relatively 'unskilled' jobs were taken over by migrant men. Women, more than before, were clustered at the lower end of the mill as cheap male labour became available for machine-handling jobs.[19] From the early 1900s to 1930, the proportion of women in the work force remained fairly steady at about 15 per cent. The first significant retrenchment came in the 1930s. Enormously high war profits (1914-1919) had encouraged a massive rush of investment. The industry faced the Depression with tremendously over-extended production capacity. The Indian Jute Mills' Association could not unite all the mills in their attempt to win government support for all-industry strategies to keep prices from crashing. Instead the government insisted upon rationalisation, efficiency and streamlining. The

government asked for standardisation of wage rates, employment and working conditions. A great deal of heat was generated by these negotiations, but labour efficiency remained a secondary concern. The mills embarked on a sustained reduction of labour costs through piecemeal mechanisation, retrenchments, wage cuts and overloading.

Such 'rationalisation' did not affect the work force uniformly. Mechanisation, for instance, hurt women workers more. The practice of employing women in the less mechanised sections of the mill had become entrenched by 1930. The introduction of machinery in these processes usually entailed retrenchment of the women and the employment of fewer men in their place. By long habit, the assumption that women could not handle machinery had become a conviction. At a time when the economy was shrinking, male workers and trade unions were more than happy to encourage this myth.[20] In Bombay, however, when mechanisation came to the 'women's departments' in the 1920s, women workers put up stiff resistance against retrenchment with support from trade unions.[21] In the jute industry, there is little evidence of such collective resistance against women's retrenchment.

Similar attacks on women's jobs became more pronounced in a new round of 'rationalisation' undertaken in the 1950s. Employers offered various arguments as to why women were to be gradually eliminated: they could not be employed on night shifts, they had to be paid maternity benefit and provide crèche facility. Trade unions, faced with spiralling male unemployment, were more than willing to encourage these arguments. Since direct retrenchment had become difficult, early retirement and 'natural wastage' were used to replace women by men. Women could be persuaded or coerced to give up their jobs to a son.[22] Women workers found it difficult to resist the combined onslaught of the family, the unions and the employers. A survey of National Jute Mill in the 1970s found 2.6 per cent women in a work force of 16,386. In almost all the cases, women worked because there were no adult males to 'take over' their jobs and almost half of these workers were casually employed.[23]

In the 1990s, after two decades of uncertainty in the industry and periodic crises in individual mills, jute mill jobs are no longer as secure. Nevertheless, in comparison to the 'informal' sector, mill employment remains lucrative. As before, the most coveted are the small number of 'permanent' jobs but there are also a whole range of not-so-permanent jobs which are graded according to security of employment, number of days of work available and social security entitlements. The permanent workers are also the best represented by the unions and tend to follow narrowly exclusionist strategies. For instance, unions and management agree to reserve job 'nominations' to male heirs. Only when such male heirs are not forthcoming, do female heirs qualify. In new recruitment, as in case of the 'zero record' or 'voucher' workers (the most casualised section of the work force), women are not entertained at all. Women tend to cluster in the middle band of 'badli' workers. And their numbers (as well as proportions) have declined further since 1970s.[24]

Women workers, households and employers

It is often argued that women are more adversely affected by economic liberalisation because they bear the brunt of the household's poverty. The argument relates to the second understanding of the 'feminisation' thesis outlined in the earlier section. The assault on the organised sector, the undercutting of organised labour and the political weakening of trade unions will, together, it is feared, lead to a general squeeze on poor

households. As more male workers are shunted into low paid jobs, household incomes will decline, more women will be forced into poorly paid work in the informal sector and total family welfare will decline. Women will suffer more because when there is less to go round, their share of household resources declines more steeply.[25]

Why is it that women suffer *more* when there is less to go around? Because they do already. Women will suffer more: they always do so; besides, not only will they suffer more than they do now, but also, presumably, more than men will suffer. Such circular logic is underpinned by existing, persistent and long-term patterns of gender disparity and discrimination in the labour market and the household which get inscribed into economic change. Economic actors, like the state and its agents, the employers and their agents, workers (male and female) and trade unions operate in this playing field which is far from level.

From a survey of garment industries in Delhi, garment and electronic industries in the Thane-Pune region of Maharashtra, the Coimbatore textile industry and five small industries (garment, leather, prawn processing, silk spinning and reeling) in Bengal, Banerjee offers a profile of the woman worker in the 1970s. Most of the women were casual workers working, typically, with low capital investment in tools and technology. There was lower familial investment in their education, health and nutrition. Most women workers were married, burdened with exclusive responsibility for housework and child care.[26]

The labour market shows two clear gender characteristics. First, women rarely take over men's jobs by undercutting them. Men, too, despite high unemployment, do not usually undercut women. The terms of competition in this labour market are somewhat differently determined. The gender composition of a work force is primarily subject to male decision-making. Male workers exert control over women's labour through familial relationships (wife/daughter) and acquire flexibility (usually associated with women) for jobs that are lucrative and where such flexibility is desired. (This was the case in the jute industry).

Employers cannot use women workers to undercut overly demanding male labour by direct replacement. Also, men resist 'women's jobs' unless they are significantly redefined or relocated. The most common situation in which this happens is when machinery is introduced for a previously manual job. In periods of crisis, however, or if the terms of the jobs improve, men do lay claim to women's jobs. Both these tendencies were evident in the jute industry in different periods. To undercut male workers with female or child labour, however, employers have to undertake job-differentiation (usually including wage cuts and casualisation) or even major reorganisation of production (usually involving a shift from factory/workshop to home-based). This latter was the case in the biri-rolling industry. Thus, women do undercut men, but usually not at their own instance and not without considerable entrepreneurial initiative. There has to be an evident 'preference' on part of employers for them to adopt such strategies.

Over the years, there has been a marked tendency for men to move out of unremunerative traditional household activities like weaving. In West Bengal in the 1990s, for example, the family continues to be involved in handloom weaving by deploying women's 'spare time'. The earlier taboo against women's working at the loom has broken down and women now weave at home while the men join the new powerloom factories as wage workers. The men moreover continue to handle the 'business' end of the household industry -- procuring orders and marketing finished

goods. As a result, women have no control over the earnings from this productive labour they undertake in addition to housework and their traditional task of yarn-processing. The goods they produce are usually of poor quality since they have been given no opportunity to acquire the necessary skill or knowledge.[27]

Given these patterns, it is difficult to try and predict the impact of state policies on women's employment. Casualisation is not new in India and was never specific to women. The standard conventions of large-scale industry, except for a brief fifty-years period, have never been 'rational' in the Indian context and is breaking down elsewhere as well. Employers preference for casualised male labour often coincides with male claims on 'women's jobs', especially in periods of high unemployment. These tendencies have contributed to a long term, often drastic, exclusion of women from more rewarding occupations like factory jobs. Periodic exceptions are more due to supply bottlenecks than to changing entrepreneurial preference. It may in fact be argued that neither national nor MNC employment strategies are likely to make any significant dent in the labour market in this regard. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the new spurt in export industries in the 1990s did not lead (as in the 1970s) to expansion in women's employment. In the case of Glaxo as cited above, desire for 'flexibility' in the 1990s led not to augmentation of the female work force they had employed in the 1970s but to fragmentation of production and putting out to smaller enterprises. The new employers have tended to prefer men workers who are more amenable to flexible working.

Clearly then, women are not universally more flexible labour. To the Indian employer, they are less. The 'feminisation' of factory labour in South East Asia has depended on young unmarried women. In India, women usually join the labour force after marriage when they already have children. These women are constrained by their family roles as wives and mothers. They are less mobile and unable to commit longer hours to paid work. This is the largest and most vulnerable section of the female work force, hampered by lack of education, mobility, opportunity to acquire or upgrade skills or find alternate livelihood. They are most liable to be pushed into working more intensively as unpaid family labour or as cheap labour for uncertain work. They do not offer the advantages that the factory girl in Thailand or Taiwan does to employers. The married Indian women workers are less flexible than men. Rather, the men acquire greater flexibility by abjuring housework and childcare responsibilities, and also by controlling women's and children' wage labour decisions. So women and children often enter and exit the labour market in response to the male breadwinner's employment situation. They enter the market when it is shrinking and terms for labour are unfavourable -- male earnings become more inconstant, inadequate or suspended. They withdraw when the employment situation begins to improve and the men are able to 'win the bread'. Thus women are flexible workers -- but more for the family than for the employer. The family's particular requirements place limits on their flexibility in the labour market.

The issue of labour flexibility needs to be rethought. Flexibility may operate at the level of organisational structure, in the pattern of production and/or in the labour market. At each of these levels, the dynamics and indicators of flexibility are different. It has been pointed out that the Indian labour market has always been flexible in some ways. In fact, flexible labour is a sine qua non for large-scale industries. For all industries, a certain degree of flexibility is required and a great deal of flexibility is desired. While workers struggle to set minimum non-negotiable standards of working, employers drive for as much flexibility as possible in any given situation. There is a drive towards a new (or nascent) flexibility, which requires

individual workers to have access to skills and retraining. Employers are exerting increasing pressure to be able to move workers across job boundaries. There is also increasing emphasis on older forms of flexibility such as the manipulation of labour time and costs. The fixed costs of full time and permanent workers militate against such calculations. The management of large-scale units seek to achieve flexibility in such situations by creating obscure job descriptions and hoping to divide workers by introducing a wide variety of employment types and conditions. Thus they seek to grade and hierarchise agents of flexibility. And here too gender is a key element. There are at least three crucial ways in which women are at a disadvantage where both the newer and older forms of flexibility command a premium.

First, the non-negotiability of housework as women's responsibility limits the time they can spend at work. An important part of their work life begins after they return from their workplace. My 1997 survey reveals that there has been almost no change in the pattern of housework distribution. When women get help with housework, it is from other women members of the household or at best a teenage son. Adult men, even if unemployed will not help with housework. As a result, women cannot work very long hours or get the benefit of lucrative 'overtime' work. Rather, they prefer to limit the amount of physical strain at the workplace.[28] Also, they have to take more leave and holidays because they tend to allocate themselves lower quantity and quality of food and are, therefore, more prone to illness[29] and/or because they are responsible for the sick and old in the family. It is the most vulnerable women -- unmarried, deserted, divorced or widowed -- who offer flexibility from sheer compulsion. In one study it has been found that married women put in long hour of overtime only when it is compulsory.[30]

Second, training and gender link the workplace and the labour market with household hierarchy. On the one hand, young girls and women are denied scope and access to education and training by the family, long before they enter the labour market; on the other, machines and workplaces are gendered too. A sexual division of labour is embedded in each social and technical division of labour. Thus men and women tend to participate in different spaces, shops or sections of the factory when they usually operate or set up different 'physical technologies' that require skills or knowledge also defined as male or female. This is justified by the argument of 'natural' complementariety of their roles but is usually accompanied by a 'vertical sexual division of labour' -- accounting for discriminatory wage gaps, patterns of promotion and supervisory functions.[31]

Third, the dominance of personalised and informal channels of recruitment allows male workers to influence the gender composition of the work force. Since inception, large-scale industry has depended on recruitment through myriad social networks based on kin, caste and regional affiliations. Such a 'system' became staple by the end of the nineteenth century. Over time the 'informal' channels have been institutionalised.[32] Given the slow growth rate of organised sector and the tight labour market, recruitment is fairly sluggish. There is almost no direct recruitment now. Recruitment takes place either through union channels or by nomination. If a worker dies while in service, his 'heirs' replace him. A retiring worker has the 'right' to 'nominate' a successor. Also, sometimes, he may auction the 'nomination' to non-kin candidates. In attempting to prevent such practices, management and unions have agreed to restrict nomination to a 'son' or a 'son-in-law', re-entrenching the 'family' in recruitment and closing off women's access to jobs by nomination. Since nomination was the only channel through which many 'widows' had earlier entered factory jobs, such policies are greatly resented by women. It appears that as factory

jobs become ‘property’, women’s inheritance disabilities in the larger social field are echoed in their access to factory employment.[33]

There are many fall-outs of these gender characteristics inscribed in the workplace and the labour market. Male supervisors’ notions of what kind of work is appropriate for women influence the pattern of their employment. Male values of segregation and male workers’ interest in retaining control and use of women’s sexuality and labour are written into hiring practices. Moreover, the supervisors and other clerical staff can extract sexual favours from women in return for access to jobs which increases the opprobrium of factory work for women and ensures their withdrawal from such jobs when higher male earnings allow them to do so. Often, women move from highly paid factory work to most ill-paid home-based work. On the basis of a study of beedi-workers’ attempts at organisation in Hyderabad, Rohini Hensman argues that husbands and employers have a common interest in keeping women confined in the house while at the same time earning an income. And husbands have the social sanction to use violence to enforce their wishes.[34]

The better-paid male workers use the recruitment system to effectively exclude women from the more prized jobs (within the factory or from the factory altogether). Possibly they fear that women’s induction will threaten their ability to maintain high wage levels. But why do some of them not use their personal and family channels to recruit their own mothers, wives, daughters or sisters in high paying jobs thereby augmenting their household resources? Obviously, the few who might desire better incomes for their women relatives are unable to contravene established rules of gender segregation. So, the more lucrative jobs go to male protégés while wives and daughters may be given the lower paid jobs where women tend to cluster. In part this also reflects a preference for male rather than female earners in the family. The better-paid workers are better able to maintain non-earning adult female relatives, and often do so. To have wives living in various modified forms of seclusion and domesticity in the city signals higher social status. Such practices further ghettoise women at the lower rungs of the job ladder. Since their ‘own’ women do not work, the better paid and more influential workers (often also active union activists) have no obvious interest in promoting women for better jobs.

Thus, male decision-making in the family and the workplace impact on women’s job decisions. In the situation of a tight labour market, competition among workers may run along gender lines too. Rohini Hensman Banaji found such instances when interviewing workers at Hoechst:

Dissident worker: In contrast to the women, who are getting very good pay including a lot of overtime, and who don’t need it so much since they are married to husbands who are also earning well, they [young men] feel that they themselves are suffering due to the D.A. ceiling.

Interviewer: Is there discrimination against men in the allocation of overtime?

Dissident worker: No...

Interviewer: And do you think women should get less pay than men because they have husbands who are earning as well? If they get the same pay, does that mean there is discrimination against the men?

Dissident worker: No. But there is a difference between the objective situation and the way it is seen, and these young [men] workers feel they are being discriminated against.

Older leaders felt, on the contrary, that:
In comparing their pay with that of much more senior women employees, they [the young men] ignore the fact that by the time they reach the same level of seniority their own pay will be very much higher.... One of them [young men workers] used threats of assault against a woman worker to get her to reduce production, and got himself suspended.'[35]

Dependence and autonomy[36]

Discussions on women's work have often two levels of concern: first, the obvious and immediate questions of livelihood and survival in the case of the poor; and second, more broadly, an engagement with the Engelsian question of the autonomy women may (or may not) derive from access to waged work. This paper has shown the question of women's employment and, therefore, any question of women's autonomy must address the family, which is the critical site for the construction of female dependence. Hilary Standing concludes from her study of women workers in Calcutta,

> The meaning of employment for women must be sought in the context of the ways in which women's lives are bounded by the family.... The family is the critical site in the construction of female dependency. The ways in which this dependency is structured have implications, first for which women enter the labour market and which are withdrawn from it at particular historical moments, and second, for women's capacity to secure their short- and long-term material circumstances. Structures of dependency are related to, but do not reflect mechanically, the changing demands for female labour, or class position. The family is an arena of intense ideological mediation and women's access to paid work is constrained by historically and culturally specific concepts of familial dependency and what are considered appropriate behaviours and occupation for women.[37]

In her analysis, there are four structures of familial dependency:

(a) economic, implying financial dependence on male kin;
(b) legal, through regulation imposing gender-asymmetrical marriage, domicile and inheritance;
(c) ideologies of domesticity which constitute women as dependants and men as 'breadwinners'; and
(d) psychic and social construction of feminine identity which subjects women to male (sometimes older female) authority figures.[38]

Access to employment may challenge some of these, rarely all of these. More importantly, the terms on which the access is gained, and the ability to continue to maintain this access is very often determined by these structures themselves. Thus, the kind of women who work and the kind of work they do are very often contingent on male decision-making in the family, euphemised as 'family decision-making' or 'household strategy' for livelihood or survival.

Importantly, patriarchal construction of female dependence is not uniform. Rather, 'class' (previously 'caste') differences are based on differential constructions of femininity. Multiple patriarchies constitute women of different caste/class status in

different ways, which bear erratic and quasi-functional relations to each other. The visibility of lower caste/class women -- in workplaces and streets -- denigrate their men. The economic and sexual exploitation of lower caste/class women marks out the upper caste/class men's ability to ensure the security of their own women. Men of subordinate castes and classes struggle, in turn, to reverse the conspicuous denial to them of exclusive access to and control over their women's sexuality and labour power.[39] Thus upward caste/class mobility gets easily fixated on visible and ensurable symbols of familial control over women: withdrawal from paid work; dowry and arranged early marriages; deployment in status-raising housework.

So far as the women themselves are concerned, there are varied and sometimes contradictory responses. Poor women are less able to stretch the given norms of feminine identity than urban middle class women. And they find themselves trapped between their understanding of discrimination and their aspirations for higher socio-economic status. In female workers' own telling, they realise the actual similarity in the content of male and female work and point out that these are obscured by constructions of skill. Equally, they themselves often echo managerial and union distinctions of male and female tasks, especially on the grounds of physical strength and strain. These distinctions are sometimes integral to the expression of feminine identity. Given the hard manual labour that is routine to their lives, a public statement of physical weakness is a means of claiming feminine frailty. They also accept the management's arguments about protective legislation being the main reason for denying women jobs in the organised sector -- these constitute a public recognition of say, motherhood and sexual protection. But this is usually accompanied by an understanding that 'protection' applies to better paid jobs. Women are forced into small-scale and informal jobs where conditions may be similar (or usually worse) and where no protection applies. The women also tacitly accept that for most men, the job is a crucial source of identity and of public recognition of their capability. In their own cases, familial roles are more defining, publicly and privately. Women in insecure and heavy work in the informal sector also share the primacy of familial identities, but they often have no choice but to submerge these in the face of the demands of employers at great cost to their family lives, their health and their leisure time. The double shift looms very large in women workers' day-to-day experience of work. They recognise and accept the non-negotiability of domestic work and its responsibilities (the primary defining feature of their feminine identity) and are, therefore, more ambiguous about their role as workers and commitment to the workplace.[40]

The ideology of domestic femininity has a special attraction for poor women. Paid work is usually monotonous, always physically demanding and carries the danger of sexual harassment. They are thus more susceptible to being pushed further into the family but simultaneously always vulnerable to being pulled out of it and into paid work during household exigencies. Paradoxically, this trend is reinforced by the difference in the earning potential between husband and wife, but also results in furthering this difference by directing women towards even lower paid home-based work. The 1970s survey of a jute mill found that an overwhelming majority of women (all from lower castes) believed factory work to be unsuitable for women. They would prefer 'home-based self-employment' drawing on traditional skills like sewing despite the lower earnings. This response did not vary by level of household income.[41] Such gender differentiated employment choices are reflected in the structure of employment.

Table 4

Gender distribution of total urban employment by status of employment (1972-1998)

	M A L E				F E M A L E			
	Self-employed	Regular	Casual	TOTAL	Self-employed	Regular	Casual	TOTAL
1972-73	39.2	50.7	10.1	100	48.4	27.9	23.7	100
1977-78	40.4	46.4	13.2	100	49.5	24.9	25.6	100
1983	40.9	43.7	15.4	100	45.8	25.8	28.4	100
1987-88	41.7	43.7	14.6	100	47.1	27.5	25.4	100
1990-91	40.7	44.2	15.1	100	49.0	25.9	25.1	100
1993-94	41.7	42.0	16.3	100	45.8	28.4	25.8	100
1997	40.0	41.5	18.5	100	39.7	31.3	29.0	100
1998	42.5	39.5	18.1	100	38.4	32.7	28.9	100

Source: Manpower Profile. India Yearbook 2000, Institute of Applied Manpower research, New Delhi, 2000. Table 3.2.7, p. 307

We see that while men tend to be in self or regular employment, women tend to concentrate in self-employment. Unlike men, women workers are equally distributed between regular and casual employment. Moreover, while men's self-employment shows a slight increasing trend, women's show a rather steeper decline.

The 1970s jute mill survey showed that few women aspire to induct their daughter or daughter-in-law into regular factory employment. Rather, marriage to a man who could afford to keep them out of the mills was more desirable. In the organised sector, the withdrawal of women from 'outside' work became evident from the 1930s and 1940s. With yet more improvement in wages and working conditions since the 1970s, factory workers aspired to upward social mobility -- education for their sons and dowry marriages for (non-productive) daughters. The withdrawal of the wife from paid labour outside the house was usually the first step in such a progression. These confirmations of the domestic ideal created more difficulties for women who did work in factories. In many jute mills, patterns of women's employment have held over a century. In 1891, Taroni told the Factory Commission that women who worked in the mills were all widows and that only widows in unfortunate circumstances worked in factories.[42] Throughout the 1920s and 30s observers commented on the predominance of 'single' women in jute mills.[43] In 1970 in the National Jute Mill, more than half the women workers were the sole earners in their family. The other half had been 'forced' into mill employment by the husband's loss of employment.[44] In Wellington jute mill in 1997, women workers were almost entirely composed of widows and deserted women.[45]

It is not surprising that women workers do not consider mill work 'suitable' for women and endorse the role of the 'housewife' as most desirable for their daughters, even though the price of such desired marriages often cripple poor families. In the 1940s, K.P. Chattopadhyay noted in a survey steep increases in dowry demands among the urban poor.[46] It is now so obvious as to render 'survey' irrelevant.

And yet, these attitudes were not universal then.[47] In the 1990s, there has been more change. Older women who had worked in the mills many years were not happy to relinquish their jobs and were not so particular about daughters and daughters-in-law abjuring factory work. However, they acquiesced with 'family' decisions to maintain non-working young adult women ascribing such decisions to the men in the family. Some women were more positive, questioning managerial and employment policy of excluding women. In the case of the rayon mill, women had a more uniformly positive approach to factory work. However, their desire for factory work was limited to the areas and tasks within which they were limited by managerial and union decision-making.[48]

The experience of female garment workers in Bangladesh point in a completely different direction. An active preference for docile workers has resulted in a predominantly female work force. But such women have not complied with managerial expectancy of docility. Their active involvement with unions has led to a decrease in women's employment in the industry. Managers argue that the cost of women's employment rises when issues of maternity leave and absenteeism are taken into account. Predictably, employers prefer unmarried or single women who constitute over 60 per cent of the work force (whereas they are about forty per cent in the total female work force). Despite lack of security, considerable gender discrimination in wages, long hours and deplorable work conditions, women have a positive attitude to wage employment in the industry. They have benefited, not only in intangibles like autonomy, self-confidence, improved conjugal lives, matrimonial relationship but also in decreased fertility, increased age of marriage and reduction in dowry demands. While wider societal attitudes remain negative towards these women's 'public' activity, they themselves have developed a positive self-image.[49] One of the surprising findings of a recent survey is that 35 per cent of the sample were women who had left their husbands in the village to search for jobs in garment factories.[50]

Amrita Chhacchi's survey of retrenched workers in the electronics industry in Delhi focuses attention on how much the women value their status and identity as skilled workers. Some of these women resisted entering the unorganised sector, others found their entry barred either by family decision or wider social norms. Most of them, however, felt the loss of physical mobility and economic independence acutely. Many of the younger women, married and unmarried, were forced by economic pressures to undertake low paid or home-based jobs which they saw as demeaning.[51] In the electronics industry in Delhi as well as in the Bombay pharmaceutical industries, unions derived considerable strength from the presence of large numbers of militant women.[52]

Conclusion

In some cases thus wage employment has led women towards some forms of 'autonomy': self-confidence, assertiveness and new values of self-worth. In the Indian scenario, however, most working women are already wife and mother and familial dependency continues to mediate their access to and experience of wage work. As a result, in certain historical circumstances, the improvement in male working conditions (as in organised industry) has promoted and fostered poor women's withdrawal into domestic roles which have been the primary means through which they seek opportunities of self-improvement and status-raising.

The new economic policies are likely to undercut these 'domestic' aspirations of the women of hitherto more secure and upwardly mobile working classes. Women's own access to such employment has always been very restricted and is likely to be more elusive. At the same time, other groups of women are being able to access employment before marriage. Poorer women's access to such employment emerged significantly in the 1970s. Such jobs may now be under some threat, though we see that in the 1990s when the proportion of men in regular jobs is decreasing, the proportion of women in the same category is increasing. (Table 4) It is necessary, of course, to look more carefully into the kind of regular jobs into which women are entering. For a vast majority of poor women, employment is concentrated in the most vulnerable and insecure sectors. A majority of women continue to respond to 'family' imperatives as to when and where they work. It is likely that the recent changes in the labour market will reinforce rather than erode the pervasive value of dependence, which continues to inhere in definitions of Indian femininity.

Endnotes

[1 A Report, National Seminar on Policies and Strategies for Working Women in the Context of Industrial Restructuring, (22-25 September 1997), The Institute of Social Studies (The Hague) and Front for Rapid Economic Advancement (Mumbai, India). Quotation from p. 2

[2] Ibid., p. 13-14.

[3] Sachetana, A Report. Structural Adjustment Programmes. Impact on Women's Work, mimeo, Calcutta, October 1997, Introductory Section.

[4] There is a growing literature on this subject. ILO-ARTEP, Social Dimensions of Structural Adjustment in India, Papers and proceedings of a tripartite workshop, New Delhi, December 10-11, 1991; G. Parthasarathy, 'Unorganised Sector and Structural Adjustment, EPW, 13 July 1996, XXXI, 28, pp. 1859-1869; Supriya Roy Chowdhury, 'Industrial Restructuring, Unions and the State, Textile Mill workers in Ahmedabad, EPW, 24 February 1996, XXXI, 8; B.B. Patel, 'Informalisation of Indian Labour. Displaced Textile Mill Workers in Gujarat and their Struggle for Alternatives', paper submitted to 'The World of Indian Industrial Labour', Amsterdam, 10-13 December 1997.

[5] Amrita Chhacchi, 'The Experience of Job Loss in the Electronics Industry', Paper presented at the workshop on 'The World of Indian Industrial Labour', Amsterdam, 10-13 December 1997.

[6] Nirmala Banerjee, 'Something old, something new, something borrowed...The Electronics industry in Calcutta in S. Mitter, and S. Rowbotham (eds) *Women Encounter Technology: Changing Patterns of Employment in the Third World*, UNU-INTECH, Routledge, London, 1995.

[7] Karin Kapadia,

[8] See for instance, Debapriya Bhattacharya, Women and Industrial Employment in Bangladesh: Challenges and Opportunities in the Era of New Technologies, A Research Report, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 1997; and Debapriya Bhattacharya and Mustafizur Rahaman, Female Employment under Export-propelled Industrialisation: Prospect for Internalising Global Opportunities in Bangladesh Apparel Sector, 1998.

[9] Nirmala Banerjee, *Indian Women in a Changing Industrial Scenario,* New Delhi, 1991.

[10] Policies and Strategies for Working Women, p. 12.

[11] Nandita Shah, Sujata Ghotoskar, Nandita Gandhi and Amrita Chhachhi, 'Structural Adjustment, Feminisation of Labour Force and Organisational Struggles', *EPW*, 30 April 1994.

[12] Policies and Strategies for Working Women, p. 6.

[13] In the case of the jute industry, I have examined this decline in my Ph.D. Thesis. 'Migration, Motherhood and Militancy: Women Workers in the Bengal Jute Industry, 1890-1940', Cambridge University, 1992. For the later period see my 'Gendered Exclusion: Domesticity and Dependence in Bengal' in *International Review of Social History*, 42, 1997, pp. 65-86. This paper draws on sections of this earlier paper. Also see, Arjan de Haan, 'Towards a Single Male Earner: the Decline of Child and Female Employment in an Indian Industry' in *Economic and Social History of the Netherlands*, 6, 1994, pp. 145-67.

[14] Sachetana, A Report. Structural Adjustment Programmes. Impact on Women's Work, mimeo, Calcutta, October 1997. See Section III: Wives and Workers. The Organised Factory System. Case Studies: Keshoram Rayon Mill and Wellington Jute Mill.

[15] See fn. 4 above. Also see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History, Bengal 1890-1940*, Princeton, 1989.

[16] Policies and Strategies for Working Women, p. 10.

[17] R.S. Chandavarkar, *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India. Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay, 1900-1940,* Cambridge, 1994.

[18] Sen, 'Gendered Exclusion'.

[19] Dagmar Engels, *Beyond Purdah? Women in Bengal, 1849-1905,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.

[20] Samita Sen, *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India, The Bengal Jute Industry,* Cambridge University Press, 1999.

[21] Radha Kumar, 'Family and Factory: Women in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1919-1939' in J. Krishnamurty (ed.) *Women in Colonial India, Essays on Survival, Work and the State,* Indian Economic and Social History Review, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 133-162;

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[25] Jayati Ghose, 'Gender Concerns in Macro-Economic Policy', *EPW*, 30 April 1994.

[26] Banerjee, *Women in a Changing Industrial Scenario.*

[27] Sachetana, 1997, Section II.

[28] Ibid., Section III.

[29] Vina Satrughana, panel presentation, IAWS, Pune, 1998.

[30] Policies and Strategies for Working Women, p. 10-11.

[31] Sujata Ghotoskar, 'Women, Work and Health: An Interconnected Web. Case of Drugs and Cosmetics Industries, *EPW*, 25 October 1997, WS45-52.

[32] Sen, *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India.*

[33] Sachetana, 1997.

[34] Policies and Strategies for Working Women, p. 21.

[35] Rohini Hensman Banaji, 'Workplace Unionism in Bombay: Problems of Democracy and Responsibility', Paper submitted to the workshop on 'The World of Indian Industrial Labour', Amsterdam, 10-13 December 1997.

[36] The sub-heading is taken from Hilary Standing, *Dependence and Autonomy. Women's Employment and the Family in Calcutta*, Routledge, London, 1991.

[37] Ibid., p. 142-3.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Also see Kumkum Sangari, 'Politics of Diversity: Religious Communities and Multiple Patriarchies', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 23 and 30 December 1995, pp. 3287-3310 and 3381-9.

[40] Ghotosker, 'Women, Work and Health' and Sachetana, 1997.

[41] Mitra, 'The Jute Workers'.

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[43] Dagmar Curjel, Condition of Women Workers Before and After Childbirth (in Bengal Industries); A Report. Commerce Department Commerce Branch, 1921; J.H. Kelman, Labour in India, London, 1923; Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, Vols 1, 5, and 11, London, 1931.

[44] Mitra, 'The Jute Workers'.

[45] Sachetana, 1997.

[46] K.P. Chattopadhyay, *A Socio-Economic Survey of Jute Labour,* Department of Social Work, Calcutta University, 1952.

[47] Sen, 'Gendered Exclusion'.

[48] Ibid. Also see, Sen, 'Gendered Exclusion' and Sachetana, 1997.

[49] See fn 7 above. Also see Pratima Paul Majumdar and Anwara Begum, 'The Gender Impacts of Growth of Export Oriented Manufacturing: A Case Study of the Ready Made Garment Industry in Bangladesh, Workshop on Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, World Bank, Oslo, 23-25 June 1999.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Chhachhi, 'The Experience of Job Loss'.

[52] Banaji, 'Workplace Unionism in Bombay'. It is to be noted that there is a long history of women's militant unionism in the Bombay textile industry. In the Calcutta jute industry too, women were militant agitators. From the 1930s, along with 'formalisation', progressive union organisation contributed greatly to marginalising women's presence in the older industries. See Sen, *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India.*