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WOMEN IN CHARAKHA SILK REELING IN KARNATAKA

**A BENEFICIARY ASSESSMENT REPORT
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PREFACE

Although it is generally accepted that Women form a considerable proportion of the work force in Sericulture, contributing to as much as 62 percent of the labour force, not many indepth studies are available which look into Women's participation and their contribution especially in the silk reeling sector. Considering this lacuna, the 1993 round of the BA study focussed exclusively on **Women in Charaka Silk Reeling** looking into issues like their social status, motivation and compulsions of work, awareness, decision making, attitude towards work and other related aspects.

The cluster study was conducted by using participant observation and case study methods, in the silk reeling areas of T.Narasipura and Chamrajanagara areas, both of which have had a long history of reeling.

The Report has been discussed with the officials of the Department of Sericulture, Karnataka. The findings of the study were presented at the National Workshop of the Beneficiary Assessment, February 1993. This report is brought out with the hope that the findings and the suggestions would be found useful by the policy makers and the implementing agencies. Considering that 1994 is **the Year of Women in Sericulture**, it is only appropriate that it is released now.

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SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS

In the entire process of conversion of cocoons to cloth, women form a considerable proportion of work force, and this is more so in the silk reeling sector where they form more than 62%. Women contribute substantially in the conversion of cocoons to both filature and charakha silks.

The status of women in the reeling sector, especially in producing charakha silk, was sought to be studied in the 1993 round of the BA. For doing this, Chamarajanagara and T.Narasipura areas of Mysore district were chosen where only charakha silk is reeled due to the availability of C'Nichi cocoons. The study covers eight villages in and around the two towns. Case studies and conversational interviews were conducted among a cross section of women.

BACKGROUND

Women belonging to all the three religious groups - Hindus, Muslims and Christians, are found working in the silk reeling industry. Among Hindus, Vokkaligas, Lingayats, Uppara Shettis, SCs predominate the scene.

Most of the women are from families which pursue agriculture. Since reeling does not provide continuous occupation through out the year due to shortage of cocoons, women look for other occupations like agriculture, rope-making, construction work etc. However, they do not like to pursue occupation other than reeling.

Categories of Women

Women engaged in the reeling industry can be classified as

Entrepreneurs, those of the women who are not only license holders but conduct business on their own. There are three such entrepreneurs in T.Narasipura. They deserve attention considering that in the entire state there are only four such women.

Supervisors: i.e. those who supervise the reeling units, the number of charakhas in the unit being four and above.

Women of family based units: one or two charakhas established at home and run mainly by the family members.

Wage earners: women who work on wages for others.

It is the economic compulsion, the need to survive, that has made all the three entrepreneurs to enter the industry. Women wage earners are also pursuing reeling due to economic compulsions. Women of the other two categories are in the fray as it is the most inevitable thing to do, since reeling is conducted at the household level.

Of the three women entrepreneurs, one is a turner turned entrepreneur, another is a turner who became a reeler and then turned entrepreneur and the third is a fresh entrant to the industry itself. This is a clear indication that occupational mobility for

women need not necessarily be in the order of turner turned reeler turned entrepreneur.

WORK LOAD AND DIVISION OF LABOUR

Wage earners work mainly as reelers. Many women wage earners pursue reeling in the town, though they are residents of villages in which reeling is carried out. They opt to work in the town due to continuous availability of work. In these areas, units are closed down due to non availability of cocoons, the units in the villages run for a shorter period of time than those in the towns.

Women of the family based units are spared the time spent on commuting. However, unlike in bigger units, there is no clear-cut distinction made between the jobs allotted to a turner and a reeler. As such, cleaning the oven and lighting it to boil water are done by the women of the household. If reeling is done by men, women would have attended to all this. Keeping the unit clean is also the job of the women.

The degree of supervision exercised by a woman varies depending on a host of factors - the work assigned to the hired supervisor, the owner/man's involvement, the religious background of the family and the educational level of the woman concerned.

It could however be said that those of the women who supervise the units mainly look after the weighing of the cocoons, the number of ends fed at each end, the silk production and the like. Arranging for labourers, and going to the market - both cocoon and silk - are not done by women. Also, the days on which payment has to be made, only if the man is not in town, the work is assigned to the woman. What

needs to be highlighted here is that only that portion of the money is given which would be needed for disbursement.

The work load of the women entrepreneurs is the same as that of the male entrepreneurs. Apart from attending to the markets and supervising the work at their units, one of the women entrepreneurs even puts in physical labour as a reeler.

WORKING CONDITIONS

There is no wage disparity in the reeling sector between a man and a woman doing the same type of work. Work is done on a 'piece' wage basis, for every three kgs of cocoons reeled (referred to as 'drop' here, gani in other areas), the reelers and turners are paid in wages.

As a reeler, a woman earns Rs.4 in Chamarajanagara and Rs.3 in surrounding villages and as a turner Rs.2 and Rs.1.50 per drop of 3 kgs of cocoons. In T.Narasipura area, a reeler is paid Rs.3.50. and a turner Rs.2.00 for 2 kgs of cocoons reeled.

Wages are collected everyday in Chamarajanagara and once a week or once in ten days in T.Narasipura area.

In a family based charakha unit, outside help/labour is rarely sought. But when family members' help, it is not as if they are not paid. The payment depends on whether they belong to the same household (eating from the same kitchen). Co-sisters, sisters-in-law, etc. are all paid in wages.

Women who perform supervisory function are not paid any wages at all since they work for the family at the household level. Entrepreneurs enjoy the gains and suffer the loss, in monetary terms, like the other entrepreneurs of the reeling industry.

ADVANCES

This applies only to the wage earners. Advance paid by the employers to employees is based on trust and not on gender. As much as Rs.1000/- to RS.1500/- is taken as advance for purposes like celebration of festivals, etc.

WORKING HOURS

The hours of work are specified only for a wage earner, who puts in eight hours or more of work depending on the season. For the other categories, the number of hours are not quantifiable. Women entrepreneurs spend considerable amount of time in attending to the market. The work hours of supervisors and woman of the family based units extends upto late in the evening, depending not only on the season but also on the time at which they start work, which again depends on the time taken by the man of the household to purchase and transport the cocoons. If, to generate working capital for the purchase of the cocoons, everyday sale of silk becomes inevitable, then the work itself is started late and hence continues during the late hours.

Even during the peak season, there are no shifts as such in the charakha units. Also, shift system is not opted for by the entrepreneurs who produce quality silk. If the quantity of cocoons purchased is on the higher side, than one or two extra ganis of

cocoons are reeled. At such times women prefer to take a break, attend to household work and continue reeling a little later.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORK

Wage earners have taken up reeling as there is no option open to them. Both the supervisors and the women of the family based units are happy to be working within the four walls of the house, conflict with others is reduced. Women supervisors even concede that they get bored on days when work is not available. Women entrepreneurs are grateful to the industry for giving them an opportunity to survive and derive respectability in the society.

Women of the family based units prefer to work as turners than as reelers, as the turning activity allows free movement. They feel that they are in a position to manage household chores as and when children substitute their work as a turner. This cannot be done if they work as reelers. Some women also feel that learning to reel would create additional burden.

Whatever may be the category to which a woman belongs to, and whatever may be her involvement in the reeling industry, she does not consider reeling either to be a skillful or an unskillful activity.

WOMAN ABUSE

Generally, one does not come across any instance where the employer abuses women. The only time where women are reprimanded is when silk quality turns uneven, this is done for all employees, irrespective of the gender.

At home, women are abused, both orally and physically, if their men are drunkards.

HEALTH HAZARDS

The general complaints heard from the working women are breathing problem, chest pain and blisters on hands.

Women of the family based units complain of health problems than compared to the wage earners. That is to say that women wage earners tend to underplay such complaints when compared to the next category of reelers. For wage earners, it is more a question of survival - a fight for everyday existence. Once this is surpassed, occupational hazards are noticed. Women who supervise the reeling units and the entrepreneurs do not complain of any health problems.

DECISION MAKING

Of the four categories, viz., entrepreneurs, supervisors, women of the family based units and wage earners, the control over money is with the first and the last category only. In the wage earner's family, since women earn wages, their say in all matters is not brushed aside easily. The entrepreneurs decide on all matters all by

themselves. The women of the family units do not handle money at all, whatever is needed for the household expenses has to be given by the men. The women supervisors, sometimes handle money to pay the wage earners, it is done only under the instructions of the men of the household.

The decisions on what the money should be spent on etc., are taken by both the men and the women, in the first and the last categories. Of the money earned, the entire amount of the woman's earning is spent for the family, whereas the man keeps some amount apart, for his expenses. How much money is spent by women on themselves depends on the category to which they belong. Wage earners spend the least amount on themselves since their money is essential to run the kitchen. There is no difference in the spending habits of those women who are single and those who are abandoned. Both spend on the families.

Whatever may be the category to which a woman belongs, the first priority is given to the family. This is true of women entrepreneurs also.

Leisure Time

Between the reeling work and the household work, women hardly get any leisure time. If the household work is shared by others, then the leisure time available is more. In this area, leisure time is perceived as times when there is no work available. But this is not something that is opted for. Occasionally, the women wage earners spend their leisure time by watching movies.

AWARENESS ON GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMMES

a) Credit:

All women are not aware of all the programmes initiated by the government for them. If credit is given, the extent and the reason for it are not known by them. Men are more aware of the finer details than women. This is true of the first three categories. Here, the women entrepreneurs stand out, as they are as much aware as the other entrepreneurs are.

b) Training:

Except in villages where training is conducted, women are not aware of programmes initiated by the Department of Sericulture. Those of who are aware of the training programmes are, however, not aware of women's group formation and such other programmes.

GENERAL AWARENESS

All women working in the industry, irrespective of the category to which they belong, are aware of the market from which the cocoons are bought and where the silk is sold. The women wage earners show minimal interest in knowing the price of cocoons and that of the silk. Women of the family based units are informed about the rates, price fluctuations etc, only if they enquire. Supervisors, who put in considerable amount of time, are aware of the prices. Women entrepreneurs, of course, are well versed in the trade.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

On going to the market

The first answer one gets from the women is ***"Why should I go when I have male members in the family!"*** None of the women, except the entrepreneurs, have ever been inside the cocoon market. As such they are not in a position to comment on the facilities or lack of it, in the market.

Women entrepreneurs perceive no problem in visiting either of the markets, cocoon and silk. They go unescorted and conduct transaction on their own. They do perceive that unless other women participate in the market, their awareness relating to the industry would be limited.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

Under the VISHWA programme of the Government of Karnataka, women working as turners, were trained to become reelers. The programme was for three months and was conducted taking the help of some entrepreneurs at the village level. A stipend amount of Rs.300/- per month was assured. However, the women have got about Rs.700/- to Rs.800/- for three months. The officials say that this was due to irregularity in their attendance, though how this was worked out is not clear. The women trainees were not explained why less amount of money is given to them. They express resentment and feel cheated. They were assured that the pending amount would be released in due course of time but their thumb impression has been taken for the amount paid, which is what they would ever get. The trainees being uneducated have remained unaware.

The owners of the units where the training was conducted were promised some amount but have not been paid either. But, the owners concede that there was no written agreement or assurance given. Now, the owners say that they do not mind, if this amount is not given provided, they are given a credit of working capital (Rs.30,000 to Rs.40,000). If this is not done, they would not co-operate when training programmes are held in future.

The owners are critical of the programme and are apprehensive that starting of more charakha units would lead to labour shortage. At the same time, they are not keen to employ the trained personnel as reelers, since they consider that knowledge gained by them to be inadequate. Women who were trained continue to work as turners, the training has not brought any change in their income level.

The resentment towards trainees are exhibited not just by men (owners) but also women (both turners and reelers). Reelers feel that though they have been doing this work since so many years, yet preference for loan is given to someone who is now *'throwing thread for the first time'*.

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Wage earners do not think that they can find work elsewhere or stop working. Some of the wage earners aspire to get loans from the Government to start their own units but they are unsure of themselves - whom to approach etc., and have no driving force to become entrepreneurs. Even for the Government loans that they aspire, they can visualise starting of a single charakha unit where they themselves can reel.

Women of the family based units do feel that they would like to stop working. They would like to hire labourers to replace them in the reeling units. Women of this category are also interested in expanding their units. They would like to install another charakha even though they face the problem of cocoon shortage, as a result of which they are at present unable to run the existing units to their full capacity. Such aspirations have arisen more because of men of their family trying to persuade them.

Women who supervise their units do not wish to stop working. They do not think of expanding the units either, mainly because of labour problems. They perceive that it would be difficult to adjust labour and pay them advances. They are happy as long as there is a continuous supply of cocoons.

The women entrepreneurs perceive adjusting working capital as the main hurdle. They would like Governmental support in this regard. They find this to come in the way of expanding their units, which they would otherwise like to do.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Some citation for the three entrepreneurs should be given during **'the year of the Women in Sericulture'** because they are the only three in the entire state (apart from one more in Hassan) who are reeling entrepreneurs in the true sense of the word. A wide publicity should be given to them. Since they possess leadership qualities, they could be asked to motivate other women to function as entrepreneurs. This will work as there is a potentiality to build up more entrepreneurs in this area.

2. Women entrepreneurs could be given working capital assistance. This they need as they find mobilising monetary resources to be a difficult task.
3. Training programmes for women reelers, should focus on account maintenance, book keeping and how to function in the cocoon and silk markets. Those engaged in reeling as a family based enterprise and in supervising their units, would be helped by this.
4. Training programmes should also concentrate on creating awareness among women on credit facilities that are available.
5. The idea of training women at their villages is welcome but the follow-up is inadequate. Formation of groups/ cooperatives of women reelers, should be taken up immediately as a first step. For those of the women who are trained, credit facilities should be made available.
6. While giving credit, women whose children are working on wages for other reelers, should be given priority.
7. The Department of Sericulture should collaborate with adult education department to conduct programmes for women reelers.
8. For wage earners, the problem is one of non-availability of employment throughout the year. To rectify this, alternate job opportunities - pupae extraction etc., should be thought of.

1. INTRODUCTION

Silk reeling - the conversion of cocoons to raw silk - is an important component of the sericulture industry. In this component, women form a sizeable proportion of the work force taking part in various activities like turning, reeling etc. Although women's contribution to silk production is indispensable, their roles have remained 'invisible'. This is despite the fact that as much as sixty two percent of the work force in reeling comprises of women.

One of the main objectives of the National Sericulture Project (NSP) is to recognise the role of women in both cocoon and raw silk production. The NSP envisages to provide the necessary inputs to women by providing access to technology, credit and income, among other things. A number of training programmes to develop skill in silk reeling are also undertaken.

To facilitate this component of the NSP, the Beneficiary Assessment study has looked into the status of women in silk industry, their conditions, motivations and aspirations, their problems and compulsions, abuse and other related aspects. The study focusses on the various dimensions of women's participation in charakha silk reeling. Charakha is a traditional silk reeling contrivance and provides ample opportunity to gauge women's participation.

The study is based on participant observation and case study methods in the traditional silk reeling clusters of Chamarajanagara and T.Narasipura taluks of Mysore district.

Table Profile of the reeling units

Taluks	Total no.of charaka reelers	Total no.of charakas	Men (no.of reelers)	No.of charka	Wom reeler	No. of charka	SCST reeler	Oth.
Chamaraja- nagara	505	2877	487	2839	18	38	141	364
T.Narasipura	193	817	164	762	29	55	77	117

Source: Technical Service Centres (TSC) Reeling, Chamarajanagara and T.Narasipura, 1993

In both the areas, reeling activity is not only concentrated in the town but is also spread over in the forty and odd villages surrounding the town, within a radius of fifteen kms. The concentration of units is however more in the town (14 percent in Chamarajanagara and 23 percent in T.Narasipura) than in the villages. Mudala Agrahara, Mangala Hosur, Madapura, Kirigsur are the most prominent villages surrounding Chamarajanagara where reeling is concentrated. Mugur and Kurubur are prominent reeling centres around T.Narasipura.

On an average, each reeler owns two charakhas, the maximum number being sixteen in Chamarajanagara and ten in T.Narasipura. In Chamarajanagara, the reeling units are concentrated in localities of Bangladesh, Kadakpur Mohalla, Adi Jambava Colony and also near the railway station.

Not all the reelers operate their units all the time, only 30% of the reelers are actively involved in reeling throughout the year. Seasonal variation, depending on the market arrivals of cocoons and renditta determine the reelers' participation. In summer, when the arrival is more and renditta is on the lower side, maximum number of reelers operate their units. Those of the entrepreneurs who are producing quality silk and have an established contact with the trader, stop work when the cocoon quality is poor.

1.3 INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

Cocoon markets are established in both Chamarajanagara and T.Narasipuraa. The cocoon transaction, on an average, is three to four tonnes in Narasipura and four to five tonnes in Chamarajanagara. A Reeling TSC has been established since April 1991 in T.Narasipuraa and in August 1991 in Chamarajanagara. Since September 1991, a Silk Exchange has been opened in Nagara and from August 3rd, a Kamataka Silk Marketing Board (KSMB) branch has also started functioning.

All the three types of charakha silk - fine, medium and coarse - are reeled. In Chamarajanagara, both fine and medium types of silk are produced by 40% of the reelers each, only 20% of reelers are reeling coarse silk.

At the Silk Exchange that has began to function in Chamarajanagara, 400-600 kgs of silk are transacted per day. From its inception (in September '91) to June '92, 22,770 kgs of silk was purchased at the Exchange by the KSMB, which is the only purchaser. No traders are taking part as of now. Only thirty reelers are selling silk here, accounting to 20% of the total silk that is produced in the area.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

Chamarajanagara and T.Narasipura areas of Mysore district were chosen as the areas of study. The study was conducted both at the town based centres and in the villages. The villages were chosen depending on the concentration of the reeling units. In Chamarajanagara, Madapura, Mangala Hosur and Kirgasur villages were chosen. Mugur, Madapura, Kurubur and Hiruyur villages around T.Narasipura were studied. Also, a few of the filature units at Honnur were studied to draw a few comparative insights.

The methodology included primarily Participant Observation and Case Studies. Rapport was built with women by repeatedly visiting the same reeling units over and over again. Group discussions at an unit of Uppara Shetty's in Chamarajanagara was also conducted.

2. PROFILE OF THE WORKING WOMEN

SOCIAL BACKGROUND:

2.1 AGE:

Women of all age-groups are found engaged in the reeling industry. Women between the age-group of 25-45 predominate the scene. Between the age-group of 15-18, not many are found working. Above forty five also there is a decrease. However, there are a few who are in the above forty five years category (below sixty) who are pursuing reeling activity. This happens only if there are no other earning members in the family. *Chikkabasavamma residing at Adi Jambava Colony of Chamarajanagara is nearly sixty years old. She does not have good eye-sight and finds it difficult to see the silk thread move while reeling. Yet she has to reel since none of her children - eight of them - are supporting her.*

One cannot, with accuracy, gauge the age of women. All women look atleast ten years older than what they claim. This is not because they understate their age, but due to various other reasons - like poverty, malnutrition etc.

Working women are unable to specify their correct age. They are hesitant to answer any query regarding their age. Those who do, say that they have learnt this by asking their mothers. There are two other ways by which women have been able to specify their age - however approximate - one is because it has been entered in the voters' list and for Christians, entry is made in the Church. But, since they cannot distinguish from one year to the next, it is difficult to accept their responses.

2.2 RELIGION :

Women belonging to the three different religious groups are - Hindus, Muslims and Christians found in the reeling sector. The Christians found here are converted Christians - converted from the Scheduled Castes (SCs).

2.3 CASTE :

The caste group to which women belong are Lingayats, Vokkaligas, Uppara Shettys, Parivara Naikas, SCs, - AK's among them predominating.

2.4 EDUCATION LEVEL :

Uneducated and school drop-outs outnumber all others. A handful of literates are found. Majority of the women wage-earners are those who have "never held slate in their hand".

2.5 LANGUAGE :

They speak only Kannada.

2.6 MARITAL STATUS:

A majority of women in the reeling sector are those who are married. There are however, quite a few women who are single - those who have never been married and also those who are abandoned by their husbands.

2.7 FAMILY BACKGROUND :

Women wage earners are not necessarily from families which are into reeling. Most of them are from families (father's side) which pursue agriculture.

The incidence of all the members of the family in reeling is less when compared to families which have some in reeling and some in agriculture. Also, cases of husband pursuing agriculture activities and wife in reeling are not uncommon. *Javaraiah and Devamma are husband and wife residing at Madapura (T.Narsipura). Javaraiah is sixty years old and was working on wages in agriculture when young. Devamma is fifty years and is pursuing reeling. Since they have eight daughters, five of whom are married and three still with them and since the man*

of the household is no longer earning due to labourious agricultural work. Devamma continues to work though old.

2.8 OTHER OCCUPATIONS PURSUED :

Since reeling does not provide continuous occupation throughout the year - due to shortage of cocoons - those in the reeling industry (women included) except big entrepreneurs, look-out for occupations which include agriculture, rope-making, construction work etc. *Puttananjamma, is fifty five years old and works as a reeler in Mugur. When work is not available, she earns money by making ropes. She has to do this since there is no one else to look after her. She is a widow.* Women wage earners, given the option, do not like to take-up other occupations outside in the sun. Their argument is *'after working in the shade, how can anyone work in the sun?'*

3. MOTIVATION AND COMPULSIONS OF WORK

3.1 CLASSIFICATION

Women engaged in the reeling industry can be classified into

Wage earners¹

Women of the family based units²

Supervisors³

Entrepreneurs⁴

WAGE EARNERS :

The general tendency is for women to have worked as turners when they were young. After marriage/child birth- when economic compulsion forces them, they turn to this occupation. Under such circumstances, the chances are that the women continue to work as turners and/or reelers. We came across only one case where the wife reeled and husband turned the wheel. But this, we later realised, was only a temporary arrangement. *Marirachaiah pursues agriculture to earn wages and on days when work is not available steps in as a turner when his wife Chandramma reels.*

- There is some sort of conviction, deep rooted, that after a certain age they cannot learn to reel. But this belief is not universal.

¹ **Wage Earners:** Those earning wages - everyday or once a week, as the case may be.

² **Family Based Units:** One or two charakhas established at home and run mainly by the family members.

³ **Supervisor:** Those who supervise the reeling units established at home are referred to as Supervisors. These units would have more than four charakhas.

⁴ **Entrepreneurs:** Those of the women who are not only the unit owners but also transact business on their own.

- Those who have learnt to reel at an young age would have discontinued for some years and start reeling after this gap.
- For those who have learnt the skill, it is the most inevitable thing to do, when economic compulsions forces them.
- If women join the reeling industry afresh, that is without any previous reeling experience. Even if young, they join only as turners and not as reelers. They *may* later on pick-up the skill of reeling.

WOMEN OF THE FAMILY BASED UNITS:

Women have taken up reeling/turning as something inevitable.

In single charakha units, at Adi Jambava colony of Chamarajanagara, the skill is passed on from men to women. Men learnt to reel by working for wages with Muslim owners of the same area and have started units of their own. Here, the age of the women to learn reeling has mattered little. But even here, women start work by turning the wheel and later on have become reelers.

SUPERVISORS:

Since the work process is at home, it is inevitable for women to take-up supervisory activity. Women have come from families other than reeling and have picked up the skill of reeling after marriage. It is only this category of women who can be said to be motivated to take-up this activity.

ENTREPRENEURS:

As mentioned earlier, the area of study achieves importance in view of the fact that there are three Entrepreneurs, who in the strict sense of the term, operate the units on their own (for a brief profile of the Entrepreneurs see Appendix I).

It is the compulsion - the need to survive - that has made all the three women Kamma, Yeshodamma and Chinkamma to become entrepreneurs. *Kamma and her children had little to eat, as such. Kamma started preparing Bondas (a South Indian delicacy) and selling it. While making door-to-door delivery, she observed people in the village pursuing reeling. She joined work as a turner - a job which she did only for two months - before becoming an entrepreneur by selling the land given to her by her father. She says that her intention of becoming an entrepreneur stemmed from the need to feed her children. She was helped by her brother, to start with.*

Yeshodamma is from a family which she claims had seen better days. Belonging to the landed gentry caste of Karnataka - Vokkaligas - her family (from father's side) is well-known and well-respected. Since her siblings are doing well, she wanted to be no less than them. As such she thought of starting a business of her own, reeling was the first thing that came to her mind. Yeshodamma chose reeling since her aunt from maternal side was already in the industry. In this sense, she is not the first in the family to take up reeling.

Chinkamma was motivated to take up reeling by the credit facilities offered by the DOS for women. Having worked as both a turner and a reeler, she is confident of making a success of it.

3.2 WORK HISTORY :

Those who were turners when young are reelers now. There are also those who have joined the industry as turners. No one joins the industry directly as reelers, unless they have undergone training.

It is not necessary either that reeling is a hereditary occupation or an occupation pursued by some other member in the family to pursue it. Although some women have had either of the parents in reeling, many are first generation reelers. Their parents - father in agriculture, mother may or may not be pursuing in agriculture, is not uncommon either.

Single charakha units in Adi Jambava colony started years ago. Over years, some of the units have expanded in size.

Mobility from wage earners (men) to family based units with women learning the skill of reeling from men is not uncommon either.

Of the three women entrepreneurs, one is a turner turned entrepreneur, another is a turner who became a reeler and then turned entrepreneur and the third is a fresh entrant to the industry itself. This is a clear indication that occupational mobility for women need not necessarily be in the order of turner turned reeler turned entrepreneur.

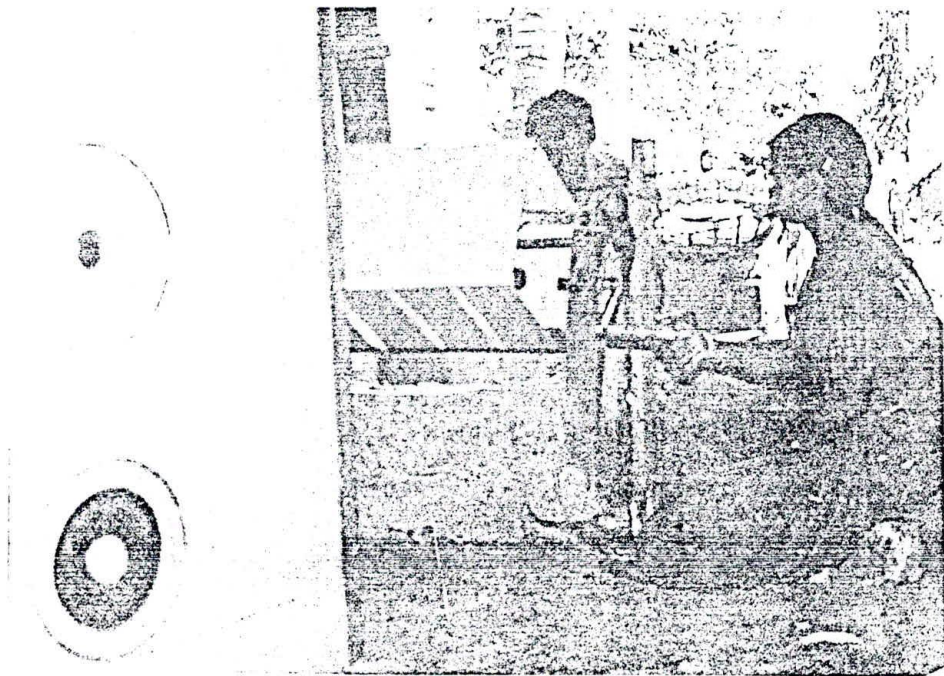
4. TYPES OF ACTIVITY

The types of activities pursued by women of different categories differ.

WAGE EARNER :

Women are employed in charakha units either as reelers or as turners.

A turner turns the wheel of the charakha. Apart from this, there are many more jobs that a turner has to do. This includes mainly fetching of fuel and water, cleaning of the utensils used in reeling and boiling the reeling water.



A WOMAN TURNING THE WHEEL OF A CHARAKHA

Reeler is the person who converts cocoons to silk. It is for this job that a reeler is paid. Apart from reeling silk, there are some other jobs that a reeler is expected to do. Jute cleaning is done by the reeler, whatever jute is taken out from each of the reeling basins is to be cleaned by the respective reelers. Removing the pupa from the basin and collecting it in a bucket, removing silk from the charakha are jobs of a reeler.



A WOMAN REELING

WOMEN OF THE FAMILY BASED UNITS :

In a family based unit, no clear cut distinction is made between the jobs assigned to a turner and a reeler, especially when the jobs are performed by the members of the same family. Even if labourers are hired - one person is hired and one is a family member and even if the roles that have to be performed are assigned, it is not strictly adhered to as in the larger units.

The job of the turner, if hired, viz., that of cleaning the oven and lighting it to boil water etc., are at times done by the woman of the household without waiting for the turner to arrive. If reeling is done by the man, by the time he comes back home from

the cocoon market, the woman would have boiled water, stifled the cocoon, if stifling is necessary.¹

Cleaning of the cocoons with water to remove the dirt is a process done by the women of the single charakha units. Keeping the unit clean is also the job of the woman.

SUPERVISION :

The extent of supervision done by the women, varies from one unit to another. In this area, the general tendency is to hire a person - always a man - to carry out the supervisory work. The supervisors - 'Mestri's' - work involves weighing cocoons, monitoring the number of cocoons fed at each end, skeining, supervising, stifling and also jute cleaning². Apart from this, they also have to arrange for labourers, if there is an absentee, they have to look for a replacement. Also, when the work starts, he would have to fetch the labourers, especially if there is work stoppage and re-start of the unit after a gap of a few days months.

If in the unit, there are more than four charakhas, a supervisor is appointed. If it is less, than the owner - in essence - the work of the woman of the household is considered sufficient.

The degree of supervision varies depending on a host of factors - the work assigned to the supervisor, the extent of time put in by the owner, the entrepreneur's religion and the education level of the women. We conducted ten case studies at Chamarajanagara town, Kurubur and Kirgsur villages which showed different variations.

Among the five Muslim entrepreneurs contacted, the extent of supervision by the women of the household (entrepreneur's wife) varies.

¹ The quality of cocoon purchased is so low that even if stifled, it is only for a few minutes.

² In some of the units, for jute cleaning, a separate labourer is hired. Either children or men are hired for this job.

In A's unit, though the reeling unit is within the same compound as the residence, the women are not involved in supervision at all. Women, including girls at home, are involved in beedi-making. The head of the household insists that the women should not get involved in reeling.

However in B's unit, B's wife is constantly present at the work spot. She does not consider supervision - which mainly involves keeping an eye on the work process - to be tedious. Since the men workers who are employed are old (in the six charakha units, only two are men workers) i.e. around 45 - 50 years, she does not mind coming out. Mrs.B perceives that all work of a 'Mestri' can be done except fetching labourers, when there are absentees.

In units owned by Muslims, if the work spot is different from the residence, then there is no supervision put in by the women as found in the cases of C & D. In C's unit, a supervisor is hired and in D's unit, one of the younger brothers - there are three - of the owner looks after the functioning of the unit.

We came across only one case where, although the working unit is different from the dwelling house, supervision - book-keeping - is done by Mrs. E. Mrs E "supervises the supervisor's" work - the supervisor has to weigh the cocoons and the silk under her vigilance. Since she is educated - has studied upto pre-university - she maintains a day to day account of all transactions. Separate book-keeping, which is written separately from the household expense, is maintained by her.

In other than Muslim run units, the participation by women depends on the amount of work assigned to the supervisor. For eg. in a ten- charakha unit run by Uppara Shettys, the owner F not only has a supervisor working for him but he himself puts in a considerable amount of time, as such the role of the women is fully reduced. In another eight-charakha unit, again managed by Uppara Shettys, the supervisor's job is restricted to carting water and jute cleaning. The women conducts all other activities - ensures that the silk quality is maintained, and that the work is done diligently and she even stifles the cocoons, which is very rarely done by women.

The same is true of a six-charakha unit run by Lingayats at Kirgsur. Where all the work, except stifling, is done by Mrs.G. However, Mrs.G, unlike Mrs E, does not write down anything but remembers everything - to give a day to day account to her husband. H of Kurubur owns a six-charakha motor unit and has a supervisor, he openly admits that he does not think much of his wife's supervisory capacity. Mrs.H however claims to have been looking after the unit ever since her daughter was four months old. Her daughter is sixteen years now.

Whatever may be the degree of variation, even in the units mainly managed and "supervised" by the women, - if the house-cum-work area is the same, women are involved in keeping a vigil on "Gudu Aaduvudu, Yele voduvadu" (the movement of cocoons and the thread). Also, women prefer to supervise the women workers, they find it difficult to interact with men workers. In none of the units, is the work of wage payment assigned to the women. It is always the man who does this job, only in his absence, this task is assigned to women. Even when done, only the required amount is given to her for disbursement.

In the reeling industry, there are some functions which are considered beyond women's capability. These activities mainly are stifling and skeining. However, one does come across stray incidences, where these activities are performed by women.

Shivamma, wife of Puttamadashetty, who owns a eight-charakha unit in Chamarajanagara, conducts the stifling process, although a supervisor is hired. The supervisor's help is sought by the woman to lift the basket and to place it on the pan containing boiling water as well as while removing it after stifling is completed.

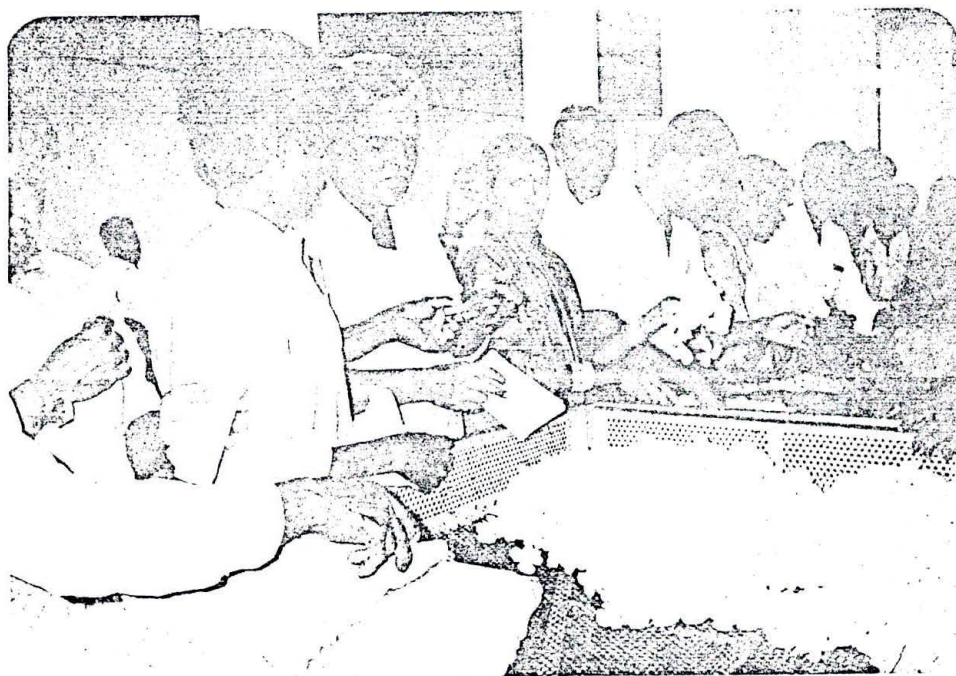
Sundaramma of Mangala Hosur skeins silk efficiently. But she does not do this regularly. When skeined silk is collected, the work of carrying it to the place of storage is, however done by men.

Both Shivamma and Sundaramma do not consider the activity done by them as skillful. Perhaps it could be inferred that the activity of lifting weight is strenuous and is therefore found difficult; the actual process of skeining and stifling, which are

defined as skillful can be performed by them. This is made evident in Chamarajanagara filature unit where women are employed for skeining the silk hanks. Stifling is however not done by women as it involves the use of hot air dryers which are considered as complicated machineries to operate. The other process of re-reeling of silk, which is said to be a man's job exclusively, is also done by women here. The difficult part of this operation is that if the thread is not uniform, with many breaks, then one has to bend many times to tie the knots since the smaller reels are placed on the ground. Women find this back-breaking work difficult to perform.

ENTREPRENEURS:

Their functions include bidding for the cocoons in the cocoon market, getting it transported to their work place, hiring labourers, supervising the work of the labourers, paying them money as well as advance, selling the silk product/s in the silk market etc.



A WOMAN ENTREPRENEUR OF T.NARASIPURA BIDDING FOR COCOONS IN THE COCOON MARKET -A RARE SIGHT INDEED!

5. WORKING CONDITIONS, ATTITUDE TO WORK, WOMEN ABUSE

PRESENT WORK :

Many women wage earners pursue reeling in their villages - place of residence. There are those who pursue jobs in the town even though they come from villages where reeling activity is carried out. They opt to work in the town due to continuous availability of work.¹

The distance to the work place is covered by foot. If the distance is not too far and if the money spent on transport is to be saved, they walk the distance. The maximum time spent by women in commuting is half an hour and the maximum amount spent on transport is Rs.2/- (per day).

Women either commute in groups or alone to the work place - depending on the household work pressure.

Women of the family based units and supervisors are not faced with the necessity of travelling to the work place. Entrepreneurs spend considerable time and money in attending to the market. Whereas both Kamma and Yeshodamma stay at close quarters to the cocoon market (T.Narasipuraa), Chinkamma has to commute by bus from Madapura to T.Narasipura. She is accompanied by her brother. About four to five hours are spent in travelling to the market, bidding for cocoons and going back to Madapura. All three of them go to the Silk Exchange, Bangalore, once or twice a fortnight, depending on the production of silk. Kamma and Yeshodamma go on their own, Chinkamma prefers to go with her brother.

In these areas units are closed down due to non-availability of cocoons, the units in the villages run for a shorter period of time than those in town.

5.1 WORKING CONDITIONS

5.1.1 WAGES:

In fact, it is only the wage earners who are 'paid' for the work they do.

WAGE EARNERS:

There is no wage disparity in the reeling sector - more specifically in the charakha units - between a man and a woman doing the same type of work.

Work is done on a piece basis, for every 2.5 or 3 kgs of cocoons referred to as 'drop' utilised for reeling purposes, the reelers and turners are paid in wages. The stipulated wage rate differs from area to area.

As a reeler, a woman earns Rs.4 in Chamarajanagara and Rs.3 in surrounding villages (per drop of 3 kgs) and as a turner Rs.2 and Rs.1.50. In T.Narasipuraa area, a reeler is paid Rs.3.50 and a turner Rs.2.00 for 2 kgs of cocoons reeled. Generally, per day, five 'drops' of cocoons are reeled.

Wages are collected everyday in Chamarajanagara and once a week or once in ten days in T.Narasipuraa area. Wage disparity, based on gender, is found in filature units at Honnur. Here, for reeling in Filature units, a male reeler is paid Rs.14/-, whereas a female reeler is given Rs.10/-. In the same village, in charakha units, for a drop of cocoons reeled, a reeler is paid, irrespective of gender differences - Rs.2.50 and a turner - Rs.1.50. Per day five drops of cocoons are reeled, fetching Rs.12.50 to the reeler and Rs.7.50 to the turner. In Honnur, filature units are more in number.

WOMEN OF THE FAMILY BASED UNITS :

In a family based charaka unit, outside help/labour is rarely sought. When family members' help is sought, it is not as if they are all not paid. The payment depends on whether they belong to the same household (eating from the same kitchen). Co-sisters, sisters-in-law, etc., are all paid in wages.

SUPERVISORS :

Women who perform supervisory function are not paid in wages since they work for the family at the household level. Women consider their contribution as a part of the household activity and not as extra work.

ENTREPRENEURS :

They enjoy and suffer the gain and the loss like the other entrepreneurs of the reeling industry.

5.1.2 ADVANCE :

This applies only to the wage earners. Advance is paid by the employers to employees based on trust and not on gender. Women wage workers take advance/s from the owners for various reasons - for consumption purposes, especially when no work is available, for the purposes of celebrating festival, wedding, etc.

Advance is repaid back by opting for a cut in the salary, whenever desired. The amount of advance varies from Rs.500/- for a turner and Rs.1000/- or more for a reeler.

5.1.3 WORKING HOURS :

The number of working hours put into the reeling activities differ from one category of women to another.

WAGE EARNERS:

In the charakha units, however big, there is no specific well-defined time to start work. Generally the reeling work starts a little after 8.00 a.m. Reelers start work an hour later than the turners. By around 8.30 a.m. all the charakhas would be running.

After converting each drop of cocoon to silk, there is a break in the work process. To reel each drop/gani of cocoons, it takes one hour fifteen minutes to one and a half hour, depending on the quality of cocoons. Each break would be for ten to fifteen minutes. Even in motor run units, work - breaks are not defined, work starts almost simultaneously with less than ten minutes difference (between operating different charakhas).

In filature units, the hours of work are fixed from 8.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon and 1.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. Between 10.00 to 10.30 a.m. and between 3.30 to 4.00 p.m., there would be short breaks in the work, also from 12.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. there is a lunch break.

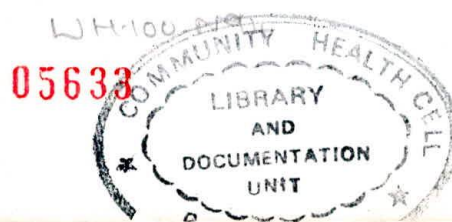
WOMEN OF THE FAMILY BASED UNITS:

The work of a turner and a reeler is not well-demarcated in a family based unit. As such, one cannot calculate the hours of work a woman puts in. The advantage for the women of this category is that they save time that is otherwise spent in commuting to the work place.

The hours of work in a family based reeling unit varies. The time at which the work begins is not well defined. In Adi Jambava colony at Chamarajanagara, it could be any time from noon-onwards. This is because of the way the reelers have chosen to function.² The silk reeled on the previous day is sold next morning to a local broker, from whom money is collected and this is used to purchase cocoons in the market. Depending on the time taken at the auction in the cocoon market, the cocoons are taken home. Somewhere at noon the reeling process begins - water for reeling is boiled around this time. Some women however wait till the cocoons are brought home before putting water to boil. Till this time, all household chores are attended to.

The work of reeling, at times, extends upto 7.30 p.m. - 8.00 p.m. in the night or even later. This happens when work itself is started late/or, if excess of cocoons are

² Small reelers operating one or two charakhas each find it difficult to sell the silk, unless this is done, they cannot mobilise resources to purchase cocoons again.



purchased. Also, the quality of cocoons purchased is low, the time taken to convert it into silk is on the higher side. Women work late in the evening. That is to say that even if labourers are hired for purposes of reeling, they would not stop reeling after certain hours, and at this time, the women of the family step-in. This intervention becomes inevitable especially when the cocoon quality is so low that they cannot be kept overnight.³

SUPERVISORS :

The number of working hours put in by the women of this category is not quantifiable. The time put in by the women to supervise gets reduced when there is a supervisor appointed for the purpose.

ENTREPRENEURS :

They spend as much time as men of this category do, in the market, bidding for cocoons. Since both Kalamma and Yeshodamma do not know to reel, they take part only in supervisory activities once they return home. Chinkamma, however reels before she sets out for the market. If time permits, she also substitutes for reelers, if absent, later in the day.

5.1.4 NUMBER OF SHIFTS :

Even during the peak seasons, there are no shifts as such in the charakha units. In Honnur filature units, when there are shifts, women prefer the late night shifts than continuing work late in the evenings. They opine that this break is needed to go home and attend to household chores like cooking etc. Mahadevamma who works in the five-basin filature unit at Honnur on wages works from eight to five everyday, with breaks in between. When extra 3 kgs of cocoons are to be reeled, she prefers to go

³ The quality of cocoons purchased is so low that they are not stifled at all. Even if it is stifled, it is only for five minutes. Usually women wash these cocoons in cold water before using it for reeling. Most reelers add yellow powder to the water while reeling, to add colour to the silk.

home and return in the night. This way, she feels, that she can attend to household chores also, which only she has to attend to as there is no other woman in the house.

Some of the reelers who are particular about the quality of silk produced, do not allow a reeler to reel more than five, at the most, six drops of cocoons at a stretch. They feel that this is necessary to maintain the productivity of the reeler and hence the quality.

5.1.5 NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS :

All days, including Sundays, are working days. Only if the units are closed there is no work. The days of work and the days of holidays are dependent on the price at which the cocoons are available and the availability of working capital with the entrepreneur.

5.2 ATTITUDE TO WORK :

Women, of the first three category, have accepted their involvement in the industry as something inevitable. This is especially true of wage earners. Wage earners opine that they have taken up reeling work as there is no other option open for them.

Women who are engaged in their family run units express various views, some of which are:

- a) They are happy to be working within the four walls of the house. Abuse or conflict with others is reduced.
- b) The work keeps them so much engaged, that they have no time to interact unnecessarily with others - gossip sessions -which may end up in 'manastaapas' (misunderstandings) are avoided.

A very few women however feel that it would be better if they worked on wages. This way they do not have to ask the men folk for money even to go to the movies. But the number of women who feel this way is out numbered by those who feel that whatever they earn goes to the family.

There are some women who are working as turners in the family based units. They do not express any wish to learn reeling - as they are afraid that learning the skill would create additional work burden. **Puttasidamma works as a turner while her husband reels in their single-charakha unit at Chamarajanagara. Both are keen on educating their children, their two daughters and a son are attending school. Puttasidamma refuses to learn reeling as she feels that she has more than enough work to attend to - working in the kitchen, getting children ready to go to the school etc. She feels that she is in a better position to manage the household chores since her work can be managed by some one - one of her children - when they return from school. She openly admits that if she had learnt to reel, her husband would have left the job to her and they could never have saved on wages because of which they are educating their children.** Turning work gives scope for movement, it is a function which could be performed by any member in the family. As such, when women want to take a break - to attend to household activity etc., they assign the work to their children.

Many women are grateful to the silk reeling industry for various reasons. In the family based units, women compel men to purchase cocoons so that they can work and be rid of their boredom. **Nagu, Shakuntala and Mahadevamma are co-sisters working in their single-charakha units at Adi Jambava colony in Chamarajanagara. They insist that their husbands buy cocoons so that they are actively engaged throughout the day. This way, they feel that they have less time to mingle with others in the colony which reduces conflict and therefore misunderstanding.** In family based single-charakha units, the tendency is to keep working even if 4 kgs of cocoons are bought during lean season/s. This makes the reelers feel that they are not unemployed - that they are working. Such opinions are more often heard from among women of the supervisory category, especially those who are Lingayats and also from among the Muslims. Whatever may be the degree and extent of their supervision, women consider life without reeling activity to be boring. Muslim women concede that this is because of the restraint placed on their movement due to religious barriers.

The three women entrepreneurs are grateful to the industry, without which they would not have been able to thrive. As Kalamma puts it, **"if it was not for Reshme Thaie**

(silk mother)' my life would have been worse than the saree which is bought at auction" (Haraju Seregu Layaku Aagutherailla).

Whatever may be the category to which a woman belongs and whatever may be her involvement in the reeling industry, she does not consider reeling to be either a skillful or an unskillful activity. However, the general perception that the art of reeling cannot be picked up after a certain age indicates that reeling needs skill.

5.3 WOMEN ABUSE :

One does not come across any instance where the employer ill-treats/abuses women. The only time when women are reprimanded is when the quality of silk turns uneven, this is done for all employees irrespective of the gender. Although men take longer work-breaks and also more number of breaks than women, they are not reprimanded either as wages are not dependent on the daily output.

At home, women are abused both physically and orally, if their spouse is in the habit of drinking liquor. Such instances are common in the wage earning category, as also in the smaller charakha units.

6. DECISION MAKING , SOCIAL STATUS AND LEISURE TIME

6.1 DECISION MAKING

Whether children have to be sent to school or to work are decisions that are jointly taken by the parents. Working children when questioned as to who decided to send them to work confirm this. This is especially true of families where women work outside on wages.

The wage earning women have a better bargaining capacity, than those who are engaged in their family units - both in the single charakha units and in the bigger units. Since women wage earners contribute monetarily, to the running of the household, their say in all matters is not brushed aside easily. Even though supervisors handle money - to pay wage earners etc., this is done only in the absence of the male members of the family.

Decision regarding the day to day running of the household is taken by women. They are assisted by their husbands and children at the time of purchase of grocery etc., and by children to attend to small chores. Men take part/assist in household work only when women are indisposed.

The wages earned are collected from the employers by women themselves. Even in cases where both the husband and the wife work in the same unit, the wages would be given to either one of them.¹ It is not necessary that the wages are given to the male worker as seen in the case of Premakumari who works along with her husband in the same unit at Madapura (Chamarajanagara).

Money earned by the wage earning women is generally not handed over to her husband. In fact, part of the money earned by him and the entire amount earned by

¹. Since all the reeling units do not work all the time, members of a family do not opt to work in the same unit. This is especially the case in Chamarajanagara, it is also a rarity in T.Narasipura.

the children is given to her to meet the household expenses. This does not happen if men are addicted to liquor. Also, money is given to the men for their expenses when they are not earning. In these areas, there are families where men pursue agriculture and women are into reeling, if men are not able to find employment women give their earnings to them. This may be the entire amount earned or only some amount to meet their trivial expenses.

Of the money earned, the entire amount of a woman's earning is spent for the family, whereas men keep some amount for their expense - for purchase of beedi etc. ***Vijaya Mary, a Christian convert, working at Kirgsur, considers it necessary to have access to the wages earned by her husband. She concedes that her husband retains Rs.5/- before handing over the rest of his earnings to her. This amount, she feels, would be needed by him to purchase beedis, or to drink a cup of coffee etc.*** Women who are unmarried also give their wages for household expenses (to their parents). They retain some amount with them and give the rest to their family. With the amount retained, articles like bangles, bindis etc are purchased. There is no difference in the spending habits of those women who are single and those who are abandoned. Both spend on their families. Abandoned think more about their children unmarried and young, a little more on ear rings, clips etc.

How much of money is spent on themselves depends on the category to which a woman belongs. Wage earners spend the least amount on themselves since their money is essential to run the kitchen. Apart from household expenses, buying grocery etc - women also try to set aside some amount of money to buy articles like rubber, pencil etc., for their school going children. Since, children - school going and also working children - ask their mothers for money, whatever is earned is kept with her. Cross-checking with working children in the reeling industry also confirms that it is their mothers who are approached for money as and when the need arises.

Whatever be the category to which she belongs, the first priority given by a woman is to cater to the needs of the family. Some amount of money is spent on the transport if the work place is far from the place of residence. Also, if hungry, they purchase eatables in the afternoon.

Women entrepreneurs exhibit a trend which is in many ways different from the other women reelers. Like other women, their priority is also their family - children. All decisions whether related to business or household matter is taken by them. In fact, *Yeshodamma decides household matters even for her relatives; she is often approached to settle inter- family disputes by her relatives. This is not only because of the rapport she has with her relatives, but also because the relatives consider her to be bold and capable of sailing through any situation, however difficult, owing to her business acumen.*

Both Kamma and Yeshodamma are doing financially better-off than their husbands; yet they do not support their husbands monetarily. They do not ask their husbands to give their earnings nor do they give their earning to them. Kamma is very adamant in refusing any hold of her husband on the income she earns. She says that since he could not cater to his family's needs when they were almost on streets, he has no moral right to claim even a share of her earnings now.

6.2 SOCIAL STATUS

The professional mobility has brought in a positive change in the status of all the three entrepreneurs. They perceive that they are better-off now than they were before. *Chinkamma says that being an entrepreneur is better since she now atleast has time to talk to her relatives. Previously she lived on the wages earned everyday and could not afford to miss out on work even for a day. Now, she can adjust her timings of work. Kamma is so obsessed with her work that even when relatives come visiting, she makes a quick dash to the market even if she is not participating in the auction. Yeshodamma is much respected in the family circle and is called to make major decisions concerning their lives.*

Men feel now threatened of the competence exhibited by these women. Kamma, when she established a two-charakha unit and started going to the market, men allowed her to take part with a sympathetic "*papa, hennuhengasu*" (poor lady). Now she says that their approach has changed since she has established four charakhas and is doing reasonably well.

Socially, among the wage earners, we find abandoned and unmarried women alongwith those who are married. In a six-charakha unit at Chamarajanagara, of the twelve workers (of which only two are male workers), the women are either unmarried (four of them) or abandoned (five in number), while only one claims to be happily married. The women who are unmarried want to remain so, they feel that this is best since they have seen many cases where the husband either abuses the women or leaves her. Because of this, they feel that spending on dowry and on the performance of the marriage ritual itself would be a waste.

The women who were abandoned by their husbands do not know where their spouses are. They are not even aware if they have remarried and could not care less. They somehow feel that if they (men) could not lead a normal life with them, they cannot be happy with anyone else. But, if they return, they are ready to accept them in their lives without any quaims. However, they feel that it is best that they do not return lest they go away again leaving them with one more kid to look after!

The abandoned women concede that their men were consuming liquor and did not give enough money to run the households. Fights would ensue because women could not bear to see their children starve. At this stage, they joined work, against the wishes of their husbands 'to keep the kitchen fire burning'. Women agree that they do not mind giving a part of their earnings to their husbands in the hope that they would not go away. This, they do, to achieve respectability in the society.

Among the women, there is a general consensus on the fact that it is better to be married and even abandoned than to remain unmarried. The society is more sympathetic towards those abandoned than towards the single girls who are victims of criticisms, comments and allegations of all kinds.

6.3 LEISURE TIME :

Between the reeling work and the household work, a woman hardly gets any leisure time. For attending to household work, if she is assisted by her children, then the leisure time available is more. Even if the household work is done by someone else

in the family, mother, sister, etc. she - the working woman - always lends a helping hand.

Leisure time is spent in relaxing (sitting around), talking to relatives and friends and occasionally seeing movies. Women also watch Television, especially Kannada movies telecast on Sundays.

Leisure time is perceived as times when there is no work available. Also, if the work gets over earlier than the usual time, then it is leisure time, which they try to spend hanging around the work place, exchanging views/pleasantries with their co-workers. When reeling work is not available for a long period of time, then women go in pursuit of other occupations. If alternative occupations are not taken up - most wage earners perceive that they cannot work outside in the sun as they are used to cooler, shaded interiors - then it is leisure time. What needs to be noted down here is that the leisure times are not opted for - they are compelled to take time off - with this the question arises **what exactly is leisure time?**

Also, in the family based units the work process itself starts somewhere around noon. One could consider morning hours to be leisure time for working women. But, the work of reeling spills over to late evenings - since working hours are not well-defined, it is difficult to gauge the leisure-time as such.

7. CLEANLINESS , NUTRITION AND HEALTH

7.1 CLEANLINESS

There is a preference shown for wearing nylon sarees by women working in the reeling industry. Considering that they work in the proximity of fire, this could be considered as dangerous. Women respondents however do not think so. They prefer this type of sarees as they are considered more durable, the dirt is not apparently visible, can be washed easily and the sarees do not look crumpled.

Women who have the charaka units at their residences use the basins to boil water for purposes of bathing. Taking bath is not an everyday routine. The frequency varies anywhere from once in four days to a week.

7.2 NUTRITION

Working women claim to eat three times a day - rice in the morning for breakfast and for lunch and ragi balls or rice in the night. They drink coffee atleast two times a day. If packed lunch is not carried with them, they buy food from hotels - an errand to run which, the help of the children working in the units is sought.

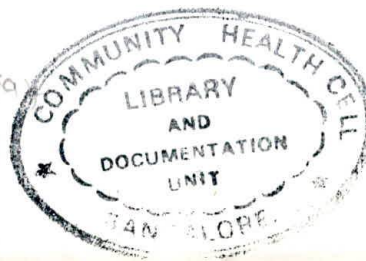
The number of times they miss their meal depends on a host of factors - time available to prepare food, distance to the work place etc., and more importantly on the purchasing power. Eating of non-vegetarian food once a week or once a fortnight is considered a must, it is considered necessary for the type of work they do.

7.3 HEALTH

Although the reelers are constantly dipping their hands in hot water, women do not generally complain of any burns. Some women have found indigenous ways to overcome blisters. They apply tamarind juice overnight and wash their hands in lukewarm water. Others use neomycin ointment; washing hands well with soap water everyday, they consider is necessary, to avoid the formation of white patches/blisters

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on their hands. They also complain of cough as they inhale dust arising from the husk that is stored. Blisterous hands create problems while cooking, especially while grinding hot masala and also while eating.

The general complaints heard are breathing trouble, chest pain and blisters on hands. Malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies, skin diseases and bronchial asthma are the common ailments noted by the local medical practitioner.

Women of the family based units complain of health problems due to the pursuit of reeling activities than compared to wage earners. That is to say that women wage earners tend to underplay such complaints when compared to the next category of reelers. For wage earners it is more a question of survival - a fight for everyday's existence. Once this is surpassed, occupational hazards are noticed.

Women who are into supervision of silk reeling units do not complain of any health problems, since they do not perform any physically strenuous work. *Of the three women entrepreneurs, only Chinkramma complains of chest pain, the other two women have no such complaints. Chinkramma has worked as a turner for many years as well as a reeler, prior to becoming an entrepreneur. Although Kalamma worked as a turner, this was only for a short period of time and Yeshodamma has entered the industry as an entrepreneur.*

In the reeling sector, it is not uncommon to find women who are pregnant working as reelers. *Nagi is six months pregnant, she plans to work for another month. But she plans to re-join work after the baby is three months old. Nagi does not perceive any kind of discomfort while reeling; one could however, notice a change in her sitting position, whereas other reelers sit crouched, this woman sat cross-legged while reeling.*

Vijaya Mary of Kirigsur claims that she worked for the full term of her pregnancy. Even on the day of delivery she worked till she felt labour pain.

Interview with Dr. Madhavan, Registered Medical Practitioner on August 26, 1992 at Chamarajanagara.

From her work place she went straight to the hospital, two hours after which she delivered. Vijaya Mary has a daughter who is blind since birth, the blindness is attributed by Mary due to starvation during pregnancy. With the wages earned, she had to feed four small mouths - she also being a mother of three sons.

Whether women work during pregnancy and immediately after child birth is determined by the number of dependents on her. Even if she works during pregnancy, the number of days she works etc., depends on whether there are others in the family who could support her. *In Nagi's case, her husband is engaged in transporting water to the reeling units, whereas in Vijaya Mary's case, the husband finds employment seasonally in the agricultural sector.*

In the family based units, the probability of one worker being replaced by another is more. For example, in Adi Jambava colony, *Kamamma who is eight months pregnant is relieved of her reeling job by her husband, who would otherwise be engaged in the purchase of cocoons only.*

8 AWARENESS AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

8.1 AWARENESS

8.1.1 AWARENESS RELATING TO THE SILK INDUSTRY :

All women workers, irrespective of the category to which they belong, are aware of the market from which cocoons are bought and its exact location. They are aware where the silk market is, but further details are not known except by the entrepreneurs.

Some of the women wage earners are aware of the price of both the cocoons and the silk. But all women wage earners do not make it a point to know this. Women of the family based charakha units, show a better interest in knowing the price variations. However, one comes across instances where women working for the family do not show an interest in this. Men say that women do not ask them, otherwise they are willing to comply. This is agreed upon by women also. If not a day-to-day account, as Dodamma says, when women question them - in course of an argument - as to what happened to the profit earned etc., then men explain the profit and losses incurred.

Women who work as supervisors are well-versed with identifying the quality of cocoons, silk etc. Although they do not know to reel, like men of their family, they can specify the number of cocoons to be reeled at each end to maintain the denier, the probable rate the silk would fetch etc.

Women entrepreneurs know all the details relating to the silk industry as much as men of the same category know.

8.1.2 AWARENESS RELATING TO THE GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMMES:

All women are not aware of all the programmes initiated by the Government for them. But most of them know that the credit facilities are being extended through the sericulture department. But, the purpose for which credit is given and such other details are not known. Men are more aware of the finer details, than women. This is

true of the first three categories. Women entrepreneurs are not only aware but have also utilised the credit facilities offered by the Government. Chinkramma has even sent her daughter, who already knows to reel, for training in reeling, so that credit facilities for establishing charakhas could be availed.²

The training programme for women undertaken by the Government of Kamataka (under VISHWA Programme) is known in those villages where women have been selected for the programme in large numbers. Women in the reeling sector of Mangala Hosur, a village situated at a distance of 12 kms from Chamarajanagara, are aware of the training programme - who was trained, how much stipend money was given and such other details.

Women are however not aware that a programme of forming women's groups has been initiated by the Government and that such groups are helped to run reeling units. A Mahila Sangha is formed in Mangala Hosur, the sangha is planning to take-up such activities like tailoring, candle making etc., although majority of the members are into silk reeling.

To facilitate the formation of a women's group in this area, a note has been submitted to the officials of the DOS.

8.1.3 GENERAL AWARENESS :

Since women in the reeling industry, except a few, are uneducated their general awareness is limited.

Women can identify colours, they think that there are thirty days in all months. They cannot specify the present year. If they want to know the date they ask others. Even the dates of festivals are learnt from others. As Kamma puts it, 'if **somebody says tomorrow is the feast day then we will celebrate the festival on that day itself?**'

² Credit facilities are given only to those who have undergone the training programme.

Kalamma otherwise has an interesting way of remembering the festivals. 'In the first month of the year it is Sankranti, in the second it is Shivarathri, in the third it is Ugadi, after which for three - four months there are no festivals.....'

Women, like children, are aware of the theatres in the area. However, women are more aware than children. With this an all important question arises - **when does a girl child become a woman?** In terms of awareness what are the changes that are brought-in? A girl child is generally made to discontinue working when she attains maturity. She continues working after marriage and child birth, under compelling circumstances. There are some (very few) who continue working without a gap.

Obviously a woman is generally more aware than a girl child. Does such a change take place with the process of growing up or is there something more, given the constant factor - that their literacy level remains unchanged. Also, their exposure to other places does not undergo any change - marriage alliances are usually from within the same area/ surrounding villages. The answer to this is best explained in Kalamma's words, '**after they reach 18 years, they become more aware. They question others to find out things**'.

8.2 FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

8.2.1. ASPIRATIONS FOR THEMSELVES:

Wage earners do not think that they can find work elsewhere or stop working. Some of the wage earners aspire to get loans from the Government to start their own units, but they are unsure of themselves - whom to approach etc., and have no driving force to turn entrepreneurs. Even for the Government loans that they aspire to get, they can visualise starting of a single charakha unit where they themselves can reel.

Women of the family based unit do feel that they would like to stop working. They would like to hire labourers to replace them in the reeling units. Women of this category are also interested in expanding their units, they would like to install another charakha, even though they face the problem of cocoon shortage, as a result of which

they are not able to run the existing units to its full capacity. Such aspirations have arisen more because of men of their family trying to make them apply for credit.

Women who supervise their units do not wish to stop working. They do not aspire to expand their units either as they foresee labour problems. They opine that it would be difficult to hire labourers, pay them advances etc. They are happy as long as there is continuous supply of cocoons which keeps the units running.

Women entrepreneurs consider adjusting working capital as the main hurdle. They would like Governmental support in this regard. They find this to come in the way of expanding their units.

8.2.2 ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN :

Wage earners have accepted the inevitability of work for their children, they think of stopping their work once their sons grow up and start earning. They would make sure that their daughters get married; if they (the daughters) have to work later on, it is their 'Hanebaraha' (fate).

Women of the family based units want their children to get educated and take-up Government jobs which are easier to perform and where income is assured. They do not want their children to continue in reeling '**Let this back breaking work stop with our generation**'.

Women supervisors do not mind if children take-up reeling as entrepreneurs. This applies to their sons, they would like their daughters to be married.

Women entrepreneurs want their sons to continue in the reeling profession as entrepreneurs. They have already made moves to establish their children in the reeling industry. Kamma has already four charakhas in her sons name, Chinkamma has made her daughter to undergo a training programme in reeling, so that she can get credit to start her own unit. Yeshodamma wants her son to continue looking after the unit established by her and expand it in due course of time.

9. PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

9.1 PROBLEMS OF GOING TO THE COCOON AND SILK MARKET:

The first answer one gets from the women is - 'why should I go when I have male members in the family?' None of the women, except the entrepreneurs, have ever been inside the cocoon market.

Women who have undergone training and are aspiring to get credit from the Government to start their own charakha units, now say that if there is a clause included (to get credit) that they should participate in the process of marketing, then they will. To a large extent, this answer is tutored by the men of the family who know very well that the present Act allows for a license holder to have two representatives to function on their behalf.

Women entrepreneurs perceive no problem in visiting either of the markets - cocoon and silk. Their problems relate to the shortage of cocoon supply, hike in cocoon prices, fall in silk prices and such other matters - factors that concern an entrepreneur.

While going to both the markets, *both Kamma and Yeshodamma go unescorted. Chinkamma goes with her brother, however she conducts her part of the business unaided.*

Although Chinkamma goes to the market, she is not keen on sending her daughter, for whom she is aspiring to start a charakha unit, to the market. The other two entrepreneurs have no female off-spring. Chinkamma firmly believes that women of the younger age-group should abstain from going to both the cocoon and the silk markets.

In T. Narasipura area, the other reelers - women included - do not either look down on the three entrepreneurs, though they have entered the sphere of marketing which is strictly men's domain. They do not consider this as something praise worthy either, may be because they do not realise its implications - the fact that in the entire state only these three women, barring one more in Hassan, are entrepreneurs in the real

sense of the term. *In Madapura - the village in which Chinkramma resides - women shower no praise or resentment towards her for entering the market. Chinkramma is a new entrant. She started her unit five years ago - unlike the other two who have been there since more than a decade. However, even if she is criticized, Chinkramma could not care less.*

On motivating other women to go to the market, all three of them have different opinions to say:

- Kalamma - Others have not tasted the thrill of running a business enterprise. Once this is experienced, they will not want to stop.
- Yeshodamma- Women should participate in the marketing process. Unless they do, their awareness relating to the industry would be limited. More importantly, they can never be successful unless they take an active part.
- Chinkramma- It is left to them.

9.2 PROSPECTS OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES:

Under VISHWA programme, from January to March 1992, women of Chamarajanagara area were trained in reeling. For this, the charakha owners' help in the villages was sought. Women working as turners were given training as reelers for a period of three months. A stipend amount of Rs.300/- per month for the trainees and compensation of Rs.100/- as incidental charges for the unit owners were assured.

Women who underwent training were assured of a payment of Rs.900/- (for three months) but each of them have got less than that (Rs.700 and Rs.800/-). The Government officials (TSC staff) say that this was due to irregularity in attendance - how this was marked is not clear. Also, since the persons concerned (women trainees) were not explained why less amount of money is given to them, they express resentment and feel cheated. They were assured that the pending amount would be released in due course of time but their thumb impression has been taken

for the amount paid, which is what they would ever get. The trainees being uneducated have remained unaware.

The owners of the unit who were promised some amount are not paid either. But, the owners concede that there was no written agreement or a guaranteed assurance given. Now, the owners say that they do not mind, if this amount is not given, provided they are given credit - working capital upto Rs.30 to Rs.40 thousands. If this is not done, they would not co-operate when training programmes are held in future.

The owners are critical of the programme and are apprehensive that starting of more charakha units in the same village would lead to labour shortage. At the same time, they are not keen to employ those trained now as reelers, since they consider that the skill acquired by them to be inadequate. Women who underwent training continue to work as turners, the programme has not brought in an increase in their income.

The resentment towards trainees are exhibited not just by men (owners) but also women (both turners and reelers). Reelers feel that though they have been doing this work since so many years, yet preference for loan disbursement is given to someone who is now **'throwing thread for the first time'**.

APPENDIX - I

THE THREE ENTREPRENEURS - A PROFILE

Name	Kamma	Yashodamma	Chinkamma
Age	39 years	39 years	35 years
Caste	Raja Parivara	Vokkaliga	SC
Edn. level	illiterate	3rd std	illiterate
Father's occ.	Agriculture	Contractor	Agriculture
Husband's occ.	Works in the cocoon market	Works in an office	Agricultural labourer
No. of offsprings	Two sons	One son and one daughter	Two daughters and two sons
Place of Residence	T. Narasipura	T. Narasipura	Madapura (T.Narasipuraa)
Previous reeling exp.	Worked as a turner for 2 months	Nil	Worked as a turner & as a reeler for totally 16 yrs
No. of charakhas	Four	Four	Four
Experience as an entrepre-neur	21 years	12 years	3 years
Male support previous	Brother and Father	Brother and Father	Brother
Male support now	Son	Son	Brother
Member of any assn.	Member of the reelers' assn.	Member of the reelers' assn.	Member of the reelers' assn.

APPENDIX II

PROSPECTS FOR WOMEN'S GROUP FORMATION - A NOTE

In Mangala Hosur, a village in Chamarajanagara taluk, there is potential of forming a group from among the women reelers. A NOTE on the findings pertaining to the village is presented below with the intention of identifying the beneficiaries for the Group Formation programme that is envisaged by the DOS, as a part of the NSP.

1. In Mangala Hosur, the reelers are supported by the infrastructural facilities provided by the location of the cocoon markets situated at Chamarajanagara and Santhemarahalli. For the sale of silk, the reelers commute to Bangalore, although there is a recently (1992) started Silk Exchange at Chamarajanagara.
2. Majority of the reelers are small reelers owning one or two charakhas, which are operated by using mostly family labour. Not all the reelers operate their units all the time. Only 30% of the reelers are actively involved in silk reeling through out the year.
3. Women of this village form a sizeable proportion of the reeling industry. They work mainly as reelers and a few also work as turners. They work either on wages or for the family. Since agriculture also forms an important source of livelihood, women from the non-reeling families work in the field as wage earners. Women from the reeling families do not wish to work in the agricultural field.
4. A reelers' training programme was conducted under VISHWA programme for three months, from January to March 1992. In Mangala Hosur, totally 25 people were trained, of which 14 are women. Under the programme, it was envisaged that at least three trainees were put under the reeling entrepreneurs of the village. The programme has inculcated a sense of self confidence in them to manage the reeling units.
5. Women have experience in reeling. All the beneficiaries selected were not new to the reeling industry. A few were from families which own one or two

charakhas. Those who were working as turners were also selected. Even after attending the training programme, the trainees continue to work as turners for wages. There are no instances where a woman trainee has found a job as a reeler. The entrepreneurs are skeptical of absorbing the trainees as reelers as they consider the programme to be not very effective in imparting the skill. The reelers are paid higher wages than the turners which could be another reason for the reluctance.

6. Women of this village have shown initiative and drive to organise themselves into a group. A Mahila Sangha is formed in Mangala Hosur with the initiative taken by the women of the village who were helped by a social worker by name Josephine Pushpa. The Sangha was first opened at Kempanapura village (Chamarajanagara) mainly with the help of the Tahsildar and the BDO officer. In Mangala Hosur, there are totally forty eight members in the Sangha, has each person contributed Rs.25/- towards registering the Sangha. The Sangha has a committee comprising of nine members headed by a President (Chikkaputtamma) and a Treasurer (Bhagyamma). Of the forty eight members, atleast thirty are in reeling. Already the Sangha is involved with activities like Beedi making, tailoring etc. They are unaware that activities related to reeling could also be organised through the Sangha. Of the thirty, atleast fifteen are without their own units.

Summing Up

From the above, it is obvious that the village of Mangala Hosur provides a setting for forming a Women's group. Here is a place where the skill of reeling is available in plenty and is under- utilised. The infrastructural facility is provided by the location of the cocoon and the silk market in the vicinity. However women are faced with a lot of constraints as they are unable to attend to marketing on their own. Also, they face constraints in getting credit. All this could be overcome by forming a group.

Mangala Hosur provides a fertile ground for forming a group as made evident by the fact that the women of the village have shown initiative to start 'Sanghas', which is reflected in the Mahila Sangha that is established. By forming a group, the women

reelers can jointly function and have a greater role in decision making at both the household level and at the work place thus achieving higher social and economic status.

The DOS has an option (a) either to help the women reelers through the Mahila Sangha that is already formed or (b) to form a 'a women's group' - and help the trainees to realise their reeling skill. The social worker working in the area could be contacted to aid in either of the two ventures. To facilitate this, the names of the trainees/the trainers, as well as the address of the social is furnished.

The following are the names of the trainees and the unit owners.

Unit Owners

Trainees

Krishnamurthy

Nanjamma
Mahadevamma
Savithamma

Mahadevagowda
Basamma

Nanjamma

Maramma

Venkatarangaiah

Puttarangamma
Malamma

Nanjaiah

Chammutra
Sundramma

Shankaramurthy

Doddamma

Mahadevaiah

Nagamma
Venkatamma

Venkataramana

Puttamma

Name and address of the social worker:

Ms. Josephine Pushpa
c/o Mariyappa
Behind Rice Mill
B.R. Hills Road
Chamarajanagara.