

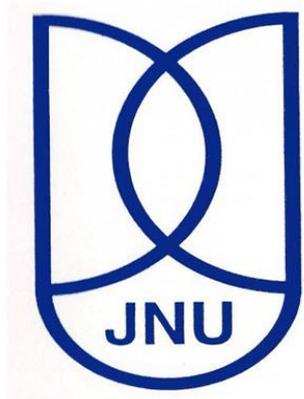
Labour in Apparel Supply Chains in India

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfilment of requirements

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation/thesis titled “**Labour in Apparel Supply Chains in India**” submitted by **Ms. Radhika Singh** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of degree of M.Phil. of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, has not been previously submitted in part or in full for any other degree of this university or any other university/institution.

We recommend this thesis/dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of M.Phil.



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Signature of Supervisor

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis titled as “Labour in Apparel Supply Chains in India” tries to comprehend the process of informalization of labour in the apparel and garment clusters of India. It tries to attribute that on one hand, informalization in these clusters expanded as a result of the industrial restructuring and fragmentation of production mechanisms-both globally and locally, on the other hand, it has constantly thrived on the social foundations that deepen its’ very roots within the functioning and organization of garment making in India. There is an amalgamation of ‘social and physical materiality’ (Mezzadri, 2017) at work of which the most crucial repercussion is the process of informalization of labour. The core analysis of the thesis rests in understanding how the local labour control regime, headed by the local suppliers, contractors and subcontractors, make use or rather exploits the various local and structural inequalities (like caste, class, gender, space, mobility, age) in order to control, subjugate and discipline the workforce. These labour governing mechanisms while mediating through the channel of informalization, generate a two-fold purpose for the local capitalists- firstly, they minimize the labour and production costs to the best of their interests and secondly, they keep the workers unorganized and fragmented, hence keeping them away from raising their voice against any form of exploitation that they face at the workplace.

To understand the interplay of different dynamics of informalization of labour in the export-oriented garment clusters of India, a two-fold mechanism is used, wherein firstly, it is attributed that an increase in the flexible and informal workforce in the informal and formal realms of production has generated an informalizing character to the garment industry and secondly, how the governance of this informalizing labour is mediated through the use of various social identities and local factors as tools to informally/socially regulate, divide, subjugate and hence

control the labourforce. The third chapter of the thesis tries to analyse how the garment manufacturing clusters generate multiple classes of labour as a result of their segregation along the lines of caste, class, religion, gender, age, mobility and space, which in turn are used as crucial tools for controlling the labour in terms of divisions in work, differential wage systems, different modes of recruitment and payment systems and constant inaccessibility to various social security benefits. By analyzing all the major clusters, the study reveals that these social identities (caste, class, religion, gender, age, religion) and local factors (migration patterns, rural and urban divide) intersect with each other to generate different modalities of informalisation in the form of the processes called ‘migrantisation, contractualisation, home-workisation and feminization’ (Mezzadri, 2010) which in turn reveal the social and physical realities of the employment patterns amidst the globalizing production. While migrantisation and contractualisation seem to dominate both the northern and southern clusters in similar degrees, on the other hand, home-workisation and feminization showcase variations across the north-south divide of the country. Various studies and field works referred to in the thesis, have revealed that though in both the northern and southern clusters female employment patterns are based on gendered discourses of work, but the degrees of female incorporation and exclusion defines the persistence of either feminization or de-feminisation processes.

Feminisation has been an important dimension of informalization because of the attributes associated with typical female activities, that is, they are low-waged, low skilled, involve highly vulnerable and exploitative workers, who are expected to be uninterested and unmotivated in organizing into unions. Feminisation involves the increase in female labourforce participation rates along with the creation of low-skilled and low-paying jobs specifically targeting women (Standing, 1989). Women are incorporated in garment making activities because of the so-called feminine traits they possess- docile nature, nimble fingers, tolerance and efficiency, acceptance to lower wages and inhibitions in participating in trade

union activities. While factors like low skills, weak physical strength, domestic responsibilities and women specific workplace facilities (toilets, separate accommodation, menstrual leave, childcare facilities) have in turn led to the exclusion of women from certain activities and employments, therefore leading to de-feminisation of the workforce. Overall, India does not represent uniformity in increasing female workforce participation rates. While the northern clusters showcase some degree of feminization only through home-based work, on the other hand, the southern clusters have been experiencing high degrees of the waves of feminization and re-feminisation of the workforce mostly in the factory realms, portraying different dimensions of the informalization process, owing to their distinctiveness in context-specific product specialisation and complex industrial configurations. The fourth chapter of the thesis tries to answer the hows and whys of these variations in the feminization process and argue as to how the interplay of gendered identities in the productive and reproductive domains result in the creation of distinct forms of classes of labour amongst women workers, which in a way reveal patterns of the different ways adopted by the local capitalists in informalising the workforce.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The rise of the neo-liberal era has turned the face of the globe towards production and manufacturing that is aligned along the fragmented yet integrated production chains and networks which are spread across continents; economic growth that is export oriented; capital, that is constantly on the move and employment patterns that are largely informal in nature. These advancements have resulted in bringing new developments in International Political Economy (IPE), wherein concepts like Global Supply Chains, Global Value Chains (GVCs), Global Commodity Chains (GCCs) and Global Production Networks (GPNs) are used as

explanatory frameworks, often interchangeably, for understanding the current architecture of the global market, the consequent integration of firms, regions and finally the states. With their continuously evolving nature, these networks and chains determine as to where things are produced, where they are assembled and created and finally how the finished products reach the consumers. The arrangement of such networks and chains is governed vertically by leading Transnational Corporations (TNCs), multinational manufacturers, large retailers and brand-name firms, which are predominantly located in developed countries, however, of late their locational patterns have been experiencing a shift towards developing regions. These fragmented yet neatly interwoven production mechanisms point to the phenomenon that has transformed the world into a 'Global Factory' (Chang, 2009). The post-fordist regime has restructured the global factory by moving the production from the global north to the global south, which has generated a new international division of labour at the global level, paralleled by the simultaneous social division of labour at the local or horizontal level. The social division of labour in turn proliferates the formation of multiple forms of classes of labour, distinctive of different labour relations.

The vertically governed mobile capital travels parallelly with the horizontally governed labour. This has always had huge implications for the working labour that is involved in such a capitalist arrangement as it has attached an informal or formless characteristic to today's labour. For sure, the world has been bombarded with employment opportunities, especially through an unprecedented increase in subcontracting and outsourcing arrangements but these have mostly been informal in nature; preferring mostly low-waged, flexible and feminized workforce. There's an element of informality that has become an inevitable characteristic of the capitalist labour not only in developing countries but in developed countries as well. Equally evident is the fact that Informality is no more an exclusive identity of the informal sector, rather it has become a binding factor of both the formal and the informal sectors of the

economies, hence paving way for the process called ‘informalisation’ in the so-called established binaries. The heterogeneity in informality can be observed through multiple ways, of which the major ones include: Firstly, the increasing attempts of the Formal sector in adhering to diverse ways of inculcating a large number of casual or temporary work force to cope with market fluctuations without excessive investment and even through its’ ways of laying off the workers by closing down entire departments and even entire units (Sudarshan & Unni, 2001); secondly, the increasing demand and shift towards subcontracting arrangements in production activities which has pushed work outside the formal factory realms to informal non-factory realms like home-based-units and small workshops (Unni, 2001), which are worked upon by informal workers governed through informal and local labour control regimes; thirdly, even for the workers engaged in formal or permanent working arrangements, there are instances of how the employers in order to cut production costs and in attempts at avoiding the formation of unions, strategically keep their employment informal in nature, by governing them through loose or unwritten contracts, denying them the various social security and employment benefits and keeping their jobs insecure, flexible and low-waged and fourthly, the exploitative, vulnerable and discriminative conditions of work have increased in extreme forms at the hands of contractors and subcontractors especially through an increase in subcontracting work to home-based units and workshops expanding from urban to rural hinterlands.

Though the process of informalization of labour has today become a characteristic feature of almost all sectors of the economies, however, the highly globalized and labour-intensive nature of the garment industry has made immense impressions in terms of it being one of the most informalizing industry world over. The expanding export base of the readymade garments and apparels and the huge economic value attached to it especially in terms of its’ contributions towards the GDPs of various countries has shifted the focus of many researchers and social scientists towards this sector and in understanding its’ heterogeneity in terms of its complex

architectures of production and the vast reservoir of employment opportunities that it generates. The vast geographies of garment production spread right from the developed countries to developing countries, from where they further scatter in the regional clusters moving right down to the small workshops and rural and urban home-based units. This spatial spread of the global garment industry functions through an interplay of power in labour governing arrangements between the retailers, brands and multinational manufacturers at a vertical level while that of the local suppliers, contractors and subcontractors at the regional or horizontal level. This hierarchy is especially characteristic of supply chain approach in which the apparel industry very well accumulates itself because of its' buyer-driven nature. Hence the title of the thesis 'Labour in Apparel Supply Chains in India' is used in direction to signify the export-oriented garment clusters of India as supply chains which stitch the threads of regionality with that of transnationality- both through labour and through the production processes. Also, the title of the thesis uses 'apparel¹' as a wholesome commodity while in between the chapters both the terms garments and apparels are used interchangeably to more or less convey the same idea; whereas labour is used to refer to wage labour.

This study stands on the backdrop of these global restructuring and outsourcing mechanisms that have further reshaped the industrial trajectories and the employment patterns at the bottom layers of local production systems. The context of the study is established by first studying the global rearrangement of the geographies, economies, markets and trade relations that influence the restructuring of these very factors at the local level. The shift from import to export-oriented growth, the subsequential phase-out of MFA, formation of regional trade regimes, the

¹ Garment constitutes a piece of clothing item, like a shirt or a pair of jeans; whereas apparel is used to denote types of clothes, like women wearables, men wearables, sports' wear, winter apparels, summer apparels, and so on. They have been used interchangeably in the present chapter as both represent the same idea. Textiles on the other hand is a much wider category involving the readymade garments and apparels, jute, silk weaving, cotton, handlooms, handicrafts and powerlooms.

deregulation of the domestic textile policy and the increasing migration patterns of workers have all been predominant contributing factors that have resulted in the relocation and restructuring of the Indian garment industry in distinct ways to incorporate in the global garment commodity chains (GGCCs).

The diverse ways of the integration of the Indian garment Industry into the GGCCs as well as their historical craft legacies have resulted in uneven organizational rearrangement of clusters based on diverse product specialisations, that is northern clusters are highly fragmented in nature while the southern clusters are highly consolidated in nature, which in turn have either strengthened or loosened the divisions of work based on ascribed identities of workers. For instance, the influx of migrants in Delhi NCR has dissolved the traditional caste, gender and religion-based identity of a darzi (tailor); whereas the migration patterns in Tiruppur have strengthened the caste-class composition and caste-based division of work in the rural and urban production sites of the cluster. Evidences of how labour is increasingly being socially regulated can be found for instance in Delhi-NCR, where highly embellished nature of the ladieswear garments require a more skilled workforce because of which female workers are less recruited; in home-based units where mostly child labour and women work; in Bangalore where consolidated factory realms of production recruit more female workers, contrary to other clusters; in Tirupur and Ludhiana where the knitwear production in both showcase a diversity in how women workers are favored in the former and not in the latter; the recruitment of migrant workers over the permanent workforce in almost all the clusters and similar such patterns that define the informalization modalities in the garment clusters of India. Hence, the thesis tries to comprehend the interplay of the various social identities and local factors at the cluster level and tries to analyse as to how they shape the different dimensions of informalization in the garment clusters of India.

METHODOLOGY

The research follows the method of systematic review of literature- both empirical and theoretical to get a broad and comprehensive understanding of the various patterns of labour control strategies and tactics used by local capitalists in the garment clusters of India. Meta-literatures focusing on the global industrial transformations, post-Fordism and the subsequent rise of informality amidst such an arrangement in global production networks have been referred to comprehensively understand the basic concepts and the global phenomenon. Most of the existing literatures on Informalisation in the global garment Industry have only been encapsulated by drawing upon the vulnerable and exploitative conditions that the workers are engaged in, paying inadequate attention to the region-specific modalities of informalization that shape the labour relations at the local cluster level. But there has been decent amount of field work done by various research scholars which has generated enough information to understand the peculiarity and heterogeneity of informalization patterns in the various export-oriented garment clusters of India, which has been comprehensively analysed. Findings and field works concerning clusters like Ludhiana, Tirupur, Bangalore, Delhi-NCR, Calcutta, Jaipur, Mumbai have been used in the chapters. The various studies and fieldworks will help in examining and critically evaluating as to what questions have been raised, what have been answered and what have not been answered adequately from the worker's perspectives, which would contribute towards reinstating labour within the paradigms of global production systems. A systematic review will also help to formulate research questions for further research in the area. Books, dissertations, Journal articles, documents from the web pages, government data sets, reports, fieldwork findings and newspaper articles, will comprise the secondary sources.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How has neo-liberal globalization shaped the global production systems and employment patterns over time? How do the social foundations of the global production systems contribute towards informalization of labour?
2. How have the social identities (caste, class, religion, age, gender) and local factors (mobility and space) facilitated in reshaping the employment patterns amidst the post-fordist regime in the export-oriented garment clusters of India? What role does the local labour control regime play in such divisions of work? How does the social regulation of labour interplay in the complex and diverse arrangement of garment production activities in India?
3. What are the predominant gendered discourses of work in the Indian garment clusters? Why do the feminization patterns differ across the northern and southern garment clusters?

OBJECTIVES:

1. To understand that informalization penetrates through various labour control strategies which are adopted by the local capitalists within an increasingly complex arrangement of garment production in India.
2. To comprehend the role of different social identities and local factors in keeping the workforce segregated and hence facilitating different modalities of informalization at the cluster level.
3. To analyze why gender dominates as an important informalizing tool that facilitates different dynamics of informalization in the northern and southern garment clusters.

CHAPTERISATION

The second chapter provides the broad context of the study, wherein it attempts to put emphasis on how neoliberal globalization has transformed the global production systems, industrial structures and labour patterns across the globe. It provides a general theoretical framework on which the study is based, because understanding the global production patterns is crucial in understanding the local production patterns and labour structures. It tries to attribute that with the rise in the global outsourcing mechanisms, subsequently informality became a characteristic feature of the global and local production systems. Further it tries to comprehend as to how the global and local governance mechanisms shape the power relations across the global and local production systems. Examples of how gender, class, space, mobility and community relations are used to further lay down the social and local foundations of the global supply chains across various sectors and activities.

The third chapter tries to analyse these theoretical assumptions and discussions by placing them into the domain of Indian Garment Industry. The chapter attempts to study the various social and local factors on which the local labour control regime depends. It first theorizes the features and trends in the global garment commodity chains amidst the neoliberal globalization and study as to how India has evolved and restructured its' garment industry amidst the global and domestic transformations. It then tries to attribute the process of informalisation of labour, one, through an increasing reliance of the formal and informal sectors on the casual, temporary and migrant labourforce; two, through the role played by the social identities and local factors in keeping the work and workforce fragmented and unorganized. Both these aspects of informalization are studied through the dominant interference of the local labour control regime, consisting of local suppliers and intermediaries, who constantly navigate along the various informal and social regulatory mechanisms in diverse ways across the various garment clusters of India.

The fourth chapter of the thesis tries to focus on gender as an important social identity that shapes the informalization patterns in distinct ways across the northern and southern garment clusters. First, a global perspective on gendered discourses of work and feminization is developed and then the status of these aspects is studied through a comparative lens between the highly fragmented northern clusters and the somewhat consolidated southern clusters. The findings reveal varying degrees of feminization across different clusters, types of activities, employments and even within the same industries. In the north while feminization is mostly concentrated in home-based production, in the south, the process of feminization has taken shape inside the factories. These different patterns are a result of the different industrial trajectories, product specialisations and different local labour control strategies that are put in practice by the employers. The chapter concludes that gender is used as a powerful tool by the local capitalists in order to control the female labourforce across the productive and reproductive realms of production.

Finally, the fifth chapter concludes the thesis by analyzing the various findings of the chapters. It traces the various gaps and limitations of the study and also puts forth questions for future research in the global garment Industry in general and the Indian garment clusters in particular.

CHAPTER II

THE GLOBAL PRODUCTION SYSTEMS AND INFORMALISATION OF LABOUR

The chapter provides the broad context of the study, wherein it attempts to put emphasis on how neo-liberal globalization has transformed the global production systems, resulted in industrial restructuring and has at the same time, created parallel patterns of global and local labour control mechanisms. It provides a general theoretical framework to understand how local production and informal labour relations weave themselves into the global production networks and supply chains. Contextualizing production and labour structures on a global level would further provide a platform in understanding these processes at a more local or regional level, especially in the Indian case, for the upcoming chapters. The research questions of study here include: How has neo-liberal globalization shaped the global production systems and employment patterns over time? How do the social foundations of the global production systems contribute towards informalization of labour?

The chapter will first shed light on the transforming global industrial trajectories at the backdrop of the neoliberal era and the rise of informality and hence, present a comprehensive understanding as to how the world became a 'global factory'. This is achieved by referring to literatures focusing on the global production systems that assess the impact of globalization, the transforming trade relations and the mobile capital on both the production processes and the labour involved in them. It will analyse the changing dynamics of the dualities of informal-formal and hence establish as to how the employment patterns have transformed to be defined by the process of informalization. The chapter will further analyse the role of social identities (gender, religion, class, household relations, ethnicity, age) and local factors (mobility, space) in maintaining the segregation of work across the global supply chains which is mediated by the local capitalists. This segregation imparts an informalizing character to the workforce, and

bring in new dynamics and multiplicities to the informalization debates, which would provide insights as to how incorporation into the global economy is negotiated and hence achieved by the interplay of control and power amongst the global, national and local actors.

NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION, INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING AND THE RISE OF INFORMALITY

Industrialization that we witness today, has been a product of a large number of significant transformations that have shaped its present organization and functioning. It has been a prey to the waves of globalization and liberalization which have virtually erased the transnational boundaries and integrated the economies of the world. Today, Capital is on the move continuously. However, the movement of capital has not been a new phenomenon, but it is the tremendous expansion in its' scope and scale that has advanced amidst the modern capitalist development (Chang, 2009). It has made the world a global factory, wherein the products and services produced are not local or confined to one particular region or nation, rather are distributed across space and time. Majority of the global trade today, deals in parts of products or intermediate goods, which add value to the products at every stage of its' making. Take for instance, the popular Barbie Dolls which are produced as a result of global fragmentation of production, manufacturing and assembling. "The Barbie Doll's label says 'Made in China'. This suggests, correctly, that in the production of Barbie, China provides the factory space, labour and electricity, as well as cotton cloth for the dress. It conceals however, the facts that; Japan provides the nylon hair, Saudi Arabia provides oil, Taiwan refines oil into ethylene for plastic pellets for the body, and Japan, the United States and Europe supply almost all the machinery and tools, most of the molds (the most expensive item) come from the United States, Japan, or Hong Kong; the United States supplies the cardboard packaging, paint pigments and

molds; and Hong Kong supplies the banking and insurance and carries out the delivery of the raw materials to factories in Guangdong Province in South China, together with the collection of the finished products and shipping” (Snyder, 2002). So, Barbies though ‘Made in China’, can be said to be a global product as they are an outcome of global outsourcing or subcontracting across countries. The present restructuring clearly depicts a picture of an interdependent relationship amongst the countries and the fact remains that no one country can develop or grow in isolation from the other.

The present phase of the industrial world system has not developed in isolation from its past, rather the world economy has been witnessing this spatial distribution of economic activities ever since the 17th century when the colonial empires searched and captured every corner of the globe for having access to cheap raw materials and new markets for their manufactured products (Gereffi et al., 2001). Back then, trade was largely organized along the ‘arm’s-length relationships’ (Kaplinsky, 2000) which involved an independent relationship between two parties wherein the manufacturing of final products took place in one country and consumption took place in the other. This was the result of the first Industrial Revolution in the Great Britain, which established the ‘Factory System’ of the modern industrial capitalism, involving a minute division of the labourforce (Chang, 2009). Textile Industry was the first to be using the modern production system. Subsequently, with organizational and technological innovations, the ‘Taylorist Labour’ came to occupy the factory space (Chang, 2009). This labour was transformed by either deskilling or reskilling mechanisms in order to keep in pace with the emerging needs of the new machinery and hence were strictly monitored and controlled (Chang, 2009). Though the factory spaces were inherently ‘informal’ in nature in the sense that workers worked for long hours at very low wages in unfavorable working environments, which later came to be defined by informality, but informality wasn’t much of a concern till then.

Later, Fordist system of production established a system of mass production for mass consumption in highly developed economies (Thompson, 2003) especially after the second world war. Mass production required a vast reservoir of labour that would be easily available and at the same time be cheap and hence as a result, informality came at the forefront though not clearly visible but its' roots started strengthening (though it officially came to the forefront of the development paradigm only in 1972). Post war, Europe, Japan and North America successfully strengthened their economies and seeing their successful rebuilding mechanisms, it was expected that this transformation could also be possible in the newly emerging 'Third World' countries along with the right amalgamation of the domestic economic policies and resources (Chen, 2012). It was predicted that economic development in developing countries would occur when the capitalist sector (formal) would subsume in itself the surplus labour from the traditional or subsistence sector (which is governed by informal institutions and social norms). This process would first be slow, with no increase in their wages and eventually a time will come when all the surplus labour would be fully absorbed in the capitalist sector and hence result in increasing their incomes above the subsistence level, henceforth diminishing the informal employment altogether (Chen, 2012). This developmental process and its' predicted imitation by the third world countries has been comprehensively articulated through the concept called the "Lewis Turning Point" (Chen, 2012). By this time, Informal employment was considered something that needed to be eliminated for clearing the path for development to occur smoothly. It was expected that capitalist development in countries was possible only when the traditional activities and labour involved in them are accumulated in the more advanced and better paying capitalist sector.

However, through the mid-1960s with advancements in capital-intensive technology, infrastructure development and growth in the export base though the employment opportunities increased but these were not at par with the increasing manpower resources. As

industrialisation and urbanisation progressed, migration rates of workers saw a substantial increase as people from rural areas settled in towns in pursuit of better wages. In South Asia, the predominance of agriculture has been used to demarcate the informal sector (Sudarshan & Unni, 2001). However, countries like India saw a major section of workforce shifting from agricultural fields to factories, leading to a sectoral shift and the eventual ‘conversion of work from field to factory’² (Breman, 1996). This transition saw these workers rather a category of these workers-unprotected and unregulated, working under exploitative conditions. At the same time, unemployment and under-employment rates increased drastically, which led the labour force to indulge in casual jobs or in disguised or open unemployment scenarios (Singer, 1970). From the broad segregation of work amongst Village and Town Economies, the differences in the working conditions, employment systems, wage inequality and exploitative nature also eventually led to the segregation of urban economy into a dichotomy of Formal and Informal Sectors. So, clearly Lewis Turning Point did not turn the face of the third world countries towards a model of capitalist development followed successfully in Europe, Japan and North America because informality was not that easy to be disposed off. Thus, the ‘marginalisation of the developing countries from the process of capitalist transformation’ has been a predominant factor that resulted in the increasing levels of informality in those developing regions of the world (Mezzadri, 2010). The need to eliminate informality wasn’t the concern of these countries anymore as it only enhanced the employment opportunities especially for most of the poor populations and was further providing prospects of development in these regions.

Informal employment further saw a boom when this Golden age of capitalism started witnessing crisis, especially since the 1970s as there was a shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism regime, wherein, the trading pattern shifted to trade in sub-components and services along with

² Mobility as an informalization facilitating factor is discussed in the upcoming section of the chapter.

the rise in the number of Transnational Corporations (TNCs). The demise of the old capitalist model of production triggered the birth of a new economic order characterized by rise in exports and FDI³, the fluctuating economies or GDPs; increase in intra-firm trade and the eventual increasing levels of interconnections between different regions of the world via the technological advancements and the expansion of markets and the international division of labour with the subsequent expansion of the so-called informal sector. The interconnections between the developed and developing countries ruled out the fact that capitalist development was only possible by following a set model wherein it was expected that informal activities either be eliminated or be subsumed into the so-called formal realms.

Subsequently, it was in 1971 that informality or informal sector took a proper shape in academic discourse at the hands of Keith Hart, a social anthropologist in his study, entitled “Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana” (1973). Hart’s study focused on the migrants-unskilled and illiterate, the *frafras*, who migrated from North Ghana to the urban areas of South Ghana in search of work (Hart, 1973). Hart’s binary of the formal and informal work in developing countries was based on the rationalisation of labour⁴, its’ regularity and irregularity in work and the availability of fixed or unfixed wages, their income generation capacity mainly through self-employment and at the same time, these activities were not directly or indirectly associated with the official economy (Hart, 1973). Based on the above-mentioned criterions, Hart also widened the scope of the economic activities by including the activities (legitimate and illegitimate), which were earlier ignored or not taken into account in the various developmental models and the national economic accounts (Swaminathan, 1991).

³ FDI: Foreign Direct Investment. It is the “direct investment across national boundaries to buy a controlling investment in a domestic firm or to set up an affiliate or subsidiary” (Dicken, 2015, p.19)

⁴ Rationalisation of labour involves downsizing of labour as a result of structural adjustment policies (Guha, 2002).

With Hart's formulation of the informal sector, informality was officially born and it paved the way for further discussions and debates on this subject. Soon after, ILO's Kenya Mission of 1972 further clarified that the identity of such activities is not their mere location of being situated at the periphery of the main towns and cities, which Hart's study also revealed in a way when it broadened the scope of informal activities by including both legitimate and illegitimate activities like stealing, which can happen both in towns and countryside areas. Contrary to location, the following parameters can easily be applied to demarcate informal activities, such as: ease of entry; reliance on indigenous resources; family ownership of enterprises; small scale of operation; labour-intensive and adapted technology; skilled acquired outside the formal school system; and unregulated and competitive markets (ILO, 1972). The formal sector, on the other hand, portray the exact opposite characteristics, that is: entry into it is difficult; constant reliance on external resources; corporate property; large scale operation; capital-intensive, often imported technologies; formally acquired skills; markets are under protectionist regulation (with the help of tariffs, quotas and trade licensing) (Hart, 1973). The major difference being that the informal sector lacks government regulation and constantly evades the taxation regime, while the formal sector does not. These characteristics form the backbone of the distinction between formal and informal sectors till today but these are not the only distinguishing parameters between formal and informal.

The post-fordist regime and the penetration of informality in it was a result of the neo-liberal era which is characteristic of two major advancements- First, the developing countries started witnessing 'a shift in focus from import-substituting industrialization (ISI) to export-oriented industrialization (EOI)' (Gereffi & Wyman 1990). This has been possible due to the supportive developmental policies and regulations of International Organizations like World Bank and IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the changing trade patterns amongst the countries,

especially since the 1980s. Also, the successful experiences of the East Asian Economies⁵ (called the ‘Miracle Economies’) especially of Japan and ‘four tigers’ (Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore) and the re-emergence of China and the emerging economic potential of India (Dicken, 2015, p.29) from the 1960s to the mid-1990s has been paving ways for the developing economies world over to shift the focus of their domestic policies from imports to exports (Gereffi, 2001). Exports are an extremely important element of measuring any country’s development status both domestically and internationally and the Asian Economies have been successfully implementing their trade strategies, focusing more on the exports, especially after the extreme financial crisis⁶ that hit Asia in the mid-1990s (Gereffi, 2001). Even the Washington Consensus⁷ suggested a shift to export-oriented trade and investment within these economies when they were hit hard by the financial crisis, which resulted in millions of people losing their jobs in the formal sector and henceforth shifting in the informal one in the form of own-account workers, wage workers or even entrepreneurs. The rationalisation of labour is a strategic attempt by formal sector firms to cope up the fluctuating markets and at the same time save investment expenditures and these mechanisms have only advanced with an expansion of production sites to informal units like small workshops and home-based work (Sudarshan & Unni, 2001; Guha, 2002). For instance, following the economic crisis, structural adjustment initiatives in Latin America had also been involved in shrinking the public sector jobs, which have pushed the resented formal sector employees to get engaged in informal jobs (Mezzadri, 2010). In China too, in the late 1990s, many state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the process of downsizing, laid-off the surplus labour, called the xiagang workers and these were estimated to be around 27 million in numbers and

⁵ Includes Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

⁶ Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 affecting majorly countries of East and South-East Asia.

⁷ The Washington, D.C. based IMF, World Bank and U.S. Government provided a set of ten economic prescriptions for all the financial crisis hit developing economies. The term was first used in 1989 by John Williamson. The standard prescriptions included macroeconomic stabilization, opening up of the economies for trade and investment and expansion of the market in terms of exports and imports (www.wikipedia.org).

they later found employment in the informal economy (Chang, 2009). Similarly structural adjustment policies (SAPs) in the Southeast Asian and East Asian countries after the economic crisis of the 1997 and 1998 led to the shrinkage in public sector jobs as a result of which people found employment in the informal sector. The informal sector has proved to be a saviour of economies especially during financial setbacks and states have time and again relied on it either directly or indirectly. The post crisis situation of various countries points to the fact that informal labour relations are not a product of statelessness as the general assumption goes, rather state either because of total lack of enforcement capacity or because of the over-regulatory mechanisms can lead to an increase in informality (Mezzadri, 2010). The advancements amidst the major financial crisis that countries have faced world over have shifted the focus of many formal sector firms to rely on temporary workforce instead on the permanent one and hence defining new parameters for the changing employment relationships.

Secondly, with the shift to EOI, outsourcing mechanisms resulted in industrial restructuring and organization of production activities along the lines of global production networks and commodity chains. The geographies of production activities and labour shifted from the global north to the global south, leading to an international division of labour. As a result, outsourcing and subcontracting arrangements expanded which led the developing countries to focus more on sector specific manufacturing of products and their sub-components, characteristic of the commodity chains and networks. However, the concept of Commodity Chains was not new to the development paradigms as it has been described by Hopkins and Wallerstein (1986) as part of their world-systems approach, wherein they described it as a simple geographic spread of economic activities amongst the core, peripheral and semi-peripheral regions of the world. But it was only after '*Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism*' by Gereffi and Korzeniewicz in 1994 that GCC (Global Commodity Chains) paradigm gained popularity in academic research and discourse. Here, the term commodity referred to the standardized products, which were

manufactured in large volumes. From the 2000s with more technological advancements and increase in intra-firm trade, a more holistic term ‘value’ came to replace the term ‘commodity’. ‘Value⁸’ captured the presence of ‘value added and value creation’ at each stage of the chain with the help of technological and human resources (Gereffi & Kaplinsky, 2001). Trade and production relations across countries now centered around functional integration of multidimensional, and multistage sequence of activities (Gereffi & Korzeniewicz, 1994, p.13), which specifically focused on the importance of value-adding functions like production, research, designing, marketing, distributing, assembling and in some cases final disposal and recycling of products (Gereffi & Kaplinsky, 2001). These value-adding activities are arranged through Supply Chains⁹ which begin with the supply of raw materials and end with a finished product (Gereffi, 2018). They act as the links between various firms (especially lead firms), wherein they supply materials to manufacturers, are involved in the manufacturing processes and finally distribute finished goods to customers through a network of distributors and retailers. Take for instance, global apparel and garment supply chains, wherein the hierarchy is maintained by the biggest players at the global level, which includes the retailers, branded manufacturers and marketers, subsuming most of the power throughout the production mechanisms (Gereffi, 1994), followed by a complex series of manufacturers, suppliers and subcontractors at the local level. This hierarchy forms the basis of the supply chains, both global and local. A simple apparel supply chain consists of four main functions- raw material supply, intermediary roles, manufacturing and retail and within these functions, there are multiple other functions that form a part of the chain, for instance, ‘supply of raw materials would include supply of yarn, cloth, accessories, buttons, zips, packaging materials, hangers,

⁸ The concept of value chains was first used in the 1960s and 1970s to establish the development trajectory of mineral and agricultural export commodities like rubber, cotton, cocoa and coffee in the French Colonies and later it found place in the French Planning Literature as Filiere, which literally means ‘thread’ (Kaplinsky, 2000).

⁹ Global Production Network (GPN) or Global Production System as a term is used to broadly accumulate the entire production processes which are dispersed across the globe. It is a network comprising of multiple chains of production activities.

boxes, etc.; the functions of manufacturers and suppliers would include pattern making and grading, laying, cutting, assembling, ironing, quality control and finishing; the functions of intermediaries would on the other hand focus on delivery and transport, wholesalers and small retailers, financiers, buying houses, agents, etc.; retailing and merchandising would constitute the functions of the companies selling products to consumers like retail outlets, designing, branding and marketing' (Hurley & Miller, 2005). These also constitute a wide array of value-adding functions and ancillary activities which are mostly performed in non-factory realms like home-based units. With the expansion in value-addition and ancillarisation, the production activities shifted to informal realms and hence the need for informal workers (low-waged, low skilled, feminized, vulnerable and flexible) increased in both the informal and formal sector, imparting an informalizing character to the employment patterns. However, informalization is not just an outcome of an increasing informal workforce but rather the governance of these employment relationships reveals hierarchies of power relations expanding from the global to the local level.

GLOBAL AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE WITHIN THE PRODUCTION CHAINS AND NETWORKS

All the multiple functions for a single commodity do not occur automatically, rather they are driven through strategies and power relations that control both the production processes as well as the labour through actors, that on one hand, are transnational and on the other hand, are national and local. That is why, governance forms a crucial aspect of these chains as it helps in the smooth functioning and allocation of responsibilities and coordination throughout the different layers of the chains. The governance model aligns the chains along two distinct sets of power relations: Producer-Driven and Buyer-Driven (Gereffi & Korzeiniewicz, 1994).

Producer-driven commodity chains are those wherein TNCs control the production activities all along the chains, for instance, capital-intensive industries like automobiles, aircraft, computers, electrical machinery, whose parts and sub-parts' manufacturing takes place in developing countries but the lead firms which govern and dictate the functions are predominantly located in developed countries. Buyer-driven commodity chains refer, instead, to those industries which are dominated by large retailers, brand-named merchandisers, and large traders, that is, actors who do not own manufacturing facilities, but make use of networks of suppliers in a variety of exporting countries (Gereffi 1994, pp. 97-99). These include mostly the consumer goods and labour-intensive industries like apparels and garments, footwear, toys, sports goods etc. At the local level, these governance mechanisms shift in the hands of intermediary traders, exporters, manufacturing units and subcontractors that exercise control through local institutions and by the strategic use of social and structural inequalities that are context-specific.

Therefore, Global chain governance interacts with or rather functions through local cluster governance (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2000). As a result, industrial restructuring and organization at the local level in the form of clusters increasingly strengthened the incorporation of local manufacturing with the global production. Clusters¹⁰ became agents of industrial growth and competitiveness especially in developing regions. These clusters¹¹ are characteristic of a particular industrial size, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and showcase geographical proximity to other smaller industrial units (Mezzadri & Srivastava, 2015). As a

¹⁰ Clusters as models of industrial development first captured the attention of development studies in the work of Alfred Marshall (Knorringa & Nadvi, 2016). They were described as industrial development models which were located within geographically defined areas especially in Western countries like Italy, Germany, Denmark and Belgium, wherein small entrepreneurs rather than big industrialists led these countries to economic success and later they were successfully implemented in countries of Asia and Latin America (Mezzadri, 2009).

¹¹ They are mainly manufacturing and export units and workshops.

result of outsourcing and subcontracting, the domains of clusters have further expanded to include factory and non-factory realms of production¹². The cluster-GVC linkages are also strengthened through a variety of trade linkages and access to global markets through intermediary traders and global buyers and lead firms (Knorringa & Nadvi, 2016).

Engagement of clusters within global chains further enhances the prospects of upgrading- both locally and globally. Extreme competition and everyday changing demands of the markets and producers makes upgrading a crucial strategy to be followed by local firms and clusters. Upgrading¹³ refers to a process of making products more efficiently by either shifting to more sophisticated versions of products or to more sophisticated processes and functions (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2000) that is taking on to higher value-adding activities, like moving to better designs, adopting different marketing strategies, introducing superior technologies and other processes that enhances the quality and quantity of products. However, these clusters have always remained ignorant to social upgrading mechanisms and have long been criticised for the vulnerable and exploitative conditions of work both in the factory and non-factory realms of production. The patterns of upgrading that each cluster adopts are influenced by global governance mechanisms (Knorringa & Nadvi, 2016) because the lead firms and global buyers dictate what is to be produced, in how much quantity and by whom. However, how these global governance mechanisms unfold at the regional or ground level depict a linkage of global and local governance in quite a distinctive way. Global governance typically deals with controlling the production processes, while local governance, in turn controls the labour. Global actors, on

¹² Factory realms of production take place inside the factory space while non-factory realms of production take place outside the factories, especially in home-based units, where most of the value-adding activities are performed.

¹³ Gereffi (2019) has broadly classified upgrading into two types, that is Economic Upgrading and Social Upgrading. Economic Upgrading is further divided into four types- Product Upgrading; Process Upgrading; Functional Upgrading and Intersectoral or Chain Upgrading. Industries or Firms mainly focus on economic upgrading activities as they enhance their profits and give them a competitive edge with other firms. Social Upgrading, on the other hand, is a process which focuses on improving the conditions of work and enhancing the measures of providing adequate rights and privileges to the workers. However, both the upgrading mechanisms might and might not lead to one another.

one hand outsource the production processes to these export-oriented clusters, at the same time they release the problem of labour control altogether and transfer it to the local actors (Mezzadri, 2009) further strengthening the separation of capital and labour. This separation unleashes an informalizing character to the capitalist logic of development.

The shifting patterns- from imports to export-oriented growth and of the manufacturing activities to developing regions- have been predominantly responsible for a strong intertwining of trade and industrial trajectories between the developed and developing countries and have further resulted in a considerable increase in the informalizing workforce and work processes. As employment opportunities increased debates around neo-liberal globalization have also centered around the parallel intrusion of informalization in the global economy. And how labour incorporates itself or rather is incorporated into the global production systems is the issue that the process of informalization is associated with.

INFORMALIZATION OF LABOUR

The neoliberal era has challenged the dualism of formal and informal sectors as the constantly changing and evolving industrial trajectories showcase a trend wherein a nexus between the two is on a constant move. However, the shift in production activities from the global north to the global south has for sure, resulted in generating more informal work in the developing regions but, the reality also remains that informality is also characteristic of the developed countries, wherein its' scope and dynamics show a distinctive, yet interconnected trajectory from their developing counterparts. Informalization has an explicit position in developing countries with informal self-employed workers (street vendors, home workers, teleworkers, garbage pickers, shoe shiners, farmers, artisans); informal employees (family business workers, domestic workers, landless agricultural workers) and migrant workers; who are mostly

employed in informal enterprises (Chang, 2009; Unni & Rani, 2008, p.2). On the other hand, developed countries have been witnessing increasing rates of informal labour in the formal sector through contract workers, task-based casual workers, agency or dispatched workers, former self-employed workers, disguised former self-employed workers and migrant workers with no regulatory framework to protect them in any form (Chang, 2009). However, as a result of globalization, informalization in developed and developing countries has involved in emulating the informalization pattern, which is characterized as a common pathway involving the penetration of the informal labour in the formal sector, these include, contract workers, part-timers, migrant workers, workers in Export Processing Zones (EPZs), which give an informalizing character to the formal economy. These workers while remain within the regulatory frameworks and are protected by labour codes of conduct, but lack any bargaining powers and hence remain informal and unorganized in nature. For instance, garment clusters in Chennai and Bangalore in India employ a permanent workforce, mostly women, who are paid monthly wages, receive Provident Fund and ESI (Employees' State Insurance) benefits, but still remain informal due to the inability to unionize (Mezzadri, 2009). Similarly, a case study on the call center women workers of India reveals that though these jobs are part of the formal sector but they display certain informal characteristics like lack of security of job because companies might shift to other countries with lower wage rates or due to the pressure from the global north to limit the number of jobs and hence cancel work contracts (Mitter et al.,2004). These patterns are common to the informal economies' world over, where majority of the workforce is either completely informal or is subjected to conditions which are informalizing in nature. According to the world estimates, "85.8% of total employment in Africa, 71.4% in Asia and the Pacific, 68.6% in the Arab States and 53.8% in the Americas is either informal, that is, located in the informal economy or informalised, that is in formal production realms but still de facto based on informal relations"; while the total informal

employment in the emerging and developing is estimated to be around 69.6 % (Mezzadri, 2019). Based on these statistics, 61.2 % of total workforce of the world is classified as either informal or informalised in nature (Mezzadri, 2019).

The major reason for the proliferation of the informal workforce has been attributed to the Globalization of production processes which has created a space for the process of informalisation to exacerbate. This has been evident mainly through the following events: first, as a result of the neo-liberal era, formal sector firms in developing countries started facing competition and in response they started decentralising work to informal units where labour costs and costs of production are comparatively lower (Sanyal & Bhattacharyya, 2009); secondly, domestic firms in the formal sector face intense competition from the inflow of cheaper imports which has led these firms to contract in numbers and size (Sanyal & Bhattacharyya, 2009); third, the retrenchment of workers in the domestic and state firms of the formal sector has been unable to rectify even by the expansion of the export oriented informal units as their capital intensive nature and technological advancements have replaced the manpower resources which has led workers to engage in self-employment and unemployment scenarios. These factors present a constant interaction of the informal activities with the formal ones that is, on one hand, facilitated through a complex network of subcontracting and outsourcing processes and on the other hand, through an expansion of the ‘economic space outside the circuit of capital’ (Sanyal & Bhattacharyya, 2009). This cross-sectoral penetration and expansion of informality has changed the dynamics of how capital relates to labour. That is why a lot of literature today centres around studying this relationship and articulating as to how the power dynamics unfold within the global production systems.

While capturing the multiple dimensions of power relations within GPNs, governance mechanisms present a two-way process of how capital relates to labour, that includes a Vertical approach and a Horizontal approach (De Neve, 2014a). The vertical approach operates at a

global level, wherein lead firms, big buyers, brands, merchandisers control the production processes in the lower tiers of commodity chains and networks. They leave the problem of labour control and regulation to the local capitalists. The horizontal approach, on the other hand, explores the social dimensions that is the role of local factors, such as gender, age, caste, class, space, ethnicity, mobility, household relations by the local capitalists in controlling and keeping the labour divided within regional production systems (Mezzadri, 2009; Neilson & Pritchard, 2010 as cited in De Neve, 2014a). Both of these approaches contribute towards a systemic exploitation and control of labour and hence lead to the desired subjugation of labour to the capitalist logic; the former at the global level¹⁴ while the latter at the local level. The thesis centres around the horizontal approach because it presents a holistic view to understand how vertically placed global production systems shape the labour structures and patterns or modalities of informalisation through social relations and livelihood strategies that operate at the regional level. Also, for understanding the labour structures and working conditions in the various export-oriented clusters, there is a need for a framework that relates the global production with local production and the subsequent insertion of labour within this arrangement. Therefore, the horizontal power dynamics help understand these social dimensions of the global production systems which the GPN literature fails to capture. It is ‘the relentless expansion of informal relations in the age of globalisation and the increasing use of informal, social structures to control and discipline the workforce’ which have become characteristic features of the process of informalisation of labour (Mezzadri, 2010).

One of the foremost implications of informalisation has been that it has made ‘flexibilization’ as its’ synonym. Flexibility refers to the precarious and casualised working arrangements (Mezzadri, 2009) and hence long been associated with imparting an informal characteristic to

¹⁴ Informalisation at the global level is attributed to the shifts in production activities and concentration of labour from the global north to the global south.

work and working arrangements. It has led to a fundamental shift from the permanent and more secure employment to temporary and insecure employment and from a core and consolidated form of workforce to a more disposable and fragmented form of workforce. Subcontracting and outsourcing arrangements survive on the decentralisation of work that in turn rely on the increasing presence of a category of workers that are easy to hire and easier to control. Women, migrant workers, contract workers, child workers, home-based workers fall under that vulnerable and exploitative category.

All these distinctive categories of workers relate to the exploitation and use of different social and local modalities that the local capitalists make use of; for instance, gender as a modality of control has long been used for hiring more women workers especially in low paying and unskilled jobs; age for hiring child labour especially in home-based units, relatively young male and female workers for mechanised tasks and old workers because of their experience are recruited for highly specialised jobs like embellishment and artisanal activities or not hired at all because of their age; mobility/migration patterns for hiring migrant and contract workers especially during peak seasons; and space for hiring home-based and peripheral workers that offer cheap services at flexible conditions. However, these modalities are not exclusively put to use, rather intersectionalities between caste, class, gender, migration patterns, come to play a major role. These social identities are used to keep the labourforce segmented and hence under control. At the same time, these identities further determine the inclusion as well as the exclusion of workers from the work processes. The different socio-economic formations of labour amidst the EOI have further been explained through different modalities like 'feminization', 'home-workisation', 'contratualisation', 'migrantisation' that move parallelly with informalisation (Mezzadri, 2012).

Amidst these processes, it is rightly attributed by feminists and Marxist analysis that capitalism entails distinct forms of classes of labour. On one hand, a narrow understanding of class

formation views it as an outcome of multiplicity of social relations, which again are based on the experiences of different social groups, however contrary to this, Marxist analysis views class formations as a result of the multiplicity of labour relations under global capitalism leading to accumulation or proletarianization (Mezzadri, 2016a). According to Bernstein (2007), the current processes of proletarianization¹⁵ have resulted in the formations of multiple ‘classes of labour’, which are characteristic of different relations to means of production, subsistence and reproduction and challenge the fixed categorisations like workers, peasant, trader, employed and self-employed. The formation of multiple classes of labour was not just an outcome of accumulation of vulnerable workers rather it was also based on the accumulation of multiple differences and divisions amongst the working class, distinguished by hierarchies of gender, age and race (Mezzadri, 2016a). These classes are in a way strengthened as a result of the interactions between the formal and informal economies. With regards to gender, the class formation begins right from the household from where the gender ideologies and the so-called gender norms mediate the entry of women into the world of labour, whose end result is the formation of an altogether distinct class of labour. In export-oriented industrialisation, informalisation and flexibilization have been increasingly facilitated by the exploitation and use of gender as a prominent social identity, which has been articulated through the process called ‘feminization of the workforce’ (Standing, 1989). Feminization of labour involves, firstly, an increase in the women workforce participation rates and secondly, an increase in expansion of insecure, poorly paid and precarious jobs, which are traditionally geared for women (Standing, 1989; Mezzadri, 2012). Local gender differences and patriarchal structures have long been exploited socially and culturally but their economic exploitation at the hands of capitalists expanded when global production systems led to the subsequent rise in the semi-

¹⁵ According to Marxist analysis, it is a process whereby unemployed or self-employed people are employed as waged labour.

skilled and low-waged jobs, especially in manufacturing sector, which also expanded the dimensions of labour control from the productive to reproduction realms. Female workforce is preferred because of the already established gendered discourses of work which view women workers as easy to control, readily available, highly productive in nature and at the same time are expected to be less indulgent in trade union activities. Similarly, capital intensive sectors like automobiles, IT sector show patterns of low female workforce participation rates because of the highly skilled nature of employment which strategically excludes women, hence leading to the process of de-feminisation (Caraway, 2006). Countries like the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Hong Kong, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand were some of the initial examples of countries that showed a substantial increase in female workforce participation rates¹⁶ as a direct consequence of trade liberalization and export-led industrialization policies that these countries adopted (Standing, 1989). The structural adjustment policies amidst the East Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-1998, resulted in a large number of workers, especially women shifting to jobs in the manufacturing sector. With their shift towards EOI, export processing zones created around 27 million jobs in the mid-1990s, of which 70-80 per cent of them were in labour-intensive industries like garments, footwear, and electronics which directly targeted the women workforce (Carr & Chen, 2004). Regions like Latin America, the Caribbean, South Asia and East Asia still show a stronger rise in female workforce participation rates. However, these feminisation rates differ significantly within the countries as different sectors, employments and industries show different degrees of women's incorporation and exclusion. Neo-

¹⁶ Labour Force Participation Rate determines the total number of employed individuals as well as those who are willing to work. It is calculated by dividing the labour force with the total working-age population (the working age population refers to people aged 15 to 64) (OECD, 2022). Female Labour Force Participation Rate determines the number of women employed as well as those who are willing to work in the age group of 15-64 years.

liberalisation has further strengthened the formation of labour markets as highly gendered institutions (Mezzadri et al., 2021) shaped by gendered discourses of work and precarious working arrangements¹⁷ involving high degrees of labour control in both the productive and reproductive work. Historically men had always had access to better jobs, while the status of women has always been of secondary and cheap nature. Even the Global Supply chains are not gender-neutral rather they reinforce segregation of work based on so-called gender inequalities. For instance, in the garment supply chains and livestock rearing supply chains of Bangladesh, feminization of the workforce has been substantially growing. The most popular belief that justifies the persistence of women workers in the ready-made garment industry of the country is that ‘women are docile, patient, and their nimble fingers make them more suited for garment work’ which is why the industry prefers mostly unmarried single women (Hossain et al, 2013). To add to that, they readily accept lower wages than men, are less likely to leave the job especially because of the delayed payment system and are similarly less likely to be involved in trade union activities. The Farmed fish supply chains in Bangladesh also reveal how patriarchal perceptions and gendered division of labour neglect the presence of women in paid productive activities of the chains and rather restricts them to somewhat hidden lower tier activities like feeding, pond management, fertilisation and fish preparation (LeBaron & Gore, 2020).

Gendered division of labour can also be seen in the Cocoa Industry of Ghana, West Africa. Cultivation of cash crops like cocoa relies heavily on the casual, informal and non-waged forms of labour represented mostly by women within the households, wherein women perform household-oriented subsistence activities like cultivation of food for family use, on the other hand, men perform market-oriented productive work (LeBaron & Gore, 2020). Women typically work as family labourers who are rarely remunerated, affirming to a strict separation

¹⁷ The fourth chapter discusses this aspect in detail.

of productive work that is, outside the household performed by men and non-productive work that is, inside the household performed by women. Men own the cocoa farms and are involved in the so-called important tasks of the cocoa supply chains, which is why cocoa is termed as the ‘male crop’ (LeBaron & Gore, 2020). The cocoa industry in Ghana, due to the seasonal nature of the crop, employs a significant number of migrant workers, especially women as waged and seasonal workers, however, the wages paid to women are way lower than those paid to men for the same type and amount of work. Disparities in work and wage levels in the agricultural and horticulture supply chains in Africa further expand the space for gender and labour exploitation within and outside the realms of production activities.

The interplay of ascribed identities has also been the medium for segmenting the workforce so as to include and exclude people, especially women based on their caste and religion from the spaces of work. For instance, a study in Ahmedabad, India, revealed that amongst the wider category of women, Muslim women and upper caste Hindu women, if working, work from their homes, while on the other hand a substantial number of women belonging to lower castes work outside their homes (Carr & Chen, 2004). Women when excluded or unable to find work inside factories, are in a way included in the work process through their own homes or through their employer’s homes- either as ‘own account workers¹⁸’ or as ‘piece-rate workers¹⁹’ (Mazumdar, 2018). Home-based work²⁰ or the process of home-workisation has been a facilitator of informalization in a number of ways (Mezzadri, 2012). First of all, it employs mostly casual informal labour, mostly women under casual working contracts with the intermediaries; for instance, in India alone the NSS Employment and Unemployment Survey

¹⁸ Own-account workers are generally independent workers, who do their own marketing and buy their own products (Sinha, 2006).

¹⁹ Piece rate workers are hired by intermediaries, who also provide them with raw materials and pay them according to the number of pieces made.

²⁰ Includes activities like packaging, embroidery work, sequencing, beedi making, incense stick making, carpet weaving, assembling work in electronics, button stitching, etc.

(1999-2000) estimated that out of the nearly 8.2 million Home-Based Workers, almost 4.8 million (or 58 per cent) of them were women (Sudarshan & Sinha, 2011). Women prefer home-based work due to the social and cultural constraints on their mobility and the flexibility in working hours that home-based work offers because of which they can simultaneously do their reproductive work. Secondly, home-based work hinders the possibility of the formation of unions because of its' very nature of being outside the vicinity of factories and hence not qualifying as 'work space'. This also hinders the accessibility of social security benefits to these workers. Thirdly, same work which is performed at higher wages in the factories can be done at very cheap rates in the home-based units, while also maintaining the quality of products. And along with lower costs to workers, home-based work also saves expenditures related to supervision of work, electricity and infrastructure facilities.

Apart from gender, space, caste and religion, mobility has also reshaped divisions in work which has been facilitating informalisation. Mobility is understood through the process of migrantisation that persists in the industries globally. For instance, migration patterns have been very instrumental in reinforcing the segmentation of the workforce in Southern Gujarat, India, between the 1970s and 1990s, so much so that 'nine out ten casual workers in Surat are migrants from Orissa and other neighbouring states' (Breman, 1996). Migration either is a result of unemployment or seasonal employment, especially in villages, which forces the workers to move to industrial towns to work in factories. Even in China, majority of the biggest factories rely on migrant labour (around 92% of the workforce) from neighboring provinces, who reside in strictly controlled and highly exploitative dormitories (Lerche et al, 2017). In the early 2000s, China reported a whopping 120 million of rural migrant workers working in urban industrial units (Phillips, 2011). Studies on the Guangdong region of China also show an

increasing role of spatial segregation of these workers into rural and urban through the hukou²¹ or household registration system. The workers coming from rural to urban areas for work, especially young and unmarried women, are denied the urban hukou, so they effectively remain outsiders and stay in the highly vulnerable dormitories (Mezzadri, 2009). The rise of dormitories and industrial hostels as accommodation facilities for migrant workers in other countries too, like Vietnam, Czech Republic, India has further deepened the ability of the employers to control and subjugate the labour beyond their work time and work space, hence reinforcing exploitation (Mezzadri, 2019) in the form of restriction in movement, extension in working hours and inadequate livelihood facilities. The dormitory labour regime forms a crucial segment of the local labour control regime linking mobility and space with gender and other social identities. Mobility and class differences have also been exploited by the garment Industries of the Global North, especially during festive seasons like Christmas, when the production is at peak and therefore, workers from the Global South migrate to the industries in the Global North. The restrictions on mobility and expansion of exploitative relations further lead to the formations of classes of labour as free and unfree labour classes.

The social regulation and controlling of the labour at the horizontal levels of the supply chains has been inherently possible because of the increasing dependence of the local capitalists/owners on labour market intermediaries-formal recruitment agencies and informal contractors, in recruiting workers through a process called 'Contractualisation' (Mezzadri, 2010), which increases the presence of short- term contract and migrant workers and simultaneously reducing the need for permanent workers. The strong presence and use of contractors and subcontractors relates directly to increasing informalisation patterns within the global production systems wherein risks of cutting labour costs and evading labour legislations

²¹ Through Hukou system people are registered and identified by place of birth, household registration and employment status; basically, an urban citizenship is granted to people registered under it.

are passed down to the lower tiers of production chains. The labour problem- to cut costs, reduce lead times, day-to-day management, adherence to labour standards and at the same time maintaining and enhancing quality of products along with timely delivery- passes on from buyers and retailers to suppliers which in turn, passes them to the contractors and further down to subcontractors (De Neve, 2014a). So, as argued before, the global control on labour is never direct rather is mediated through a local labour control regime, consisting of institutions and actors which fall outside the parameters of formal regulatory spheres, of them contractors play the most crucial role. Most of these contractors advance from their wage worker status. Castells and Portes (1989) have observed two types of labour contracting arrangements with respect to their study in Latin America, which seem to be inherently applicable in almost all contractual arrangements, that is, in-contracting, which involves the recruitment of labour inside the factory; and, out-contracting which involves recruitment of labour for some ancillary, labour-intensive economic activities, which are performed generally in non-factory realms. Both of these arrangements also involve the interplay of caste, kinship networks and mobility at the hands of the contractors. For instance, Local Contractors in India mostly employ labour from their own castes or social group and even from their own villages. Out-contracting arrangements for instance can be seen in Chilean fruit Industries and garment factories in Jordan, Egypt, Mauritius and Romania, wherein contractors move the required number of workers to these industries when the productions are at peak (Barrientos, 2013). These workers are mostly from lower castes and marginalised ethnic groups and hardly have any documentation required to be working in other countries because of which they are found to be very vulnerable to abuse and exploitation at the hands of the contractors. However, contractor's own participation in the global production systems has been said to be 'adversely incorporated' (De Neve, 2014b) as they too face conditions of higher vulnerability at the hands of suppliers, who constantly threatens them of giving orders to other contractors if the production demands

are not met on time. The highly volatile and competitive nature of the market also pushes them back to their wage worker status and at the same time the increase in subcontracting arrangements further provides a tough competitive platform for them to gain orders from suppliers. Therefore, intermediary role of contractors and subcontractors is inevitable to maintain the power asymmetries in the different nodes of supply chains.

The serious implications of informalisation on labour have been in the form of degrading and exploitative working conditions within the global production systems. The quantity and quality of work generated has always remained a paradox. Fast-Fashion Retailers while outsourcing their manufacturing activities to developing countries shun away from the responsibilities of labour welfare, accidental deaths at workplaces and unpaid wages. Some chains of brands and retailers adhere to the rules and regulations at the workplace and some violates them. Incidents such as the Rana Plaza Tragedy in Bangladesh in 2013, is evident of the fact that how the health and safety of workers is compromised- both at factory level and also within these chains and networks at large (Prentice, 2014). However, the tragedy did lead to signing of International Accords on Safety and Health of workers and various labour legislations at the international and national level but these have not been implemented properly and still participation of workers in these networks have led to increased vulnerability and insecurity. There has always been a nexus between the 'codes of conduct and codes of practice' that the firms adhere to especially at regional levels (Mezzadri, 2012). The persistence of such informalities at workplace creates a space where deficits in decent work continue to strengthen their position. Similarly, deliberate and strategic attempts by the local capitalists in pushing away the possibilities of the formation of unions have been making conditions even worse for the workers. Studies have revealed that with the rise in outsourcing and subcontracting arrangements since 1970s, the trade union density has also been rapidly losing its' presence (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2012). For instance, between 2011-2014, China experienced only 6

garment workers strikes in the Greater Shanghai Region and 12 in the Guandong region (Lerche et al, 2017). This depicts the terrible state of the workers engaged in export-oriented production wherein they are unable to even raise their concerns or indulge in any bargaining dialogue with the suppliers and contractors.

However, parallel to those, new forms of labour activism amidst the neoliberal globalization have also garnered attention. Informal workers have been getting support from formal trade unions, for instance, Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, UNITE HERE (Union of Needle Traders, Industrial and Employees and Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees) has been involved in organising the homeworkers and the Timber and Woodworkers' Union in Ghana (Kapoor, 2007). Along with formal trade unions, various NGOs have also been supporting and fighting for the informal workers like the National Group of Homeworking in the UK and the Garment Workers' Union Forum in Bangladesh (Kapoor, 2007). New forms of labour activism also include the unique case of SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) in India, which is not just organising informal workers since decades but is also empowering and creating opportunities for these workers to thrive. For instance, SEWA-Ruaab is an employment generation wing of SEWA, wherein women workers are involved in printing and dyeing of fabrics and stitching ready-made garments, which are in turn supplied to national and international brands, retailers and suppliers.

New ways of labour activism in the form of workers conveying the realities of the 'labour behind the labels' like Zara, Mango, H&M, Primark, M&S have emerged as powerful voices of silent protests. For instance, in 2017, in Istanbul worker's protest against the brand, Zara, wherein they stitched notes inside the clothes, stating that they had not been paid their wages for over a really long time shocked the world (Lanzillo & Kumar, 2021b). The instances of labour rights violations always outnumber the instances of successful labour activism. And this has especially been characteristic of functionally dispersed yet integrated production

mechanisms which stand firmly on the vast reservoir of flexible, casual and informal labour that in itself is highly fragmented and vulnerable.

CONCLUSION

The chapter traced the evolution of the changing industrial trajectories from arm's length dispersion of activities to transnational functional integration of production processes facilitated by the global production networks and supply chains. These global production systems led to a fundamental shift towards export-oriented growth that created the need for industrial clusters to constantly depend on casual, informal and flexible workers. With globalization of production activities informalization of labour became the characteristic feature of the neoliberal era. And how the production processes and labour are governed further reveals the constant interplay of power dynamics between big buyers, brands and merchandisers at the global or vertical level further down to suppliers and local contractors at the regional or horizontal level. Informalization of labour, where on one hand, results in the increase in the informal workforce in both formal and informal realms of production, on the other hand, it has also been facilitated by local labour governing mechanisms which exploit the social and structural inequalities like caste, class, gender, mobility, space, ethnicity, to keep the workforce subjugated, divided and controlled and at the same time, keeps the labour costs within limits. The international division of labour globally, translates into a social division of labour, locally. However, amidst all this the process of informalization where on one hand creates opportunities in terms of increasing employment opportunities, on the other hand it has also aggravated the prospects of vulnerabilities and exploitation within the same vicinities of work, hence creating new and wider forms of informalities at almost all the tiers of production processes and supply chains. And how these different dynamics of informalization unfold in the garment clusters of India is for the next chapter to reflect upon.

CHAPTER III

THE GARMENT INDUSTRY OF INDIA: GLOBALIZING PRODUCTION AND INFORMALISING LABOUR

The discussions in the previous chapter centered around understanding the global transformations especially since the 1970s in terms of organization of production activities, changing industrial trajectories, evolving trade relations, transnational and local labour control mechanisms, and the subsequent strengthening of the informal-formal ties amidst this arrangement. The chapter further argued that the evolution of global production systems, on one hand, is facilitated by the expansion of global economic relations, on the other hand, it reinforces the role of various local and social factors at the regional level hence affirming the stage for informalisation. The emergence and expansion of the fragmented yet interconnected networks of production systems gave rise to a continuous need for labour-intensive processes, hence shifting the labour structures from international division of labour to social division of labour, characteristic of higher flexibility and increasing vulnerability and generation of multiple forms of classes of labour.

This chapter tries to put these general theoretical assumptions into the Indian Garment Industry. It attempts to study the various patterns of labour control mechanisms or strategies that are in use by the local capitalists in order to cut labour costs (in terms of remuneration and employment benefits), and hence contribute significantly in facilitating a platform for increasing informalization patterns in the export-oriented garment clusters of India. The two major arguments proposed in this chapter are: First, informalisation of labour in the Indian garment clusters is facilitated by an increase in the informal workers in both the formal and

informal realms of production. Secondly, the use of various patterns of labour control, that is through the exploitation of various local modalities (caste, class, gender, mobility, age, space, family or community relations) has facilitated in increasing informalization in the Indian garment clusters. Based on these arguments the main research questions of this chapter include: How have the social identities (caste, class, religion, age, gender) and local factors (mobility and space) facilitated in reshaping the employment patterns amidst the post-fordist regime in the export-oriented garment clusters of India? What role does the local labour control regime play in such divisions of work? How does the social regulation of labour interplay in the complex and diverse arrangement of garment production activities in India?

These questions are answered by first developing a background understanding of the global apparel industry and how the Indian garment industry makes its' place visible in the wider networks of global garment production arrangements and how have these structures transformed amidst the changing trade dynamics especially with the phase out of MFA and finally where within these complex systems labour finds its' place, if at all it does.

THE GLOBAL APPAREL AND GARMENT SUPPLY CHAINS

The garment and apparel industry today, is one of the most globalized industries of the world, involving a major portion of the global workforce. In fact, the process of globalization of the garment industry triggered when textile became the first commodity to be the face of the modern industrial revolution that started decades ago from England. However, from the late 1960s with the rise in neoliberalism and the subsequent shift of the developing countries from import to export-oriented industrialization, the garment industry experienced complex and systemic regional expansion with multiple patterns of location, relocation, structuring and restructuring. The value-creation/value-adding feature of the global production systems has led

to an extremely varied and wide geographic reach of the industry subsuming in itself almost all the developed, developing and underdeveloped countries of the world in some form or the other (Fernandez-Stark et al., 2011). However, amongst them, Asia has proved to be a prominent garment producing and exporting region in the global garment industry, while the miniscule presence of garment production in developed countries has only been limited to informalized production spaces which are mostly inhabited by migrant communities (Mezzadri, 2017).

The shift of garments towards East Asia started from the 1960s onwards as with the coming in of the global production networks and supply chains, labour intensive manufacturing activities started relocating from the developed countries to the developing countries especially East Asia, which became the ‘first site of global garment production’ (Mezzadri, 2017, p.20). The East Asian economies started incorporating ‘garment production’ as part of their export-oriented industrialization (EOI) and hence became massively successful. With further advancements, the export-oriented garment clusters in East Asian countries soon shifted their focus from simple assembly line production to full-packaging production activities (Gibon, 2001 as cited in Mezzadri, 2009). And by 1980s, when labour became a bit expensive in these regions, a further shift or rather a second geographic shift in the garment production activities initiated a process called ‘triangle manufacturing’ which became apparent when the local manufacturers moved to neighboring South East Asian countries, Latin American countries and even to China which provided cheaper labour facilities (Gereffi, 1994; Mezzadri, 2017, p.22).

However, apart from the triangular manufacturing process, the vast geographic spread of the global garment commodity chains (GGCCs) has also been attributed to the setting up of and subsequent phasing out of various global trade regimes and international regulations. Initially, textile exports were regulated through bilateral trade agreements, which started with US

imposing restrictions in exports from Japan in 1955 and subsequently from 1961 onwards, multilateral agreements regulated the garment imports and exports (Mezzadri, 2017, p.21). Of them, the most prominent has been the Multi- Fibre Arrangement (MFA) which came up as a replacement to Long-term Trade Agreement (LTA). The textiles and clothing industry, instead of being governed by the rules of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) as other manufacturing industries were, was regulated by LTA through which, developed countries of Europe, US and Canada, restricted the import of fabrics especially cotton from developing countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan (Ernst et al., 2005). However, when LTA got replaced by MFA in 1974 as a part of the protectionist measures by US, Europe and Canada to protect their domestic markets from the highly competitive Asian Industries, the scope of these materials was expanded to include higher value-added products, such as garments of wool and man-made fibres (Mezzadri, 2017; Ernst et al., 2005). These international restrictions continued until the formation of WTO²² in 1995, whose free trade agenda questioned these restrictions. As a result, the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) was introduced as part of the GATT Uruguay Round of negotiations in 1986, which established that the countries should gradually dismantle these quotas within a ten-year period, ending on 1st January, 2005 (Hale & Burns, 2005). Subsequently, MFA was dismantled in 2005.

The phase out of the MFA expanded the geographic reach of the global garment commodity chains, with China capturing the global market with almost one-third of all the garment exports and spreading its presence in developing and emerging economies like Cambodia and Jordan (Mezzadri, 2017, p.23). In return, the Garment Industry when compared to other sectors of any economy contributes significantly to a country's development by rising exports and increasing employment opportunities especially via the value-addition activities. For instance, right after the phase-out of MFA, in Bangladesh, the contribution of the clothing industry stood at almost

²² World Trade Organisation

75 % of the total exports of the country; in Mauritius, the figure stood at 64%; in Sri Lanka it was 50% and in Tunisia 40% (Applebaum, 2003, p.17). In terms of the employment generation almost 40% of the workforce in Tunisia and Morocco and around 35% of the workforce in Turkey were working in the textile and clothing industries (Hale &Wills, 2005). As a result of the global outsourcing strategies by developed and developing countries and the phase out of MFA, a number of other countries with no traditional history of textile production, e.g., Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Ghana, Sri Lanka became part of the GGCCs and took advantage of the quota free garment regime. As of 2020-2021, China ranks as the top most country with the global apparel exports of around 29.5%, followed by Bangladesh (8.3%), Vietnam (7.3%) and India (2.9%) (AEPC, 2021).

The integration of local architectures of garment production into global production systems showcase no ideal or constant pattern for all the countries, rather there exists ‘multiple varieties of global integration’ (Tewari, 2008 as cited in Mezzadri, 2014a). However, this incorporation largely depends on two broad factors, firstly on the governance mechanisms that enhances the possibilities of inclusion and exclusion of local industries as nodes of production into the wider supply chains. As seen in the previous chapter that garments and apparels fall under the buyer-driven type of governance model, wherein big brands, large retailers, merchandisers and traders, without actually owning the manufacturing facilities, exercise enormous control at the global level through a network of suppliers present at the local level. Adding on to that is their “labour-intensive and the footloose, mercantilist nature of its’ dominating capital which makes them prone to multiple relocations and also use these relocations (or threats to relocate) as a way of disciplining its subordinate agents, namely the local suppliers based in developing countries” (Mezzadri, 2017, p.21). And secondly, the multi-lateral trade regimes, domestic industrial policies, especially post-MFA period, and labour laws also play a crucial role in strategizing ways of incorporation into the wider production systems. However, apart from

these aspects, the integration of Indian garment production into the wider networks of global garment supply chains reveal different patterns of adjustment that has shaped it to its' presently dominating export-oriented nature.

GLOBALIZATION OF GARMENT PRODUCTION IN INDIA

The Indian 'garment' sector had its' early origins during the Second World War when units were set up for mass production of military uniforms (Unni & Bali, 2001). However, the Indian 'Textile' Industry is pretty ancient, dating back to around 3000 BCE, when cotton was cultivated in the Indus Valley Civilization and later by 1700, it became a major commodity of import for the East India Company (Kara, 2019; Mezzadri, 2017). The colonial textile industry in India largely constituted of activities like spinning, weaving, embroidery, block-printing and cotton ginning which were performed in homes, small workshops, mills and industrial training institutes. The Indian darzi or tailor had a significant place in the colonial textile Industry. However, with the invention of the hand-held sewing machine in the mid-19th century and subsequently with the coming in of the electric sewing machine in 1889, darzis were viewed to be unadaptable to the changing European fashions (Lanzillo & Kumar, 2021b). Along with the technological resistance, the colonial narratives around the marginalization of tailors also centered around the rigid caste and religious composition of tailors that incorporated both Hindus and Muslims (Lanzillo & Kumar, 2021b). Tailors were mostly males who mastered the nuances of measuring, designing and cutting, while women were restricted to only sewing. While the colonial state as well as some missionary and religious charitable schools garnered the idea of sewing as an appropriate economic activity for women, but still due to the gendered hierarchies around the profession, women received very low wages as compared to their male counterparts (Lanzillo & Kumar, 2021b).

After the British, textile production in India was largely consolidated in the hands of ‘different communities like Sindhis, Marwaris and Punjabi trading castes, who did not have access to large capital’ and were mainly involved in exporting traditional printed fabrics (Mezzadri, 2009). Till the late 1980s, inward-looking policies of the country focused on the production of cloth mainly through handlooms and mills and subsequently shifting to powerlooms²³. Despite having a rich history of an extensive textile export base, especially of cotton, India’s integration into the global garment commodity chain started only in the late 1980s (Mezzadri, 2017). So, it was not the trade liberalization of the 1990s that boosted the export base of the country, rather it was the expansion of the outsourcing activities globally and the domestic deregulation of the textile and apparel industry which triggered the globalization of the Indian garment sector. Initially, the export growth in India was a little slow when compared to its’ competitive counterparts like China and Mexico, probably owing to its’ outdated technology, fragmented capacities, low scale production, lack of an exit policy and rigid labour laws, but still overcoming these obstacles, it emerged as one of the top ten textiles and clothing exporters according to the global estimates after 1998 (Tewari, 2006).

Tewari (2006) argues that India’s integration into the global apparels and textiles has been indifferent from others, mainly because it has occurred “without any significant FDI, entry into regional free trade agreements, or deep insertion into dominant clothing supply chains” but rather it has been facilitated by the restructuring mechanisms adopted by the domestic firms in terms of building ties with local and global suppliers especially after the deregulation of the domestic textile and apparel sector in the mid-1980s and the subsequent trade liberalization of

²³ Powerlooms are involved in providing cloth for ready-made garments, along with also performing functions like dyeing, finishing or printing textiles (Chris et al., 2013).

the early 1990s. The garment sector earlier being reserved for the Small-Scale Industries (SSI or SMEs)²⁴, gradually started the process of de-reservation with the coming in of the Textile Policy of 2000, which allowed the larger enterprises to invest in the SSIs of garments and hence further enhance the global integration and at the same time the local concentration of the garment sector industries (Mezzadri, 2009). For instance, the global integration of Ludhiana garment cluster, which strategically survived the collapse of its biggest export market, USSR (its' disintegration in 1989) and the simultaneous opening up of the domestic economy for international trade (Tewari, 1999). Local suppliers of Ludhiana found a way to overcome these external shocks and neatly blended their knitwear production activities to cater to the demands of both the domestic and international markets. Like Ludhiana, other garment clusters of the country restructured their production capacities especially after the 1990s focusing more on export-oriented trading patterns, e.g., Bangalore and Chennai integrated to global garment production because of their proximity to cotton fabric centres (Mezzadri, 2014a).

Along with de-regulation of the private sector, the new industrial policy further enhanced informalization by a strict control on labour, which in turn led to a decline in the number of directly employed workers especially since the 1990s (Vijayabaskar, 2011). These restructuring mechanisms have simultaneously been facilitated by the advancements in technology, availability of skilled workforce, and the global rise in subcontracting arrangements. Since the liberalisation policies of the 1990s, the Indian exports in textiles consisting majorly of RMG (Ready-Made Garments), handicrafts, cotton textiles, have increased tremendously from 8 billion USD in 1995 to 29.8 billion USD in 2021, giving employment to over 4.5 crore workers and by 2029 the Indian textiles market is expected to be of worth more than USD 209 billion (IBEF, 2021). Textile Industry in India is governed by

²⁴ Under the Industry (Development and Regulation) Act (ID&R Act) of 1951.

Factories Act of 1948²⁵. USA, UAE, parts of Asia and European Union are India's primary exporting destinations, while UK has been the primary garment importer and about half of these total garment exports consist of knitted and crocheted garments and accessories (AEPC, 2021). At the same time, India continues to maintain its' place as the largest producer of cotton in the world. The growing export base of the country has attracted the attention of leading global apparel Retailers and Brands like Zara and Mango (Spain); Benetton (Italy); Promod (France); Espirit, Levi's, and Forever 21 (USA) and Hennes & Mauritz (Sweden) and many others, which have recently been shifting their supplier networks to India and have successfully been capitalising on its' cheap labour, low production costs and increasing flexibility in labour laws and policies at the ground level.

Garment Export Production in India is largely organised around specialised industrial clusters which are arranged through small and medium enterprises (SMEs) acting as nodes of production for the wider networks of supply chains. The EOI and outsourcing mechanisms gave a rather fragmented and informal character to garment production in these clusters. According to Apparel Export Promotion Council²⁶ (AEPC), around 95% of the total garment production in India takes place in the top 18 clusters²⁷, whose annual production is 8,900 million pieces and even amongst them, about 85 percent of the total production of garments both for domestic (especially Indore and Bellary) and international markets, is concentrated in twelve major clusters: Kolkata, Mumbai, Tirupur, Ludhiana, Indore, Bellary, Jaipur, Bangalore, Chennai, NOIDA, Gurgaon and Okhla (AEPC, 2009; Ray et al., 2016). Bareilly,

²⁵ Firms in India that hire more than 10 workers with power and 20 workers without power should be registered under the Factory Act of 1948 and are considered to belong to the formal sector and the remaining are considered as part of the unorganised or informal sector (Maiti and Sen, 2010).

²⁶ The Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) was the Government Body in charge of the allocation of quotas during the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) but now primarily focuses on issues related to export-promotion (Mezzadri, 2009).

²⁷ Okhla, Gurgaon, NOIDA, Mumbai, Tiruppur, Indore, Bellary, Ludhiana, Jaipur, Bangalore, Chennai, Kanpur, Ahmedabad, Jabalpur, Salem/Erode/Madurai, Faridabad and Nagpur (AEPC, 2009). In Hyderabad and Cochin garment production takes place in special economic zones (SEZs) or export processing zones (EPZs) (Mezzadri, 2017, p.32).

Lucknow and Delhi are some of the major embellishment centres. The type of products made in each of these clusters have their origins to the region's historical industrial trajectory and to the different routes that the region took to enter the global garment industry, which in a way is still reflected in their present product specialisations (Mezzadri & Srivastava, 2015). Historical craft legacy of the Northern garment clusters like Delhi and Jaipur (Rajasthan) became their entry route to garment production, while for other clusters like Kolkata and Ludhiana (Punjab), their significant role in the colonial textile sector proved to be their starting point in the garment production (Mezzadri & Srivastava, 2015). In the south, garment clusters specialise in standardised and volume-based production, like t-shirts and other basic garments, for instance, Bangalore in casual men's wear and Bellary in jean's production. Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu is one of the largest clusters of ready-made textile and apparel industry of India, specializing in knitwear production for global and domestic brands (Mezzadri, 2014a). Women wearables are generally manufactured in the north, west and east of the country especially in Delhi, Jaipur, Ludhiana, Kolkata, which can bank on craft-based tailoring and textile production. Ludhiana, too is known for its' knitwear production; Jaipur, on the other hand, is popular for its' printing work on ladieswear; Kolkata is known for hosiery and woven garments and Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region) is the most significant garment industrial area, in fact the largest garment hub of North India and hence is mostly preferred by the popular fast-fashion brands and retailers. It is popular for its' embellishment and intricate embroidery work especially on ladieswear garments. And Mumbai, having links to its' colonial and post-colonial textile mills evolved to specialize in RMG like children's wear, undergarments and woven menswear (Mezzadri, 2009).

Based on the diverse variety, type and quantity of garments produced in India, Mezzadri (2014a) through her decades long research in the Indian garment clusters reveals that production activities in these clusters are structured around four different layers: first one

consists of direct garment export units, followed by the subcontractors or jobbers and then comes the processors, who are specialised in activities like washing, dyeing, or printing and finally the fourth layer is composed of the various ancillary craft-based activities like embroidery, sequencing, zari-work, moti-work, which are mainly done on ladieswear, performed either in karkhaanas (workshops), at addas or in home-based units. These can further easily be classified into factory and non-factory realms of production. This spatial segregation of production activities is managed by ‘group systems (groups of tailors), semi-assembly lines and even by ‘make-and-through’ techniques (tailor-made) according to unit, order size, and type of collection’ (Mezzadri, 2014a).

However, a general trait that has been revealed by various case studies and research findings is that the arrangement of production activities in the clusters of the north is more decentralized and fragmented while that of the south is more centralized and consolidated. This is not to say that northern clusters are more informal in nature than the southern clusters, but rather there exists an interplay of distinct modalities of informalisation that all the clusters get engaged in, the point which the later part of the chapter deals with. The layered pattern of disintegration of production activities depends largely on the type of products made in that particular cluster, for instance, ladieswear and niche products require ancillary activities that are performed in mostly home-based units or at addas, while volume-based assembly line production requires no such ancillary activities and therefore is mostly performed in factory realms. All these layers of a cluster are interrelated and interdependent, each forming a crucial node of garment production, weaved together by a complex network of economic factors like trade and market linkages, at a broader level and social factors like supplier-contractor relations, contractor-subcontractor relations and finally labour relations with all of them at local level. These interconnections between economic and social factors also determine the vertical and horizontal governance

patterns within these chains which shape capital and labour relations and hence contribute towards the reinforcement of the process called informalisation of labour.

INFORMALISATION OF LABOUR IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY OF INDIA

The globalisation of the Indian garment Industry, where on one hand, brought huge transformations in the way garment production got relocated and restructured amidst the global and domestic waves of interference in the form of various policies and legislations, on the other hand, it created a constant demand for vast reservoirs of cheap, flexible and casual labour, hence constructing a bridge called informalisation, linking formal production with informal labour and hence constructing new classes of labour. The formation of new classes of labour in the Indian garment industry falls on the shoulders of the continuum between the formal and informal realms (Mezzadri, 2016a). However, the demand for cheap, flexible and casual labour cannot be said to be of Indian garment clusters exclusively, rather the global garment Industry has long been known as a representative of ‘sweatshop system’²⁸, wherein workers are vulnerable, flexible and highly feminised, who are put to work under exploitative working conditions involving unpaid long working hours, unsafe and unhealthy work environments, improper facilities at workplace, lack of legal and social security benefits and regularly faced with harassment and subjugation by the contractors. These precarious and informal working arrangements have become a constant characteristic feature of the neoliberal era, which has advanced its’ ways in order to capitalise on them. The varying cost minimisation strategies by the local capitalists have generated different patterns of local sweatshop regimes in the export-oriented garment clusters of India (Mezzadri, 2014a). The process of Informalisation of labour

²⁸ This term was proposed in 1901 by an economist, John R. Commons, who defined it as “a system of subcontract, wherein the work is led out to contractors to be done in small shops or homes... to be contrasted with the factory-system, wherein the manufacturer employs his own workmen in his own building” (Howard, 1997 as cited in Mezzadri, 2017, p.24).

is an outcome of such local strategies and global advancements, which entails both ‘the informalisation of the formal as well as the expansion of the traditional informal sector’ (Chang, 2009; Mezzadri, 2017). Along with the increase in the informal workforce, informalisation patterns have also survived by the social and local dimensions facilitating outcomes as to how this labour is controlled, disciplined and subjugated to the capitalist logic of profit making at the expense of cutting labour costs and at the same time creating barriers for the workers to organise and participate in trade union activities. This is where the horizontal governance model of global production systems comes to interplay. The social and local dimensions constantly navigate around the use and exploitation of identities and factors like age, mobility, caste, class, gender, space and household relations, the point raised in the previous chapter. These different institutions form the centrality of the social structures of accumulation (SSA)²⁹ theory, which gives weight to the processes of accumulation and proletarianization in the production processes that are shaped by these very identities (Harris-White, 2003, p.14; Mezzadri, 2016a). Harris-White (2003) while analysing the presence of these social structures in the Indian informal economy, argue that, where on hand, they form a crucial component of the civil society, while on the other, in the neoclassical terms they are neatly grouped under the category of ‘social capital’, wherein an inter-dependent relationship between the labour and the capital is constantly at work. The social and capital relations in the garment clusters in India are an outcome of the varied product specialisation techniques and distinct product cycles that are in turn shaped by the distinct regional industrial trajectories, hence leading to an amalgamation of social and physical characteristics in the production of commodities (Mezzadri, 2017, p.47). These social processes in turn mediate the formation of classes of labour. On similar lines Harris-White and Gooptu (2001) while analysing the informal workforce in India, observe that social institutions and structural differences play a

²⁹ This term was coined by Gordon and Kotz and their Colleagues in the United States (Harris-White, 2003).

major role in mediating the process of formation of multiple classes of labour. However, the use and exploitation of these ascribed identities and local factors in the garment clusters trace their origins to the historical, social and cultural aspects of the Indian society. The case of the Indian garment industry confirms how labour informalization should be understood as a two-fold process involving both “the absorption of informal economic activities into wider economic circuits, and the spread of informal labor relations across supposedly formal production realms” (NCEUS, 2007). Here, informalisation of labour is specifically associated with the ‘growth of informalised wage-workers within the formal sector as well as disguised wage-workers in the informal sector, accompanied by stagnant or declining regular and protected employment’ (Sanyal & Bhattacharyya, 2009). And subsequently how these informal labour relations unfold at the regional level via the network of local suppliers and intermediaries in turn reveal patterns of informalisation that are on one hand, context-specific and on the other hand, product-specific.

The process of the strategic use of the social structures of accumulation begins with the recruitment mechanisms which are inherently informal in nature and composition, whether they are put to practice in organised or in unorganised work spaces. A general trend of recruiting workers in garment factories is through informal recruitment methods like pasting pamphlets or advertisements on the walls of factories; recruiting workers through personal connections of other workers based on caste and community relations or through propagation of information through word of mouth. These appointments involve zero training methods for the workers. Intermediaries like Contractors and subcontractors are mostly used in both the factory and non-factory realms that involve in-contracting and out-contracting arrangements. The nature of employment relations between the workers and the intermediaries remains informal in nature, for instance, in Delhi NCR and Bareilly all relations whether between contractors and subcontractors or between artisans and labourers are mostly based on word of

mouth, kachcha/informal contracts and trust relations (Mezzadri, 2014b). Contractors provide in variety of labour to meet pressures of seasonal fluctuations, short notice demands, last minute orders/modifications throughout the year (Barrientos, 2013).

They are mostly responsible for recruiting the cheapest and flexible labour possible through various social networks, and are involved in supervising the work when production is scattered from factories to home-based units, and at the same time paying them wages, managing them and even dismissing them. Since these contractors are themselves often poorly regulated and are informal in character, so the workers employed by them find themselves outside the realm of the labour laws. As a result, these workers fail to unionise as they themselves are at the behest of the contractors, who control them right from the beginning. Sometimes, Contractors may also be workers themselves working in the garment factories, which in a way is further erasing the distinctions between employers, contractors and workers. Also, the supervising role of contractors involve the transportation of garment sub-parts from factories to fabrication units and home-based units as and when they find defaults in the required designs and products and are also involved in final assembling of products. Many of the times, the provisions of the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970³⁰ are flouted at the ground level because the contractors themselves are not registered. For instance, in Tiruppur, employers focus more on the number of machines, instead on the number of workers working for them (Chari, 2004). Mezzadri (2016b), while studying the labour contracting networks in Bareilly revealed that the cluster showcases hierarchies in contracting, wherein large contractors owned karkhanas and had access to final markets, while some directly employed several artisans for sampling purposes and design checking. In this set up, all contractors in order to meet production demands on time and for easy supervision would further fragment the production to

³⁰ An Act to regulate the employment of contract labour in certain establishments and to provide for its abolition in certain circumstances and for matters connected therewith.

subcontractors. In-contracting arrangements also involve the presence of multiple contractors in single units. All these contractual arrangements further discourage the workers to get involved in trade union activities as there is no single employer who is directly accountable to the workers.

The fragmented nature of clusters, especially of the north involve a substantially larger presence of contractors and subcontractors, while consolidated clusters, like Bangalore do not depend on intermediaries that often. Clusters like Tirupur uses contractors to employ inter-state migrants (Mezzadri & Srivastava, 2015). Also, a trend of workers doubling up as informal contractors for companies so as to recruit workers through personal connections (like employing workers through their network of friends, family, acquaintances or neighbourhood), can also be seen in a lot of clusters (Verite, 2010). Suppliers depend on these local intermediaries for the supply of casual, flexible and unorganised workforce that caters to the seasonal demands of the garment production. While the suppliers exercise enormous control on the contractors, the contractors on the other hand, subjugate and control the labour.

The vast pool of labour supplied through these intermediaries has changed the dynamics of employment structures and relations across the formal and informal domains. The increasing presence of the informal workforce in the garment industry of Industry has challenged the overall work and employment dynamics whose end-result is the loosening of the dichotomies of formal and informal. These advancements are studied by discussing the structure, size and overall changing nature of the workforce which is in turn facilitated by the changing employer-employee relationships.

i. INFORMALISATION OF LABOUR: AN INCREASE IN THE INFORMAL WORKFORCE

One of the most common strategies employed by local capitalists to minimise labour costs and tighten their control on labour has been the recruitment of footloose labourforce instead of the permanent one especially because of the everyday changing fashion, small batch productions and peak season demands of the garment industry. Therefore, the spread of the export-oriented garment production processes right from factories to workshops and right down to the home-based units, slums and even villages, involves the penetration of almost all forms of labour that is informal or unorganised- women, migrants (internal or from other countries, possibly not registered), contract workers, home-based workers, temporary workers, permanent workers and even child and bonded labour. While most of it is temporary labour, however, even in clusters where permanent workforce is employed, it remains informal in nature especially due to the inaccessibility in being able to organise into unions as a tool to put forth their concerns and demands. The process of informalisation therefore should be analysed by comprehending the employment relationship patterns between the employer and the employee rather than just the type of economic activity. Breman (2002) too stresses the importance of employment relationship in defining informal work and argues that companies though themselves subjected to legislative criterions relating to the formal sector, but they hire workers indirectly mostly through intermediaries or jobbers because of which the workers lack any written contracts and hence can be fired as and when the contractors demand. Thus, the employment relationships reveal that informality has acquired a heterogeneous character in varying degrees and measures across various segments of work.

To comprehensively accumulate the different dynamics of informality that comes to practice in the garment clusters, the definition of unorganised workers given by NCEUS³¹ is crucial. It defines the unorganised workers in India as “those working in the unorganized sector³² or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits provided by the employers and the workers in the formal sector without any employment and social security benefits provided by the employers” (NCEUS, 2007). Hence, accessibility to social security benefits becomes a crucial factor for categorising the so-called informal and formal. The Commission further stipulates that employment patterns involving informal employment in the formal sector and informal employment in the informal sector associate themselves to the process called ‘informalisation of the formal³³’. Estimating this process, Commission noted that there was an increase from 362 million in 1999-2000 to 423 million in 2004-05 in the total number of informal workers that is those without social security and other employment benefits (Unni & Rani, 2008, p.19). Along with that there was an increase in employment in the formal sector from 54 million to 63 million, while the number of formal workers (having social security and other benefits) in the formal sector remained stagnant at about 34 million (Unni & Rani, 2008, p.19). This clearly reveals that much of the employment in the formal sector was captured by the informal workers. This process started especially since the mid-1990s as with the rise in outsourcing strategies globally, value-added activities in the garments and apparels in India too depicted a considerable increase in the unorganised and informalising workforce. The share of value-added activities and employment in the unorganised apparel sector more than doubled from 6.2% and 0.7% respectively in the period from 1989-1990 to 1994-1995 to 14.9% and

³¹ National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector was set up in 2004 to look into the matters of the unorganised sector/workforce.

³² The NCEUS (2007) defines the unorganised sector at enterprise level as the sector which, “consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers”.

³³ While ‘formalisation of the informal sector’ occurs with penetration of formal employment in the informal sector.

15.2% in the period 1994-1995 to 1999-2000; while it significantly reduced for the organised sector from 27 to 2.3% in value-added activities and from 17.3% to 3.8% in employment for the respective time periods (Rani & Unni, 2004 as cited in Mezzadri, 2017). It has been estimated by ILO (2012) that globally India is witnessing the highest rates of Informalisation when compared to other countries of the world. Almost 92 per cent of the total workforce is employed in the unorganised sector, while the remaining 8 per cent is employed in the organised/formal sector (NCEUS, 2007, p.1). Within this number of informal employments, self-employed workers constitute the major section of the workforce (Harris-White, 2003). It was further estimated by NCEUS (2007) that even within the stipulated 8% of formal employment, around 49% of them were informal workers without having any social security benefits. Informal employment in manufacturing contributed to around 87 per cent of the total informal employment and within manufacturing, garments and apparels being the most employed sub-sector, employment grew by nearly 1 million per annum between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012 to reach 59.8 million (ILO, 2012; Mehrotra, 2019). Srivastava (2015) while estimating the changing nature of employment patterns³⁴ during the entire phase from 2004-05 to 2011-12 accounted that regular employment grew at a brisk rate of 18.7 per cent a year, on the other hand, self-employment grew at an even faster rate of 22.4 per cent a year.

Contract workers in the northern clusters (e.g., NCR) range from 60-80 per cent, while in the south (e.g., Tiruppur), they vary from 20-30 per cent to 70-80 per cent of the total workforce (Chan, 2013). Majority of these contract workers lack written contracts and are casually employed by subcontractors based on oral contracts. Contract workers are preferred because of the highly unpredictable and seasonal nature of the industry as well as the frequent style/product changes that require variety in skill sets because of the everyday changing fashion

³⁴ According to NSS, regular/salaried and casual workers include the salaried and piece-rate workers; while self-employed workers include independent home-workers, own-account workers and unpaid family workers.

and consumer tastes. The use of contract labour is higher in the north because of the seasonal or short nature of production in this region as this region specialises in high value-added products, particularly in the summer season while the south being engaged in all season wearables (like undergarments, jeans, shirts, etc.), so the production season is longer which prefer employing a large permanent workforce (Chan, 2013). The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act of 1970, which regulates the employment and working conditions of contract workers has been a victim of serious criticisms on part of the trade unions, workers' rights activists and the workers at large. According to Verite (2010), the act has been responsible for encouraging the use of contract workers and their subsequent poor working conditions, denying them basic workers' rights. The state/regional level variations in contract labour laws and policies have only aggravated the employment of contract workers in factories, especially in states where the laws are quite lenient. For instance, NCR employs a great deal of contract workers because of its' leniency in laws and policies concerning them (Chan, 2013).

A study on Garment workers in Delhi by Mezzadri (2015) revealed that around 90 per cent of the workers in Northern garment clusters migrate from neighbouring states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and the rest 10 per cent from Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Odisha and West Bengal. Ludhiana, too showcases an almost 90% of its' workforce as migrants from neighbouring states, which migrate especially during the peak season (Mezzadri, 2009). On the other hand, in the south too, migrants constitute a major portion of the garment workforce. For instance, in Tiruppur cluster of Tamil Nadu almost 70% of the workforce consist of migrant workers, coming from Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Assam, West Bengal as well as from other districts within Tamil Nadu (Verite, 2010).

But when it comes to the representation of women workers, the north and south showcase a substantial difference. The northern garment clusters of Delhi-NCR, Ludhiana and Jaipur showcase a marginal presence of women workers especially in factories. While in non-factory

realms women are considerably decent in numbers, especially because of the large number of ancillary activities in the North. While the more consolidated garment production in the southern clusters like Chennai, Tirupur and Bangalore, showcase a trend of greater feminisation amongst the factory workers and even amongst the migrant workforce. The patterns of women's incorporation and exclusion lead to the processes of either feminisation or de-feminisation of the workforce, which has been dealt in detail in the next chapter.

Home-based workers form an invisible but crucial node of garment and apparel supply chains, especially in the fragmented clusters of the North. As per data, homeworkers in wearing apparel and textiles accounted for 19.2% in 2011-2012 and 18.7% in 2017-2018 and amongst them, women homeworkers saw a considerable increase in their shares from 22.6% 2011-2012 to 27.4% in 2017-2018 (Raveendran, 2020). A similar invisible presence is of child labour in the lower tiers or fabrication units of garment industries, which is the source of cheapest labour. A factory level assessment study of International Brands, conducted by Verite (2010) found that around 12% of the workforce in the garment sector comprised of juvenile workers aged between 15-18 years. In a Report on Child labour by an NGO Save the Children (2014), it was revealed that over 8,000 children were engaged in garment related activities in households (84 per cent) and addas (13 per cent) of Delhi; of these 69 per cent of the child workers in households were girls. In most of these units, child workers are mostly migrants, which links mobility with age and generate patterns of informalisation.

Another striking reason for persistent informalisation in the Garment/Apparel supply chains is because of the direct and indirect presence of forced and bonded labour, who again form a part of the hidden workforce in the supply chains. The production units rely on recruiting them as they are easily available coming from impoverished and disadvantaged background, and are more easily controllable and hence end up facing extreme forms of exploitation in the garment supply chains. A significant share of the workforce (estimated to be around 51%) in the garment

sector can be said to be working under forced conditions, wherein workers are paid less than the minimum wages (ILO, 2017). However, the nature of forced or bonded labour has expanded in dimensions to not just include the debt as the major reason for the workers to continue working against their will, rather the term has acquired a heterogeneous character to include conditions like overtime by workers, unhealthy and unsafe work environments, discrimination and exploitation at workplace by contractors and fellow workers, restricted freedom of movement, inadequate and withheld wages and similar other conditions that makes the labour bonded to their work. One of the most evident examples of forced labour in the garment sector has been the Sumangali or Marriage Assistance Scheme in Tamil Nadu, which employs young unmarried women of the age-group 14-21 years for a time-bound contract usually of three years, and after the term is completed, these women are paid in lumpsum amount which would later be used as dowry in their marriages. Most of these women are migrants from nearby states and areas (Verite, 2010).

One of the crucial dimensions of informality in the Indian garment Industry has been associated with the inaccessibility to all the stipulated social security benefits for the workers. Social Security is one of the major pillars of ensuring decent work to the workers in organized and unorganized sectors. In India, social security provisions in the garment sector have been ensured through various acts, which includes, the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923; the Employees' State Insurance Act³⁵ (ESI), 1948; the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act³⁶ (EPF), 1948; the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; and the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972³⁷ (Fairwear Foundation, 2016). The ESI and EPF schemes are only

³⁵ This act provides for the medical insurance and sickness benefits to all types of workers, whether permanent, contract, casual or temporary workers in factories and establishments consisting of ten or more workers (ILO, 2017).

³⁶ This act is applicable to permanent and contract workers in factories and establishments with 20 or more workers (ILO, 2017).

³⁷Applicable to all workers- permanent, casual and piece-rate workers with gratuities or retirement benefits.

applicable for workers working in organized sector enterprises, that is the permanent workers but even within the formal sector, these provisions and benefits fail to be adequately given to or used by workers and sometimes even the workers themselves unaware of the benefits willingly deny them because they require certain number of deductions from their wages. As per NSS data (2011-2012), a whopping 96.1% of the workers working in the garment sector either denied receiving any such benefits or were unaware of any such contributions to these schemes (Mezzadri & Srivastava, 2015). According to Mezzadri et al (2015), the workers having limited or no access to social security benefits has been increasing mainly due to the increasing number of casual and piece-rate workers being employed through contractors and subcontractors which makes the availability of such benefits all the more difficult for both the organized and unorganized workers. For instance, Clusters in South like Chennai and Bangalore showcase a strategic denial of the Gratuity Act, 1972 even to the permanent factory workers (Mezzadri, 2009).

Infact, the New Labour Codes passed by the Parliament amidst the pandemic, involving Labour Codes on Wages (ICW), Industrial Relations Code (IRC), Occupational Safety and Health and Working Conditions Code (OSH) and Social Security Code (SSC) expected to be in force from 1st July 2022, have been brought in as steps to generate employment and to facilitate ease of doing business, but they have mostly been criticized for being unilaterally decided by the central government and also for inhibiting employer-friendly characteristics. Though the codes provide some benefits to the labour through universalization of minimum wage, recognition of trade unions, social security benefits for gig and platform workers and giving a wider definition to the migrant worker (Mukherjee & Narayanan, 2020). But at the same time, these codes are scrutinized for further facilitating informalization in the already informalized economy especially through the concepts like ‘fixed employment and by rendering contract labour as the norm’ (The Indian Express, 2021). Of all the changes brought at the forefront through these

new labour codes, the changes to Contract Labour Act, 1970 and the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 (ISMA³⁸) are crucial for the garment workers as contract and migrant workers form a major section of the workforce. ISMA's accumulation under OSH has been criticized for excluding a large number of establishments employing migrant workforce. While ISMA applied to firms employing 5 or more workers, but through OSH it now covers establishments with 10 or more workers, hence leading to an exclusion of a substantial greater migrant workforce (The Indian Express, 2021). Another crucial development has been associated with redefining the migrant worker, which in a way is a welcome move from the workers' perspective. ISMA defines a migrant worker, "as a person recruited by or through a contractor in one state for employment in another state", however, under OSH, a migrant worker can also be directly employed by the employer in the destination state and hence eliminating the need for a contractor. This in a way also eliminates the possibility of exploitation at the hands of contractors and the employers can directly be held accountable to the workers. However, the application of these changes at the ground level is yet to be seen.

The reliance on these forms of disposable labour makes it easier for the intermediaries to control the work process to their advantage. Control over the work process is done by segregating the designs to skilled and unskilled workers, dictating the lead time, checking the quality of work, modes of payment, controlling the hours of work and also working on the various tactics to avoid unions and strikes by workers (Unni & Scaria, 2010). However, the staggering numbers of the informal workers do reveal one of the major reasons of as to why the garment clusters in India are experiencing the process of informalization of labour. But at the same time, the socio-economic profile of workers only unclutters the physical materiality

³⁸ Provides protection and Entitlements to migrant workers.

of informalization, while the social materiality is de facto at work too through various labour control strategies that make use of the ascribed identities of these workers contributing towards the segmentation of the labourforce to the capitalists' logic of avoiding the labour problem altogether and hence increasing their profits. The following section centers around understanding this dynamic of informalization of labour that is hitherto a product of interplay of power-relations between suppliers and intermediaries on one hand and on the other hand these have further been made easy by the continuation of the segmentation of work and work processes along social and cultural lines.

ii. INFORMALISATION OF LABOUR: LABOUR CONTROL THROUGH SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND LOCAL FACTORS

As argued in the previous chapter that governance model of the apparel and garment supply chains travels vertically through the excess control exercised by the big brands, retailers and merchandisers over the horizontally placed suppliers, big exporters and local contractors. At the horizontal level, the 'labour problem' that is the control and supervision of the labour is addressed and, in the process, what has been revealed is that the labourforce is systematically fragmented across various lines of social differentiation (caste, class, religion, age, gender, household relations) and local factors (mobility and space), crossing both productive and reproductive realms, and hence diversifying the aspects of informalisation in the complex local structures of garment production.

Social identities have long been in place especially in India which have been used as prerogatives for assigning certain tasks/jobs to people of a specific class, gender, religion, caste or age. However, when one looks at the Neo-liberal and export-oriented nature of the global

factory, these identities would seem to be rather invisible in the vast world of the global production systems. But within the local structures of these very production systems the same identities lie at the very centre of the cost minimisation and labour control strategies of the local suppliers, visible through ways of recruiting, supervising, subjugating and hence, keeping the workforce divided. At the same time, the case of garment Industry in India showcase the persistence and favouring of different social and local modalities which are specific to product specialisation as well as to the different paths of integration of the local industries into the GGCCs, the point that Tewari (1999) has stressed. However, an equally vital underpinning of the social and structural inequalities has been that they are not parallel to each other, rather nearly in every cluster, social regulation of labour involves the intersection of two or more of these social and local factors. At the same time, the case studies and secondary literatures on the garment clusters of India have revealed the persistence of mobility as a binding factor for all. The figures of the increasing migration patterns stated earlier has reshaped the organisation and functioning of the clusters on one hand and on the other hand, it has made the 'footloose proletariat' as the dominant class of labour of the garment industry. Mobility or migrantisation has strengthened the social divides based on class, caste, gender and religion in both the factory and non-factory realms of production. So, with every social identity of workers, mobility as a local factor reproduces more dimensions for informal labour control.

The caste and class composition of the garment industry saw a rather restructuring in the export-oriented garment clusters because with changing industrial trajectories, traditional caste and class compositions of traders and merchants, either completely diluted in some clusters, or took newer forms in others. However, for both the processes, again mobility has a major role to play because it led to the diversity in the socio-economic profile of traders as well as workers. The initial caste and class composition of trading communities was segmented around Marwaris, Jains, Khatri, Punjabis, Aroras, Gujaratis and Sindhis in most of the major export

clusters, while in terms of the workforce, Delhi for instance, in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly composed of darzis, a traditional tailoring caste in North India (Mezzadri, 2017). However, the increase in fragmentation and outsourcing activities in the industrial clusters resulted in the entry of a vast pool of migrant labour and trading communities, which in a way washed away the initial caste and class composition. For some clusters, the expansion in the local economic opportunities led to the loosening of the caste nexus, for instance, in Jaipur, the hand-block printing technique³⁹ traditionally belonged to the Chhipa community who migrated from Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh and settled in areas around Jaipur (Mezzadri, 2009). There were instances of getting the daughters married within the same Chhipa castes so as to protect the traditional technique from moving out of the community, but with the rise in exports, the migration patterns in the region led to the subsequent ‘re-organisation of the artisanal production process and proletarianization of the printing community’ (Mezzadri, 2009). As a result of the downward social mobility, many members of the community transformed from being owners to being wage labourers and this transformation was also because many casual migrant labourers learned the printing craft, hence diluting the caste and class nexus on which the craft was based. A similar decomposition of the dominant caste in craft can be seen in Arni (Tamil Nadu), a silk weaving cluster, wherein because of industrial developments only a small part of the weavers come from the traditional weaving castes, while a majority of them belong to other castes and sectors of the economy like agriculture (Roman, 2008 as cited in Mezzadri, 2009).

In terms of religious identities of workers, Hindus and Muslims dominate as a religious community in garment activities, while the presence of other religions is considerably

³⁹ Through this technique, designs carved on blocks of wood are printed on fabrics with natural pigments (Mezzadri, 2009).

negligible. However, the social divides based on caste, class and religion continue to thrive as labour segmenting agents in some clusters, like in West Bengal, Muslim communities are still exclusively involved in woven garment production, while other Bengalis (mostly Hindus) are involved in hosiery production (Mezzadri, 2009). In Bareilly too, which is a traditional embellishment cluster, Muslim communities continue to be the dominating community of the traditional embroidery craft or the adda work (especially the zari work) and within these Muslim communities' lower-caste Muslims, such as Ansaris, form the major portion of the workers in cottage and home-based units, while the upper caste Muslims, such as Khans are mostly the large contractors (Unni & Scaria, 2010). A similar dominance of Muslim communities is also seen in the Chikankari (a type of embroidery) cluster of Lucknow, wherein Muslims have traditionally been patrons of the embellishment activity and still continue to hold their strong place. The religious based distinctions are particularly more apparent in the northern clusters as compared to the southern clusters.

The persistence of the traditional caste dependency, along with the role of gender and mobility in the Tiruppur garment cluster, known for volume-based t-shirt production, have also been defining informalised employment relationships in the industry. Tiruppur knitwear garment cluster traces its' origins to its' agrarian roots and that is why shows a strong hold of the peasant caste, Gounders⁴⁰, who themselves were once industrial workers in knitwear production along with Chettiars, a traditional trading class (Chari, 2000). 'Gounder toil' soon transformed the industry into a success with the help of drawing strategies from its' agrarian past and also reinstating the legacy of a 'fraternal capital', which involved the strong kin and community bonds between small owners, who at large interconnected with each other to strengthen their position in the wider industrial arrangement (Chari, 2004). By the 1970s, South India Hosiery

⁴⁰ Gounders are a combination of Vellalas community, a peasant supra-caste of South India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and inhabitants of Kongunad (Coimbatore and Salem districts) (Chari, 2000).

Manufacturers Association (SIHMA) became a strong hold of Gounders at the domestic level and by 1980s, Gounders also dominated the direct exporters association through Tiruppur Exporters Association (TEA) (Chari, 2000). The strong hold of Gounders in the industry, has also strengthened the traditional caste dependency relationships between the Gounders and Dalits. A comparative study of two villages in Tiruppur, that is, Allapuram and Malyapalyam by Carswell and De Neve (2014) reveals that with neo-liberalisation and the subsequent industrial development of the region, caste-relations between the dominant Gounders and the Dalits have reshaped themselves amidst the new economic opportunities. Both the villages show distinct ways of caste relations as a result of the development of the Tiruppur garment cluster especially since the 1990s. Many Dalits from the Allapuram village migrated to the garment factories near and far in search of better work or finding an alternative to agricultural work, which in a way loosened their economic dependency on the Gounder landlords, while in Malyapalyam, industrialisation took place in the village itself, so naturally Gounders owned many of the manufacturing units and employed the Dalits, which again in a way reproduced ways of local caste dependence, on one hand and unfree labour relations with the Gounders, on the other (Carswell & De Neve, 2014). The Caste-based segregation of work continue even within the industries wherein dirtier and low paying jobs, for instance, dyeing, ironing and knitting are assigned to low-caste communities particularly Dalits while in sections where activities like cutting, sewing, checking and packing takes place, workers from different castes, class and religious groups are employed (Carswell & De Neve, 2013; De Neve, 2016). Along with Caste-based labour control, the strategies of labour control adopted by exporters and manufacturers in Tiruppur expanded to rely heavily on the increased entry of migrants and women in the industry, especially to avoid risks of unionisation, on one hand, and to cater to the needs of surplus labour, on the other (Chari, 2004). The cluster has also shown instances of upward mobility of women workers, as initially they were engaged in low-skilled and ‘typical

female activities' like packing and checking, while in the 1990s, stitching units started employing more female workers, in fact most of these units today are composed of women as the majority of workers, contributing to the process of feminization of the workforce in the Tiruppur garment cluster (Mezzadri, 2009). Traditional patriarchal relations make it easy for the supervisors who are mostly males to control and supervise the female workers. However, mobility too intersects the process of feminisation, as many of these women workers are migrants, which in a way has declined the need for contract labour in the industry. The case of the Sumangali Scheme as mentioned above, has also contributed to the exploitation of female labour across social and structural lines of differentiation.

Along with Tiruppur, other southern garment clusters like Bangalore and Chennai effectively portray the image of a feminised garment workforce, when compared to their northern counterparts (RoyChowdhury, 2005). The gendered differences are exploited not just in terms of employment opportunities for women, but also through the type of activity women are expected to engage in that is typically low-skilled and low paying jobs; the wage differentials between men and women; physical and verbal harassment at workplace and a relatively minimal recognition of their work when compared to men's work. The constant persistence of the feminisation of labour in the southern clusters and its' parallel absence in the factory realms of northern clusters has been a major contributing agent to the process of informalisation of labour, the patterns and reasons of which are traced in the next chapter.

The social structures of kinship, gender and caste also play a crucial role in regulating the informal process of silk weaving in the Sualkuchi silk cluster of Assam, also known as the 'Manchester of Assam'. Historically, Silk weaving in the region has been a patronisation of the Pala and later Ahom dynasty which shifted the craft to the twenty-six weaving families of Tantikuchi, West Bengal, who migrated to Sualkuchi (PIB, 2017). The generations of these weaving families in order to protect the craft continue to act as regulating forces with respect

to the type and scope of production, ownership, labour and market relations in terms of the changing trade dynamics and the increasing market demand of the cluster (Das & Mishra, 2021).

Much like other social identities, age too apart from being biological, is a social and cultural construct (Bowen, 2020). A worker is either excluded or included from work/activities based on his/her age. The social identities of being young and old relates to their experience and more the experience, better the skills and hence even better the wages (Unni & Scaria, 2010). In the garment clusters, younger workers are recruited more because of the physically demanding nature of work which requires long hours of working on machines, and other activities of garment making in uncomfortable environments having poor lighting, foul smell of dyeing and bleaching colours, and other occupational and health hazards, which the young are expected to adjust to faster than their elder counterparts. In many factories young women are generally excluded because they demand separate toilet facilities amongst other gender specific facilities at the workplace. Also, the migration patterns have generally drawn young workers to the garment clusters and hence it makes it easier for the contractors to recruit and exploit the workers who are relatively younger and are in desperate need of work especially in new places. Age has also been exploited in garment clusters to recruit child labour for activities that do not require any specific skills. For instance, in Tiruppur child workers are engaged in activities like packing and labelling; the sports good industry in Jalandhar too employs a significant number of child labour (Mezzadri, 2009). Children and elderly people are also disguisedly employed in home-based units, where the family works as a unit to help the actually recruited family member.

Apart from mobility, Space is another local factor, which shapes labour accumulation and regulation through geographies of workspaces and the people residing there. It is an important node of the entire supply chain, that 'discriminates labour market outcomes such as earnings,

type of products and modes of payment' (Unni & Scaria, 2010). Harris-White (2003), while acknowledging the importance of space have also described it as one of the crucial social structures, which has shaped the local clustering patterns in India based on 'quiddity of commodities' (that is clusters specifically characteristic of a particular type of commodity) on one hand and on the other, it has also facilitated the simultaneous informal regulation of labour within them. The rearrangement of clusters on the lines of space has been largely aligned along factory and non-factory realms of production, which also expands to rural and urban spaces. The expansion of the spaces further tightens the control on labour as rural areas offer comparatively cheap, unorganised and yet a skilled workforce. The embellishment clusters in India are centred around the dynamics of space accumulation, which are neatly segmented into rural and urban embellishment areas of work. For instance, the complex and unorganised embellishment industry in Bareilly is highly segregated into rural and urban areas of work, wherein urban areas, being the major centres of production activities, mainly assembly line production, are home to big contractors and wholesale traders who subcontract ancillary activities to hired and home-based workers in the rural or peripheral areas (Unni & Scaria, 2010). Spatial segregation of the garment workers can also be observed in the southern clusters like Tiruppur, wherein along with the urban garment industry, as seen earlier, rural textile industry has also flourished with Gounders setting up small powerloom units in villages west of Tiruppur which employ both the local workers from the village who are mostly Dalits as well as the long-distance migrants (Carswell & De Neve, 2013).

Space as an accumulative and segregating factor, for both work and labour, is also apparent in Delhi where ancillary activities like washing, dyeing, printing, and embroidery take place in the non-factory realms of production. Embroidery, a highly labour-intensive activity forms the most crucial value-adding part of the ladieswear garments and apparels. However, it is also further layered in a complex way to include both the job-workers (Subcontractors) as well as

intricate networks of specialised agents, called vendors, which may or may not be based in Delhi and therefore work through out-contracting arrangements (Mezzadri, 2009). Hand-embroidery like thread work or Moti-work or beading⁴¹ takes place in artisanal mahallas as well as in homes of workers and it also spreads to the rural areas bordering Delhi, especially in the NCR as Adda-work⁴². Addas have traditionally been in use by Muslim communities of North India, but now the caste and religious composition of addas has diversified (Mezzadri, 2009). Cost cutting strategies of vendors in Delhi NCR involve the decentralization of adda-work through local subcontractors to addas in rural Bareilly, which show a diversity and neatness in intricate work (Unni & Scaria, 2010).

The penetration of Informalisation in regular work has also been attributed to the decline in average real wages of regular/salaried workers as a whole, across rural and urban areas, and even amongst male and female workers (Srivastava, 2012). The garment clusters in India have a complex and varied forms of wage structure, which differ across states, regions, clusters and even within the same industry based on the type of work, skills, modes of wage payment, gender, age and across rural and urban clusters of work. For instance, the differentials in the urban and rural areas continue through the payment system as the hired workers in urban areas are paid according to the naphiri system (consisting of eight to twelve hours of work) whereas the workers in rural areas do not work as per the naphiri system instead they work on hourly basis receiving as low as Rs.10 per hour (Unni & Scaria, 2010). The major reason behind such diversity in wages across the states and clusters is due to the non-uniform nature of the Minimum Wages Act of 1948⁴³, which provides for the central and state governments to set their own minimum wages parameters (ILO, 2017). However, the new codes on Wages passed

⁴¹ Stitching of beads or motis (hindi word) on fabrics, especially done on ladieswear.

⁴² Hand embroidery involving very intricate sequence work on the fabrics, especially on ladieswear, which is generally performed on addas.

⁴³ Act provides for paying minimum wages (enough to fulfil the subsistence needs) to the skilled and unskilled workforce

by the Central government in 2019, have established universalization of wages across the country by accumulating the four wages- Payment of Wages Act, Minimum Wages Act, Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and the Equal Remuneration Act. According to these codes, a floor wage is fixed for all the organized and unorganized workers by the center based on the minimum living standards of workers working in different geographical contexts of the country and the state governments can in no way fix the minimum wages lower than the determined floor wage (Vanamali, 2021). The codes also provide for the equal remuneration between male and female workers for the same amount and type of work they do. The applicability of these codes is yet to be seen, but the predecessors of these codes have largely been exploited in the factory and non-factory realms of garment making. According to Cowgill and Huynh (2016), the minimum wages of Indian garment workers mainly amongst the unskilled workforce, show the highest non-compliance rate with the existing minimum wages norms, wherein about 50.7% of the workers' wages fail to comply with the prevalent minimum wages norms and also within them, the rates are much higher amongst the female garment workers' wages, which show a 74% non-compliance rate. Field findings from the clusters revealed that non-compliance rate was found to be higher for the NCR region, especially for all the workers in Delhi; while it was considerably less in the Tirupur cluster (Ganguly, 2013). Further, Ganguly (2013) while drawing evidences from a primary survey conducted by Society of Labour Development in the three garment clusters- Gurgaon, Tirupur and Bengaluru, revealed that all these clusters had varied average wages across all types of workers, wherein, Tirupur had the highest prevailing wages, while Bengaluru had the lowest, for instance a skilled worker like a tailor would earn on an average Rs. 7,310 per month in Tirupur, while in Bengaluru, he/she would earn on an average Rs. 5,915 per month. However, it is not just the non-uniform nature of the wages act, but rather the non-compliance with the prevalent minimum wages is mainly due to the absence of proper monitoring and regulating mechanisms for the workplaces and

employers alike; while the increasing use of informal contracting arrangements between the intermediaries and workers has also led to a constant downward push in the minimum wages for the workers across all the clusters further contributing towards the strategic social regulation of labour. These issues need a strong intervention even with the coming in of the new labour codes on wages.

Further, the expansion of labour control strategies from the productive to reproductive realms can be observed through the local dormitory regimes, which are constitutive of the accommodation facilities either in slums, in industrial hostels or even inside the factories. Since the majority of the workforce is migrant in nature, so they are mostly given staying facilities by the contractors and employers. The local dormitory regime enhances the control even in the reproductive realms, wherein the movement of labour is strictly monitored.

Thus, the strategies of social regulation of labour form the core of the 'local labour control regime' consisting of actors and institutions which fall outside the formal regulatory sphere and amongst them contractors are the main mediating agents between the global capital and the local labour (De Neve, 2014b). The use of social identities and local factors to segment the workforce at the cluster level is one of the crucial strategies that withholds and strengthens the control on labour. Almost all the garment clusters in India showcase the prominence of caste, class, age, religion, mobility, gender and space, in some form or the other, however, amongst them, the role of gender as a fragmenting, controlling and informalizing factor provides insights into the various ways in which it continues to be exploited in multiple forms and aspects across clusters of the north and south. These have facilitated in the formation of multiple classes of labour in both the northern and southern clusters- the footloose proletariat because of the migrant nature of the workforce; the free and unfree classes of labour based on caste, gender and age; and the male footloose proletariat in the north while the female footloose proletariat in the southern clusters based on the inclusion and exclusion of female migrant workers. The

next chapter tries to further take the discussion forward in understanding the different dynamics of informalization facilitated especially by feminization of the workforce at the cluster level and analyse how the north-south divide of the garment industry function as per the gendered dimensions of work.

CONCLUSION

The discussions in the chapter centred around understanding the different local labour control strategies that have facilitated informalisation of labour at the cluster level. These strategies involve the use and exploitation of the vast pool of unorganised and flexible workforce dividing them across social lines of accumulation.

The chapter begins around in comprehensively tracing the changing dynamics of the global garment industry amidst the advent of the global production systems and supply chains, multiple trade regimes and the phase out of MFA and how the garment industry in India showcased varieties of integration processes to adjust in such an arrangement and at the same time coping up with its' changing domestic policies and laws. The integration of Indian garment industry into the GGCCs led to its' industrial restructuring and relocation, as a result of which some clusters adopted to consolidate their domestic and export production into factory realms (e.g., Bangalore) and some decentralised their production across factory and non-factory realms (e.g., Delhi). The complex industrial trajectories were also influenced by the historical and cultural roots of the regions/states, which further shaped the product specialisation for each of the export-oriented clusters in India. Export oriented production and product specialisation of clusters are in turn further shaped by the increasing labour demands especially of flexible and casual nature. The need for a vast reservoir of cheap and flexible labour creates a parallel need for mediating actors or institutions to govern this labour which is

subsumed within the garment supply chains located far and near because of the subcontracting and outsourcing of production activities. Hence, the mediation between the vertical and horizontal governance model of the supply chains lies at the centre of the local labour control regime, consisting of local suppliers, contractors and subcontractors. The local labour control regime facilitates the informalisation of labour by social regulation and accumulation strategies that on one hand, involve the informalising workforce and on the other hand, the interplay of social and local factors like caste, class, religion, gender, age, space and mobility that further strengthens informalisation at the ground level. The interplay of these factors cuts the labour costs and at the same time they keep the workforce divided. Apart from the increase in the informal workers in both formal and informal realms, the dynamics of informalisation of labour also find their place in the permanent or regular workforce, which despite being permanent showcases similarities with the casual workforce in terms of inability to participate in trade union activities and in availing the social security benefits. Along with their informal character, the workers are further fragmented and controlled through their social identities and local factors, for instance, Gounders continue to be the dominant caste and class in knitwear production in Tiruppur, while Dalits are still employed in low skilled and low paying jobs; Mobility or migration pattern has reshaped the socio-economic composition of garment workers in almost all the clusters; segregation of work and payment of wages based on gender and age is the dominant labour controlling factor; spatial fragmentation of work into factory and non-factory realms and further into rural and urban realms of production activities has also redefined the contours of informalising work and labour in clusters like Tiruppur, Ludhiana, Jaipur and Delhi. However, various field surveys and empirical data have revealed that amongst all the factors, the role of gender or rather feminisation of the workforce has been an important agent for facilitating informalisation of labour in diverse ways in the northern and southern garment clusters. The north has female workers mostly employed in home-based units, while

the south showcase evidences of majority of women as the permanent workforce in factories, both showcasing different patterns of informalisation and feminisation of the workforce. Therefore, the discussions in the next chapter deals with in answering questions as to why such differences persist around the gendered patterns of labour control which further defines the contours of informalisation that unfold differently in the north and south garment export clusters of India.

CHAPTER IV

GENDERED GARMENT PRODUCTION IN INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN EXPORT-ORIENTED CLUSTERS

The previous chapter centered around in understanding the multiplicity of social and local factors on which the local labour control regime makes its deep presence in the export-oriented garment clusters of India. It revealed that the garment clusters of India are experiencing increasing rates of informalization of labour through a constant demand for an informal and informalising workforce which is regulated and controlled through social structures of accumulation, including caste, class, age, gender, religion, migration patterns and the rural and urban divide. However, amongst these social and local factors exploited in controlling labour, the case of gender adds significant facets to understand the different dynamics of informalization of labour, especially through its' diverse ways of incorporating and excluding women across the northern and southern clusters.

Garment production has always had a gendered dimension attached to it, adding significantly to a parallel process of feminization of the workforce along with informalization. The studies referred to in the previous chapter revealed that while in the northern clusters, women are generally incorporated in non-factory realms of production as an irregular and casual workforce, however, in the southern clusters majority of the women are employed as permanent workers, who are in effect informal in nature. This trend also stands true even for clusters engaged in the similar product specializations, contrary to the assumption that same type of product specialization in different clusters would generally involve the same type of functioning and organizing of activities. For instance, Ludhiana and Tiruppur, both specializing in knitwear production, however, but both showcase distinct ways of the quantity and quality of work that is given to women in various types of activities of garment manufacturing. The

context-specific instances of how labour and work is segmented along the lines of gender further contribute towards the gendered discourses that in turn surround the process of informalization of labour. Based on these aspects, the chapter tries to reflect upon the following important questions: What are the gendered employment patterns operating between the northern and southern garment clusters? Why do the northern and southern garment clusters showcase variations in the employment patterns for women? Why are women workers preferred as permanent factory workers in the south and as casual home-based workers in the north? And, if women are constitutive of the permanent workforce in the southern clusters, then, how is that associated with the process of informalisation of labour? These questions will draw narratives from political economy and feminist traditions which will further take the discussions forward in understanding the heterogeneity around the process of informalization of labour in the garment clusters of India. The chapter tries to answer these questions by comprehensively comparing and analyzing these aspects of informalization, feminization and de-feminization of the workforce amongst the clusters of north- Delhi NCR, Ludhiana, Bareilly, Lucknow and the clusters of south-Tiruppur, Bangalore and Chennai.

For this, the chapter is structured around in first developing a comprehensive framework to understand the 'feminine' nature attached to certain activities of garment making and then it tries to reflect upon how gender is used as a powerful tool by the local capitalists for segmenting, subjugating and controlling the women workforce, which would further reveal aspects of as to why women prefer garment work and why the local capitalists prefer women workers in certain segments of the supply chains and not in others and how amidst all this, the patriarchal relations expand from the social realms to the economic realms; and finally, how all these factors unfold to showcase a distinctive pattern of informalization that is de facto at work in the Indian garment Industry.

FEMINIZATION AND GENDERED DISCOURSES OF WORK: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The present configuration of the global garment industry presents an image of it as one of the most female dominated industries of the world, with China employing 70% of female garment workers; in Bangladesh the share is 85%; while in Cambodia it is as high as 90% (Rock, 2001). Though historically, the presence of women in garment manufacturing was rather invisible and unrecognized because the kind of work women did was either low-skilled or they were marginally involved in providing supplementary help to their male counterparts. On the other hand, tailoring, a skilled craft, was performed by master tailors, who were generally males. These employment patterns were and infact still continue to be shaped by social and cultural practices which define the gendered discourses of work as ‘ideas and practices about men and women providing distinct forms of labor’ (Caraway, 2005), designating men as breadwinners and women as homemakers. However, with mechanization in the garment industry, especially through the invention of sewing machine and band knife in the 1850s, the demand for ready-made garments increased which made way for simpler less skilled jobs that could be performed by cheaper labour that is provided by women and girls (Kabeer & Mahmud, 2004). Till the early decades of the twentieth century, only young single women could avail these jobs as married women were exempted as part of the deliberate attempts by male dominated trade unions of Britain, who were seeking to protect the interests of the skilled master tailors (Kabeer & Mahmud, 2004). Simultaneously in colonial Bombay too, conflicts arose as women came to occupy almost 20% of the labourforce in the textile industry (Lanzillo & Kumar, 2021a). These conflicts around the world were part of the desperate attempts by men to retain their position in the garment factories, who felt threatened by women even though women occupied very low-paying and low-skilled jobs. The attempts also involved the reinforcement of the patriarchal ideology of domesticity according to which ‘the figure of the working woman was

marked as the figure of the mother who produced new generations of healthy workers' (Lanzillo & Kumar, 2021a). However, this ideology still continues to hinder the participation of women in economic realms.

With the global transformations defined by neo-liberal globalization and post-fordist regime of the late 1970s, the shift in production activities from the global north to the global south combined with the structural adjustment policies of developing countries focusing on export-oriented industrialization, the garment industry witnessed a significant reconfiguration in the gendered discourses of work as more women entered the economic spaces. The global production systems led to a subsequential increase in informal and informalizing employment patterns, wherein the need to hire flexible, cheap and temporary workforce arose, which was subsequently fulfilled by women workers. Also, many jobs traditionally held by men especially in the labour-intensive industries like manufacturing, saw a restructuring or transformation to employ women workers, hence leading to the process called feminization, characterized by a relative growth in the female labour force participation rates (Standing, 1989). Hence, 'feminization involves either a gendered redefinition of work—jobs that men previously claimed are redefined as women's work—or the assignment of new jobs to women rather than to men' (Caraway, 2005). EOI combined with patriarchy, which inherently keeps low wages for women have been strong driving factors for facilitating the feminization process (Caraway, 2005). The stagnant and falling household incomes due to poor performance of economies also pushed women to enter the labour market (Unni, 2001). Moreover, with global production systems and supply chains, subcontracting and ancillary activities mostly concentrated in home-based units which in turn increased work opportunities for women in their own homes, leading to informalization and feminization in working patterns. However, the increasing employment opportunities created for women as a direct outcome of globalization were

critiqued by early feminists to be based on “comparative advantage of women’s disadvantage” (Arzipe & Aranda, 1981).

Feminization did not blur or completely erase the gendered divisions of labour, rather they got restructured in different ways. Caraway (2005) argues that the preference of female labour in manufacturing industries was not just the result of the need to hire cheap labour rather gendered discourses of work in a way influence the feminization process. Women are employed in the garment industry because of certain positive traits that they are expected to possess, that is their docile nature, their inherent submissive quality to accept lower wages, to be less indulgent in trade union activities and their undying willingness to take up tedious, repetitive and monotonous work despite the unequal status (both economically and socially) given to their labour power over the male labour power. These gendered attributes make it easier for the employers to control and subjugate the labourforce and at the same time enhance productivity. For instance, if the managers find that the male workers are not doing the best quality of work, then they might prefer hiring female workers for their work efficient nature; or if the male workers are demanding more wages, then the employers might feel that the same work can be done through female workers at lower wages and hence employ them. Therefore, it is the combination of the two dominant views, consolidating political economy approach and feminist traditions, that is, ‘the economics of cheap labour and the gendered discourses of work’ that have shaped the feminized employment patterns in the garment industry, justifying labour exploitation and gender inequality in the workplaces (Hossain et al., 2013).

The labour exploitation and inequality in the form of gendered work segregation and unequal wage differentials, further expands in dimensions which also include the failure of gendered labour market to recognize the importance of social reproductive realms and the higher level of informality associated with female labour (Elson, 1999). The gendered labour exploitation and inequality in the productive realms is a continuum of gendered labour exploitation in the

social reproductive realms. Women's exploitation in the paid productive sphere cannot be understood in isolation from the realm of social reproduction- defined by 'the activities associated with the maintenance and reproduction of peoples' lives on a daily and intergenerational basis', which include responsibilities of childbearing, care work and domestic labour like cooking, cleaning and washing (LeBaron & Gore, 2020). Hence, in the words of Mezzadri et al (2021), "social reproduction becomes the bridge between producing and reproducing, labouring and working, capitalism and life". It is because of these responsibilities that employers associate qualities like patience, efficiency, docility, nimble fingers, and quiet and tolerant nature that further shapes women's employment opportunities, contractual relations and conditions of work in the garment industry that are largely informal in nature. And for women engaged in home-based work, the devaluation of both reproductive and productive domains multiplies in different forms and degrees to reveal patterns of exploitative relationships between patriarchy and global capitalist accumulation. These patterns were first brought to the forefront by Maria Mies' (1982) seminal study of the women home-based Lace Makers of Narsapur, Andhra Pradesh, India, wherein "she explores the features of 'housewifisation'-the process whereby the devaluation of women's reproductive labour inside the household sets the basis for their disadvantage in paid employment outside it" (Mezzadri, 2020). Housewifisation, on one hand being a double burden for women, in terms of responsibilities of breadwinning and breadmaking, on the other hand as Mezzadri (2020) argues it has also been 'a dynamic process of double-devaluation of women's social and economic contribution to capital'. These debates around housework unveil the logic of capitalist control over the processes of value creation by devaluing and exploiting the social reproductive domains.

The two-fold process of feminization and informalisation involve the increasing presence of female labour in the insecure and flexible working arrangements, characterized by no written

contracts, no job security, low wages and no social security and employment benefits along with exploitative and vulnerable conditions involving sexual and verbal harassment at workplace- which is either home or factory. A comparative study between informally employed males and females in developing countries has revealed that the percentage of women workers who are informally employed is substantially higher than the percentage of male workers (Bonnet et al., 2019; ILO, 2019). Part of the reason for the staggering female numbers in informal employment patterns is due to the fact that women are generally considered the ‘reserve labour force’, which makes it easy to hire and fire them as per the needs of the factory (Bruegel, 1979). The disposability attached with female labour is reflected majorly through two factors- Firstly, because of skills, it is often viewed that women possess lower skills in comparison to men, which makes the employers to easily get away with them and keep up with the more skilled male labour force which is hard to replace and gets the job done in required quality and time; secondly, because of mobility, married women are tended to move/migrate with their husbands, so the employers tends to fire them first instead of the immobile workforce as and when the opportunity arises (Bruegel, 1979). Therefore, gendered discourses do not always lead to the process of feminization in garment industries and instead may lead to de-feminisation with the introduction of capital-intensive machinery (Caraway, 2006). Moreover, the relationship between gender and globalisation involves a two-fold mechanism of either excluding women or including women based on the gendered identities of work, which in turn leads to masculinisation or feminisation respectively. Caraway (2006, p.41) while assessing the relationship between feminization and de-feminisation/masculinisation in the context of industrialization notes that “trends over time – feminization versus masculinisation – (are) best explained by the balance of employment between sectors. Since primary EOI (export-oriented industrialization) encourages employment growth in labor-intensive sectors relative to capital-intensive sectors, there is a strong relationship between EOI and feminization. However, as

EOI matures, masculinization ensues since employment usually expands more rapidly in capital-intensive sectors”. Factories with large machines do not generally recruit female workers, because the patriarchal mindset views women as physically incapable of handling big machines. Women are also not generally recruited because of the various benefits and facilities like menstrual leave, maternity benefits, separate toilet and hostel facilities that are required for them at workplace, which require an extra expenditure from the employers, so they altogether exclude hiring women.

Despite the gendered discrimination in terms of occupational segregation of work, wage disparities and abysmal conditions of work, women still prefer garment work over other alternatives if available. For instance, the development story of Bangladesh is proclaimed to be an outcome of female-led industrialisation, especially in the garment industry. By 1995, garment factories in Bangladesh expanded from four to 2,400 garment factories, wherein 70 per cent of the wage employment was captured by women (Bhattacharya, 1999 as cited in Carr & Chen, 2001). Over the years, the garment industry has grown tremendously in the country employing a huge section of the workforce, wherein the number of women employed exceeds the number of men. Numerous studies in the country’s garment industry have revealed that women prefer working in the garment factories because it offered them somewhat decent wages when compared to either agricultural work in the rural areas or working as domestic servants in urban areas (Kabeer & Mahmud, 2004). Moreover, earlier female migration in Bangladesh was associated with females accompanying male members, but recently an evident trend of women migrating to cities independently in search of work specifically in garment factories has been making way for the feminisation of the workforce in the country (Kabeer & Mahmud, 2005). Along with better wages, garment work has also been associated with offering security of work, a sense of dignity, financial independence and freedom to women especially from disadvantaged backgrounds when compared to other alternatives of work. However, these

positive attributes associated with garment work cannot hide away the sweatshop reality of the global garment factory which functions on labour exploitation and commodification.

FEMINIZATION AND GENDERED DISCOURSES OF WORK: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

When compared to other developing countries, overall, India is not experiencing such greater rates of feminization, however the number of female workers in the garment sector has been increasing considerably (Mezzadri, 2016a). As per 2011-2012 NSSO data, of the 45 million people employed in the Indian Textile and Apparel Industry, almost 59 per cent of them are men, while 41 per cent of them are women. From 1993-94 to 2011-12, the share of women in the sector increased from 33% to 41%, and their share in total manufacturing has increased to around 22%, while that of men has only been around 13% (NSSO, 2012). Part of the reason for inadequate representation of women in data and statistics has been that most of the women are employed in the informal, unorganized and home-based units of the garment Industry (Mukherjee & Narayanan, 2020). With the majority of these women working in informal realms of production, despite being highly productive, they remain invisible, undercounted, unskilled and underpaid. However, the invisibility, marginalization of women workers and the gendered discourses of work in today's RMG industry in India trace their roots to the colonial textile industry when women were engaged in activities like spinning, weaving, embroidery, block-printing and cotton ginning, but their labour still remained unseen.

Today, with EOI and global production systems, the spectrum of apparel and garment production sites is layered around clusters of SMEs, workshops and home-based units in both rural and urban spaces, however, historically, 'home' has been the dominant site of textile production in India, where the man of the house, usually a weaver, was incharge of the entire production activities and would supervise the women and young girls performing subsidiary

tasks in the production of yarn and cloth, while the male children of the house learned the craft by helping their fathers (Lanzillo & Kumar, 2021a). The gendered division of labour involved the women performing spinning, including supplementary activities like collecting, drying and cleaning the cotton cloth, while men usually carried out the weaving activities (Lanzillo & Kumar, 2021a). However, this still remains the reality of many of the traditional and cultural crafts, for instance, the block-printing technique in Jaipur, where only males of the house inherit the nuances of the crafting technique. With urbanization and industrial development, many of these weavers and along with other men from the villages migrated to cities in search of work in factories and textile mills especially during off season in agriculture. While many women remained confined to their native homes, contributing significantly towards the social reproduction of labour, some who migrated along with their husbands or male members of the house either worked in factories or engaged in home-based work, while some stayed at home. However, the patterns of incorporation and exclusion of women in certain layers and type of activities in garment production showcase the strategic use and exploitation of gender in distinct ways in the northern and southern garment clusters. As seen in the previous chapter that distinctive patterns of labour relations, based on gender and other social factors, are a result of cluster-specific product specialization and product cycles which in turn are shaped by multiple and highly differentiated regional industrial trajectories (Mezzadri, 2017, p.47). These patterns reveal that though overall India may not be experiencing feminization of the workforce in the garment Industry but equally evident is the fact that the degree of feminization varies across regions, clusters, nature of employment, type of activities and size of the factory. For instance, it has been observed in the previous chapter that southern clusters are said to be more feminized than the northern clusters. While in the north women are largely incorporated in non-factory realms of production that is through home-workisation of value-addition activities and generally excluded from factory realms, but in the south migrantisation has strategically led to

the process of feminization in factories. However, common to both the pathways of women workers' incorporation and exclusion is the process of informalization of women workers which is shaped by the gendered discourses of work involving women's constant struggle between the productive and reproductive realms. The chapter tries to analyze as to how the gendered discourses lead to the process of feminization and de-feminisation in the southern and northern clusters respectively as an interesting outcome of informalization which forms the essence of the forthcoming discussions. The assessment of gendered dynamics in northern and southern clusters is based on three main aspects, which include analyses of gendered wage differentials; gendered labour control and disciplining and of the social construction of female labour as easily disposable, replaceable or spendable (Mezzadri, 2016a).

FEMINIZATION THROUGH HOME-WORKISATION IN THE NORTHERN GARMENT CLUSTERS

The industrial fragmentation of both Ludhiana and Delhi NCR⁴⁴ is layered around factory and non-factory realms of production; while clusters like Bareilly and Lucknow are embellishment centers where garment activities are largely concentrated in home-based units which are connected across rural and urban spaces of work. The product patterns of the northern clusters favor the highly fragmented and complex industrial restructuring which involves a magnitude of value-generating and ancillary activities. In sharp contrast to the southern garment clusters, the clusters of the north represent marginalization of women workers in factory realms of production. Women constitute a mere 5% of the workforce in factories of Ludhiana, while their share ranges from 5-10% in the factories of Delhi (Mezzadri, 2009). At the same time, in home-based work the share of women is around 89%, while men in home-based activities are mostly

⁴⁴ Though NOIDA, Gurgaon and Okhla are now considered as separate clusters by AEPC; but the region also includes Faridabad (Mezzadri & Srivastava, 2015).

hired workers (working on hourly basis), contractors, subcontractors, wholesale traders and exporters (Unni & Scaria, 2009). Ludhiana's specialization in woolen knitwear and Delhi's in embroidered ladieswear production requires a high demand for labour especially during peak seasons, because of which a non-permanent workforce is preferred as a cost cutting as well as easy labour control strategy by suppliers and contractors. The surplus demand of the non-permanent labourforce is fulfilled by circular male migrants coming from neighboring states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana as well from some parts of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Orissa, which constitute around 80-90% of the workforce in these factories (Mezzadri, 2010; Srivastava, 2015). The gendered division of work in factories of Delhi range from males performing skilled activities like tailoring, cutting and ironing, while females are engaged in tedious tasks, which are considered completely unskilled, such as thread cutting, mending, packing and some may even be involved in semi-skilled jobs like checking (Mezzadri, 2009). There would be very few chances of female tailors in factory realms of production in the northern clusters as tailoring has historically been a male dominating skilled activity and it still continues to be dominated by males especially in Delhi NCR and Ludhiana. Women in major northern clusters- Delhi NCR, Ludhiana, Bareilly and Lucknow, are generally involved in home-based production, either working as part of family units or as individual piece-rate workers involved in embellishment activities and activities like thread-cutting, mending, knotting (home-based work in Ludhiana). In Ludhiana, Knitting has always been conceptualised as male activity, while the hosiery production too excludes women substantially (Mezzadri, 2017, p.69). Even classic female activities like checking are performed by males (Mezzadri, 2009).

The embellishment activities in Delhi also involve the gendered and spatial pattern of work segregation as machine-based and computerised embroidery is mostly performed in factories by male migrant workers, working on piece-rate systems, whereas hand-based embroidery

extends to rural hinterlands of NCR and Bareilly, wherein mostly the entire family is engaged and women perform around 60% of these activities because males are mostly engaged in agriculture (Mezzadri, 2009; Mezzadri & Srivastava, 2015). Thread-cutting and moti-work are considered the most unskilled activities and that is why performed by women in their homes. The intersection of gender and religious identities of women can also be observed in home-based work, for instance, Hindu women in NCR are mostly engaged in moti-work, while Muslim women, generally of low castes engage in adda work in rural and urban areas (Mezzadri, 2017).

Chikankari work of Lucknow is a classic example of how gender and religion combine to produce patterns of gender inequality and social labour control. Lucknow has been a hub of weaving activities dominated by male weavers but in late 19th century many weavers out-migrated, which allowed the entry of women in low-paid chikan embroidery work, becoming a source of livelihood for most of the women and children engaged in it (Lanzillo & Kumar, 2021a). Studies have also cited that the restriction of Muslim women performing chikankari in homes has also been due to their cultural practice of purdah system (seclusion from unrelated men, veiling) which compels them to work from homes or either get engaged in self-employment (Mazumdar, 2018; Chambers, 2020). However, for some women it is also a matter of choice because through home-based work women can simultaneously balance the adherence to purdah and at the same time fulfil their domestic responsibilities (Chambers, 2020).

Unni and Scaria (2009) in their study on embellishment activities in Bareilly reveal that gender is often used as a powerful tool of local labour governance mechanisms, wherein women are discriminated on the basis of the type of products women work upon which in turn decides the wage differentials and the modes of payment. Home-based women workers are the least paid workers of the entire value chain (Verite, 2010). This is because firstly of the low skilled work that they do and secondly, their work being of home-based nature inhibits their prospects of

earning high incomes. Home-based workers in embellishment units generally engage in export products like tops and accessories (bags, hairbands), which are considered to be less expensive and low-skilled, whereas domestic products like duppattas and salwar suits, which are expensive and require intricate embroidery are generally not outsourced to women home-based workers (Unni & Scaria, 2009). They are mostly paid on piece rate basis and when the pieces are not of the desired quality, they are not paid at all, for instance, a study found that if Rs.100 is the final price paid by the consumer then out of it, a zardozi⁴⁵ worker receives only Rs. 15 (Sudarshan and Sinha, 2011). Similarly in Bareilly, the wage differential gap between the average daily earnings of a hired worker as compared to women home-based worker is almost half, with hired worker (mostly males) receiving Rs. 90, whereas home-based worker receiving Rs. 45 as their daily wage earnings (Unni & Scaria, 2009). In case of chikankari work too, the home-based women workers receive as less than Rs.600 as their average monthly income, while that of men who are artisans like cutting masters, tailors, printers, washermen earn around Rs. 2500 on a monthly basis (Mazumdar, 2018).

Patriarchal norms governing women's mobility and the burden of domestic responsibilities reinforces the presence of women in home-based work, which further expands the horizons of labour control and subjugation from the productive to reproductive realms. Social restrictions on women's mobility in turn further restricts women in three ways- first, by constraining their wage-earning potential because of the inaccessibility to high paid factory work; secondly, inhibitions in forming social networks with contractors and workers who might provide them with better employment opportunities (Phillips et al., 2014); and third, restricted mobility makes women unaware of the labour market situation which keeps them in a powerless position to negotiate wages, conditions of work and access to rights with their contractors and employers and instead they remain completely dependent on their employers. The trends of increasing

⁴⁵ Zardosi is gold thread embroidery.

female participation as well as the gendered discourses of work that surround home-based work in the northern clusters point to a modality of informalisation characterised by ‘feminisation through home-workisation’. But the process also entails extreme exploitation and subjugation of women workers at the hands of contractors and subcontractors in forms of delayed wages, extreme hours of work, physical and verbal harassment, and inaccessibility to other employment benefits and rights because the hyphenated term ‘home-based’ fails to recognise home as an economic domain of women’s work.

However, again coming back to the issue of as to why women are under-represented in factories is crucial to understand the process of de-feminisation or rather masculinisation of the workforce in the factories of northern clusters. The demands of the seasonal nature of production as well as the cost minimisation strategies are put on the shoulders of the reserve pool of footloose migratory labour. The migration patterns have almost erased the caste-class based composition of the traditional tailoring craft (darzis), which in turn has created a surplus of skilled labour mostly males (Mezzadri, 2009). So, naturally skilled male migrant workers are preferred over unskilled female migrant workers. Another crucial factor for recruiting male migrants over females is the housing patterns and accommodation facilities provided by the suppliers and contractors. A study on the migrant workers of Gurgaon, Delhi and NOIDA done by Mezzadri and Srivastava (2015) revealed that from the sample surveyed, around 56.4% of garment workers were accompanied by a family member, mostly males, and out of these only 22.5% of them migrated with their wives. They stay in or near the clusters for less than a year and then migrate back to their villages during harvest and holiday season (Mezzadri, 2017, p.55). Their time-limited stay as well as the expenditure associated with living in big cities discourages the workers to bring along their families and instead live in the cost-free dormitories and hostel facilities provided by the employers. Therefore, it can be stated that the workers’ livelihood in the northern clusters is somewhat ‘female-unfriendly’ (Mezzadri, 2009)

since the majority of the workers are male migrants, often from same villages, castes or communities so they tend to work and live together, while for migrant women, contractors need to provide separate accommodative facilities. "This type of work arrangement, where the boundaries between work (as part of the public realm) and leisure (the private space) are blurred, quite successfully excludes women workers' participation in employment" (Singh et al., 2004, p. 98 as cited in Mezzadri, 2009). The deliberate exclusion of women from entering the factories extends to male members performing the so-called female tasks of cooking, washing, cleaning and further even some factory based low skilled activities like thread-cutting are generally subcontracted to women in their homes, which further excludes women from working in the factory premises (Mezzadri, 2009).

However, of late a trend of partial process of feminisation which involves recruiting women workers as frontline shop-floor workers in tailoring and other top segments of garment manufacturing has become evident especially in NCR (Mezzadri, 2017, pp.55-56). The latest preference for female workers has been attributed to the disregard for flexibility as more and more products are becoming less seasonal because of the changing international tastes and diversifying market demands are changing the patterns of product specialisations (Mezzadri, 2017, p.56). However, the process of feminisation just triggered in the northern clusters has a long journey to match up to the high levels of feminisation that has made a strong place in the southern clusters, which has strategically pooled the female migrant labourforce inside the factory realms of production.

FEMINISATION THROUGH MIGRANTISATION IN THE SOUTHERN GARMENT CLUSTERS

Bangalore, Chennai and Tiruppur are the major export clusters of the garment industry in the south of India. The product specialization of all three clusters is quite distinct from the northern

clusters as they do not engage in any kind of craft- based embellishment work but rather manufacture standard quality garments like jeans, t-shirts, shirts, trousers and jackets in high volumes inside the factories. Therefore, consolidation of production space around factories, whose size is comparatively larger than the northern garment clusters, is a result of low levels of subcontracting arrangements, wherein the only value-adding activity involved is fabric production (Mezzadri, 2017, p.82). While in the 1980s and 1990s garment production activities in Chennai and Bangalore were organized around group systems in non-factory realms and make-and-through techniques in factory realms, however, by the early-2000s, assembly-line production came to dominate the export-oriented factory space (Kalpagam, 1994; Mezzadri, 2009). The factories increased in size as a result of the New Textile Policy of 2000; the increasing investments of the domestic textile players into the local readymade garment business and also by the outsourcing strategies of international and national brands (Mezzadri, 2017, p.84). The presence of non-factory realms is largely negligible in Bangalore and Chennai because of the lack of subcontracting activities, as mostly all production takes place inside the factories, while only activities like printing and washing are done by specialized operators and other value adding activities like embroidery is mainly computerized instead of hand-based (Mezzadri, 2017, pp.84-85). On the other hand, a somewhat similar pattern of fragmented production seen in northern clusters can also be observed in Tiruppur, specializing in t-shirts, knitwear and hosiery production, wherein the Gounder toil transformed the industry into a decentralized factory organized around rural and urban spaces of work (Chari, 2004). Activities like knitting, cutting, stitching, embroidery, packing take place in micro and small units and even in home- based units in rural hinterlands (Mezzadri, 2017, p.94).

However, common to all these southern clusters is the persistence of the strong waves of feminization and re-feminisation at the shop floor level which have become characteristic features of the southern garment industry. The entry of female workers in large scale was a

result of the shift of production activities to assembly line production in the context of changing product specialization and hence engaging in volume-based production which led the employers to recruit women as the best cost minimization strategy. The southern clusters strongly capitalize on the so-called feminine traits of women as well as on the patriarchal norms, which further enhance the dynamics of gendered discourses of work in the factories. The in-house production involves a combination of low-paid female workers, who are mostly migrants, hence strengthening the process of 'feminization through migrantisation'. While Tiruppur deploys both male and female migrants based on shared caste-solidarities, Chennai and Bangalore employ mostly female workers as permanent factory workers (Mezzadri, 2014a; Chari, 2004). The migrant workers hail from states of Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Assam, and West Bengal (Inter-state); as well as from other districts within Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The gendered division of work involve the adult male workers engaging in knitting and fabrication units, while the female workers are employed as helpers in these units and some women are also employed as machine attendants (Neetha, 2002). The highly skilled and permanent nature of jobs like cutting are mostly grabbed by the male workforce (Neetha, 2002). Combining all the clusters of South, the women can be said to be constitutive of around 80-90% of the total workforce in the factories leading to the process called feminization of the workforce (Mezzadri, 2009; RoyChowdhury, 2005).

Feminisation in the southern clusters traces its' origins to the 1980s (Kalpagam, 1994) and it deeply strengthened during the 2000s and from then to now it has only aggravated in scope and character. The shift towards the docile female factory worker as a crucial class of labour is an outcome of the strategies by employers to dispose of the active and aggressive male factory workers who would now and then organize into unions. At the same time, from the workers' point of view it is also "a desire for flexible work routines, autonomy on the shop floor, and

personal freedom and dignity are key factors that shape and simultaneously constrain the agency of garment workers” (De Neve, 2014a).

According to Arnold (2021) the process of feminisation of the workforce in the southern clusters went through two significant phases- first through the increasing employment opportunities for women in precarious positions inside the industry and second through the active recruitment of women and long-distance migrant workers from the 2000s for regular work in garment factories and spinning mills. The second phase of feminisation has been described by Arnold (2021) as ‘formalised system of labour recruitment that has brought workers into the labour force through increasingly national labour recruitment networks and factories’ provision of company hostels’. These have been facilitated by corresponding changes in the location of factories, recruitment systems and transforming employer-employee relationships characterised by increasing informality. The outcomes define the new labour regime of the southern clusters as characteristic of a ruralised, formalised recruitment of both young women and male, long-distance, migrant workers.

Contrary to other southern clusters, since the beginning of garment production Chennai has been employing female workers as piece-rate workers mostly in non-factory realms of production. While in Bangalore, garment production was mostly done on piece rate by male home-workers or darzis hailing from Maharashtra (Peer, 2018). After the 1990s, the production units consolidated the informal units of production in the formal ones, which also led one to assume that the employment patterns would also become formalised however which eventually did not happen (Mezzadri, 2009). On the contrary it only resulted in employing more female workers in informal employment relations. In Bangalore, it was only after a number of labour strikes in Gokuldas, one of the largest export centres of the region, that the factories started employing women workers especially after the 1980s on the perceived notion that women wouldn’t unionize (RoyChowdhury, 2005). The rising trade union activities in all the southern

clusters was the major reason behind the recruitment of female workers in garment production. The double shift, that is firstly, towards assembly line production and secondly, towards employing female workforce as response to growing unionisation, led to the de-skilling of the workforce, which in turn facilitated the feminisation process. Women's increasing integration in assembly line garment production resulted in the feminization of the local labour structures that was 'aimed at ensuring both labour cost minimization and labour discipline' (Mezzadri, 2017, p.87). In the case of Tiruppur too, the garment industry witnessed a dramatic shift during the 1980s and 1990s, one, with its' expansion of the industry and two, with the simultaneous increase in the number of women working in the informalised and feminised employments (Arnold, 2021). Here, the shift from domestic to export-oriented production led to a corresponding shift from 'fraternal hegemony' to 'gendered hegemony' (Mezzadri, 2009; Chari, 2004) which transformed the composition of the workforce from male dominant to a new gender regime consisting of women, migrants and Dalits in casual employments. As a result of expansion of subcontracting, the employers tended to reduce the size of the regular workforce and consequently by the end of 1990s, 80% of the workforce was employed on temporary or daily basis while only 10-15% of them were able to unionise, despite Tiruppur's prominent history of labour activism (Arnold, 2021). With informalisation of the workforce, women's employment also expanded from 7.5% to covering almost half of the workforce by 2000 (Neetha, 2002). These have been attributed to the integration of garment clusters into the GGCCs in the 1980s and 1990s which led to a substantial qualitative shift in the employment patterns and the labour control strategies, parallely facilitating feminisation and informalisation of workforce. Hence, there was growth in the number of women workers in the increasing unskilled and low paid jobs and rising employment insecurity as a result of subcontracting arrangements.

On one hand, the increasing entry of women workers is based on the patriarchal norms which consider women as the secondary labour who are low-skilled and docile, on the other hand, the skilled activities like tailoring which had been dominated by male workers got restructured to transform these workers into non-skilled or semi-skilled operators (Mezzadri, 2009). In response, the employers started recruiting the female workers as ‘permanently temporary’ workers as strategies of cost minimisation (Mezzadri, 2017, p.90). The class of labour defined as permanently temporary in characteristic is applicable to the workforce of both Bangalore and Chennai. In both Chennai and Bangalore, because of the standardised product cycles, most of the female workforce employed is said to be permanent in nature that is they receive monthly salaries and also receive basic legal benefits like Provident Fund and ESI (Employee State Insurance) benefits (Mezzadri, 2009). However, being permanent does not mean that they are formal, rather there are different dynamics of informality that come to interplay in these so-called permanent employment relations. These workers are employed for between three and a half and five years or to be precise for four years and eleven months (Mezzadri, 2009). This strategy is to do away with the gratuity benefits that these permanent workers are entitled to without actually flouting the laws. The gratuity bonus is the payment paid by the employer to the workers for the fifteen days of work in each year and is enforced only after the completion of five years in the same factory unit (Mezzadri, 2009). The workers too voluntarily agree to be a part of these type of strategies as they also sometimes leave the jobs due to household problems, marriage reasons or due to migration along with their husbands. Similarly, women can be compelled or lured to leave the jobs to have access to the PF which they may use as dowry in the future (Mezzadri, 2017, p.90).

The case of Tiruppur is described by Mezzadri (2017) as following a model of ‘selective feminization’. This is because the male dominated knitting segment of the cluster is still preserved for the male workforce while the garmenting segment has substantially transformed

to have allowed a systemic process of the feminization of the workforce (Mezzadri, 2017, p.96). Neetha (2002) while taking note of the Tiruppur garment cluster argues that the process of feminization of labour is more in segments that are highly labour intensive for instance in finishing units, cutting and stitching. Further, the involvement of women in these units is based on the ambiguous criteria and definition of skill that is, when the work is monotonous and dexterous, in short, unskilled, hence it becomes the source of employment for women (Neetha, 2002). The gendered division of work extends to even activities like dyeing and bleaching, where women are confined to drying and winch operations, while men perform skilled tasks of combing the required shades to bring out perfect colours (Neetha, 2002).

The process of feminization of labour in Chennai, Bangalore and Tiruppur has also gone through different qualitative phases which are marked by intra-gender differences (Mezzadri, 2017, p.89). So, women instead of being a homogeneous category are constitutive of different classes of labour mostly based on local factors like space and mobility and also on social factors like age, marital status and household relations. While initially the industries only employed married women but from the 1990s the trend of employing unmarried young women came to dominate the factory space (Mezzadri, 2017). This is because of the patriarchal notion that married women especially those having children carry the double burden of the productive and reproductive realms and hence expect better wages while unmarried young women who either live with their parents or stay in company hostels relatively work on cheaper wages.

The intra-gender differences accumulate the patriarchal norms that function in productive and reproductive realms of women's work. The process starts first with the choice and permission of the male members of the house that a woman is obligated to have so as to work. Most of the women enter the factories as a result of the decisions made on their behalf by the negotiations between their parents or husbands and the employers (Majumdar, 2021). However, for some women the decision to work in the factories is also based on financial reasons of earning a

supplementary income along with their husbands to support their families. Most women exercise their preferences and choices to take up certain type of job that would balance the productive and reproductive spheres and hence offer them on one hand, enough time flexibility to fulfil their domestic responsibilities and on the other hand, give them spatial flexibility in terms of social interactions with other working women. For instance, women especially married women's preference to work in small scale units of garment production like checking is based on spatial and time flexibilities while they would avoid working in large export houses because of the inflexible work regimes and the constant supervisory gaze that they'd be subjected to (De Neve, 2014a). On the other hand, unmarried women may opt to work in export houses for jobs like checkers, helpers and even as tailors and live in hostel or other accommodation facilities provided by employers and hence earn a regular income of around Rs.3500 every month (De Neve, 2014a). The choices of unmarried women preferring to work in large export units is because of the fact that they are released from the domestic responsibilities of their parents houses and at the same time their money earning capacity proves to be highly valuable and attractive for their marriage prospects in the future. However, the type of jobs available for women are not just rendered as per the choices and preferences of women, the gendered division of work also expands to the segmentation of work along the lines of age, which excludes and includes women from certain activities. For instance, in Tiruppur, female workers of the age group 15-25, of whom almost 80% of them are unmarried work as helpers to masters in cutting and stitching activities, while women above the age of 30 are involved in packing and folding (Neetha, 2002). Further, Neetha (2002) also notes that from the sample surveyed at Tiruppur, no female workers above 30 are employed in cutting and stitching and are instead demoted to activities like checking, which hinders the prospects of upward mobility for these workers and even for activities like checking female workers above 40 are not preferred due to the dexterity and the low speed of work because of age.

Women with children are often not recruited by factories because the employers need to provide childcare facilities at the workplaces which would incur extra costs in production.

In some factories even women without children also face constraints in availing jobs because their choices are curtailed by male control and at the same time, they are articulated through gendered norms of what is appropriate and respectable work for women. In some factories single women are employed through kin-based recruitment systems which are shaped by the gendered notions of respectability that prohibits women working in different factories and instead they are allowed to work in same factories as other male members of their families or people belonging to their same castes, neighbourhood or village are working. Here, women are controlled in two ways, firstly, they remain under the constant surveillance of the supervisors and secondly, they also remain under the watchful eye of their kin networks.

The new waves of feminisation have also been shaped on one hand, by the hostel facilities or the dormitory regime enforced by employers to recruit migrant women on the other hand, they also incorporate the ruralisation patterns of production as well as the workforce. Ruralisation in production has occurred in the form of relocation of factories from traditional centres to cheap rural locations, while ruralisation of labour has been through the employment of young women from poor villages and migrant workers both males and females from northern and eastern India (Arnold, 2021). The shift in production activities to rural areas lowers the production costs for the local capitalists and it also provides them with an opportunity to target the disadvantaged women who are in desperate need of work. Since most of these women belong to disadvantaged regions, castes and communities so that too in a way prohibits them to engage in union activities and for them getting a job and a monthly income is more than sufficient. The new labour recruitment regime has extensively been dominated by the ruralised feminisation targeting the unmarried young women from 14-20 years of age coming from poorer districts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala as well as women from the same regions (Arnold,

2021). However, Arnold (2021) argues that this ruralised feminisation is formalised in nature that is, it is inherently concentrated in the in-house operations of factories, organised through labour recruitment networks, lump-sum contracts and hostel accommodation facilities provided by the factories. One of the prominent examples of such an arrangement is the Sumangali System that has also been discussed in the previous chapter. Sumangali and hostel systems are company-controlled local dormitory regimes that target young unmarried migrant women in attempts to expand greater control on the workforce in both the productive and reproductive realms. The constant surveillance system of company hostels and sumangali systems use gendered ways to restrict the freedom of movement of women, which on one hand, also restricts the involvement of these women in trade union organisations and on the other hand, facilitates mandatory overtime in the factories. These accommodation facilities in a way provide relief to the concerns of families of unmarried young women who are sent away from homes in unknown places of work, however in reality what they entail is a new feminised form of labour precarity enabled by the control and forced overtime. Women are rarely permitted to leave the hostel premises maybe only once a week. Almost half of the Sumangali workers are employed through labour agents which in turn give these feminised recruitment systems an institutional form (Arnold, 2021). Under the sumangali system, women enter as lower waged apprentices which is a legal category and this apprenticeship period extends from one to five years. The precariousness entrenched in the sumangali system is built upon the wider gendered household structures shaped by the ill-conceived societal norms on marriage and dowry. Sumangali System, where sumangali means a happily married women, functions upon the so-called formal contractual relations between the contractors and the parents of women wherein promises to offer a lumpsum amount of money at the end of the apprenticeship period are made. Instead of giving monthly salaries, these women are tied to years long contracts in lieu of the notion that the lumpsum money can be used in the future to contribute towards their dowry

which in a way attracts the families of these women. These practices facilitate the abuse of the contracts as some employers refuse to pay the amount once the contracts are over while still others fire the workers months before the completion of the contracts (Arnold, 2021). These type of hostel systems further facilitate new patterns of bonded labour based on combinations of patriarchy and poverty (Lerche, 1999).

The processes of feminization witnessed in the southern clusters differ greatly from the northern clusters not just in terms of the number of women employed but also in terms of the qualitative composition of the workforce. However, the common reality of the north-south divide of garment manufacturing reveals a highly controlled local sweatshop regime that functions inevitably on the gendered division of work. These aspects where on hand, facilitate in enhancing the process of informalization of labour, on the other hand, they widen the horizons of the classes of labour to include the multiple categories of labour based on intra-gender differences and local factors. The following section tries to compare and differentiate the process of feminization that is incorporated in the northern and southern clusters in distinct ways.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FEMINISATION PATTERNS IN THE NORTH-SOUTH GARMENT CLUSTERS

The patterns of the feminisation process showcase wide variations across the northern and southern garment clusters. The diversity in women's incorporation in garment manufacturing activities are strongly shaped by the local and social factors- space, mobility, religion, age and marital status. These factors where on one hand, facilitate informalisation of labour as discussed in the previous chapter, on the other hand, they correspondingly generate intra-

gender differences that further enhances the process of feminisation of the workforce in the factory realms of southern clusters and in the non-factory realms of northern clusters.

The strikingly broad difference between the north-south divide has been that in the factories of northern clusters (Delhi NCR, Ludhiana) the presence of women is strictly marginal while in the factories of the southern clusters (Tiruppur, Bangalore and Chennai) women are vastly present. While the logic behind these employment patterns has been one, the cost minimisation strategy; two, to prohibit the chances of trade union activities and three, to enhance labour control and subjugation. When the reasons are same so why are the employment patterns different? The answer lies in the changing industrial trajectories of these clusters as a result of the export-oriented industrialisation as well as in the product specialisation of each of these clusters which require a different class of labour for different type of activities. The differences are also context specific which are shaped by the local regionality, both historical and present configurations of the places where the clusters are located. On the basis of the sketch drawn above, the comparative analysis of the process of feminisation between the northern and southern garment clusters can be done on the following basis:

First, the type of Productive work available to women: Based on skills, wages and the so-called feminine traits.

In the northern clusters, majority of the women find employment mainly as piece-rate workers doing embellishment work in the non-factory realms like home-based units and workshops and therefore receive very low wages and are also denied any sort of employment benefits. While the factory realms are preoccupied by the male circular migrants who stay in the company provided accommodation facilities. The gendered division of productive spheres traces roots to the historical configuration as well as the product specialisation of the clusters. Ludhiana, specialising in knitting has always been a male dominated industry depicting a very marginal presence of women in factories. Both Ludhiana and Delhi NCR prefer employing a non-

permanent workforce consisting of male circular migrants because of the seasonal nature of the products. While in the embellishment clusters like Bareilly and Lucknow women are subcontracted home-based work via the male subcontractors. The employment relationships are based on flexible unwritten contracts, exploitation at the hands of employers, and denial of any legal benefits.

In the southern clusters, Chennai has been employing women workers since the 1970s, while other clusters like Bangalore and Tiruppur have shifted to employing female workers as a response to a number of strikes by male workers. Almost majority of the workforce is feminised in the factory realms, a sharp contrast to the northern clusters. The social and cultural realms have associated so-called feminine qualities to women like nimble fingers, docile nature and work efficiency and at the same time their willingness to accept lower wages, work overtime and not indulge in any trade union activities have been the major factors for employing women. Since clusters are mostly engaged in assembly line production, which is tedious, repetitive and monotonous, so women are recruited as ways and means to reduce labour costs while here too gendered division of work can be seen in highly specialised activities like tailoring, for which mostly males are recruited. Though women were employed in factories in place of men but still they were not paid the same wages as the men. As Mezzadri (2016a) argues that “wage differentials have clearly been reproduced through a systematic process of social construction of skills”. The language of skills is always constructed around gendered lens which is why skilled and unskilled categories always overlaps with social categories (Mezzadri, 2016a). With regard to the garment industry, men have always been referred to skilled employment patterns like tailors while women as operators or helpers. In terms of the employment relationships, they are somewhat formal in nature when compared to the highly casual and informal employment relationships in the northern clusters. Women are employed as permanent workers, receive regular salaries, and are also entitled to certain social security benefits. Sure,

there is exploitation of these contractual relations at the hands of the employers but here the female workers are more secured than the female workers of the north. However, in both the northern and southern clusters, feminisation and hence informalisation is manifested in more obvious ways in the north while in the south it is working at the edge of the legislations without actually breaching them.

Second, gendered labour control between the productive and reproductive realms of Production: Based on factors like space and mobility.

Gendered labour control expanding from the productive to reproductive realms is at the very heart of both the northern and southern garment clusters but how the modalities differ is a case in point. Women are recruited in garment manufacturing activities on the sole idea that they are easier to control and subjugate than the male workers. While in the northern clusters the control expands to home-based units which are the common sites of productive and reproductive realms of women; in the south, it expands from factories to company hostels, which are exploited as means of acquiring overtime by workers and at the same time putting restrictions on the freedom of movement of women. While immobility of the women of the north have restricted them to home-based work, while the mobility of the women in the south (that is majority of the women are migrants from other states and districts) also in a way restricts these women to the factories and hostels. The women in the southern garment units are under the constant surveillance of supervisors (who are mostly males) while the women of the north are under the everyday exploitation at the hands of contractors and subcontractors.

Third, intra-gender differences: Based on age, marital status, patriarchal relations, religion, caste, space and mobility.

Intra-gender differences are more apparent in the southern garment factories, obviously because of the vast presence of women employed at the shop-floor level. In the embellishment clusters like Bareilly and Lucknow, the gendered division of work extends to the different modalities like space and religion. For instance, home-based work in Bareilly is mostly performed by rural women; while in Lucknow, Muslim women are the dominant category of home-based workers. In Tiruppur, Chennai and Bangalore, most of the women employed are unmarried and young because they are expected to work for long hours and stay in factory hostels while married women especially those having children are deliberately excluded because of the double burden of responsibilities they carry because of which they refuse to work overtime. As a result of the recent shifts of these clusters towards ruralisation of production, the feminisation strategies have also shifted to employ a ruralised workforce, especially women coming from backward castes and communities.

Fourth, patterns of the multiple classes of labour formed.

Based on Bernstein's concept of classes of labour (2007), the feminisation and informalisation patterns have resulted in the formation of distinct and multiple classes of labour across the north-south garment clusters. While the classes of labour formed as a result of the different modalities of informalisation have already been discussed in the previous chapter, however rooting gender within such analysis depicts a diverse category of feminised labourforce based on intra-gender differences. Based on migrantisation, the northern clusters are composed of footloose male proletariat; while the southern clusters of footloose female proletariat. Ruralised female workforce is common to both but more apparent in the southern clusters. Classes of bonded female labour through the Sumangali and hostel systems are also characteristic of the southern clusters. In short, the qualitative composition of the southern garment clusters is marked by a highly feminised, migratory, ruralised, and bonded labourforce; while that of the

northern clusters, in factory realms it is composed of a highly masculinised and migratory labourforce dominates and in non-factory realms a highly feminised and ruralised workforce dominates. Common to both, however is the fact that the unfreedom for women stretches to the social reproductive realms, whether they are working in factories of the south or as home-based workers in the north. However, overall, the garment industry in India demonstrates ‘classic features of informality with the workforce that is non-unionised and footloose’ (RoyChowdhury, 2015, p.84).

In short, the employment of women whether in factories or home-based units rest on the exploitation of patriarchal norms that govern men and women in the garment industries in discriminative ways- in terms of the wages, skills, type of work and employment benefits. The interplay between historical industrial trajectories and current reconfigurations based on evolving product specialisations have been mediated by the diverse composition of the workforce functioning at the heart of multiple modalities of informalisation. The strategies of local capitalists in preferring a certain type of workforce rests on attempts at involving cost minimisation, low unionisation and excess control on the workers. And in turn all these are mediated by various local and social factors amongst which gender forms a crucial tool that has been deployed in diverse ways across the northern and southern garment clusters.

CONCLUSION

The chapter makes an attempt in comprehending the process of informalisation of labour through a gendered lens. It argues that feminisation and masculinisation of the workforce lies at the very heart of the labour control strategies of the local capitalists across the northern and southern garment clusters. While gendered discourses of work have always rendered women a status of secondary workers characterised by docile and disposable nature at the same time, it has also facilitated in generating patterns of informalisation that are quite distinct across the

north south divide of the country. The northern garment clusters are characterised by masculinisation of factory realms and feminisation of non-factory realms, while the southern clusters are said to be highly experiencing the multiple waves of feminisation. However, the degrees of feminisation interplaying across the spectrum of north-south garment industries showcases wide variations in terms of the different activities in the same units or in different units; historical legacies of the gendered production of activities and employment patterns based on intra-gender differences. Based on these aspects, it has been articulated that the clusters of the north carry forward the legacies of their previous industrial configurations that were structured around a strict no entry for women workers inside the factories. However, the clusters in the south, on one hand, adjusting to the changing industrial trajectories as a result of the global integration, on the other hand, they have also shut the possibilities of the formation of unions and hence depending on strategies of employing more women workers. While workers in north-south clusters are all informal in nature, but while in the north they are strongly visible but, in the south, they are at the verge of legal legislations which are actually breached in reality.

The chapter tries to reveal that all the narratives around the inclusion and exclusion of women from certain factories and employments are constructed on one hand, around the political economy approach which views women's labour as cheap, on the other hand, they are also centred around the patriarchal norms that view women as secondary workers and hence easily disposable. The gendered structural differences unravel the broader patterns on which informalisation persists in the garment clusters of India. From the cluster wise analysis done in the chapter it can be concluded that 'feminisation does not only refer to the increase in the employment rates for the women in the factories but also to the multiple ways in which gender may be mobilised across clusters, factories and even within the same factories in efforts for cost minimisation of different activities and tasks (Mezzadri, 2016a).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The thesis set on the backdrop of neo-liberal globalization attempts to substantiate the presence of the local labour control regime facilitating informalisation in the local production networks and chains. The study of the local labour structures amidst the changing industrial trajectories globally showcases different patterns of how the local garment clusters in India adjust themselves into the Global Garment Commodity Chains. As a result, there are complex industrial restructuring mechanisms that function through the informal regulation of labour whose end result is attaching an informalizing character to the working labour in both the formal and informal realms of production. The local processes of informalization shaped by the informal regulatory mechanisms involving the exploitation of the various social and local structures, differences and divisions is linked to the product specialization, historical craft and industrial legacies and context specific integration processes of accumulation into global production networks that define the local garment clusters. The presence of the various local modalities of informalization analysed in the thesis showcase varying ways of how the local and social factors like caste, class, religion, gender, space and mobility are exploited by the local capitalists for the sole purpose of controlling, segmenting and subjugating the labourforce to the capitalist logic. The thesis draws upon the horizontal approach to understand the varying patterns of labour control mechanisms adopted at the ground level. The adoption of the horizontal model of governance initiates as and when the global production systems pass on the 'labour problem'-includes labour supervision and labour control- to the local labour control regime, which is constitutive of local actors like local suppliers, manufacturers, exporters, contractors and subcontractors. There is a corresponding shift from the international division of labour to a social division of labour. Of all the social structures of accumulation and

exploitation, gender has garnered special attention in the thesis as it has been used as a powerful tool to either incorporate or exclude the vast world of female labour which through both ways facilitates informalization. To study these aspects the thesis is systematically organized around three major chapters that add layers to reinstate varying forms of classes of labour working within the global and local production systems.

The second major chapter of the thesis tries to place the study in the global context, wherein it traces the evolution of the changing industrial trajectories and labour structures especially since the 1980s which have restructured the global factory to be rearranged along the global production systems and supply chain mechanisms. These advancements have correspondingly challenged the so-called dualities of formal and informal sectors, making way for an informalized workforce across all segments of work and employment patterns. Empirical data and evidences from countries worldwide have been used to showcase the process of informalization of labour that is de facto at work and has only aggravated with the shift of the global economies towards export-oriented industrialization and adoption of outsourcing strategies. Today's informalizing labour is characterized not by the permanent or temporary nature of employment rather through their changing dynamics that cut across formal and informal realms and therefore can be said to be including features like loose contracts, inaccessibility to employment benefits, lower wages, exploitative and vulnerable conditions of work and prohibitions to engage in trade union activities. And to further the objectives of cost minimization and avoid trade unionization, governance of production systems travels vertically transferring the labour problem right down to the horizontally placed local actors and institutions. At the horizontal level, the social regulation of labour is facilitated by the different local and social modalities like caste, class, religion, mobility, space, household relations, ethnicity and gender. These social identities and local factors have been used as tools to facilitate divisions in work, functioning through social regulatory mechanisms and hence

rendering an informal character to labour markets and labour processes. The examples of women call center workers in India, cocoa supply chains in Ghana, fishing and garment supply chains in Bangladesh, the migration patterns in China and the increasing instances of home-based work across rural hinterlands have demonstrated how labour is being increasingly socially regulated in different regions of the world.

The third chapter attempts to take the discussions forward by subsuming the garment and apparel industry of India within such global arrangements of production processes and labour structures. The review of various published literatures done in the chapter shows how the different dynamics of informalization are locally manifested in varying ways in the different garment clusters. As a result, the different local architectures of production entail different outcomes for labour structures which are inherently locally constituted and represent ‘unique intersections of spatially contingent social processes’ (Coe, 2000 as cited in Mezzadri, 2016a). The social embeddedness is shaped by the cluster specific product specialization, the distinct regional political economies and the integration into specific final markets via a network of supply chains (Mezzadri, 2009). The various social identities and local factors on one hand, contribute towards the segmentation of the labourforce and on the other hand, they facilitate in making a firm ground for easier processes of labour control. The northern clusters like Delhi NCR and Ludhiana are characterized by fragmented and layered structures of garment manufacturing wherein flexible product cycles involve different ways of labour control. The strategic use of mobility or migration patterns accumulate the male migratory labourforce in the factory realms of production. The circular migrants who are mostly males come from the states like U.P., Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh during the peak season and return back to their villages in the lean season. These migration patterns provide a well suited labourforce that is flexible, temporary and casual labour to the industries. The non-factory realms of production engaging in value-addition activities in Delhi NCR, Ludhiana, Bareilly, Lucknow involve

combinations of mobility, space, rural-urban differentials, age, religion and gender that facilitate strategies for cost minimization and strict labour control. Embellishment activities like embroidery are done through homeworkisation across rural and urban spaces of work that mostly involve informal employment relationships between the home-based workers and the subcontractors. In the southern clusters like Chennai and Bangalore involving in assembly line production, strategies of labour control involve the interplay of combinations of gender, mobility and even space mainly through the accommodation facilities provided by employers. In Tiruppur, on the other hand, caste, gender, migration patterns and rural and urban differentials contribute significantly in facilitating multiple combinations of classes of labour.

To broaden our understanding of the evolving narratives around informalization, the fourth major chapter of the thesis centers around the process of feminization of the workforce. Feminisation, which involves not just an increase in the number of women workers but also an increase in the low-paid and low-skilled jobs that specifically target female workers. So, when the post-fordist regime expanded the contours of flexible and informal employments, it correspondingly resulted in the expansion of the feminized workforce across all realms of production processes though in varying degrees. Countries worldwide have been experiencing increasing feminization rates since the 1970s-1980s especially in the labour-intensive sectors like manufacturing as compared to capital-intensive sectors like automobiles. The reasons for such disparities involve the expansion in the low skilled and low paid jobs in the manufacturing sectors which specifically targeted the female proletariat; while capital intensive sectors evolved in terms of involving heavy machinery and sophisticated technology for which a skilled workforce is required and therefore is concentrated by the male proletariat. Hence there is feminization in the former and de-feminisation or masculinization in the latter. In case of India, though overall the country is not experiencing increasing feminization rates but degrees of feminization vary across different sectors, regions, industries and employments. While

analyzing the garment industry, the degrees of feminization vary substantially across the north-south divide of the country. The inclusion and exclusion of women from certain employments or segments of work is on one hand based on the feminist discourses that perceive women as secondary workers who are docile and low-skilled, on the other hand, they are also substantially shaped by approaches of political economy that view women's labour as cheap and disposable. Both these approaches further shape the employment opportunities for women in distinct ways in the northern and southern garment clusters. When comparing the presence of women in the north-south divide of the country, the clusters of the south (Chennai, Bangalore and Tiruppur) are highly feminized than the clusters of north (Ludhiana and Delhi NCR). The feminized or de-feminised nature of clusters is not constant throughout, for instance, in the north, non-factory realms of production is said to be highly feminized than the factory realms, where women are marginally present. Home-workisation in the north combined gendered discourses of work along with other factors like mobility, space, religion and age, which produces varying patterns of informalization.

While in the south, engaging in standard product cycles and volume-based production, the increasing number of strikes by male workers shifted the focus of employers towards the workforce that on one hand, was cost-efficient and on the other hand, showcases low tendencies to engage in trade union activities. These demands specifically targeted the women workforce, which also suited the assembly line production of garment manufacturing in Chennai and Bangalore and in knitting and garmenting activities in Tiruppur. However, here the accumulation of women did not imply a homogenized workforce rather women are increasingly segmented across intra-gender differences. Social differentiation within gender involves the division of the female workforce based on their marital status, age, caste, household relations, migration patterns and the rural and urban divides. These intra-gender differences in turn shape the varying patterns of informalization in the southern clusters which

are quite distinct from the northern clusters. The garment manufacturing in the southern clusters can be said to be a classic case of gendered hegemony. The earlier versions of feminization focused on employing married women who were mostly local. But with shifts towards assembly line production, new waves of feminization targeted young, unmarried women coming from disadvantaged families of rural hinterlands. Simultaneously there was focus on employing women in formal realms as permanent workers eligible for social security benefits like PF and ESI after completion of job for complete five years. However, here the permanent status of the workers is strategically exploited by employers as women are either forced to leave or voluntarily leave the jobs for reasons like marriage, migration and other household issues. So, here an important dynamic of informalization persists working at the edge of the existing labour legislations. Also, newer forms of labour control processes by capitalizing on the rural-urban differentials and company hostels or Sumangali systems which have specifically been targeting young unmarried poor migrant women under loose contracts, abysmal conditions of work and strict control strengthening the productive and social reproductive realms of women's lives. However, labour control mechanisms adopted across the north-south divide of the garment industry function on subjugating and disciplining the women workers based on societal norms and patriarchal relations.

Based on the above analysis, it is therefore concluded that the patterns of informalization of labour observed in the garment clusters of India can be said to be based on the 'nature of the social processes operating in the social space of the labour system', which ultimately, 'produces multiple classes of labour and/or combinations of free and unfree labour by deploying already socially classed bodies' (Mezzadri, 2016a). Some are factory wage workers, others are self-employed deployed as a disguised form of wage labour, some are male migrants, others are female migrants, some are urban, and others are rural workers all working within an overall context of precariousness and informality in the local sweatshop regime (Mezzadri, 2014a).

Thus, the local modalities of informalising the workforce are henceforth shaped by the strategic use and exploitation of different social tools that produce a fragmented and flexible working class suited to the interests of the fragmented production networks. The garment clusters in India can therefore be said to be an apt case of how physical materialities intertwine with the context specific social realities and hence re-craft new definitions and meanings to the concepts of formality and informality.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is subjected to some potential limitations. First and foremost, the thesis is not based on the field work and instead relies heavily on the already existing theoretical literatures and field surveys. Field work could have added more nuances to the study and hence would have contributed in adding on to the literature on the labour working in the garment industry of India. Secondly, most of the data used regarding the informal employment and informal workers in India is based on the outdated data, for instance, the last NCEUS Report which dates back to the 2007-2008. Lastly, the study fails to elaborate more on the direct and indirect role of the state as an important agent in facilitating informality in the garment industry in India. State's direct role in relaxation of labour laws and industrial regulations and an indirect role as a silent spectator to flouting laws at the hands of the employers who very easily get away with them could have added more dimensions to how excessive labour control survives at the very edge of government institutions and legislations.

WAY FORWARD

The discussions of the various issues in this thesis merit further research. First, the future research could focus on the possible impact of automation/machinery on the quality and

quantity of employment opportunities generated in the manufacturing industry as it has been replacing traditional tailoring and hand-work embellishment work. Second, how employment relations function amidst the rising popularity of e-commerce businesses (or online shopping apps) and how does labour fit within such virtual arrangements of work if at all it does. Third, the rising instances of workers' agitation globally against the irresponsibility of fast fashion brands towards the workers employed at the farthest ends of the supply chains in both the factory and non-factory realms of production could prove to be a well-established topic of research contributing to discussions around labour rights. Fourth, relevant questions regarding sustainability in garments and clothing items could also offer insights for understanding the issues regarding disposability and reusability of world's worn-out clothes. Many recent literatures on garment and apparel sector focuses on the question of sustainability of fast fashion as a result of the irresponsible disposing of tons of clothing items, for instance tons of clothes disposed of in Chile's Atacama Desert. These items are generally leftovers from the fast fashion industry all across the globe which have been causing serious environmental issues because of their non-biodegradable nature. In India too, Tiruppur, the jeans' capital, has been one of the major centre for irresponsible draining of dyeing waste from the jeans. These issues of the fashion industry can further be explored by assessing their impact on the workers and also generating efforts in putting responsibility on the concerned stakeholders.

However, taking the discussions of this thesis forward, following broad questions can be explored in the future:

1. If informalization of labour entails an expansion of degrading labour standards at almost all levels of the supply chains, then should it be replaced with formalization? Is formalization of the economy an answer to increasing issues associated with informalization?

2. How have the organizing strategies of garment workers evolved over time? How do these strategies differ across the northern and southern garment clusters, in light of the different patterns of gendered hegemony across these clusters?
3. Can the broad issues discussed in this thesis be useful in studying labour relations in other sectors of the economy or in other Asian countries? If yes, how?
4. Is there a need to regulate informalization of the formal? If yes, then, what should be the role of the state in controlling or dealing with the expansion of informalization?
5. Where does the responsibility of fast fashion brands lie towards the workers employed at the farthest ends of the supply chains?
6. What has been the impact of COVID-19 on the garment and apparel workers in India? Has the pandemic further expanded the gendered dimension of the garment industry by impacting the male and female workers in different ways?
7. How do the garment workers perceive the new labour codes? What are their limitations from the workers' perspective?

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