THE EMERGENCE OF BOMBAY TEXTILE LABOUR FORCE AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON : 1854 - 1947

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled "The Emergence of Bombay Textile Labour Force as a Social Phenomenon: 1854-1947", submitted by Mohd. Akbar Ansari for the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted by him for any other degree to this, or any other University, and it is his own work. We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the Examiners for evaluation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AITWC:	All India Textile Workers' Conference
BLO:	Labour Office, Bombay Presidency
BMOA:	Millowners' Association, Bombay
BSEC:	Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee
BTLU:	Bombay Textile Labour Union
Cmd (od):	Command
EPW:	Economic and Political Weekly
FC:	Factories Commission
GKM:	Girni Kamgar Mandal
GKU:	Girni Kamgar Union
H. of C.:	House of Commons
IESHR:	Indian Economic and Social History Review
IFLC:	Indian Factory Labour Commission
IJIR:	Indian Journal of Industrial Relations
ITB:	Indian Tariff Board
ITJ:	Indian Textile Journal
PP:	Parliamentary Papers
RCL:	Royal Commission on Labour in India
TLIC:	Textile Labour Inquiry Committee

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Nature of the Problem

India[1] is a relatively underdeveloped country economically. A look on the constellation of nations around us provides ample testimony to this fact, and it has been, time and again, asserted that industrialization is essential to the economic development, which is based on the level of technological development, natural resources, and the quality of people who inhabit a particular land, or a society. Some seek the economic development in the concurrent development of agriculture and industry. Admitting that industrialization is essential for economic development, why then, some countries developed earlier and faster than others? There are various historical factors, most important being the Scientific Revolution of the Fifteenth Century and the Industrial Revolution of the Seventeenth Century, among other factors; largely remained confined to the European Continent, whereas other countries could step into the process of industrialization towards the middle of Nineteenth century. But still it remains to be

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1. My concern here is with the undivided India before 1947.

explained why certain countries like Japan, China and Russia could industrialise faster than India, whose industrialisation began even later than India.[1] Some ascribe this failure of India to its rigid, closed, immobile social structure based on Hindu religious ethic, emphasizing other wordly austerity and simplicity of life.[2] There is a controversy regarding the interpretation of nineteenth century Economic History of India, between the nationalist and imperialist historians to explain the retarded economic development.[3] The former seek their explanation in the colonial status of India for over two centuries and the consequent drain of wealth, while the latter argue that the fault lies with the social structure that did not respond to the impulse induced by the most developed nation of the Age - the Britain.

But my concern here is to see how far the industrialisation is impeded by the quality, or rather, the lack of quality, of the people following largely Hindu

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1. It is not my concern to go into details of this disparity in the level of industrialisation among nations.

2. This idea was largely mooted by the great sociologist Max Weber in his Comperative Study of different religions. Max Weber, 'The Religion of India', Glenco, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958.

3. This point is elaborated in the next section.

religion,[1] particularly the part of it, what is known as workforce, labour force, or the proletariat working class in the power drawn industries.

It is being variously contended that the Indian industrial labour force, largely coming from the rural-agriculture structure with its basic corralaries of village community, caste, joint family drawing its strength from the religious ordinals of karma and dharma, which is being assumed to be fit only for village-based occupations. Village community rests upon the caste system, based on the characteristics of primary groups of face-to-face relation with diffused roles, and is closed, that is, largely self-sufficient. The castes are distinguished on occupational grounds in which ascribed status governs the social position of an individual and he cannot change his caste, whatever he does, and his present is the result of his karma and dharma of his previous birth, and his status in the next birth is based on how good or bad he followed the prescription of 'karma' and 'dharma' of this birth. Thus, he cannot move vertically, horizontal mobility

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1. I include other religions such as Islam and Christinity because of the overwhelming majority of the workers come from Hindu religion and as such 'Indian worker' will be used alternatively with 'Hindu worker' and that common cultural traits are emphasised.

is possible within the varna model.[1] The Brahman being uppermost, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, the Sudra, in the downward hierarchy. The Untouchables, it should be remembered, fall outside the varna model because of their 'unclean' occupation and habits. But caste (the jath) is different from Varna, for there are a hundreds of jatis in one part of varna. The joint family is one in which more than two generations of a parent live together, with common property rights. However, the myth of self-sufficiency is exploded, and the rigidity of caste and joint family has undergone transformation.[2] Thus, the pre-industrial society is concieved as the ideal type "with ascribed status, low level of organisation, diffused roles, lack of mobility, primary group relationship, and a closed system, as the peculiar characteristics. On the other hand, rather on the other extreme are the western industrialised societies, with emphasis on achieved status, formal and

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1. In fact, even the individuals can move through the acquisition of high caste values and acquired wealth, education, status and power in the new emerging industrialised social system, but the structural changes, that,is, the changes in the traditional social structure are difficult to obtain.

2. M.N. Srinivas, and A.M. Shah, "The Myth of the Self-Sufficiency of the Indian Village", Economic Weekly (Bombay), XII, No.27, September 10, 1960, pp.1375-1377.

complex organisation, secondary and open groups, with maximum mobility, market economy, political system based on liberty, equality, justice and welfare, which is again is an 'ideal type'. These are the ideal types, because there is a wide variation in the cultures and values of the pre-industrial societies and so is the case with the industrialized societies. And, it is being assumed that the value systems of the two types of societies are too different to be diffused, and the transformation from the pre-industrial to the industrial society brings in its wake painful transition, often with conflicting values, thus retarding the progress of industrialisation.[1] It is based on the 'theory of uniform sequence', that all the societies have to take the linear sequences of industrial development, in which the incompatible values and motives need to be discarded and replaced by the values and 'cultural patterns' of the functionally integrated industrial society. A theory known

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1. For such theories, see Clark Kerr, et al. 'The Labour Problem in Economic Development: A framework for a Reappraisal', International Labour Review, March 1955, pp. 1-15; Moore, W.E. "Industrialization and Labour: Social Aspects of Economic Development", Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1951; Oscar A, Ornati, 'Jobs and Workers in India', Ithaca, IILR, Cornell Univ., 1955; Clark Kerr, et al. 'Industrialisation and Industrial Man: The Problems of Labour and Management in Economic Growth', Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960; and especially, Moore, W.E. and Feldman, A.S. (Eds), 'Labour Commitment and Social Change in Developing Areas', Social Science Research Council, New York, 1960.

as 'Commitment Theory' as a result came into existence.[1] Taking these assumptions, although such ideas were prevelent even earlier than this[2], various scholars tended to allege that the Indian worker is uncommitted and inefficient, using the definition of commitment of Moore and Feldman,

> "We mean both the short-run objective performance of modern kinds of economic activity and the long-run and deep-seated acceptance of the attitudes and beliefs appropriate to an Industrial Society".[3]

As a result of various empirical studies proving to the contrary and discussion led to the theory that Indian labour is "partially-commited".[4] Some scholars found it to be "methodologically unsound, theoretically unclear and untenable, and empirically questionable."[5] Besides, if there is not much to choose from, especially when unemployment is in a chronic state, the judgement of the level of commitment not only becomes obscure, it becomes irrelevant too.

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1. This theory is being variously disproved and criticised by various scholars. For instance, Hilton Singer, 'Changing Craft Traditions in India', in Moore and Feldman (ed.), Op.cit., pp. 258-276; Morris D. Morris, 'The Labour Market in India', in Moore and Feldman (ed.), Op.cit., among others.
2. Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, 1931.
3. Moore and Feldman (ed.), Op.cit., p. 1.
4. C.A. Mayers, 'Labour Problems in the Industrialization of India', Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1958.
5. Surendra Munshi, 'Industrial Labour in Developing Economies: A Critique of the Labour Comitment Theory', EPW, August 1977, pp. M74-M87.

But it is not to deny that the industrial institutions are different that are effective for the mass production. Rather, they are as important as other kind of society has its own relevant institutions. But this is not always necessary to replace the pre-industrial societal norms by the industrial ones. This necessity of replacement is obscured by the fact that technological development is amnable to wide range of industrial norms and that they are not inflexible; they may adjust to numerous pre-industrial institutions, providing alternative roads to industrialisation. Japan, Russia and China are good examples. Even there is a range of variation among the nations of the West having varied political, social and technological institutions. Taking India, the allegedly closed system that impeded Indian industrial development, for instance, the joint family system when on the one hand proved an inhibiting factor to mobility, it facilitated the movement of individuals from traditional to modern job, which can serve as a cushion to an individual against economic vagaries in the market situation, e.g. in case of unemployment, sickness, strike, lockout and a resort for holidays. In fact this has been proved empirically for the institutions related to 'rural nexus'.[1]

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1. For instance, N.R. Sheth, 'The Social Framework of an Indian Factory', Oxford University Press, 1968, pp. 189-199.

Assuming the base of the Feldman-Moore Commitment Theory, various scholars in India examined the level of Commitment of the Indian labour and the results regarding the rural social structure and its impact on industrialisation, through empirical studies, are found to be as chaotic as they ought to have been due in the main to the unsoundness of the commitment theory.

The other reason for this chaotic state may be due to the baises of individual scholars, or to the relative competence, or the application of commitment theory to regions and industries of varying nature, but the first cause is more responsible for this chaotic state. Because the indicators of commitment are traditionally taken as difficulty in mobilising the labour force, high rate of absenteeism, high rate of turnover, indiscipline expressed in misbehavior to supervisors, strikes, loitering, irregularity etc. These indicators will be examined in detail in the following chapters. For the present it is sufficient to point out that these indicators are neither necessary nor sufficient, rather they are misguiding also.[1] To arrive at a general theory, there is much need to have exhaustive studies of different industries, of different regions and various developing countries. But this is a big task and

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1. See Chapters I and III, and especially the latter.

is possible only if studies carried either by large number of scholars or big research organisations. An individual has to specify not only the country, but industry, centre and a specific period. Besides this, one has to choose a perspective. For this purpose to see how labour force was mobilised during the early years of industrialisation, it becomes essential to choose a historical perspective in terms of recurrent relationship of various structural components. As such the topic of the modest work is 'The Emergence of Bombay Cotton Textile Labour Force as a Social Phenomenon: 1854-1947'.

One may genuinely ask as to why cotton textile industry, and not any other, and why Bombay centre of it and a period from 1854 through 1947? The reasons are as follows:

The cotton textile industry is the first and premier and most important modern industry of India. The problems that might have been arisen, have to be most demanding because it was a departure from the traditional mode of production to power-driven mode of production with a sharp contrast in its institutions, with the labour problems of mobilization, and disciplining the labour force, besides financial, technical and entrepreneurial aspects in the face of the foreign dominance. The period is sufficiently justified by the fact that first cotton mill was successfully

erected in 1854 in Bombay. The terminal year is justified by the fact that British colonial period ended in 1947 and the division of the country took place into two separate nations: India and Pakistan. Thus, this period is justified in its beginning to justify 'emergence' and the end year to analyse the changing British colonial policy towards industry and its effect on the labour force.

Yet it remains to be explained why the Bombay centre, instead of Ahmedabad or Calcutta or Nagpur. There are, in the main, four reasons: (1) Firstly, the first mill went into production in Bombay; (2) secondly, Bombay, from the very beginning, had a complex composition of the population a - cosmopolitan character, more fit for India level generalization of the findings than the one that is more specific, e.g., Ahmedabad. (3) Thirdly, the Bombay labour force is notorious for its tumultous, translucent and instable character. (4) Lastly but not lenst, this industrial centre is better served by qualitative evidences as well as quantitative data.

But it is pertinent to remember that India as a country has number of diversities of language, region, religion, and caste, and no generalisation can ever be quite a fit drawn from Bombay. It may simply reflect very general tendencies. Bombay centre being a cosmopolitan centre, can not be an ideal centre for the early migration of labour force to Bombaymills, for there already existed employment

opportunities in Commerce, Public Works, Construction, Railways and Shipbuilding. Thus, the pattern of mobility of the rural folks had to be rather easy. But every centre has its limitations, one has to choose the best one, and Bombay is the best among the given choices.

Another phrase "social phenomenon" remains to be explained still. Instead of defining it, the proper idea would be to describe the factors that ought to be taken into account. The first set of factors will be well supplied in an answer to the question as to what were the social roots of the labour force, that is, origin and, socio-demographic characteristics. Whether the labour supply was sufficient? If so, how far were they committed to their work and industry? What were the working and living conditions under which they had to work? How far the industrial organisation affected their behaviour? How well they could organise themselves as a group to safeguard their interests in the face of the employers' policies in the colonial setting? What factions existed among themselves? All these questions are answered in the light of available evidences in the subsequent chapters. In the meanwhile, it will be reflected upon how the pre-industrial structure was carried over, or more appropriately was modified, in response of the demands of the new industrial social structure, insofar as the Bombay textile labour force is concerned.

Parther, the productivity of Bombay millhands has been found to be low as compared to the United State, Great Britain, Japan and even to China, all scholars agree. But why was it low, there are divergent opinions, which may roughly be classified into two groups. One group of scholars tend to allege this low productivity and, inefficiency largely to the 'ingrained habits' of Indian labour due to immobile nature of the social structure and not their being responsive to economic incentives.[1] The other group of scholars emphasises the role of employers in mobilising and structuring the disciplined labour force.[2] But there is perhaps none, that could emphasise the role of the British colonial rule, its impact on industrialisation,[3] and its

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1. IFLC, 1908; RCL, 1931; BMOA, various issues, S.D. Mehta, ICTI, 1953; S.D. Mehta, CMI, 1954; V. Anstey, 'The Economic Development of India', Longman Green Co. London, Ed.3, 1942; D.H. Buchanan, 'The Development of Capitalist Enterprises in India', New York, 1966, ed. , Originally 1934.

2. Morris David Morris, 'The Emergence of the Industrial Labour Force in India: Bombay Cotton Textile Mills - 1854-1947', California Press, 1965.

3. Recently a scholar with the help of quantitative and qualitative evidences has proved the impeding effect of colonialisation on industrialisation of India. A.K. Bagchi, 'Private Investment in India: 1900-1939', Orient Longman, Cambridge University Press, 1972 ed. There are numerous scholars who have extensively reflected on the adverse effect on industrialisation, especially the 'nationalist' economic historians, but effect on labour is, by and large, being neglected.

effect on cotton textile labour force. Here an attempt is made to examine the latter, that is, the impact of colonial rule on cotton textile labour force, together with the role of employers.

First chapter is introductory that defines the problem, general economic conditions at the eve of industrialization, economic development of Bombay city; and the development of Bombay cotton textile industry. Chapter II examines the rural links of the operatives, regarding supply of labour, origin of the labour force, socio-economic characteristics of the operatives. Chapter III examines the relevance of commitment theory in relation to Bombay textile workers. Chapter IV assesses the working and living conditions affecting the efficiency of workers. Chapter V examines the organisational structure and its impact on the administration of labour force. Chapter VI discusses the labour discipline as a result of labour movement and the role of the State. The Final chapter (Chapter VII), concludes the results of the analysis.

1.2 Economic Conditions of India at the Eve of Industrialisation

The Indian religious ethic created a social structure based on village community, caste, and joint family. The village economy was, by far, the self-sufficient economy. The joint family was the unit of economic structure, in which the caste occupations were carried through the cooperative system - the demand that agriculture made on the members of the village economy. There existed the service class which were attached to families and the system what is known as jajmani system, was prevalent, Market transactions were largely missing. Most of the payments were made in kind, rather than in cash. This system servived the attacks of invaders from outside, until the British power conquered the country.

It is not to suggest that there was no urban population. In fact, there existed big cities, but the total urban population never exceeded 10 per cent of the total population. These towns owed their existence to religious pilgrimage, like Benares, Hardwar, or to feudal courts like Cawnpore, or to their trade - internal or external - like Calcutta. The urban economy accordingly depended to meet religious, feudal, or commercial demands.[1] The 'muslin' of Dacca,

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1. D.R. Gadgil, 'Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times', Ed. 5, London, Oxford University Press, 1971.

that was famous all over the world came from these towns.

By the time the British impact came to be felt, first on the towns, and latter on the villages, the population was controlled through famines, epidemics and wars, which kept the pressure on land to tolerable proportions[1] that is, India was making Malthusian adjustments.[2] The Migratory tendencies among the population were only marginal.[3] Thus, the Indian society largely remained static through the ages consequently there had been no development of means of communications

Then came the British rule in India that subjected India to various changes. The Battle of Plassey of 1757 has established the supremacy of the British power over other foreign and native powers. Britain was undergoing that time through industrialisation, for which capital was needed, and a process of exploitation of India began and the

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1. Kingsley, Davis, 'The Population of India and Pakistan', Princeton University Press, 1951.

2. Morris, Op.cit., p. 40. According to Malthusian theory of population, the population of a country, nation or a society increases in geometric progression, e.g. 1,2,4,8,16,..., while the resources increase in an arithmatic progression, e.g. 1,2,3,... Thus, making the pressure on land increasingly large, which in turn is set into balance through such natural or other calamities as droughts, epidemics, floods, wars etc.

3. Irfan Habib, 'The Agrarian System of Mughal India', London, Asia Publishing House, 1963.

phase of "drain of wealth",[1] by subjecting the Indian calicoes to high import duties in British markets and by popularising the British clothes in India. For this purpose, the means of communications were opened and extended to the interior of the country for British goods. This policy dislocated Indian trade and industry, and consequent decline of Indian handicrafts. Simultaneously occured the exhaustion of land, through high rates of taxes and the consequent fall in wages of rural labour, and a large number of people both from handicrafts and agriculture were thrown out of employment.[2] India was de-industrialised and de-urbanised.

This is to be pointed out here that the land tax in Madras and Bombay Presidency during the Nineteenth Century was higher than Bengal and other places, therefore, the people were less resourceful, the famines were more frequent and intense and more fatal.[3] This explains the high mobility of the Bombay Presidency, especially Konkan districts to Bombay cotton textile mills.[4]

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1. Prabhat Patnaik, 'Imperialism and the growth of Indian capitalism', in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (eds.) "Studies in the Theory of Imperialism", Longman, 1972, pp. 210-229.
2. S.C. Roychaudhary, "History of Modern India", Surjeet Publication, Delhi, 1980.
3. R.C. Dutt, "Economic History of India", vol.II, 1837-1900, Publication Division, Govt. of India, Oct.1960.
4. This reasoning will have implications for the Supply of Labour situation in Chapter II.

To be more precise, there has been a long debate over the Nineteenth Century economic history of India. The economic historians according to their views, can be grouped into two blocks; what are usually called imperialists and nationalists.

The former group of historians argues that India in its economic and industrial development gained through the British rule. India got political stability better system of administration, better law and order, development of means of communication, increased irrigation facilities and increased area under cultivation, and the industrial development through plantation, jute textile industry and even cotton textile industry. Although individual imperialists vary in their method of assessment of the impact of the British rule, on the economic development, but usually claim that the per capita income and longivity of life increased over the years.[1] To this category belong such scholars as Strachey Brothers, Lord Curzon, Theodore Marison, Mrs. Knowles, D.H. Buchanan, and to some extent Veera Anstey. This is not to suggest that they always interpreted the

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1. M.D. Morris, "Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Economic History", Journal of Economic History, XXIII, No. 4, Dec. 1963; and IESHR vol. V, March, 1968, pp. 1-15; see also, Morris D. Moris and Burnstein, 'The Economic History of India', Journal of Economic History, 1961, pp. 179-207.

history deliberately to emphasise the role of British rule in India, at times they rationalised it, and sometimes were convinced also.[1]

This proposition is rebutted by the Nationalists, both Indian and foreign scholars, more particularly by R.C. Dutt, William Digby, W.E. Hunter, Charles Eliot, G.V. Joshi, B.D. Basu, D.R. Gadgil, R.P. Dutt, J.C. Jack, T. Roychaudhary, Toru Matsui, and others. Though their analyses based on British Government Documents; and by the results that India gained through the British rule, they argue that British colonial rule in India retarded or at least delayed the industrial development of the country. The import-export policy, the currency muddle, the investment policy, the borrowing pattern, the monetary gains to British nationals in Britain and in India - all the indicators tend to imply that India suffered from the British rule.[2] Most of

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1. For this classification of the scholars into imperialist and nationalist historians, with annotated Bibliography, see Bipin Chandra, 'British and Indian Ideas on Indian Economic Development' in, D.R. Nanda and V.C. Joshi (eds) "Studies in Modern Indian History", No.1, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 76-114.

2. For the controversy between Moorie and Bipin Chandra, see, Bipin Chandra, 'Reinterpretation of the Nineteenth Century Economic History', IESHR, vol. V, No. 1, 1968, pp. 35-76. In the same issue of IESHR on the controversy, see also the articles by Tory Matsai, T. Roychaudhary etc.

these analyses draw largely upon William Digby that is based on original British documents.[1] In his rigorous analysis of the Twentieth century of British period, Dr. A.R. Bagchi[2] has conclusively shown how India was subjected to subsume the role of a colony to the interests of Britain. More recently, two scholars analysed the total colonial system in relation to the "metropolitan economy" that is, how the peripheral economies were subjected to the central British interests,[3] but the impact of the British rule was differential in regard to region, religion and caste in India.[4]

No doubt, India gained indirectly by the British rule, but it created more economic problems as expressed in the views of the nationalist historians stated above, than that it could solve. If India were a free country, under native government, she could have progressed faster.

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1. William Digby, "The 'Prosperous' British India: A Revelation from Official Records", London, T.Fisher Unwin, 1901.

2. A.K. Bagchi, "Private Investment in India: 1900-1939" Orient Longman, 1972.

3. P.J. Caine and A.G. Hopkins, "The Political Economy of British Expansion Overseas: 1750-1914", The Economic History Review, Series 2, vol. XXXIII, No. 4, Nov. 1980, pp. 463-490.

4. Christine Dobbin, "Competing elites in Bombay Politics and in European and Indian entrepreneurship in India", in Edmund Leach and S.N. Mukherjee (eds), "Elites in South Asia", Cambridge, 1970, pp. 79-94.

However, 'History' does not deal with 'ifs' and 'buts', and as such, it will be examined in the subsequent chapters how the British colonial policy was reflected on the development of Bombay cotton textile mills, and its effect on the stability of labour force.

1.3 The Economic Development of Bombay City

There is no adequate history of Bombay city and Island written to the present day, and no attempt is made here to write one. Only those events are taken that have some bearing on the population, its composition, and trade, on the supply of labour to the Bombay Cotton textile mills.

Bombay, when the Portugese took over its possession was a village inhabited by the fishermen community. Some of the islands during their possession were brought together. The British received Bombay in 1661 by the Portugese as a dowry to the British Prince.[1] There is a very sketchy information, which is not sufficient to throw adequate light on the demographic, social, or occupational composition of the population. Yet a few things lay bare, largely impressionistic in nature, that the East India Company had been trying to capture the city, quite for sometime, and where conflict has failed, diplomacy proved effective. The

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1. The History of Bombay city is written from 1661-1706 AD by M.D. David, 'History of Bombay City: 1661-1708' University of Bombay, 1973.

Company wanted to make it a profitable centre of trade.[1] Following the policy of "toleration and progress", attracted large number of people of varied linguistic, religious, occupational and regional background.[2] As a result of this deliberate policy of the Company, Surat declined in importance and Bombay progressed towards the end of Eighteenth century. The main items of import were broad cloth, lead, tin, copper, coral, wine and oil, bear and sum for the factory as well as for sale.[3] This is also clear from David's account that Bombay from the very beginning was a cosmopolitan city and Bombay greatly[4] improved from the generally improved circumstances of the East India Company, owing mainly to its militarily defensible position and the security of the harbour. The Parsis were inducted into Bombay from Surat to establish a shipyard in 1735, and in 1781 it employed 500 native workers.[5] There was a steady influx of weavers, goldsmiths, ironsmiths, construction workers and traders into Bombay, following the British policy of "Tolerance" and with increasing economic opportunities in Bombay. With a growing population, it had to

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1. Ibid, p. 351.
2. Ibid, p. 371.
3. Ibid, p. 352.
4. Anonymous, 'A Description of the Port and Island of Bombay, 1724, p. 4.
5. R.A. Wadia, 'The Bombay Dock and the Wadia Master Builders, Bombay', Privately Published, 1955.

depend more and more on the mainland for its supplies.[1] The colonial policy is also reflected during the development of Bombay city. "That Bombay should bear its own expenses and bring honour and profit to the company".[2] The efforts were made to popularise trade with India and especially import of British cloth during the early rule of the Company,[3] and the English cotton industry was protected from Indian competition by high tariff duties and by ordering the people not to wear cloth manufactured in India.[4]

From various sources that are available, as noted by Morris David Morris,[5] it becomes clear that there were three chief characteristics of the population: one, its cosmopolitan character; two, migratory character and great mobility of the population of nearby areas; three the periodic role of famines and epidemics that drove people in or out of the city of Bombay. Thus, the population of Bombay fluctuated over the years, depending on the economic activity inside or outside Bombay and due to epidemics, pestilences,

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1. Anonymous, Op.cit., pp. 4, 16 and 33.
2. Company's policy as early as 1668, regarding Bombay is quoted in M.D. David, Op.cit., p. 351.
3. Ibid, pp. 350-398.
4. Ibid, p. 369.
5. Morris David Morris, Op.cit., pp. 11-12.

famine or harvesting operations.[1] The population of Bombay is assembled in the following table, wherever the data could be collected, although not always reliable.

Table I

Population of Bombay City from 1661 to 1951[3]

Period	Population	Period	Population
1661	10,000	1864	816,562
1675	60,000	1872	644,562
1715	16,000[2]	1881	733,196
1744	70,000	1891	821,764
1780	113,726	1901	766,006
1806	200,000	1906	977,822
1814	180,000	1911	976,445
1826	162,570	1921	1175,914
1830	229,000	1931	1161,383
1836	236,000	1941	1489,883
1946	566,119	1951	2329,020

1. The Imperial Gazetter of India, vol. VIII, New Co., Oxford, 1908, p. 411.
2. Outflow of population due to pestilence, M.D. David, Op.cit.
3. For the population figures and extent of variations in population see, M.D. David, Op.cit.; Morris David Morris, Op.cit.; Imperial Gazetter, Op.cit.; S.T. Sheppard, 'Bombay', The Times of India Press, 1932, etc.

Another important aspect is the average commodity foreign trade through Bombay, that emphasizes the growing importance of Bombay Island, as shown in the following table.

Table II

Average Commodity Foreign Trade Through Bombay : 1801-02 to 1870-71[1]

(in millions of Rupees)

Period	Imports	Exports	Total
1801-02	7.2	8.0	15.2
1809-10	7.3	9.8	17.1
1819-20	9.3	10.7	20.0
1829-30	14.9	20.4	35.3
1839-40	19.5	35.1	54.6
1849-50	32.4	49.9	82.3
1859-60	53.9	91.7	145.6
1860-70	119.6	261.5	381.1
1870-71	115.2	248.2	363.4

1. S.M. Edwardes, 'The Gazetteer of Bombay city and Island', Bombay, The Times of India Press, 1909. However, the composition of export and import commodities, I have not been able to locate. Although impressionistic evidence suggests that usually the raw material was exported from India and the finished and semi-finished goods were imported.

The following conclusions may be drawn from the above table:

1) It shows increasing trade, exports always greater than imports: an indication of growing importance of Bombay harbour to Britain;

2) the exports moving faster than imports, implying the drain of Indian wealth, especially if the composition of commodities taken into account. Since raw material was exported at cheaper rates than import of manufactured and semi-manufactured goods at higher costs from abroad. The biggest trade partner of India was obviously Great Britain.

1.4 A Brief History of the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry

So far there has not been any systematic attempt to write the history of the Bombay textile industry, that covers the period from 1854 to 1947.[1] But the Bombay sector of the cotton mill industry is well served with information in writings of contemporary administrators, committee and

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1. The History of Bombay mill industry has been sketched upto 1925 by S.M. Ratnagar, "Bombay Industries: The Cotton Mills", Indian Textile Journal Ltd., 1927; S.D. Mehta, 'The Cotton Mill Industry: 1854-to 1954'. The Textile Association, 1954; and S.D. Mehta, 'The Indian Cotton Textile Industries: An Economic Analysis", the Textile Association (India) Bombay, 1953 (hereforth will be referred to as CMI, ICTI respectively), are the two volumes written on All-India basis and largely undocumented. A sketch of history may be found in Morris David Morris, 'The Emergence of an Indian Labour Force in India', Oxford Univ. Press, 1965; and good information from V. Anstey, Op.cit.; D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit. and S.T. Sheppard: 'Bombay', The Times Press, 1932.

Commissions, reports, journals, personal and academic accounts.[1]

The career of Bombay cotton textile industry may well be divided into three distinct periods, for these periods reflect the vicissitudes through which the industry progressed. The periods are from 1854-1890; 1891-1922 and 1923-1947. (1) The first period reflects the growth, (2) the second period is more or less a period of stagnation, owing to large number of difficulties, (3) the last period is characterised by the painful progress.

The first[2] successful cotton textile mill was erected in 1854 in Bombay and went into production of cotton yarn in 1856, by a Parsi[3] merchant, C.N. Davar. With abundant and cheap labour, raw cotton available in India, and Indian capital, the early mills could be erected with the plans, machinery, skilled mechanics, and managers to be imported

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1. But my purpose is not to wirte a history here either, but to the extent that it has some relation to the labourside of the industrial set-up.

2. Although the first Mill, M/s. Ferguson and Cp. was started in 1817 in Calcutta, but it was not successful, besides was composite mill with distillary, foundry, oil processing operation, and a paper mill. For brief survey of these early attempts see, S.D. Mehta, CMI, pp. 3-27.

3. Parsi community proved more responsive, for their special relation with the British, especially in opium trade. See, Mehta, CMI, Ibid; D.H. Buchnan, Op.cit., and Helen B. Lamb, 'The Indian Business communities and the evolution of an Industrial class' "Pacific Affairs", 1955, 28(2), pp. 101-116.

from Britain. True, these being the pioneering attempts, the difficulties for the mill-owners were enormous, but once a few mill went into production and proved highly profitable the other people moved into the industrial ventures. The progress that the industry made from 1865 to 1947 is shown in Appendix I, with number of mills, looms and spindles, installed and the average daily employment in the Bombay industry.[1] There may have been, in fact other indicators to present the totality of the progresses of the industry such as paid-up capital, profits earned, dividends declared, the composition and quality of yarn and cloth produced, wages and relative cost of labour, but for reasons mainly of availability of data, their limited relevance to the labour problem and for the time and space available for such an attempt like this.[2]

The progress upto the American civil war has been slow, as it ought to have been due to its embryonic stage of development. By 1862, at least four spinning and weaving mills with 94,000 spindles, and 2,150 looms, were working, six other mills were under construction,[3] and it is also

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1. For the period 1856 to 1864, the information is not very definite regarding these indicators, besides the progress upto this period is not very significant.

2. The above indicators of number of mills, spindles, looms and employment are sufficient for our purpose.

3. W.H. Cassels, Cotton: An Account of its culture and in the Presidency, Bombay, 1862, pp. 344-45.

clear from the spindlage and loomage:the emphasis had been more on spinning and of coarse nature.[1] But this modest progress of the cotton mill industry caused grave concern and alarmed, the British cotton manufacturers to the extent of protesting against the protective nature of tariff in vogue on the British imports to India.[2]

The technological aspect of the production at the beginning was well taken care of: the mill were laid out with care, most modern equipment was imported, and the well qualified British managers and technicians were contracted from Lancashire. The capital was largely Indian[3] and so were the operatives, mostly from rural regions of the nearby districts. The raw cotton was also available in the upcountry regions, but was of short staple and low quality, fit for coarse yarn and coarse cloth but was cheap owing to very low transportation costs. (The capital was mobilised through managing agency system, selling shares to people who wanted to invest for profits in the mill industry. (The system was unique to India but it was not peculiar to the cotton mills or to Bombay - the managing agents controlled the majority of cotton, jute and other mills, as well as tea gardens and

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1. S.D. Mehta, CMI, p. 41; Presidency of Bombay, Annual Report, 1872-73, p. xii.
2. R.M. Martin, 'The Progress and Present State of British India', London, 1862, pp. 280-282.
3. S.D. Mehta, ICTI, passim, argues somewhat to the contrary.

coal mines.[1] In the face of dear capital the system helped to build up the industry requiring high level of investment, the industry could have otherwise been financially starved.[2] But it induced slackness, corruption and speculative fever much to the detriment of the long-term interests of the industry and its bad effects on the labour discipline.[3]

The American Civil War in 1961, blocked the supplies of raw cotton (main exporter of cotton, especially of higher counts) to Lancashire Cotton textile industry, resulting into a cotton famine. Heavy reliance came on Indian raw cotton, although of poor quality. The prices were soaring to unprecedented levels and the profits to Indian speculators in cotton trade were astronomical. This brought prosperity to the Bombay city in particular and the Bombay Presidency in general.[4] There was a 'share mania' due to speedy returns,[5] but it ----------

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1. S.T. Sheppard, 'Bombay', The Times Press, 1932, p.90.
2. The managing system will be discussed in Chapter V. For general information on the system, see, H.G. Aubery 'Industrial Investment Decision: A Comparative Analysis', Journal of Economic History, XV, No. 4, Dec. 1955, pp. 335-351; P.S. Lokanathan, 'Industrial Organisation in India', George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1935; D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 162, 172; V. Anstey, Op.cit., pp. 113-115 and 501-505; and Rutnagar, Op.cit., pp. 49-55.
3. This aspect will be developed in Chapter V.
4. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., p. 28.
5. Rutnagar, Op.cit., pp. 9-37.

did block for a while the expansion of the cotton mill industry,[1] although it kept progressing. But the Civil War came to an end, supplies from America were restored, and the Indian cotton boom collapsed. People started leaving markets, Banking system has also collapsed, prices came down sharply, all suffered - even the common man.[2] But the aftermath of the Civil War proved beneficial to the industry, as the market for Indian cloth was better now than before, as it reduced the import of British cloths to India, and a lesson to speculators who might have joined the industry. And on the whole, this helped the expansion of the industry *in* latter years, and put it on a more sound and healthy base, and by 1870, the progress was resumed. In 1874, there were 15 mills in operation providing an employment to 11,398 operatives.[3]

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1. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., pp. 28-30; P.P. Pillay, 'Economic conditions in India', 1925; Rutnagar, Op.cit., pp. 9-37; Morris D. Morris, Op.cit., pp. 25-26. But a few scholars tend to argue that the cotton textile industry also got a good share of the new wealth. See for instance, C.N. Vakil et al. 'Growth of Industries in Modern India', p. 127; N.C. Bhogendranath, 'The Development of the Cotton Textile Industries in Madras upto 1950', University of Madras, 1957, p. 1. But former view seems to be correct as there were only 10 mills from 1865 to 1871. See Appendix I.
2. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., p. 32.
3. See Appendix I.

The industry expanded rapidly until 1890, but in the mean-time the British Colonial policy towards the industry has begun to take shape. This progress of the infant cotton industry of India has become an eyesore to the British manufacturers and resentment has begun. They demanded the total abolition of import duties of nearly 5% to 10% on British goods, although there was hardly any competition from India, for India was producing, by and large, the yarn of counts less than 20's and the coarse cloth. After the findings of the Tariff Commission in 1875, the Tariff Act of 1875 was passed, keeping the import duties on British goods intact, for reasons of revenue rather than providing protection to the Indian industries, for the British policy was a proclaimed policy of 'laissez faire'. But duty was imposed on the long staple cotton from Egypt and America that mills were beginning to use, affecting adversely the production of finer quality of yarn and cloth, that might, otherwise, have come as a competitor to British cloth in Indian markets. Eventually, pressed by the patriotic interests, the colonial interests won over Indian interests, and the duties were exempted on the export of cotton and import of cotton cloth from Britain under the disguise of 'open door' policy. The Revenue stringency again forced the government to impose the duties on the British goods and a countervailing duty on Indian export goods. "Lancashire's real object was to

prevent, or at least obstruct, the future growth of the textile industries in India".[1]

The period from 1854 to 1890, in the sum, is marked by the extensive growth, by the rapid entry of new mills and a concentration of yarn production. This is clear from Appendix I, the number of mills rose from 10 in 1865 to 70 in 1890; an eight fold increase in spindlage, fourfold increase in Loomage; and employment rose approximately by 900 per cent in the corresponding period, despite the resistance that the industry was beginning to feel from the colonial rule.

The second period is characterised by a slower rate of growth of new mills, the expansion of old mills, and an increasing emphasis on weaving and a shift to finer count production. Appendix I clearly shows that mills increased in number from 67 in 1891 to 83 in 1921, an addition of 16 mills in 30 years. The geographical location of the Bombay Island must have dictated, at least to some extent, this rather slow progress in number. Daily employment, on the average increased from nearly 62 thousand to 140 thousand - more than doubled which dictates the slow rate of entry of

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(1) S.D. Saklatvala, 'History of Millowners Association: 1877-1930', BMOA, Bombay, 1931. The same point was noted by N.H. Thakkar, 'The Indian Cotton Textile Industry', Vora & Co. Ltd., Bombay, 1949, pp. 34-68, Report ITB, Evidence, p. 14, and Mehta, CHI, Chapter IV.

new mills but expansion of old ones. A shift to finer counts,[1] and an increasing emphasis on weaving is clear from the fact that during this period, the looms increased by nearly 75% whereas, spindles increased by 64%.[2]

Between 1891 to 1922, a number of factors threatened the properity of the industries: The silver currency muddle in the Japanese and Chinese market in 1893 was mainly to stabilise the British currency; the communal roits in Bombay, in 1894 Manchester succeeded in securing a duty on Indian yarn of counts above 20's at the rate of 5% ad volorem, plague in 1895 through 1898, glut in China market - the main market for Indian cotton yarn; and an excise duty at the rate of 3½% on all cotton goods in 1896, disastrous famine in the countryside,the government policy on currency in 1898 causing financial stringency in the country and the pinch of Japanese and Chinese competition being felt. All these factors tended to slow down the progress of the industry.[3] The bad conditions continued until the middle of 1904. By this time the upcountry mills were also competing in the internal market. It was hard to make profit during this

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1. Morris, D. Morris, Op.cit., p. 28.

2. Bombay Millowners Association (referred to as BMOA) Appendices from 1901-1902 to 1921-1922.

3. For details of these factors affecting the progress of the industry in the decade, 1891-1900, see Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., pp. 64-85.

decade due to unstable market conditions, short supply of labour due to plague in 1898;[1] shift from lower counts to higher counts despite the 'colonial excise duties', greater concentration on cloth production.[2]

The year 1904 was an unusual year of properity, due to recession of natural factors like famines nd plagues, better Chinese market, Swedeshi Movement of 1905 gave boost to the Indian cloth in the Indian market, which import of British cloth declined.[3] As market expanded, the employment also increased, but working hours went up due to the widespread use of electricity, production was diversified simultaneously; due to Swadeshi Movement, and increased working hours led the labour to become more restless and refractory. Because of better technology and better labour deployment and higher efficiency,[4] the margin between the Indian labour productivity vis-a-vis Japanese and Chinese productivity that was narrowing since 1905, almost diminished during this period. After 1907, the prices of Indian yarn in Chinese market declined. Besides the demand in the home-market also declined, and these conditions continued until the World War boom set into.

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1. Morris D. Morris, Op.cit., p. 49, agrees to it.
2. N.H. Thakkar, Op.cit.
3. For details, see Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., pp. 91-94.
4. Ibid, p. 95.

The effect of World War I was quite in favour of home industry. The import of cloth from Britain was cut down to considerable extent, because of shortage of transportation. Besides the War increased the demand of cloth for military purposes. The number of mills remained more or less stable, but the existing mills expanded and made profits, but new mills could not be added due to the difficulties in importing the machinary and chemicals. The evidence that the mills in Bombay earned huge profits due to war conditions is shown in the following table.

Table XII

The Profits on Cotton Goods in Bombay[1]

Year	Profits (in crores of Rupees)
1905	2.35
1909	0.16
1910	(-)0.41
1911	(-)0.51
1919[2]	10.88
1920	13.30
1921	12.22

1. Report on an Enquiry into the wages and hours of Labour in Bombay cotton mills in India, Labour Office, Government of Bombay, pub. 1923, Appendix F, p.108.

2. It will be discussed in the latter chapters that these high profits and decline in real wages of labour led to strikes in 1918-1919.

Some organisational and production method also improved during this period. New technology and especially the introduction of spinning wheels in later year of 1880's made rapid progress during 1890's and thereafter, improved methods were also applied to weaving, producing yarn and cloth of higher counts and cloths of different patterns. But it should be remembered that plain looms were in vogue in Bombay, instead of automatic looms, that were quite common in other countries during this period. This may be explained by the cheapness and easy labour supply of raw labour. Besides, some of the ills of management came under attack especially the managing agency system and jobber system.[1] More and more Indians came to be employed in the mills to the managerial and technical cadre.[2] The British colonial policy also changed a bit, but significantly after 1925, when the question of protection to Indian industries was taken up.

The third period 1923-1947 is notable for retrenchment and reduction in the number of mills, and increasing shift towards finer counts. Substantial changes took place in technology and organisation. The intervention of Government in labour-management relations became more direct.

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1. All these points will be development in the subsequent chapters.

2. See for details, Mehta, ICTI, Op.cit., Chapter III, and Mehta, CII, Chapter VIII.

The labour unrest and strikes remained on a very high pitch. Yet the industry was quite prosperous as indicated by the profits and dividends paid.[1]

In 1922, the boom ended and due to the growing competition with Japanese products in the home market as well as the markets in the East Asia forced Indian manufacturers to readjust and adapt during the next decade and half. Basic technological and organisational changes were required. The wornout machinary due to overtime war operations needed to be replaced; the formidable labour unrest and the international depression, all hit the industry a bit two hard.[2]

Nevertheless, in 1926, the Indian cotton textile mill stood fifth in number of spindles, fourth in the quantity of raw cotton consumed, third in number of persons employed, second in raw production, in the world, and that the larger share belonged to the Bombay mills.[3] Taken as a whole, the industry (of India) compared favourably as regards to building construction, modern machinary and

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1. B.J. Padshah, 'The cotton Industry of India and the Cotton Duties', ITJ, XIII, No. 147, Dec. 1902. Morris D. Morris, Op.cit., p. 30.

2. Ness Wadia, 'The Industry in Retrospect', Indian Textile Journal, Jubilee Souvenier, p. 161; Mehta, CMI, Chapters XI and XII.

3. Indian Cotton Committee Report, 1926, pp. 26-27 quoted in D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 194-230.

upto-date labour saving devices, with the mills in Lancashire.[1] In 1929, 81 mills were working with 344,433 spindles, 76,375 looms and 106,710 daily labourers in Bombay Island.[2] Although the labour costs of production during this period were somewhere between 15 per cent to 20 per cent,[3] resulting into labour saving equipment, use of short staple cotton, high machine speed, and production in each mill of a vast variety of products,[4] yet the efficiency of labour due to unstable and illiterate workers, climatic conditions, short-term profit orientation of the mill-owners, ills of managing agency system, and poor system of recruitment and administration, was quite low as compared to Japan and other countries.[5]

The attitude of the Government changed only after 1925, when excise duties were imposed on foreign goods, and in 1927, a limited protection against Japan (good for the Government too) was given, but frequent strikes of labour did not allow the industry to recover rapidly, after the

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1. "Report", conditions in the Cotton Textile Industries in India, 1926, p. 43.
2. Report of the Indian Tariff Board (ITB) Regarding the Grant of Protection to the Cotton Textile Industry, 1932, p. 22.
3. Morris, Op.cit., p. 33.
4. Mehta, ICTI, Op.cit., pp. 78-81.
5. H.D. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 205, foot note 26.

depression starting in 1923, as is shown in the decline of cotton exports.[1] But by 1929, the industry made substantial progress[2] despite these perpetual difficulties, and continued on a moderate scale until 1939, making adjustment with circumstances. The World War II beginning in 1939 gave a boost to the industry as the imports from England declined, and competition ceased to be a significant factor in the home market. Besides, the demand increased and the industry continued to progress in varied directions, although some decline after 1945 is evident in Appendix I.

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1. N.H. Thakkar, Op.cit., p. 58.
2. S.T. Sheppard, Op.cit., pp. 188-204.

CHAPTER II

RURAL LINKS OF THE LABOUR FORCE

This chapter deals with such questions as to whether the supply of labour was adequate to meet the demands of the expanding cotton textile industry? Where do these people come from? What were the socio-demographic characteristics of the labour force so mobilised? To these questions, the following analyses will provide answer.

2.1 Supply of Labour:

It has generally been argued that the Indian labour force in the early years of industrialisation has been immobile,[1] owing to the static Indian social structure as enshrined in the Indian Social Organisation based on self-sufficient village community, caste and joint-family system[2]. The genesis of such a view is probably lies in the observations of the Indian Factory Labour Commission, 1908.

> "The position of the operatives has been greatly strengthened by the fact that the supply of labour is, and has been inadequate, and there is, and has been, the present competition among employers to secure a full labour supply".[3]

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1. S.D. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., pp. 81-82, 91, 94, 97-99 150, 171-194.

2. V. Anstey, Op.cit., pp. 118-25, 281-2; S.D. Mehta, CMI, passim; about the alleged recalcitrance of Indian labour see Alexander Gerschenkron: 'Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective', New York, 1962, p. 9.

This view was further strengthened by the Royal Commission on labour that reported,

> "Throughout the greater part of its history, organised industry in India has experienced a shortage of labour. A generation ago, the shortage was apt at times to become critical. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, after the plague epidemics, the difficulties of employers were acute, especially in Bombay; and in 1905, the complaints of employers in Bengal and the United Provinces led to an official enquiry into the causes of the shortage. Thereafter, the position became easier in the factory industries, but even in these, before the war, few employers were assured of adequate labour at all seasons of the year".[1]

The scarcity of labour in Bombay Cotton textile mills is claimed upto 1921, after which, it is being agreed by all that the supply situation eased.[2]

On the contrary, there are scholars, such as D.H. Buchanan, Morris D. Morris, Daniel Thorner, A.K. Bagchi and D. Mazumdar, who through intensive statistical analysis supported by primary sources tend to show that there

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3. (from previous page) IFLC, 1908, Parliamentary Papers, LXXIV, Part II, p. 543 (Parliamentary Papers hereafter will be abbreviated as PP).

1. The Royal Commission on Labour in India (RCL hereafter), "Report", 1931, Calcutta, p. 21.

2. Mehta, CMI, chapter IX, pp. 81-83, 97-99 and 225; Oscar A. Ornate, 'Jobs and Workers in India', Ithaca, the Institute of International Industrial Labour Relations, Cornell University, 1955, p. 35.

had never been a shortage, rather there have been an abundance of labour supply adequate to the needs of the cotton mills.[1] Morris in his early attempt[2] argued that there had never been any scarcity in the cotton mills of Bombay, which is rebutted by S.D. Mehta,[3] but his arguments do not seem to be convincing.

In fact, the situation is too chaotic to form any definite and precise idea about the labour supply situation during the ealy industrialisation. It will be justified if current contentions are critically examined in the light of evidences, however scarce or chaotic, that are available.

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1. D.H. Buchnan, Op.cit., Chapters XVI and XVII, Morris D. Morris, Op.cit., Chapter IV, Daniel Thorner, 'Casual Employment of a Factory Labour Force: The case of India, 1850-1939', The Economic Weekly, Annual No. January 1957, pp. 121-124; A.K. Bagchi 'Private Investment in India: 1900-1939', Orient Longman, 1972, pp.117-50; D. Mazumdar, 'Labour Supply in the Early Industrialization: The Case of Bombay Textile Industry', The Economic History Review, August, 1973, pp. 477-96.

2. Morris, D. Morris, 'Some Comments on the Supply of Labour in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry: 1854-1951', Indian Economic Journal, vol.I, No. 2, Oct. 1953, pp. 138-152. see also Morris D. Morris, 'Labour Market in India', in W.E. Moore and A.S. Feldman 'Labour commitment and social change in Developing Areas', social Science Research Council, New York, 1960 that included the conclusions from TISCO Study by him.

3. Mehta, S.D. 'Professor Morris on Textile Labour Supply: A Note', Indian Economic Journal, I, No. 3, January 1954, pp. 333-340.

It has already been emphasised in the previous Chapter that the economic conditions on the eve of industrialisation were pretty bad, insofar as the employment situation is concerned. There is sufficient evidence to show that there was considerable migration to and from Bombay, depending on the commercial activities in Bombay, epidemics, famines or agricultural conditions and seasons in the districts surrounding Bombay. Morris[1] has shown quite convincingly that there has been no physical or social barriers (migration from rural sector to urban sector of employment) to the mobility of Indian population. But he has not considered the peculiar location and importance of Bombay Island as compared to other upcountry centres like Ahmedabad or even Calcutta,[2] in making generalisations about the mobility of Indian people. Because of the very nature of the rural economy, people, by and large, depended on agriculture, or marginally on the artisan

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1. Morris, Op.cit., pp. 39-44.

2. N.C. Chaudhry, 'Jute and Substitutes', Calcutta, 1933, pp. 45-47, claim that at least during sowing or harvesting seasons the wages in agriculture were higher and more labour had to be employed from Bihar and the United Provinces; G.H. Broughton, 'Labour in Indian Industries', London, 1924, pp. 73-74; A.K. Bagchi, Op.cit., passim; for internal and international migration, see Lalita Chakravarti, 'Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in a Dual Economy', IESHR, vol. 15, No. 3, 1978, pp. 250-327.

occupations or other menial service occupations, based on jajmani system, lack of markets, limited monetary transactions lack of means of communication, low standard of living, the influence of caste and joint family, the mobility was not as great as has been assumed by Morris. The mobility, it may be argued , with sufficient evidences, definitely increased because of the destruction of indegenous handicrafts by the foreign cheaper goods, excruciating and recurrent famines, increase in population, dissolution of courts, excessive agricultural taxes, opening up of the interior of the country by means of communications.[1] Since it is being agreed by all that most of the labour supply to the early industries was overwhelmingly from the rural areas, during the period 1854 to 1947. Naturally most of the people were 'pushed' out from the villages to the urban centres in search of employment, especially when the wages were better than what were available in the villages.[2] This explains the rapid expansion of the Bombay City population[3], and makes a point against shortage of labour supply.

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1. D.R. Gadgil, Op.cit., Chaps. III and IV, pp. 33-54.
2. See, A.R. Dagchi, Op.cit., Morris D. Morris, Op.cit., RCL, 1929, Report, Op.cit., on wages see Appendix III.
3. See Table I on Bombay City Population.

In 1864, there were 10 mills working in Bombay, with an average daily employment of about 6,000, while the population of Bombay was about 816,000.[1] The greater part of the working population would have been engaged in construction work, railways, ships, public works, and other commercial activities,[2] but the demand for about 6,000 workers for the cotton industry might have been easily met when the earlier experience or education or training was not any criterion of selection and wages were better than other occupation.[3] Besides the low productivity of labour in rural areas might have helped the people to migrate in large number either due to 'posh factors' from the village or 'pull factors' towards the town.[4]

Another factor that made the Indian labour force more mobile during these years was the British colonial policy. Just as in the field of industrial production, it naturally led to the favouring of British, or rather

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1. See, Morris, Op.cit.
2. In fact, the relative employment in different occupation calls for an extensive research which to a large extent will clarify the issue of scarcity versus abundance of labour supply.
3. See Appendix III.
4. No direct evidence is available. After independence of India, large number of studies have been conducted and it has been found that both factors were at work with varying emphasis depending on number of factors. See for instance, Charles A. Mayer, Op.cit.

European traders and industrialists.[1] So in the field of labour supply, it led to a policy of increasing the mobility of Indian labour with a view to pushing it into British managed plantations and factories[2] - a consequence of agricultural reveme policy.

All told, however, there is as much scarcity of statistical data regarding the supply of labour, as that of qualitative evidences. The data collected by Morris to form his index on wages[3] from 1875 to 1947, is defective, if it is put to the close scrutiny. However, his qualitative evidences gathered upto 1885 are convincing and shows that there has not been any evidence to the contrary.[4] In fact, the second Factory Commission of 1885 provided some information in which the scarcity of experienced

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1. Sir Reginald Coupland, 'India: A Restatement', London, 1945, pp. 53-54.

2. A.K. Bagchi, Op.cit., p. 116.

3. Morris, Op.cit., Appendix II, table XX, p. 223. The index is based on data coming from a single mill which cannot be a representative of all mills, and the relation of wages to employment or supply of labour is rather facile. Thus data suffers the representativeness of the sample, lower limit of wages is taken to make it, neglecting variability, price situation has not been taken care of, market conditions are considered perfect, a wrong assumption considering the backwardness of the operatives and number of other factors. Besides he has failed to explain if there was no scarcity, why wages remain stable upto 1922, and why not declined in the face of abundance supply.

4. Morris, Op.cit., pp. 51-53.

labour is claimed, but not the scarcity of unskilled labour, mainly due to the fact of rapidly expanding mill industry in need of experienced hands.[1]

Another source[2] that also reveals that there would have been no short supply of labour, although it might not have been equally abundant everywhere: 'Generally speaking, a picture of labour abundance and not of labour scarcity emerges from the answers given by the mill operatives'.[3] Royal Commission on Labour in 1892 tells the same story of abundant supply of unskilled labour, reported the presence of about 25 per cent badlis (substitutes) working every day, showing a high rate of absenteeism.[4]

The only period when scarcity, in fact, was felt was in 1897, when the bubonic plague erupted, killing thousands of people and ejecting the fear-striken people in general, and operatives in particular, from the Island. As a result the mill-operatives were quite short in supply, despite all the efforts by the employers to keep their

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1. FC, 1885, p. 27.
2. IFC, 1890, Bombay, as interpreted by Baniprasanna Misra in 'Factory Labour During the Early Years of Industrialization', The Indian Economic and Social History Review (IESHR), July-Sept., 1975, pp. 203-228.
3. Ibid., p. 222.
4. RCL, 1892, p. 130.

machines operating. Simultaneously the famines in the countryside in 1896 and 1902 worked in the reverse direction and the 'would have been' scarcity was overcome.

But this is to be pointed out that the period 1895-1914 shows at least periodic scarcity of labour in Bombay, specially in hot weather and the marriage seasons.[1] In fact, the period from 1901-1914 shows a rise in wages vis-a-vis rise in employment,[2] suggests a mild extent of short supply of labour. The increase during these fourteen years, in average monthly money[3] wages, was of the extent of 31% and that of real wages[4] of 25% although variation existed in between these two year ends, and employment rose by 51%.[5] It is during this period that scarcity of labour is popularised by the BMOA.[6] These undercurrents of shortage are caught by the Indian Factory Labour Commission, 1908.[7]

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1. D.R. Gadgil, Op.cit., p. 123.
2. Employment includes double shifts from same mills.
3. Morris, Op.cit., Appendix II on wages index.
4. See Appendix II.
5. See Appendix I.
6. See for the sources complaining for the scarcity of labour during these years; Morris D. Morris, Op. cit., pp. 59-60 and his arguments regarding the chaotic state, when the market underwent number of favourable and unfavourable signs.
7. IFLC, 1908, p. 19.

The rise in money wages are explained away by Morris assuming that a 'Dear Food Allowance' was given to compensate for the rise in prices, but even after excluding the effect of price rise, the real wages tend to show nearly a rate of growth in wages of 2% per annum, which is significant considering that institutions like trade unions or state interventions were absent, which could have affected the rise in wages. Here emerges a paradox that could not be explained away.

The reasons seem to be that the assumption of perfect market; and free operation of demand and supply law is at odds with the real situation; lack of communication between labour and the market, pressing factors in the countryside, working conditions in the mills, housing and sanitation conditions in the "chawls" in Bombay, Swadeshi movement affecting the consciousness of labour[1] and most importantly the difference between the 'casual' status[2] of workers and the experienced workers with long years of service to their credit[3], and the overriding influence of jobbers[4] on the wages, who could create

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1. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., pp. 91-94.
2. Danial Thorner, Op.cit., pp. 121-124.
3. D. Mazumdar, Op.cit., pp. 477-496.
4. R.K. Newman, 'Social Factors in the Recruitment of the Bombay Millhands' in K.N. Chaudhuri and C.J. Dewey (eds), "Economy and Society", Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 277-295, especially pp. 281-287.

scarcity even when there was plenty of labour outside. These undercurrents were basically the cry for a skilled, experienced, stable and disciplined labour force and not that of raw floating labour force, especially when the profits were difficult to make.[1]

This situation can further be explained if we devide the population of workers into three categories: (i) those who had come as 'target workers'[2] for the time-being employment; (ii) those who had come to stay and settle in the centre itself,[3] and (iii) those who came to Bombay for employment and wished to retire eventually to their native places.[4] If one would expect such a composition of work-force in 1960's, any period between 1890's to 1947, would have been more clear about it. For instance in 1890's in a selected sample though of small size, carried by IFC, 1892 and interpreted by Misra,[5] shows that 50% of the total sample had no links with the villages, or have severed all links from village; 20% were those who

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1. See Table III.
2. Mehta, CMI, pp. 118-119.
3. Morris, Op.cit., Table VIII, p. 85; the most stable one, whose proportion seems to have been rising.
4. See for details, K.M. Patel 'Rural Labour in Industrial Bombay', Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1963.
5. Baniprasanna Misra, Op.cit., pp. 203-228.

had house in the villages and had no land (weak link), and finally those who had 'strong' links with the villages (30%), having interests both in land and villages.[1] If it is assumed that the 'target workers' were even less than 30%, during this period, it is a sufficient cause of scarcity of stable and experienced workers.

The predominance of male workers, always more than 70%[2] of the total mill operatives, and low sex ratio in the city of Bombay shown in various census reports strengthen the belief that there has always been some mill-hands to maintain 'strong' and 'weak links' with the native villages and for at least some of them, but significant, having temporary attachment to the industry causing much of absenteeism and turnover, and were responsible for the explicit abundance. As has been noted and will be discussed in subsequent analysis that this instable labour force has been responsible for these undercurrents. The wages went up because the employers were ready to pay (and the piece-rate workers will tend to earn more) wages who were

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1. For details, the study conducted in Kanpur textile workers explains that the social setting of the workers is in the 'rural nexus' and economic setting in the 'urban nexus'. V.B. Singh, "Wage Patterns, Mobility and Savings of Workers in India", Lalvani Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973.

2. Morris, Op.cit., Table IX, p. 66.

more stable and experienced than the ones who were migratory.[1] Why the migratory or casual sector was abundantly supplied with owes itself to the fact that mills were offering higher wages than other occupations available in the city.[2] For the very early years, the wage rates in Bombay mills were higher (before the First World War) by nearly 150% over the rate of rural field labour in the most significant 'Labour Catchment Areas' (LCA) for the mills, that is, Konkan and Deccan Districts. Despite the high cost of living in Bombay, the real wages in mills were higher than rural wages. Besides, the rural employment was seasonal providing 151 days work in a year, against the continuous work in the factory for the stable labour force, and on the average 18 day's work for the substitutes,[3] leading to 216 day's work in a year. If despite such highly favourable economic conditions existing in Bombay as compared to rural areas, and still people maintained their links with the villages, explaining nothing but the effect of the social structure.[4]

1. D. Mazumdar, Op.cit., RCL 1892, p. 5; Report of the ITS, I, pp. 133-145.
2. See Appendix III; Also RCL 1892, p. 128; IFLC, 1908, para 28.
3. D. Mazumdar, Op.cit., p. 470.
4. Noted by K.M. Patel, Op.cit.

Another factor that did not allow the free play of supply and demand was the influence of jobber who could create scarcity inside the mill,[1] while outside the mill plenty existed and the 'badli system' worked to the jobber's advantage; the responsibility of the management side of the total situation.

Another factor that might have affected the stability and supply of the labour force, is concerned with the working and living conditions, proving village a better place to live in provided sufficient income is forthcoming.[2]

The money wages rose sharply during 1917 to 1920 period but during the War, they remained stable, and because of price rise induced by the War, the real wages declined by nearly 15%.[3] There is no question of shortage of labour, rather suggests more and easy supply. In fact, unemployment in the industry was beginning to be felt.[4] The strike of 1918-19, resulted into a success and more wages were given to the workers, clearly reflected in the rise of real wages in 1919 - a 5% rise over 1918. The

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1. R.K. Newman, Op.cit.
2. These conditions will be dealt with in Chapter IV.
3. See Appendix II.
4. Morris, Op.cit., pp. 60-62.

labour movement had come to stay and it tended to push the wages up despite widespread unemployment.

During 1920's and thereafter, there is no disagreement that there has ever been short supply of labour, although restlessness among workers had been there.[1]

Thus, it may be concluded that there has always been sufficient supply of raw and casual labour but, the scarcity of skilled and stable labour force existed for most of the period upto 1914, excluding quite early years when labour in cotton industry was not much in demand. The role of colonial government[2] was in favour of mobility owing to their interests, if not in Bombay, then in other centres or industries or plantations, mainly due to excessive revenue demands on the agriculturists. It is also clear that the village links[3] (social structure) acted, though not in very large measure, but to a significant level against mobility. The larger share of this state is due to the employers' policies.[4]

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1. The rise in real wages owe much to the labour organisation and state intervention, although the wages declined during 1934-37, but mainly owing to world wide peak of depression, from 1940 to 1946 due to price rise as a result of World War II.
2. This role of the Government will become more clear in subsequent chapters as to how it hindered the industrial development and its corrollary the unemployment and its effect on the stability of labour force.
3. This point will become more clear when we proceed to the subsequent analysis.
4. Employers policies will be emphasised to show that how they created indisciplined labour force.

2.2 Place of Origin of the Labour Force:

To the question; where did this labour force of Bombay cotton textile industry come from, no definite answer can be given before the Census of 1901 - there is little evidence to show it.[1] But there is a piece of evidence[2] which is being cautiously interpreted by a scholar to throw some light on the origin of these wokers[3] which is modified by another scholar.[4] This Distribution was found like this:

Table IV

Sources of Supply of Bombay Industrial Worker: 1890.[5]

Area		Number of Workers		Percentage	
Ratnagiri	Konkan	16	22	35	48
Colaba		6		13	
Nasik			1		2
Bombay			9		20
Poona			5		11
Sholapur			1		2
United Provinces			7		15
Unspecified			1		2
T o t a l			46		100

1. Morris, Op.cit., p. 62.
2. The Indian Factory Commission, 1890, "Report", Bombay. The Commission conducted a survey mainly to assess the hours of work in the factory to form a Government policy on industrial workers, but it did provide some information about the origin and nature of the workforce. 47 workers were taken from the 18 mills of Bombay out of a total of 96.
3. Baniprasanna Misra, Op.cit., pp. 203-228.
4. P.S. Gupta, 'Factory Labour During the Early Years of Industrialisation: A Comment', IESHR, vol. 13, 1976, pp. 107-108.
5. Baniprasanna Misra, Op.cit., p. 211.

A few interesting features may be extracted from the above table, despite its doubtful representativeness:

The largest number of workers came from the Konkan districts, about 48%, 20% from Bombay, implying that as early as 1890, Bombay-born population was taking part in the cotton mill labour force, and that some stability existed among the workers. The United Provinces represented about 15%,[1] of the operatives, which showed that migration from as much as 750 miles was taking place as early as 1890, despite the underdevelopment of means of communication.[2] The rest operatives were sent by the nearby Decan districts. If measured in terms of distance from Bombay, the 101 to 200 mile circle sent the largest population, nearly 50%, and the rest of India only 50%. But this is interesting that representation of the areas distant 1 to 100 miles contributed very low proportion.

Buchanan states that the settled population in Bombay in 1872 was 31.1% which declined to 16% in 1921.[3] If this is true then it shows that migratory content of the

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1. This high percentage is doubtful mainly because of smallness of sample size, as will be shown as wrong in the subsequent pages.
2. Why there was less representation of nearby districts of less than 100 miles can be explained only by the conditions that existed in the rural sector. See the concept of 'LCA' in Lalita Chakravarti, Op.cit.
3. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit.

population was increasing. This shows that population from rural regions was becoming more mobile, thus also implies that the rate of mobility during the earlier years would have been less. He* also states that the highest migrant content was caught by the Bombay cotton textile mills, which were largely landless labours.[1]

After 1890 evidence, we have no record of the place of origin of the Bombay mill operatives, unless the Census of 1911, 1921, 1931 provide sufficient information. Morris[2] constructed two tables to show the percentage of operatives coming from different districts and different distances. (Table V and VI).

The inferences that can be derived from these tables are as follows: The largest proportion of mill-hands came from the 101-200 miles circle - majority of which from Konkan and especially Ratnagiri - where rural economic conditions were quite depressed.[3] This is followed by the Deccan districts. Other areas from Gujarat contributed significantly low proportion, despite the fact that the

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* ibid

1. D.R. Gadgil, Op.cit., pp. 83; 128; Also K.M. Patel, passim.

2. Morris, Op.cit., Tables VI and VII, p. 63. For weakness of the census figure, see V. Anstey, Op.cit., p. 42.

3. Director of Land Records and Agriculture: Report on Economic Conditions of the Masses of the Bombay Presidency (1888), Patel, Op.cit., p. 2.

Table V

Place of Origin of Cotton-Mill Workforce: 1911-1931[1]

Place of origin (miles from Bombay)	Per cent of total mill hands		
	1911	1921	1931
1 - 100	7.48	5.13	3.62
101 - 200	63.44	50.07	38.26
201 - 300	2.68	4.98	4.71
301 - 400	3.37	2.67	1.30
401 - 500	0.62	3.48	1.98
501 - 750	0.28	1.50	0.99
750 and more	3.05	10.65	14.62
Unidentified migrants	8.16	2.67	8.19
Born in Bombay	10.92	18.87	26.33
T o t a l	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table VI

Districts Providing Main Supply of Cotton-Mill Work Force: 1911-1931.[2]

District	Distances from Bombay (miles)	Per cent of total mill hands		
		1911	1921	1931
Ratnagiri (Konkan)	101 - 200	49.16	35.53	25.37[3]
Satara (Deccan)	101 - 200	7.27	6.63	5.15
Kolaba (Konkan)	1 - 100	6.22	4.47	3.04
Poona (Deccan)	101 - 200	5.65	6.18	5.72
Kolhapur (Deccan)	301 - 400	3.07	1.85	0.51
Ahmednagar (Deccan)	201 - 300	1.46	2.99	2.01
United Provinces	Over 750	3.05[4]	9.42	11.82
Total of Above Districts		75.88	67.07	53.62

Notes continued on the next page

proportion of Gujarati mill-owners' was high.

With the passage of time, increasingly the mill-hands came from more distant districts. For instance, the proportion of United Province in the total labour force increased over time, and the proportion of nearby regions decreased.[5] But there is an exception insofar as Ratnagiri and Kolaba (Konkan) districts are concerned, that in 1935[6], these districts represented 49.76% as against 30.52% in 1931. This was due to the retrenchment of the workers largely from these districts, following the strikes of 1929, thereafter the percentage stabilised. Even in 1940, the percentage was not different: 49.6%.[7]

(Footnotes combined for both p. 58 and 59)

1. Morris, Op.cit., p. 63, see his Appendix IV for sources and discussion of methods of construction. The Census did not provide such information.
2. Morris, Op.cit., p. 63, and his Appendix IV.
3. This decline is due to large scale retrenchment after the 1928 and 1929 strikes and replacement by Harijans as strike brokers, K.M. Patel, Op.cit.
4. Understatement of migrants reporting from only two districts, Morris, Op.cit., p. 63, n.87.
5. This is in contrast to an observation from the coal mine industries, where initially the labour force came from nearby villages and the percentage of distant places increased during War years only, thereafter it remained in theregion of 90%. C.P. Simmons, 'Recruitment and Organising an Industrial Labour Force in Colonial India: The Case of the Coal Mine Industry, C.1880-1939', IESHR, vol.13, No. 4, 1976, pp. 456-486.
6. Report on an Inquiry into working class family Budget in Bombay City, 1935, p. 4.
7. R.G. Gokhale, 'The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker', Bombay Millowners' Association, 1957, pp. 117-118.

It may, in general, be stated that the proportion of the labour from Konkan districts in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry had been fairly large, but it declined until 1931, after which it rose to previous levels as has been suggested by the surveys of 1933 and 1940.[1] The proportion of the Bombay-born population in the labour force increased. The share of migrants from U.P. to textile mill also increased. All these trends reflect that over the year, the labour force became mobile from distant places, and concurrently the stable, urbanised labour also increased. Yet, the operatives maintained their rural links, and the labour population largely remained semi-settled,[2] but they were not mere agriculturists.[3]

But the appropriate question have arisen as to why the Ratnagiri district or the circle of the 101-to 200 miles contributed the larger share to the Bombay labour force and not the areas as close as the 1 to 100 miles or the State like Gujarat? There is no explicit information on this point. It may, however, be assumed that the jobbers that were probably recruited from railway workshops and construction, to the Bombay cotton mills might have come from these

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1. Refer to foot note no. 6 and 7 of previous page.
2. K. Patel, Op.cit., p. 7.
3. RCL, 1931, Report, p. 12.

areas.[1] They naturally might have brought their village folk and kinsmen to these new openings of employment. In fact, there are certain evidences that the recruitment policy was based on personal acquantance of the jobbers to operatives rather than merit or experience. This system survived even after Independence and after the Employment Exchange and Decasualisation schemes were operative.[2] Another reason is the bad economic conditions in these areas that 'pushed' the people to urban employment.[3]

These trends, whatever they are, reflect one thing very clearly that the large distance has not been any barrier to labour mobility, provided there is someone who could look after the migrants from the village to the city. Obviously the jobbers and other relatives or village people who had same socio-cultural background and had come earlier to the city could take care of this responsibility, especially in the absence of any institutional arrangement.

Another feature that is clear from these tables is that the proportion of the Bombay settled millworkers was

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1. R.K. Newman, 'Labour organisation in the Bombay Cotton Mills: 1918-1929 (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Sussex, 1970, p. 34) shows that such relationship existed going by the proportion based on caste and linguistic groups. This is being quoted in Gail Omvedt, 'Non-Brahmins and Communists in Bombay', EPW, April 21, 1973, pp. 749-759.
2. K. Patel, Op.cit., pp. 40-41.
3. K. Patel, Op.cit., pp. 17-21.

increasing. This is clear from the following table.

Table VII

Proportion of Total Bombay Population and Mill-hands Born in Bombay: 1911-1931[1]

Year	Total Population (Per cent)	Total mill-hands (per cent)
1911	19.6	10.92
1921	16.0	18.87
1931	24.6	26.33

This shows that mill-hands born in Bombay increased faster than the total Bombay born population, implying that more and more mill-operatives were settling down in Bombay as compared to the general population.[2] But it is necessary to note that operatives from distant places showed more tendency to settledown in the city than the ones who stayed nearer, as is clear from the proportion of Ratnagirians settled population remained almost stable over the seven decades.[3]

1. Morris, Op.cit., Table VIII, page 65; the progress of settlement would have been slow before 1911.

2. There is a possibility that these two groups are having differential fertility rate, but as noted by Kinglay Davis that poorer people show higher birth rate, and as we noted earlier the Bombay mill-operatives were better off economically than the other general labourers in Bombay city.

3. K. Patel, Op.cit., Table i, p. 13. From 16.3% of the total Ratnagiri operatives in 1881 to 18.1% in 1951

2.3 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Labour Force

The next issue that demands attention is: what were the socio-demographic characteristics of the labour force in the Bombay Cotton Textile Mills? That is the sex and age composition, literacy, caste and ethnic composition, and the religious composition.

Appendix IV, shows the distribution of Men, Women and Children from 1884 to 1947. A look at these figures will provide an easy conclusion, that in the Cotton mills of Bombay, the proportion of female varied between 20% to 25% until after 1931, when the Factories Act restricted the employment for them in the second and third shifts. If compared with other countries, especially with Japan,[1] it becomes quite clear that there had been a preponderance of female over males, contrary to the trend in India. This is one of the reasons for the competitive position of Japan as compared to other countries in cotton products. It is argued that the employment of females in low proportion in India has cultural reasons, as a result only low caste, or at least more preponderance of low caste females in total number of female operatives, are employed in the factories, the middle caste or high caste females are insignificant in these categories of employment.[2] This

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1. Bombay Labour Office (BLO, hereafter), 1934, p. 10.
2. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 213. For Bombay see Census reports of Bombay city giving religion, caste, and sex distribution for the years of 1911, 1921 and 1931.

becomes even more clear when compared with up-country mills where the proportion of women is even more low: the high proportion in Bombay is largely due to the high cost of living, cosmopolitan character of the city, and having high proportion of diserted women.[1]

It is further argued that females were employed largely in the spinning departments, but there is a representation in small measure in such occupations as ring piecers, doffers, gaiiors and farwallas and occasionally in weaving sheds.[2]

There is no clear evidence as to why the industrial employment of particular occupation was selective in nature, insofar as sex is concerned. The sex ratio in the city of Bombay has always been against the women; it 2, from the very beginning, because wage earners moved into the city alone, leaving their families behind - this again explains the social customs dis-favouring the women employment, especially among high cast women. It is a common knowledge even today. The other reason of their being in low proportion in the mills is that they were considered by the

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1. Numerous BLO Surveys between 1921-1934. For nineteenth century, some information may be had from Jones, F.C. 1885, p. 34; Mr. Moos BCL, 1892, p. 13, Morris, Op.cit., p. 69.

2. B.H. Saklatvale, IFEC 1908, II, p. 82.

employers as unstable and irregular workforce, because of early marriage and children, and house hold duties to perform, and they are reluctant to employ low caste male and female.[1] Their proportion declined after 1951 mainly due to their legal exclusion from the night shifts and partially through retrenchment during the 1930's to meet the challange of Depression leading to rationalization and economies.

To the fact that females were employed in certain categories of jobs and were excluded from others is that they are largely employed in those departments that did not affect the main operations and does not involve the use of costly machinary.[2] They did not find favour because the law had restrictions on the working conditions of female while there was not significant difference in their wages as compared to male[3] who were in sufficient supply.[4]

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1. B.H. Saklatvala, IFLC, 1908, II, p. 82. But this fact can be dismissed as the industry progressed on more sound industrial organisational norms, see also Morris, Op.cit., p. 69, n.107.
2. BMOA, 1875, 1875-76, p. 75; Morris, Op.cit., p. 69.
3. FC 1890, p. 3.
4. Morris, Op.cit., p. 69.

The proportion of children had always been small[1] as compared to other countries like Britain at the similar stage of industrialisation. The reason seems to be that in India the male labour was also cheap, whereas in Britain the labour cost was high and children were cheaper for their work, the necessity of which might have been felt to a less extent. Besides, in India the proportion of children is not clear because of changing definition of an employable child,[2] and has always been reported less than 5%[3] not only in Bombay but in other industrial centres of India also.[4] The proportion declined after 1915, and in 1930's one could not see any child working in the Bombay Cotton textile Industry.[5]

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1. There is a contrary evidence in 1890, that there were large number of children, because they were always underestimated due to several restrictions on the employment of children, from at least 1881 Factories Act. See for decussion, P.S. Gupta, Op.cit, IESHR, vol. 13, 1976, pp. 107-108. See also Rajni-kant Das, 'Factory Legislation in India, 1923, pp. 5-14; who states that increase in children after 1870's, which led to legislation scheme 1874-81, mainly due to Lancashire protest. See D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 213.
2. According to Factory Act of 1881, age was 7-11, in 1891, 9-13 and in 1922 14-17. If so (7-11 age) the proportion in 1870's must have been above 10%. J.M. Maclean, 'A Guide to Bombay,' Bombay 1880, p. 216.
3. See Appendix IV.
4. C.P. Simmons, Op.cit., IESHR, 13(4), 1976, pp.456-86.
5. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 213.

This is possible that violation of law against child labour employment from time to time might have led to understate the age of children, either by children, their guardians, or by their employers.[1] Their low percentage may be explained besides the provision and enforcement of child Acts, by their being less useful as they acted as helpers and the technical demands were too high for their age - they could have found better employment oppurtunities in the city like house servants, work on small hotels or as 'khanawala' etc.

It may be concluded that the age and sex composition has largely been in favour of able bodied males above the age of 15 years or 17 years, although the migratory pattern shows that most of them come to Bombay as labourer between the age of 11 to 20.years, but they had to wait to find their coveted job in the cotton mills only when they fulfilled the demand of law in regards to age and sex.[2]

Regarding the literacy of the operatives, no specific information is available. Its importance in industry is obvious, although the effect of literacy varies with the kind of industry. For instance, education is less important in cotton textile industry, as compared to

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1. See for discussion, Morris, Op.cit., p. 70, n.112.
2. K. Patel, Op.cit., pp. 30-31.

mechanical industry,[1] depending on the kind of technology and it is known that the technology required in textile industry is simple, comprehensible to the illiterate, although its effect on efficiency is obviously positive.

The Royal Commission on Labour in India reported in 1931, "In India, nearly the whole mass of industrial labour is illiterate, a state of affairs which is unknown in any other country of industrial importance".[2]

Similar observation was made by the Textile Enquiry Committee in 1941. It is said, "nothing impressed us more during our tours of the various cotton textile centres of this province (Bombay) than the almost complete absence of education among workers".[3]

If such situation existed in 1931 or 1941, the level of literacy would have been, if anything, lower than this in preceeding years. This owes greatly to the working and living conditions, general poverty of the masses, and more importantly the attitude of the employers and the government. The colonial rule did not favour the

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1. R.D. Lambert, 'Workers, Factories and Social Change', Asia Publishing House, 1963, pp. 45-47.
2. RCL, 'Report', 1961, vol. I, part 1, p. 27.
3. Report of the Textile Enquiry Committee, 1940, p. 279.

literacy, or technical education.[1] There are some evidences of the existence of schools in the factory complexes for the children of the operatives, but they were abused by employing 'half-timers' in the factories, or a tactic to lure the children to factory work.[2]

According to the survey conducted by R.G. Gokhle, the percentage of literates in the industry in Bombay in 1940 was 29.7% while in 1950, it rose to 42.5%, and that the level of education among mill workers was higher than people in general in Bombay city.[3] It reveals that there would have been a cumulatively higher proportion of literates among the operatives over the period of time, and that literacy is becoming growingly a significant factor. Its effect on the commitment of a worker is obvious[4] provided the level of education is low, if it is higher it will tend a worker to move to better job, where education is a more important factor in recruitment.[5]

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1. R.I. Crane, 'Technical Education and Economic Development in India before World War I', in C.A. Anderson and M.J. Bowman (eds.) "Education and Economic Development" (London, 1966), pp. 167-203. J.R. Cunningham 'Education' in L.S.S.O'Malley (ed.) "Modern India and the West", pp. 138-187.
2. Buchanan, Op.cit., passim.
3. R.G. Gokhale, 'The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker', 1957, p. 23.
4. Muthuchidambaran, "Commitment and Motivation of Blue-Colour Workers in India", IJIR, vol. 7, No.4, 1972, pp. 569-587.
5. K. Patel, Op.cit., p. 125.

The analysis of caste system becomes increasingly important when it is argued that the caste-based rural society tend to impede the progress of industrialisation as there exists different sets of institutions as compared to the set of institutions required for the industrial way of life. The caste composition of the work force will also throw light on the proposition that the depressed classes (that are formed largely of low castes) tend to move first into the factory industry as factory labour, due to the abhorence of the high caste Hindus to manual work, who in fact have been higher in economic status besides the social status. But this process over the period of time have to be diffused and it makes any analysis based on caste quite chaotic. Besides, the 'Varna' model of caste classification got mixed up with numerous jatis, and is difficult to define the caste as occupational functional group in the traditional society.[1] But it is agreed that low caste groups of all kinds did constitute an overwhelming majority of migrants to Bombay from an early date.[2]

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1. Morris, Op.cit., p. 71; M.N. Srinivas, "Social Anthropology and the Study of Rural and Urban Societies", The Economic Weekly, XI, special No, January 1959, pp. 133-140; M.D. Morris, "Caste and the Evolution of the Industrial Work-force", Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, CIV, No.2, April, 1950, pp. 124-133.

2. Morris, Op.cit., 1905, pp. 23 and n.116.

Where caste distinction is difficult, it is equally difficult to find the proper unit in the industry for analytical purpose.[1] On the factory level the occupational functional groups such as doffers, weavers, spinners etc. may be such units.[2]. But the paucity of data on both the units of analysis are indeed badly missing.[3] Specially the caste is so mixed up with language, region or religion groups as to make it too difficult to separate, once these are separated, it will be wise to find out how the caste groups are correlated to the industrial occupational functional groups.

According to Morris, the low caste or depressed classes in India did not move first into the industry, rather there had been evidences to show that the percentage of 'untouchable' increased over the years, starting with an insignificant proportion of the total labour force in the Bombay cotton textile industry. His analysis is based on the census data which he himself admits to be defective due to various reasons. He admits the proportion of depressed classes in the total population during 1864 to 1881,

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1. B.K. Newman, Op.cit., 1979, p. 288.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 278.

in the range of 59 to 64%, whereas his census data of untouchables shows a range between 3.97 to 6.36% of the total Bombay city population, to this category and proportion he makes the base of his analysis.

On the contrary there are evidences to show that it is the 'depressed classes' that include overwhelmingly the lower castes, which moved first into the industry[3], and that the Bombay-born population liked the manual job in the factories.[4] The percentage of Bombay-born mill workers were less represented vis-a-vis the proportion in the total Bombay population, in the mill industry, and trend from 1911 to 1931 is on the increase.[5] This suggests that the proportion of Bombay-born mill workers during the earlier years of industrialisation would have been less. This implies that more people would have come from villages and with more traditional caste biases. In her work on

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1. Morris, Op.cit., 1965, p.p. 71-72.
2. Ibid, Table X, p. 72.
3. C.A. Myers, and Subbiah Kannappan, 'Industrial Relations in India', 2nd ed., Bombay 1970, chapt. III, esp. pp. 91-92; Shiva Rao, 'Labour in India' Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 1944, p. 128; 'Bombay Migrants', Hindu Weekly Review, 13 July 1964, p. 7.
4. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 458.
5. See Table VII.

Ratnagiri workers in Bombay textile mills, K. Patel shows that 'Brahmins do not join the industry very readily,' in her sample Brahmin constitute 1.2%.[1] She also shows, basing her arguments on the data provided by Presidency Gazetter that formerly it was chiefly 'humbis' (low caste) who went out of the district (Ratnagiri) to find employment in the factories. Very few Brahmins, who usually owned best land, left their villages later in search of employment, and those who did were mostly absorbed in administration, offices and military services.[2]

The situation may be briefed like this: As a result of decline of the handicrafts,[3] the pressure on land, due to population increase and loss of artisan employment, excessive land tax policy, increased the unemployment and thus pushed the people out of land, who owned land, usually uppercastes owned land[4], or those Marathas who were in military service[5] must not have naturally moved first to the

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1. K. Patel, Op.cit., p. 43.
2. Ibid, p. 16. Her study is based on first-hand information collected by her, has to be better than the distorted historical data and evidences.
3. See D.R. Gadgil, Op.cit., Chapter III.
4. K. Patel, Op.cit., p. 18.
5. Both occupations were highly prestigious in the traditional rural structure.

occupation, based on manual work, was hated by the upper caste Hindus. Thus the marginal farmer or largely the landless labour, village servants, whoewem largely the the low-caste people, moved in search of whatever job they could get, especially assisted in their search by the jobbers. But with growing unemployment, and better opportunities, or at least the expectation of it, shown by the jobbers[1] more and more people from different upper castes moved in.

The census always tabulated mill hands from a district, if there were any to report.[2] This leaves the possibility of those worker who were present in the mill, and then census took place in the districts and were not included there. Besides, the column 'general labour' includes those who stated themselves as 'mazdoor', many of whom are likely to be mill-workers. There is another possibility of people not stating their occupation and caste, or reporting as high caste, owing to the prestige bias.[3] These reasons obviously deflated the number of low caste operatives,

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1. See R.K. Newman, Op.cit., 1979, pp. 287-290.
2. Patel Kunj, Op.cit., pp. 11-25.
3. Census Reports state that who came from Bombay Presidency Maratha Region to cotton mills adopted the caste title 'Maratha' including those of low castes.

especially the immigrants from distant places. Any analysis based on such data, in all probability, has to be defective.

Morris seems to be a bit too loose in employing the notion of caste, making two categories of operatives into 'untouchables' and 'the high caste', Majority of Marathas belonged to the low caste, most important being 'Kundis' who were landless labour before coming to the mills. As such Morris' analysis created more confusion rather than removing it. It is thus implied here that the preindustrial structure is carried over to the new emerging social structure.

Although there exists no historical evidence regarding religion and caste, it is too dogmatic to conclude as Morris did that caste is virtually irrelevant to the recruitment, utilisation, and behavior of the labour force in industry.[1] The truth is that we do not know one way or the other.

The circumstantial evidence, however, suggests that ties of jati or kinship may well have been alive in the industrial environment. It is admitted by Morris also that certain untouchables are concentration in certain low-paid sections and almost absent in sections like the weaving sheds. Besides the volume of impressionistic comment about

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1. Morris, Op.cit., p. 132.

caste as a determinant factor in factory occupation exists, at least some of the comments coming from the people who would not have been likely to confuse jati with other groupings.[1]

More important is the fact that the jobber, the agent who organised the transition from village society to the factory loom, operated at a level which could have linked the jati with the functional groups inside the mill: the migrant villagers who came into jobber's gang through jati or kinship connections were employed in the functional groups which was the jobbers' limited area of responsibility in the mill. So long as the jobber arranged recruitment and the employer refrained from distributing the layout of the mill by rationalisation or technical change (which remained at a very insignificant level at least upto 1920's), the social tradition of the workers could be transferred to the mill and accommodated to its technology. The absence of caste tensions, which Morris takes to be the sign of the absence of caste consciousness, may in fact be

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1. R.K. Newman, Op.cit.; A.K. Rice, 'Productivity and Social Organisation: The Ahmedabad experiment', Tavistock, London, 1959; V. Parthasastry, 'Caste in South-Indian Textile Mill', Economic Weekly, Aug. 16, 1958, p. 1083; Uma Ramaswamy, 'Tradition and Change among industrial workers', EPW, Annual No., Feb. 1979, pp. 367-376, etc.

a sign of the ease with which caste had become the part of factory organisation.[1]

Beside the census tables,[2] special surveys reveal some clustering of caste in different departments - reflect that people tended to associate people with their background.[3] This may also point to the tendency of clustering on functional levels. Besides, the fact that untouchables tended to be employed on unclean and low-paid occupations like sweepers. Nieboff[4] and Lambert[5] both found a tendency of caste at the extremes of the traditional heirarchy to occupy similar relative positions in factories.

BMOA[6] in its survey in 1940 not only found high proportion of Harijans but a clustering in departments like ring spinning. Similarly, Muslims in weaving sheds and

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1. R.K. Newman, Op.cit., p. 288.
2. See, Census Reports of Bombay City, Occupational classification for, 1911, 1921, 1931.
3. Prabhu, P.N., 'A Study of the Social Effects of Urbanisation on Industrial Workers Migrating from Rural Areas to the City of Bombay', UNESCO, Calcutta, 1956; For criticism, see Morris D. Morris, 'Myth of Paradise Lost', UNESCO Study of Bombay Labour, Economic Weekly, IX, pp. 857-862.
4. A. Nieboff, 'Factory Workers in India', Milwankee, 1959, pp. 53-57.
5. R.D. Lambert, Op.cit., p. 158.
6. BMOA Survey, 1940; See also R.G. Gokhale, Op.cit., p. 158.

Bhaiyyas from United Provinces in 'mixing to speed frame' departments. However confusing the groupings may be, for structural purpose, they may be adopted as such to reveal at least the tendency of social distance and clustering of the operatives of same background. Morris[1] agrees that "Bombay Survey does suggest some regional, linguistic, and religious, as well as caste clusterings in the mills of Bombay".

It may be concluded from the foregoing discussion that the depressed classes, mainly owing to their marginal position in the employment market in rural areas, were the first who were pushed into the factories as manual labourers. Because the traditional manual occupations were considered unclean by the higher castes, who were forced latter to leave their traditional occupations to join the work-force, but usually making clusterings in those sections where the 'untouchables', if not the other depressed classesmere

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1. Morris, Op.cit.; In addition see Gokhale, Op.cit., p. 116; R.C. James, 'Labour and Technical Change' (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Cornell University, 1951), pp. 103-111; Maneklal Maganlal Shah, "Labour Recruitment and Turnover in the Textile Industry of Bombay Presidency",(unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Bombay, 1941), pp. 179-180; J.H. Kelman, "Labour in India", London, 1923, pp. 75, 86-87 and 134-137; Mehta CHI, pp. 120-121; Also noted by the Census Commissioner of Bombay, 'Census 1864', p.xviii, PC 1875, p. 23; IFLC, 1908, II, p. 82.

less represented. Some of the untouchables were even denied jobs in some mills,[1] although no general policy explicitly discriminating against untouchables was formulated,[2] but it was operative on a practical level - the explicit policy would have come under attack from the 'enlightened' colonial policy, who believed in equality before law. Besides, in Bombay, Parsis dominated who would have been guided by profit motive alone rather than caste considerations. Jobber, in fact, implanted castes within the industrial organisation, which obviously induced lack of motivation reducing efficiency. And that the 'kinship and caste names have changed their context but not their content'.[3] But it may safely be argued (considering that the level of literacy among workers was increasing) that with the increase in literacy, consciousness of rights and duties, political participation, trade union participation, the social and legal opportunities to back up the lower castes, the rigidities that might have been prevalent during the early years of industrialization are loosening,[4] but not eradicated. Or, it may be said

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1. IFLC, 1908, II, p. 82; BMOA, 1897, p. 5.
2. Mehta, CMI, pp. 120-121, Kelman, Op.cit., pp. 86-87.
3. Bellwinkel, 'Rajasthan Contract Labour in Delhi: A Case Study of Relationship between Company, Middlemen and Worker', Sociological Bulletin, 22: 1, March 1973, p. 96.
4. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., pp. 120-121.

that the caste system was transforming itself to meet the industrial challange. The traditional social structure was putting a declining pressure on the labour force through such processes as adaptation, transformation and the like. There does not seem to have been emerging any essential conflict between the traditional values and the industrial values. The following chapters will clarify that the traditional structural demands were less important on the labour force in Bombay than other factors.

CHAPTER III

COMMITMENT TO INDUSTRIAL WORK

The concept of labour commitment is vague one, at least, in the context of developing societies. It is difficult to find out the indices that may measure the level of commitment. Different scholars take different indices and tend to show whether the Indian industrial labour is committed or not.[1] Besides it is too broad to be discussed here, for it involves as broad categories of factors as social, technological, and psychological,[2] and that the debates on labour commitment have proved sterile.[3]

In the circumstances it will be better if we examine the traditional concepts of commitment, to see if the Indian labour is inefficient, then why is he so? The concepts are low labour productivity, high absenteism,

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1. The different criterion such as attitude to employer and organisation: K.N. Vaid, 'The New Worker', Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967, and B.R. Sharma, 'Commitment to Industrial work: The Case of the Indian Automobile Worker', Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, 1968, 4(1), pp. 3-33; Stability of Workforce: R.D. Lambert, Op.cit., N.R. Sheth, 'Society and Industrial work in India: A Case Study' Human Organisation, 1967, 26(1-2), pp. 77-89; availability of workers when needed: Morris D. Morris, Op.cit.; Danial Thorner, 'Casual Employment of a Factory Labour Force: The Case of India, 1850-1939' Economic Weekly, Jan. 1957, Annual No., pp.121-124.

2. N.R. Sheth, 'The Problems of Labour Commitment', EPW, 27 Feb. 1975, pp. 35-39.

3. N.R. Sheth, 'Industrial Sociology', in M.N. Srinivas (ed.), A Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology, vol. I, ICSSR, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974, p. 163.

high labour turnover, and labour indiscipline. There is no need to define these factors here. It may simply be assumed that they are important in throwing the light on the kind of labour that industrial India produced - but these indicators are by no means necessary nor sufficient to test the level of commitment.[1] But each of them requires an explanation to show their inadequacy.

Low productivity or inefficiency is a function of numerous technological, organisational, and environmental factor, besides the other inputs of production. On absenteism, as Vaid[2] pointed out that even among habitual absenteism, the workers who dislike or avoid their work do not always constitute significant proportion. The labour turnover, may sometime be desirable for the growth of organisation, for the development of young workers and dynamic leadership patterns. Indiscipline is usually a response to the behavior of management or to the influence of external forces.[3]

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1. For instance, Angus Hone, 'High Absenteism and High Commitment' EPW, vol.III, May 1968, pp.M31-M32. He shows that high absenteism is compatible with high commitment provided labour turnover is low. He shows the absentee rate among skilled workers is higher than unskilled and temporary workers as the former enjoy more security of job. But Bombay case had been different for there was no security of job until the close of my period: 1947.

2. K.N. Vaid, 'Papers on Absenteeism', Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967.

3. N.R. Sheth, 'The Problem of Labour Commitment, EPW, 27 Feb., 1975, M35-M39.

It has been alleged by a majority of scholars, administrators, millowners, and the reports presented by labour committees and labour commissions, that the Indian Industrial labour is inefficient, indisciplined, irregular and unattached to his work and industry, and that the pace of industrialisation is retarded to some extent by the labour force in India[1] and this is so because of the existence of the 'rural nexus' of the workers. This is not always true. For instance, Kunj M Patel in her study of Ratnagiri workers in Bombay cotton mills reported that Ratnagiri workers in Bombay do not frequently change their mills, and are semi-permanent, but 90% maintain their rural links, average service of a worker is worked out to 20 years and majority go to villages after retirement, besides frequent visits during service period,[2] but as a result of weakness of the 'urban nexus' as pointed out by Thorner.[3] Besides the 'rural nexus' is so exaggerated as to neglect the possibility of not counting the people who after turnover from

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1. S.D. Mehta, 'Professor Morris on Textile Labour Supply: A Comment', The Indian Economic Journal, I(3), Jan. 1954, p. 334; S.D. Mehta, CMI, p. 11; RCL, 1931, 'Report', pp.11-14; 17-19; C.A. Myers, 'Labour Problems in the Industrialisation of India', Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1958, pp. 43-44; BMOA 1918, p. xii, IFLC, 1908, pp. 18-19.
2. Kunj M. Patel, Op.cit., 1963.
3. Danial Thorner, Op.cit., pp. 121-124.

a specific mill did not go to their villages, but went to other mills, or went to alternative employment in the city, or counting those people in turnover rate who are rendered jobless due to lack of definite recruitment, promotion and work regulations.

3.1 Labour Turnover:

The Bombay mill operatives are considered to be showing high rate of turnover.[1] Royal Commission on Labour estimated average labour turnover as high as 60% per year,[2] but mainly because of the counting the same workers a number of times whenever they come back after a long leave. As early as 1890 the labour turnover did not appear to have been exceptionally high and compared favourably with other countries unless it is proved that labour reverted in large number to villages.[3] Recently Myers and Subbiah Kannappan claim that during 1940's and 1950's the labour turnover is low in India.[4]

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1. Mehta, CMI, pp. 109, 114, 119, claims that there was no operative seen in Bombay around 1900 beyond 45 years of age and average service period between 5 to 6 years. See also FC, 1890, pp. 22-50, D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 383-384. But this is so because of trying working and living conditions.
2. RCL, Report, 1931, pp. 11-14.
3. Baniprasanna Misra, Op.cit., pp. 203-228.
4. C.A. Myers,and Subbiah Kannappan, 'Industrial Relations in India', Asia, 1970, pp. 108-109.

There is no precise data on labour turnover available as late as 1947, but the fragmentary data is available on the length of service of Bombay Mill cooperatives, compiled by Morris[1] which is reproduced in the following table.

Table VIII

Length of Service in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry: 1890-1947 (in per cent)

Years of Service	1890	1927-28	1940	1955
Less than 5	72.2	37.5	29.5	9.7
5 - 9	11.1	23.4	28.5	34.0
10 - 14	5.6	15.9	18.8	25.6
15 and more	11.1	23.2	23.2	30.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

This data may serve as an indicator of labour turnover. The table suggests that at least 25% of the operatives were adhering to their jobs for more than 5 years in 1890. By the trend it may be admitted that the labour turnover during the earlier years (before 1890) would have been more, as evidenced by the complaints made by the employers to that effect.[2] Yet the trend in the table suggests that the

1. For sources and explanation, see Morris, Op.cit., pp. 88-89.

2. See BMOA Journal, FC 1875, IFC 1890, IFLC, 1908 and RCL, 1931.

years of service by the majority of operatives gradually increased with the increasing pace of industrialisation and it may be concluded that the turnover rate declined.[1] There may be number of reasons for the state of affairs. The organisation of mill industry was poor during the earlier years and it underwent positive changes very gradually. The labour was unorganised and employer could retrench operatives at will, besides they failed to identify themselves with their organisations, and no trade unior existed. After 1927-28, the labour turnover decreased whereas strikes increased showing that the labour by that time had acquired a sense of group identity. Before which nothing but the rural ties could have been the source of identification. Besides, relatively young age of the industry will tend to show less number of service years to the credit of operatives. The rapid expansion[2] upto 1890's called for more experienced operatives and by providing better wages, the new mills could lure away some of the operatives, raising the rate of turnover. Long hours of work and other working and trying conditions disfavoured stability. The differences

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1. On the similar trend of labour turnover, see Mehta, CHI, p. 170; Morris, Op.cit., p. 89; C.A. Myers, 'Labour Problems in the Industrialisation of India', Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1958.

2. For the increasing attachment to industry as blurred by the expansion of industry, see, R.C. James, 'Labour mobility, Unemployment and economic change'; An Indian Case', Journal of Political Economy, LXVII, 1959, p. 546; Morris, Op.cit., pp. 90-91.

in wages in different mills for the same occupation caused great instability. The exaggerated complaints of the turnover rate by the employers further inflated the extent ..

The Badli system that was prevalent from the very beginning made the turnover rate to look like more than it actually was as is shown in Table VIII. And above all the role of the jobber in creating high turnover because he got 'Bakhshish' (bribe) on every new appointment.[1]

After 1940, the increase in the length of service[2] of the operatives may be ascribed to the changes in employment, tenure and discharge policies in the industry - the elimination or limitation of the adverse factors, in addition to the increasing pressure of unemployment, change in attitude and values, due to long experience with the industrial life, of the mill operatives in particular, and the society in general. This shows that if labour turnover is some indicator of labourer's commitment to work, then the labour is becoming increasingly committed to industrial life, but less so to urban life,[3] although there is a tendency among operatives to settle down in urban centres.

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1. R.K. Newman, Op.cit.; D. Mazumdar, Op.cit.; Morris, Op.cit., pp. 135-136, 144-145, 147.
2. See Table VIII.
3. Kunj H. Patel, Op.cit., pp. 7-8.

3.2 Labour Absenteeism:

The absenteeism rates, with scarce gross statistical estimates, have been stated to be very high in Indian industries,[1] but the justified complaints against the unjustified leaves, due to migratory tendency among operatives before 1870's do not appear to be acute, but thereafter, due to casual employment policy of the employers, it is reported to be as high as 50%.[2] of the daily employment, is rather exaggerated. In 1933, the average daily absenteeism rate in Bombay cotton textile mills is estimated to be 10%, and that too unreported much to the trouble of the supervisors for which the jobber had to fetch the new recruits either from the mill gate or from the nearby urban or rural areas.[3] It may be evident from the badli system characteristics how prevalent the absenteeism tendency among the operatives was, thus:

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1. The different studies in different industries indicate that the rate of absenteeism, even in the post-independent India are reported to be as high as 20 to 50%, the Causes assigned usually are bad working conditions, poor hygience, crowded housing, lack of incentives and training, and jobber system of recruitment. For instance, K.M. Avshesh, 'Absenteeism in Industries', Indian Worker, 1965, 13(45-46), p.27; see also H.R. Sheth, Op.cit.; Mehta, CMI, pp. 109, 114, 118; K.N. Vaid, 'Papers on Absenteeism', Asia 1967, Tables 77-99.
2. Mehta, CMI, p. 118.
3. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 382-383.

> "Two substitutes have to be kept ready for the average employment of one per day in the case of monthly shift...., but the figure goes as high as eight when the annual shifts among the substitutes is taken into account".[1]

Even in 1946 and 1947, when the absenteeism statistics is fairly stable, despite some weaknesses, on the average in Bombay Cotton mills is reported to be 14.16 and 14.39, respectively.[2] Anstey, ascribing the low earning of the operatives to the absenteeism, arrives at 12% rate.[3] James, basing his arguments on the number of badli hired from the total badlis reporting at the mill gate, implies high rate of absenteeism.[4] D. Mazumdar, after his cautious consideration of all factors, comes to the conclusion that the absenteeism rate before the first world war has been in the region of 10%.[5]

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1. H.M. Shah, 'Labour Commitment and Turnover in the Textile Industry of Bombay Presidency', unpublished Phd.D. Thesis, Univ of Bombay, 1961. Quoted in D. Mazumdar, Op.cit.

2. K.M. Patel, Op.cit., p. 36, extracted from Bombay Labour Gazetteer of the Corresponding years.

3. V. Anstey, Op.cit., pp. 127, 278.

4. R.C. James, 'The Casual Labour Problems in Indian Manufacturing', The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Vol. LXXIV, No.1, Feb. 1960, pp. 553, 554, 557.

5. D. Mazumdar, Op.cit., p. 481; The Bombay Saturday Review, VI, No.17, April 23, 1964, p.391, reports an absenteeism rate of 25%.

Before 1922, there is no consistent series on absenteeism. The Bombay labour office collected data from 1922 onwards, as presented in the following table, which Morris has compiled from the Bombay Labour Gazetteer from 1922 to 1947.[1]

Table IX

Annual Average Daily Absenteeism: 1922-1947

Year	Rate	Year	Rate	Year	Rate
1922	14.8	1931	9.3	1940	9.1
1923	15.1	1932	9.1	1941	9.6
1924	13.4	1933	9.8	1942	14.0
1925	12.2	1934	8.4	1943	10.8
1926	11.9	1935	7.9	1944	11.4
1927	8.5	1936	7.2	1945	11.4
1928	8.7	1937	7.6	1946	14.2
1929	9.8	1938	8.3	1947	14.4
1930	9.3	1939	10.5		

Morris, after taking number of factors into account shows that these figures are, in fact, inflated figures and the real situation of absenteeism is on the lower side than what had been reported as absenteeism rates.

Another aspect of the data is that it is not available by the Causes of absenteeism which could have thrown sufficient light on the exact extent of absenteeism. The Causes

1. For Weaknesses of the data, also see, Morris, Op.cit., p. 93.

of absenteeism may be bad working and living conditions, long hours of work, no provision for regular holidays. The average number of holidays in late 1920's is 55 to 57, per year.[1] During the earlier years there were not only fewer holidays but were irregular also.

Considering all the evidences and causes, it may be stated that the rate of absenteeism from the early years to 1947 would have been in the vicinity of 10%, which, of course, cannot be dismissed as insignificant. This shows that at least some proportion of the absenteeism may be attributed to village links, but not to non-commitment.

Another factor strengthens this belief, that is, the periodicity in absenteeism, which coincides with the periodicity of monsoon and festival rythm.[2] The seasonality is reflected in the months of March through October, where it is very High, and May is the peak month, despite the provison of certain category of operatives, especially weavers, to provide their own substitute in case of leave or absence from work. Thus, the operatives visit their

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1. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 316.

2. RCL, 1929, 'Report', I, part i, p. 7; Monthly Miscellancy of Western India, pp. 239-245; S.M. Edwardes, 'The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island", Bombay, the Times Press, 1909, vol. I, pp. 214, 322-323, and IFLC, 1908, I, pp. 18-19.

villages during monsoon, festival and marriage seasons.[1] V.B. Singh in his study of Kanpur textile workers shows the seasonality in absenteeism.[2] Kunj M. Patel also recorded that in her sample of Ratnagiri workers in Bombay nearly 53% visit their villages in a year and 22% once in two years, and 8% in at least once in three years, reveal the rural links of the operatives. "He comes to Bombay to earn but keeps his sheet-anchor in the village".[3] Panadhikar, referring to Labour Commission, says 'the percentage of absenteeism shows seasonal variation and is highest in the monsoon months and the festival and marriage seasons'.[4] In his most detailed study by Causes of absenteeism, K.N. Vaid,[5] comes to the conclusion that the highest absenteeism is due to 'other' and 'social and religious' groups of causes.[6]

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1. C.A. Myres, Op.cit., pp. 79-80; see also M.V. Venkatraman, 'Absenteeism in the Cotton Mill Industry', Indian Economic Journal, III, July 1955, pp. 79-87.
2. V.B. Singh, Op.cit., 1973, pp. 54-55.
3. Kunj M. Patel, Op.cit., Table 7, p. 36 and p.37.
4. S.G. Panadhikar, 'Industrial Labour in India', Longman, 1933, p. 66.
5. K.N. Vair, 'Papers on Absenteeism', Shri Ram Centre, New Delhi, 1967, pp. 77-99. The Study covers number of industries and centres and the period is 1947-65.
6. 'Other' causes have not been defined which may be the reasons that could not be categorised due to individual needs to go on leave.

All these evidences suggest that the Indian industrial worker maintains his rural links for various socio-economic reasons, but it does not prove his reluctance to attend his work. The social structure makes some demands on the operatives which are beyond his control, and as such he should not be dubbed as uncommitted worker. On the other hand B.R. Sharma, after testing a total of 30 variables as causes of absenteeism, comes to the conclusion that rural labour were found to be more regular than urban worker, and the greater the union involvement, the better the attendance record, rest factors were found to be insignificant or uncorrelated.[1] This opposite view may only be explained by the living conditions of the rural labour in urban centres, and probably by the fact that absenteeism is compatible[2] with commitment as urban workers showed high rate of absenteeism. Butani, on the basis of his analysis of statistics on absenteeism from 1954 to 1968, observed, 'there was..... little confirmation that agriculture was still exerting a pull on industrial labour'.[3] N.R. Sheth[4]

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1. B.R. Sharma, 'Absenteeism: A Search for Correlates' in R.D. Aggarwal (Ed.), 'Dynamics of Labour Relations in India' Tata McGraw Hill, Bombay, 1972, p.254.
2. Angus Hone, Op.cit., pp. M31-M32.
3. D.H. Butani, 'Studies in Absenteeism', in R.D. Aggarwal (ed.), Op.cit., 1972, p. 247.
4. N.R. Sheth, 'The Social Frame Work of an Indian Factory', Oxford University Press, 1968, pp.189-99.

found the "ritual nexus of workers not affecting the rationality expected of their technological activities".

Contrary to what has been assumed that both absenteeism and turnover are the indicators of non-commitment, but the discussion reveals that an inverse relationship exists between them. A low turnover rate and a high absenteeism rate are consistent with the labour commitment.[1] In the case of Bombay textile labour force, the relationship exists, and it is not an indicator of 'partial commitment', but of commitment, subject to the condition that during the initial stages when both turnover and absenteeism was high the rural nexus exerted some influence on adjustment of workers to the new way of life, but this tendency is diminishing, and there is no essential contradiction between traditional structure and industrial structure which may co-exist in the case of India.

3.3 Labour Discipline:

The other indicator of labour commitment is the extent of discipline within the factory, as prescribed by norms and values, or rules and regulation by the employers for the employees. For instance, loitering during working hours, irregular time of arrival and departure, misbehavior with supervisors or denial of their orders, or indulgence in destructive activities or strikes.

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1. Angus Hone, Op.cit., pp. M31-M32.

There seems to have been very few complaints about labour indiscipline by the employers in the early career of the mill industry. Employers' grievances began to show only around 1880's.[1] It was alleged that Indian industrial worker, or the mill operatives in particular are indisciplined. In fact there are evidences to show that such an image is not wholly unwarranted, but on close scrutiny it turns out to be that discipline is not ingrained in his nature (Indians are a peace loving people!), but his resentment expressed owes largely to the defective industrial organisation and employer's policies - methods of recruitment, lack of promotional avenues, strict regulation and lax administration of the work force. This coupled with low wages, higher cost of living, lack of adequate social welfare institutions, the late development of trade unions, lack of training and educational facilities, make a good cause for resentment and its expression.[2]

It is said that Indian mill worker is generally incapable of steady and continuous work. Industrial commission reported in 1918, "It is generally argued that millhands loiter away much of the time during when they are

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1. See various BMOA reports and Commission and Committee Reports.

2. A few of these factors will be developed in later chapters.

normally at work".[1] Or again, "he is given to loitering and loafing away his time under various pretexts, men are found to be absent from their machines and spare hands to be employed to attend to the machine of idlers".[2] Continuing the theme, "ordinarily, a reserve force of ten or more persons must be kept and there is always an idle group in the mill or its yard".[3] Even as early as 1885, similar complaints were available, "the most obvious feature.... are the large number of idle workers visible in the mills. In 1884,mill officials estimated that at any time in individual mills from 7 to 47% of the workforce was not at its machine". Although there is no evidence of such complaints before 1885, but this Factory Commission Report implies that such a situation might have existed even before.

Agreed loitering habits existed among the mill operatives, but were they ingrained in their habits arising out of the habits they cultivated during their stay in the villages. Firstly not all operatives came from agriculture, or rural areas; but majority did come. But the majority of the rural people seeking employment in the industries came

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1. Industrial Commission Report, 1918, pp.189-190.
2. Quoted in Messers Jether and Bari, 'Indian Economics', p. 9.
3. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 382.
4. FC 1885, quoted in Morris, Op.cit., pp. 111-112.

in their early ages.[1] The argument of ingrained habit is untenable.

The physical health of the general operatives was poor,[2] due to undernourishment, excessive working hours, lack of medical facilities, or poor hygenic conditions.[3] Who was responsible for the poor constitution of the workers? Both the Government and the employers were responsible for neglecting social welfare measure, or at least providing better and regular wages, and better working and living conditions.

In fact, the crux lies elsewhere, besides these peripheral causes. The formal system of rules that was issued, but not well communicated, by the BMOA in 1892,[4] provisions of which were largely in the favour of the employers, and it was severe in its nature but the regulation and administration of the specific behavior of the operatives at work was surprisingly lax. The laxity and its

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1. Kunj M. Patel, Op.cit., Table 3, p.30; only 10% of the people migrated after the age of 20 years.
2. It is debatable point.
3. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 384-385.
4. For the text of the uniform code of work regulations proposed by Bombay Mill Owners' Association, 1892, see Morris, Op.cit. Appendix VI, pp. 238-240, and for discussion of work regulation in the mill, ibid, Chapter VII, pp. 107-128.

effect can largely be explained away by the pattern of labour utilisation deliberately chosen by the employers. The shareholders were interested in their dividends, mill-agents in their commissions, for which they had to keep the costly machines running at highest speed and for longer hours of day, even if considerable proportion of extra hands was required, for wages of the operatives were low and these tactics paid them highest profits. So long as these gains were forthcoming, they would not bother for the discipline[1] or recruitment, in the mills. They would not bother in what circumstances the operatives are working or living. Government would not interfere with the internal administration due to the 'policy of non-interference by the State', unless it becomes a 'law and order situation', it will be so if there is no organisation of the labour force.

In fact, the individual mills had their own work regulations, to the advantage of the employers, if the individual operative is not conforming to the mill disciplines, he will be fined or terminated. Usually the lower supervisory staff, especially the jobber will judge the misconduct and in the name of his supervisor take the disciplinary action.

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1. See for evidences, the view of an official spokesman, admitting it. Dr. K.N. Bahadurji, BMOA 1891, pp.44-45.

Under these insecure conditions of wages and employment, the milloperative had to work as long hours as 13 to 15 hours a day[1] in a technically too hot and humid environment. There had been no adequate rest pauses for lunch or tea break, no adequate toilet facilities. The operatives in such circumstances had to come out to relax, to have fresh air, to smoke, to eat or to relieve themselves, while in his absence the fellow worker would tend his machines. Afterinworking in such tiring working conditions for longer hours, the operatives had to look after their household chores, as they came to the city as singles suggested by sex ratio in the introductory chapter. They did not have a proper roof on their heads to relax in whatever hours are left to sleep. In such circumstances, if operatives show apathy to their work, it is justified. Besides, the extent of loitering has been exaggerated.[2]

There are not many evidences to suggest that mill operatives were aggressive to their supervisors, there may be a few incidences that might lead to such an impression.[3] If there were any, they were motivated by personal or an individual level, but mostly carried by the jobbers'

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1. Morris, Op.cit., Chapter VI, pp. 101-156.
2. See Comments on the inflation of th extent of loitering. *Ibid*
3. Mehta, ICTI. *Op. cit.*

rift with the supervisors, who for financial and social reasons maintained overriding influence over their work force not only in the mills but outside also. By and large the attitude of the operatives was of patron-client relationship.

There are very few sporadic incidents of strikes in the cotton mills before 1918 strike and they lasted for few days usually amicably settled between the limited number of operatives and their employers,[1] and most of the strikes, besides being ephemeral, were against the cuts on wages, or imposition of fines.

The period 1890's was a difficult one for the industry, yet the industry earned profits.[2] It is during this period that complaints of indiscipline, scarcity of labour supply absenteeism and turnover sky-rocketed. But nothing substantial was done to standardise, uniform work-rule or wages, or improvement in living and working conditions.[3] The period from 1904 to 1909 was comfortable one for the industry, where working hours were raised due to introduction of electricity and better China market. But profits declined after 1909.[4] A Commission was appointed

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1. The topic on strikes will be dealt with in detail in Chapter VI.
2. See Chapter I, Section 1.4.
3. See Morris, Op.cit.,
4. See Table III.

which reported in 1908 and an Act was passed in 1911, restricting the hours of work for males, females and children, beside other measures. But they were not properly administered. The war period brought properity, and this aspect of labour force remained burried. The prices rose during the war and profits were large. The discontent was seething among workers leading to the First successful general strike of 1918-19. Prosperity due to world depression after 1922 had come to an end, competition from Japan increased and the necessity to modify and standardise the work rules and their administration was badly felt. But by this time, the old practices have become institutionalised.

First action to overcome the financial difficulties by the employers was to lower the existing wages which resulted into two general strikes of 1924 and 1925 and costed 20 million mandays. The rationalization that was felt so badly after 1925, action on which brought further two more general strikes in 1928 and 1929 paralising the mill industry in Bombay.[1] The intervention of government in industry step-by-step increased. But old habits of loitering, and indisciplined now acquired more explicit form

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1. Morris D. Morris, 'Labour Discipline Trade Union and the State In India', Journal of Political Economy, LXIII, Aug. 1955, pp. 294-307, esp. p. 296.

taking a shape of a labour movement and resulting into big strikes. This situation continued while in 1937 BMOA[1] gave another series of standing orders for uniform application to all mills, which was brought under pressure from the labour movement and the government that was mainly concerned with law and order situation. The situation in this regard improved considerably[2] thereafter.

3.4 Labour Efficiency:

This discussion leads ultimately to the alleged inefficiency of the mill operatives. It is to be noted, however, the concept of efficiency is a facile one, for number of factors are required to be taken into account before judging the level of worker's efficiency: the technological, organisational, social and environmental beside the other inputs of production. The only way to judge the efficiency of a labour force is to compare with another labour force, more advance in terms of high productivity. For instance, Indian labour force against the Japanese,

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1. Morris, Op.cit., Appendix VII.

2. For detailed analyses along these lines, see Morris, Op.cit., Chapter VI on Hours of Work, Chapter V on Formal Work Regulations, and Chapter VII on Administration of Workforce. These issues will further be discussed in the following chapters: Chapter IV, V and VI.

Chinese, American or British workforce. Or comparison of the same labour force with some base year or roughly the earlier years. But comparisons are odious.

The difficulty of comparison in the change of efficiency of the worker from the earlier year to the subsequent years upto 1947 is obvious, for there has been number of changes in the rate and pattern of production, in the equipment used, in the socio-technological organisation, changing national and international conditions for nearly a period of century. Similarly, there is a difficulty in comparison with other countries, because of differences in technology, in organisation, the stage of development, pace of development, and the material used and articles produced. India, from the very beginning had been using low grade material, even until 1930's which naturally leads to decrease in efficiency. The average weight of raw cotton spun per spindle in India is four times as great as in Great Britain.[1]

Further complication arises due to the number of hours worked - India was working as much as 15 hours a day as late as 1910, whereas other countries like USA and Britain were working shorter hours quite for sometime. Although there had been a controversy whether efficiency

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1. D.H. Buchanan, pp. 372-73.

had increased or not with the increase in hours of work[1] but there has been, on the whole, a gradual advance in efficiency, especially in ability to produce better goods and amount of work per man in India.[2]

Following are the figures taken from the ITB 1932 Report.[3]

Table X

Comparative Labour Efficiency in Japan, India and Britain for Low Count Cotton Manufactured in 1932

Source	Looms per weaver	Average Efficiency per loom	Working Hours Index Britain = 100	Wage Rs./worker /day
Ordinary Loom Japan	5.5	1 -	-	-
Japan Average	6	95.6	250	2/- to 4/-
Toyoclo Loom	50	-	-	-
Britain	4	85	100	4/-to 8/-
India	2	80	125	2/-

1. PP, 1909, Cmd, XXVI, PP, 1909, Cmd, 5328, p.117; BMOA Statement to ITB, 1927, Table I.
2. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 373.
3. ITB, 1932, 'Report', p.112.

Another table for the same year throws light on the comparative efficiency of the Indian labour.

Table XI

Comparative Labour Efficiency in Japan, India, Great Britain and USA.[1]

Country	Operatives per 1000 spindles plus the looms used per shift	Pound of raw cotton	Loom/ spindles
Great Britain	10	26.4	1/50
USA	13	85.8	1/50
Japan	26	111.1	1/75
India	43	97.7	1/50

Both the tables show that Indian worker is less efficient than any other country producing cotton cloths.

After giving allowance to variations, Buchanan comes to the conclusion that an average Englishman was equivalent to two Indians.[2] There are evidences, usually qualitative, they say that on account of coarse material, and labouring conditions, the Indian work was hard than that of the Englishman.[3] Even an American manager in India thought, "the English operatives could not do more work in India than

1. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 375.
2. Ibid.
3. Sir Dennongi Mehta, PP, 1909, Cmd, 4519, pp.313-317.

the Indian operative".[1] These statements carry substance but they do not revert the conclusions that the average productivity of an Indian labour is low.[2] The Indian operative is alleged that he is not only inefficient but apathetic also and resistent to efficiency drives.[3] Some scholars go even to ascribe some cause of inefficiency to the Indian religious ethic that does not allow aggressiveness and steadiness in the job the worker does.[4] But these assumptions are wholly unwarranted and unproved, explained away mainly on Weberian line that 'Indian religion ethic is not conducive to capitalist development. On the contrary, Mehta, although accepting the inefficiency of Indian labour, argues that several mills in Bombay, where technological programming and good management combined to achieve a high degree of efficiency, even during difficult days the Bombay mills achieved a creditable financial progress.[5]

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid, p. 321.
3. Mehta, CMI, pp. 122, passim; V. Anstey, Oplcit., pp. 67, 86, 229, 232; R.K. Ray, 'Industrialization In India: Growth and Conflict in Private Corporate Sector : 1914-47', Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi, 1979, pp. 67, 226-227; Kunj H. Patel, Op.cit., passim; Charles A Mayer, Op.cit., pp. 88, 183; etc.
4. V. Anstey, p. 232
4. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp.213, 384; V.Anstey, Op.cit., p. 232.
5. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., p. 170.

Before citing the reasons of the inefficiency of the mill worker, it will be better if a few sentences are recorded on the controversy of relative cheapness of labour in India. It may be said that Indian labour was not as cheap as it appeared by the wages paid to him, although there is no denying the fact that the labour was in abundance, but labour costs were comparatively high for reasons of low productivity. Throughout the career of the Bombay mill industry, the labour costs of production remained below 20%. D.H. Buchanan, after taking into account various factors come to the conclusion that in 1928, the Indian labour was cheaper than the labour of the United States of America, but was costlier than Japanese and Chinese labour.[1] But the reasons for the most part lay in the poor work organisation in India. As a result of foreign competition, rising prices, growing labour unrest, after the World War I, the relative cost of labour increased substantially.

The causes of inefficiency are many that may be grouped into three categories: working conditions and living conditions and organisational weakness.[2]

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1. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 381.
2. These topics will be dealt with in the subsequent chapters.

The Indian labour is ill-paid, ill-fed, illiterate and medically uncared for - the responsibility lies with the employers and the government, and not with the worker, and to some extent it is owing to his instability in his occupation of which a part he also shares in maintaining his rural link, but this is less important. The worker was pushed to the factories by the general conditions of unemployment and indebtedness as a result of decay of handicrafts, taxation policy on land, and increase in population. The employment was given to the mill operatives, but was not provided with healthy surroundings where he had to work and live. Nothing much has been done to provide housing, medical facilities, education or training. Nor was he provided with clean and healthy factories: rather had to work under hot, moist, poor-illuminated, low qunlity of raw material and at times poor quality of machines. Organisationally, the jobber was made responsible for the recruitment, training, discipline, even for the social life of the operatives. He exploited them to the best of his advantage. He induced high absenteeism and high turnover. Besides longer hours of work, irregular rest pauses, low wages, with absence of liesure hours, and such other factors were responsible for the low level of efficiency of the mill operatives. With the changed circumstances, after the turn of nineteenth century the mill operative became increasingly efficient.[1]

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1. See, S.D. Mehta, CMI, pp.121-123; D.H. Buchanan, Op. cit., Chapter XVI, pp. 361-386.

CHAPTER IV

WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE MILL HANDS

The causes that will explain further as to why the Indian worker is, allegedly, inefficient or uncommitted to the industrial work, may be divided into two categories: the working conditions, and the living conditions. There is sufficient literature on the working and living conditions of the workers in Bombay cotton textile mills that sufficiently proves that the conditions were too tiring to allow maximum capacity to work.

4.1 The Working Conditions

The working conditions may be divided into three major categories: The hours of work, wages, and the general environment in the factories.

Hours of work: There is no direct evidence before 1887, when we get the definite record that the textile mills in Bombay worked from dawn to dusk.[1] It may be safely assumed that there were the hours of work from the very beginning in the industry. On the average the working hours tended to be 12 hours 5 minutes a day - the largest day usually did not exceed 13½ hours of actual work and the shortest day was about 11 hours, and probably during

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1. Parliamentary Papers, 1889, vol. 58, H. of C., 124, pp. 60, 70.

the earlier years the female worked as long as did the males.[1] The First Factories Act was passed in 1881 on the protest from Lancashire mainly to restrict the hours of work of the children in the factories. But protests began as soon as this Act was passed, for the provisons of the Act were insufficient to protect children, and in particular the failure to regulate woman labour. Enquiries were made by the factory inspector in 1882 and also in 1887, and by a Bombay Factory Commission in 1884.[2] Also the First International Labour Conference held at Berlin in 1890,[3] which recommended among othr things, the regulation of woman and child labour. Thus, the Second Factories Act was passed in 1891, after the recommendations of the Factory Commission in 1890.[4] The Act raised the minimum employable age between 9 and 14 years, and hours of work were limited to 7 a day, with a rest of half an hour. The hours of work for women were limited to 11 in one day with an interval of rest of

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1. PP, 1890-1891, H. of C., 86, pp. 67, 70.
2. Report on Bombay Factory Commission of 1884, Bombay, pp. 5-22.
3. Great Britain: Parliamentary Papers - International Labour Conference of Berlin, 1890, vol. 81, C.6042, pp. 72-151.
4. Report on the Recent Factory Commission on Indian Factories, 1890-91, pp. 1-14.

1½ hours. Besides, the working hours for women and children were limited to the period between 5 a.m. and 8 p.m. All factories were required to stop work for a full half-hour between noon and 2 p.m., and to grant a weekly holiday on Sunday or any other day in the week.

The idea of employing electricity in Bombay Cotton textile mills was conceived in the early 1890's,[1] and thereafter longer hours of work began, and in 1907, a number of mills were working from 12½ hours to 16 hours a day,[2] and more than 90 hours a week. The protest began from inside and outside the country.[3] A committee in 1906[4] and a Factory Labour Commission was appointed in 1907,[5] following the recommendations a new Bill was introduced in 1909 and passed in 1911 as the Third Factories Act of 1911.

The Act prescribed 12 hours a day for adults, 6 hours a day for children, and for women 11 hours a day as before, and for women the working day was limited to the period between 5.30 a.m. to 7 p.m. In addition to a certificate of age of physical fitness was required for the children.

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1. Morris, Op.cit., p. 106.
2. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 314.
3. R.K. Das, 'History of Indian Labour Legislation', Univ. of Calcutta, 1941, pp. 54-55.
4. Report of the Textile Factory Committee of 1906, pp. 16-17.
5. Report of the Factory Labour Commission, 1907, pp. 7, 31.

Soon after the passage of the Act, the World War I began in 1914, giving new impetus to the growth of industry and was followed by the rise of a well-organised class of Indian industrialists and a self-conscious class of wage workers. Moreover, the Government of India realised the importance of making India self-sufficient as far as the basic industries were concerned, and adopted on the recommendation of the Industrial Commission of 1916-18, a new policy of national economy.[1] Besides, the International Labour Conference held in 1919 in Washington and among other things recommended a 60 hour week for India. As a result of these recommendations, the Factories Act of 1911 was amended to become the Factories Act of 1922. It restricted the hours of work, for both male and female to 11 in any one day and 60 hours in any one week. The employable child was defined to be between 12 to 15 years, and the hours of work limited to 6 a day, besides age and fitness certificate. All workers were granted one hour's rest for work exceeding 6 hours, and a day of rest in a week. This factories Act was amended in 1923, 1924 and 1926, with minor adjustments and to make the functioning of provisions more smooth.

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1. Report of the Indian Industrial Commission, 1916-18, pp. 229-242.

2. International Labour Office: Draft Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the International Labour Conference, Draft Convention No.1, Articles 5 and 6.

After the publication of the Royal Commission Report in 1931[1] and consulting provincial government, the Indian Factories Act of 1934 was passed. The Act reduced the hours of work in textile factories from 60 to 54 a week and from 11 to 10 hours a day for all adults. The Act beside the children, created a class of adolescent between the ages of 15 and 17. The hours of work for children reduced from 6 to 5 a day. Adolescents could not be employed as adults without a medical certificate of fitness to work in a factory, the rest of one hour was granted upto 6 hours of continuous work, ½ an hour before 5 hours and second interval before 8½ hours. One day weekly holiday continued. Women and children may not be employed before 6 a.m. or after 7 p.m. The hours of work were subsequently reduced to the normal week of 48 hours.

This is the story of excessive hours of work, that might have had direct bearing not only on the health of the worker, but on his efficiency also. The hours were so excessive that the workers became exhausted, sometimes falling "fast asleep on the mill floor", and that no more than 4 hours were available for sleep.[2] But the story does not end here. There were variations from mill to mill and

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1. RCL 1931, Report, pp. 31,38,44-46, recommended 54 hours a week.

2. For detailed discussion of hours of work, see, D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 309-310; Morris, Op.cit., pp. 101-106.

from season to season, and sometimes depending on the market conditions.[1] To quote one contemporary source: "there are no standard hours of labour; each mill works as many hours as day light allows them to, the number of hours varies with variations in lighting and processes in different mills; the new mills, long, high, and narrow, with nearly half of their walls fitted with windows, make much better time than the old mills do".[2]

Besides, there were no fixed times for arrival and departure for different mills, mainly for want of time pieces or public clocks to tell the illitrate operatives the time of opening of the mills; there were no regular day breaks, and to avoid the fine, the operatives had to come at varying and earlier than scheduled times, thus reducing time for sleep or liesure, or house-hold chores. This variability in timings had an effect on the stability of the workforce. Due to these excessive and unpatterned hours of work and holidays, the mill operative visited their villages to recuperate if their wages allowed them to go. When they returned to work, they were counted as new operatives, thus inflating the turnover rate, and making their case to some observers as uncommitted workers.

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1. Ibid, pp. 101-106.
2. Mr. Drewet, RCL 1892, p. 132.

Although situation in the hours of work improved after 1911, Factories Act, other issues have become more important, leading to strikes.[1]

Differential Wage Rates: The other greater cause for instability was the low and differential wage rates among mills, even among same occupations in the same mills. The effect of wages on the movement of labour in the market had to be definite and significant. For the only thing these workers were compelled to leave their villages and families were the relatively better wages, in lieu of their tremendous hardships, and they naturally fought every inch that could ameliorate their wage rates. But it is not to suggest that the relation of wages to supply of labour was perfect, but for numerous reasons, it was not. For instance, the general awareness of the workers about the market situation, the recruitment policy and role of jobber, andtheir relations with the villages and their families, did not, in fact allow the wages and supply operate as freely as has been suggested by Morris.[2] But the purpose is to emphasise the fact that wages were the

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1. Strikes will be dealt with in Chapter VI.

2. Morris, Op.cit., Chapter IV. See also R.K. Newman who modified it through influence of jobber; R.K. Newman, 'Social Factors in Recruitment of the Bombay Mill-hands' in C.T. Dewey and K.N. Chaudhuri (eds.) 'Economy and Society', Delhi, 1979, pp. 281-284.

only incentive for the workers to work at least until the beginning of First World War, and even latter this has been the major issue of labour discontent.

But, even these wages which these operatives received were not regulated properly through mill administration. The wages of an individual from month to month varied in the same occupation and the same mill. There had been considerable variations among mills and occupations, depending on the situation of the mill, the class of material used, and general work regulations under which the mill workers had to work,[1] the situation that did not change in 1908, despite the claims of the employers to the contrary, that there has taken place a general standardisation of wages in the Bombay mills.[2] It is being reported that the wages of an average weaver varied by as much as 21%.[3] The variations within the same mill were not systematic over time,[4] and these diversities within the mills, or among mills, not to talk of other centres and other industries, continued during the war period and after "very wide variations.... both in methods of payment

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1. RCL 1892, pp. 130, 132,
2. IFLC, 1908, I, p. 20.
3. IFLC 1908, pp. 134, 149.
4. Morris, Op.cit., Table XVII, p. 156.
5. Bombay Labour Office, 1929, p. 29.

and the manner in which rates are fixed... as between unit and unit."[1]

If there were variations among piece-rate workers such as weavers, warpers, relears etc. it is understandable owing to the difference in efficiency and skill of the workers, the material used or the actual hours of work done, but it is inexplicable as to why was there a wide variation among daily-rate workers, like the doffers, ring spinners, trawlers, and remained so during the whole history of the textile mills, despite the protests from the workers, efforts made by the Bombay Millowners' Association, and the government[2]; The surveys of 1926, and 1933 yielded rather an increasing disparity in basic wage rates in different mills, after 1937 through 1947, perhaps the range of wage rates narrowed down a bit, largely, due to the cost of living payments made, disproportionately high to the low-paid workers.[3] These variations overtime, among different occupations and different mills would certainly have had a profound impact on the labour turnover especially during the expansion period of the industry, and must have encouraged unrest. In fact, number of strikes

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1. Bombay Labour Office, 1929, p. 29.
2. See for these efforts, Morris, Op.cit., Chapter IX.
3. Mehta, ICTI, p. 36.

are reported to be largely influenced by this lack of standardisation of wages and admitted freely by the BMOA and the Commissions.[1]

Another factor that caused greater variation in wages and general instability had been the rapid expansion of the industry, as has been recorded in 1885, "there is a large demand for trained hands, and these being scarce, are leaving us as new mills spring up - new mills offer inducements in the ways of higher pay",[2] or more efficient equipment and the possibility of greater output and income. The Bombay mills admittedly had wide variety of equipment pattern ranging from the most efficient of its time to the worst.[3] To these rates of wages, there were frequent attempts to cut the wages of the operatives, both for the time-rate and piece-rate wage earners, especially during the bad market conditions, where rationalisation and better development was required; which led to various disturbances and strikes. There were seasonal cuts in winter when shorter hour work was possible, before electricity was installed, although the workers worked as much as they did in longer hours of summer.[4]

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1. For references, and explanation along these lines, see Morris, Op.cit., pp. 154-177.
2. F.C. 1885, p. 18 and pp. 88, 126.
3. Mehta, ICTI, Chapter I, pp. 1-25.
4. N.M. Lokhunday, F.C. 1885, pp. 119-120; RCL 1892, pp. 128, 137.

It is also being reported that Indian operatives never asked as to how their wage were being computed, for reasons of illitracy and complexity of computations due to casualness in the attitude of pay clerks, unless the previous month's wages showed a considerable difference. The management never bothered to tell them that there were cuts in wages for some specific reasons; once known these led to strikes.[1]

Further, the mode of payment was equally defective, and the wages were not paid regularly, and the payments were with-held for 2 to 3 week's advance wages,[2] to insure minimum labour turnover. But this irregularity and time of payment caused greater suffering to the workers, leading to perpetual indebtedness,[3] frustration and to vhilent strikes.

The main mechanism for maintaining the labour discipline was the monetary fines, and they were as unsystematic as the wage differentials. There had not been any set of

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1. East India (Fedrate Act): Return to an Address of the House of Commons, 15 April, 1889, p.72; RCL 1892, pp. 123, 132, 135, 136, 137, 169; BMOA 1892, pp. 10-11, 28. The discussion will be extended a bit in Chapter VI on wages and strike. For discussion, see Morris, Op.cit., pp. 163-165.

2. In fact, it acted as a barrier to the movement of labour from mill to mill.

3. For nature, extent and causes of indebtedness, and its effect on efficiency, see D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 345-346, 22; See also V. Anstey, Op.cit., pp. 185-190; RCL 1931, p. 226.

rules to decide the extent of fine; the rules were very general and varied from time to time and mill to mill. The most disputable cause, and a cause of some strikes was regarding the weaver, when the spoiled cloth was entered in his name at the market price and deducted from his monthly wage.

The wage differentials, deductions from wages, mode and time of payment, conditions of indebtedness[1] and the system of reinforcement for the sake of labour discipline, proved detrimental to stability and discipline and general industrial peace. The millowners had always been guided by short-term perspective[2]. The employers failed to create a system of discipline along sound institutions, especially those dealing with welfare of the operatives and their grievences. The labour that had come from the village with different background, and needed more sympathetic treatment at the hands of the employers and the Government, was subjected to severest kind of endurance tests. As a result the labour that emerged with high rate of absenteeism, turnover, strikes, tardiness, loitering

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1. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 217.

2. The short sightedness of the employers that led to strike are discussed in Ahmad Mukhtar, "The Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes in India", Longman, green & Co. Ltd., Madras, 1935; especially sections dealing with Bombay Strikes.

and relative inefficiency was not, in the main, the product of the worker but that of employers and the British colonial government.

General Working Environment Inside the Mills: It will be interesting to have a short trip to the general environment obtaining in the cotton mills in the form of dust and dirt, sanitation, temperature and humidification, safety against accidents, danger from industrial disease and the buildings in which the operatives had to work, besides the want of welfare organisations that were necessary for the healthy growth of the labour force and their efficiency and the general good of everyone. Once these conditions touched upon and the explanation of 'not seeing an operative beyond the age of 45 and having on the average a record of 5 to 6 years of service in a mill[1] becomes pretty clear.

Very little is known about the sanitary conditions that prevailed in the Bombay cotton textile mills prior to the year 1885, when the Sanitary Commissioner of Bombay reported that the conditions of the mills were far from being as bad as he had expected.[2] The first systematic inspection in 1892 reported that conditions were satisfactory, but stated that longer establishments were better

1. S.D. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., p. 119.
2. PP 1888, vol. 77, H. of C., 321, p. 1.

kept than the smaller ones, and there was difference[1] between the old mills and the new mills, in favour of the latter.[2] The acting Chief Inspector of Factories, Bombay, in his report in 1918, stated the conditions inside the mill, on the whole satisfactory.[3]

However, the Royal Commission on Labour writing dn 1931, states that in a number of factories a large amount of dust is observed, removal arrangements of which are lacking, which may result in palmonary disease. Further states 'Latrine accommodations is not often always adequate and quality often leaves much to be desired.'[4] (There are further evidences to show that buildings that were constructed for Bombay mills followed Lancastrian structure, quite unsuitable to Bombay environment, which has a great disadvantages in Indian climate.[5] There is too much of dust and dirt blocking the proper sight at work,[6] and that "the atmosphere is really vitiated and injurious to the operatives",[7] but the conditions in the newly build

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1. PP 1894, p. 54.
2. Ibid, p. 65.
3. The Bombay Chronicle, Nov. 26, 1919.
4. RCL 1931, 'Report', p. 56.
5. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 203-204.
6. PP 1908, vol. 74, Cmd, 4292, p.62.
7. B.K. Das, 'Factory Labour in India', Water DeGruyter & Co., New York, 1923, p. 58.

mills is stated to be better. The ventillation interferes with spinning operations and the windows are kept closed. Temperature is usually kept high with high relative humidity due to technical necessities, thus making the inside of the sheds much uncomfortable. There were no canteens, no adequate sheds and proper water supply in the mills. Provisions for safety and accidents are scared.[1] These observations are made by the RCL during 1929-31, together with other contemporary sources, paint a picture of unsatisfactory working conditions. It seems the earlier reports were based on very formal and general assessment The effect of these factors on health and efficiency of the mill operatives is obvious, especially if the effect of long hours of work in these circumstances is taken into account. The complaints of loitering and inefficiency prove to be the allegations only. However, both the working conditions and efficiency improved overtime.[2]

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1. RCL, 1931, Report, pp. 56-62.

2. RCL, 1931, pp. 56-57; Kunj M. Patel, Op.cit., pp. 49-61.

4.2 Living Conditions of the Bombay Textile Workers:

The living conditions, especially the housing is closely related to poverty, and place of residence has a great influence on the life of an industrial worker.[1] The workers' standard of living may be classified under several main heads: Housing, food, clothing, education and culture, and welfare work provided by the factories, but the condition of housing of the Bombay Labour will explain the circumstances that a village dweller had to face after joining the city - the problem is particularly acute when it is a city like Bombay. The general poverty and low standard of living of the Bombay mill-operatives is not an isolated and unknown phenomenon.

The Bombay worker had always been largely indebted, especially to the jobbers or to the Marwaris.[2] This was largely due to very high cost of living in Bombay incommunsurate with the wages that the mill operatives received,(but the textile worker in Bombay had been better off[3] than his counterparts in other occupations in the city, or to the rural area.)) The general economic conditions

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1. Housing in Europe, International Labour Office, 1934, p. 40.
2. The general description and extent of indebtedness of Bombay milloperatives may be read in D.H. Buchanan Op.cit., pp. 317-360 and on standard of living, Ibid, pp. 387-415.
3. See Appendix III.

in the country-side were deplorable and the operatives had to send remittances to the relatives or family members in the native villages. All these responsibilities had a telling effect on the health of the operatives and their efficiency. The operatives for their survival needed housing, food and cloth for a bare subsistence. Land being scarce in Bombay, and an increasing pressure of people as a result of expanding commerce and industry, escalated the cost of housing and rent. Pressed by low income and high cost of living, the operatives tended to overcrowd the tenements from the very beginning. The Bombay mill-owners, concerned as they were with their immediate profits, neglected the housing requirements of the operatives. Although the government was aware of this growing housing and sanitary problem from the very beginning,[1] but did nothing substantial to remove these disabilities. The Factory Labour Commission in 1908 noted, that in Bombay where land available for housing was scarce, little had been done by the employers.[2] However, this necessity was felt badly during the World War I, and the main object of the Industrial Commission of 1916-18 was to investigate into the housing conditions of the operatives,[3] and noted

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1. PP 1889, vol. 58, H. of C., 124, p. 611.
2. IFLC, 1908, p. 22.
3. PP 1919, Cmd 51, p. 152.

that in the city of Bombay, where space is limited and prices high, there exist house, called "chawls", that are provided by the private people, at enormous rents. A chawl is a two or three-storied building, with single room units, either placed back to back or separated by a narrow 'galley' (corridor), two or three feet wide, usually traverted by an open drain.[1] The rooms are generally 10 x 10 feet with a small varandah, are in most cases pitch dark, especially those on ground floor. They have little facilities for ventillation, and are dirty and insanitary with foul air due to the burning of dried cow-dung. Where the chawls are built by the municipality and the Improvement Trust Company, had better sanitary conditions, but are few proportionately and overcrowded. This situation is worsened by the world war I heightened economic activity and influx of people from outside the city. An illustration from the Bombay Labour Gazetteer will prove the point , "in outside chawls, I have several times varified the overcrowding of rooms. In one room on the second floor of a chawl, measuring 15 x 12 feet, I found six families living. Six separate ovens on the floor proved this statement. On enquiring, I ascertained that the actual number of adults and children living in the

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1. PP 1919, Cmd 51, p. 153.

room was 30".[1] Buchanan comes to the same conclusion: "Housing conditions doubtless are one of the worst aspects of Indian Industrialism".[2] The Royal Commission in 1931 reported, "There can be no question that many of the older types of mill chawls are detrimental to the health of their occupants, and although, they are gradually being eliminated, large number still remained in use. Moreover, because of their proximity to the mills, they are invariably the most crowded .....".[3] "The practice of subletting for profit is common and add considerably to the degree of overcrowding".[4]

In an enquiry made in 1926 by the Bombay Labour Office showed that 28 of the mills had provided housing in the form of single room tenements for about 20% of their employees,[5] while in Bombay in 1926, there were 83 mills with 149100 operatives - how much progress is made in this direction is obvious. In her sample in 1960's, K.M. Patel shows that only 16% of the operatives are living in Mill chawls and 6.2% had no place to live, 3.6% were living

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1. Indian Woman Doctor in 'Bombay Labour Gazettee', II, no. 1, pp. 31.
2. B.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 398.
3. RCL 1931, 'Report', p. 273.
4. Ibid, p. 274.
5. Ibid, p. 273.

in municipal chawls, 1.68% in huts and stables, 3.8% in Housing Board Accommodation, and 68.6% in private chawls.[1] This shows how slow the progress had been in this direction.[2]

Such are the housing conditions of the Bombay textile workers, with overcrowding, lack of privacy, insanitary conditions, insufficient water supply, lack of lighting and ventilation. What discomfort, consequent morbidness and misery these operatives had been undergoing? How genuine is to call such an operative as inefficient, and uncommitted who is living and working under such tiring conditions?.[3]

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1. Kunj, M. Patel, Op.cit., Table 1, p. 63.

2. For general discussion on efficiency and welfare measures, see, Anwar Iqbal Qureshi, 'Industrial Problems of India', Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1942, pp. 196-222.

3. For general standard of living including clothing and food, of the mill operatives, see RCL, 1931, Report Chapters XII, XIII, XIV and XV; D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 387-415; N.H.Thakkar, Op.cit., pp. 130-169.

CHAPTER V

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK-FORCE

This chapter deals with the organisational set-up of the cotton mill industry in Bombay, the formal work regulations and their application in administering the labour force and its effect on efficiency and commitment.

5.1 Organisational Structure:

The mill industry in India was initiated by the Parsi entrepreneurs who were engaged in opium and cotton trade, especially with China and who found favour with the British government in India,[1] owing to their long-standing associations with the Britishers, and general level of education and mode of living,[2] followed by Hindus, especially Gujarati trading castes, Muslims and British in Bombay. Usually the capital for industry was raised through personal efforts, or borrowings from relatives or acquaintances and from British market. As the industry proved profitable, more capitalists moved in. The base of financing the industry expanded through selling shares to the public. In the initial stages of development, the

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1. For pioneering attempts and the causes of Parsi dominance in Industry, see Mehta, CMI, pp. 3-27.
2. Mehta, CMI, p. 49.

technical and managerial skill together with machinary was acquired from Lancashire, but gradually the Indian capital and skill started replacing the foreign dependence. Out of the interaction of patterns of investment, capital, managerial and technical skill emerged an organisational structure,[1] peculiar to India, what is known as Managing Agency System, somewhere around 1865,[2] in Bombay, followed by Bombay Mill-owners' Association (BMOA) in 1875. The BMOA came into existence as an instrument of self protection against Lancashire pressure on Parliament. It was organised to oppose unfavourable tariff legislations and the passage of factories acts which Bombay Millowners felt was a Lancastrian device to raise the cost of production of Indian cotton goods.[3] Its membership over time fluctuated, but the BMOA represented, by and large, all the cotton mills of Bombay. It has elaborate regulations to guide the behavior of the member millowners and their mills but because of lack of punitive powers, it has not been able to affect uniformity of regulations, and as such

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1. See, P.S. Lokanathan, 'Industrial Organisation in India', London, 1935, pp. 21-32.
2. Ibid, p. 22.
3. Morris, Op.cit., p. 38; S.P. Saklatvala, 'History of the Millowners' Association, Bombay', Bombay, 1931, p. 1. A. Mukhtar, 'Factory Labour in India', Madras, 1930, pp. 12-16, BMOA 1875-76, p. 52.

affected adversely the technical organisation and the administration of work-force,[1] yet its role had been constructive, at least as a media of talks with the labour and the government.

But the Association, apart, the typical mill structure was shaped by the managing agency system. There was a managerial cadre at the top at the mill level, guided by the policies of the managing agents, followed by a technical cadre, various heads of departments (e.g., weaving,masters), and to the lower ring of management lie the sectional heads, called the jobbers or head jobbers (foremen). Outside the management were the millgperatives, both experienced or inexperienced; skilled or unskilled who were responsible for the production of the actual yarn and cloth. This is the ideal structure of themmill organisation, but the distribution of power and authority is different not only in general from this structure, and individual mills differed even in this respect, for reasons of convinience, stage of developuent, and interests of the agents.

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1. IFLC 1908, I, p. 31; Lokanathan, Op.cit., pp. 306-7; Morris, Op.cit., p. 38.

The Managing Agency System: The Managing Agency System[1] is "one whereby an individual, or a group of individuals or a private limited company, manages a business (or industry) on behalf of the owners"[2]. This is a peculiar institution to India, although akin system exists in Europe and Japan,[3] but it is almost universal to India. A managing agency system can control a number of ventures including both trade and industry. Usually the agency takes up the responsibility in its hands starting from construction of building, supplying equipment, raw material, provides general guidelines for the board of directors, and looks after the sales. They are paid commission on products, sales, or net profits. Upto 1890's, the commission was paid on output, latter the commission was paid on net profits, and in 1930's almost all the mills in Bombay were paying commission on profits.[4]

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1. A.K. Rice, 'Productivity and social Organisation: The Ahmedabad experiment', Tavistock Publication, London, 1970, pp. 17-18; see also, P.S. Lokanathan, 'Industrial Organisation in India', George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1935; S.M. Rutnagar, Op.cit., pp. 49-65; V. Anstey, Op.cit., pp. 113-115; D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 165-174; Morris, Op.cit., pp. 34-38; Mehta, ICTI, pp. 54-57.
2. A.K. Rice, p. 17.
3. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 165-172.
4. S.D. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., p. 84.

The system seems to have come into existence in India during the East India Company rule, which handed-over the tradition to the private traders from Britain after 1833, and by 1880's was well adapted by the Indians.[1] Usually the capital is raised by selling shares of the Company, which are bought in large number by the managing agents themselves, and consequently become the managing directors, in the Board of Directorate, and have an over-riding say in the formulations of the internal policies of the mills. Their earnings come from various directions. They are paid commissions in the capacity of managing agents, receive the cost of maintaining the administration and other permissible expenses; they draw salaries in the capacity of directors. Sometime they supply the raw material and equipment and earn profits, for they have interlocking of various commercial and industrial concerns. They bear less risk, earn more income at the risk of mill-owners or share-holders. This system, as a consequence resulted in concentration of power in the hands of the agents. The responsibility and power of the shareholders became non-existent in reality, and restricted the "free exercise of the voice of the share holders in the management of an enterprise in which their savings are at stakes".[2]

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1. V. Anstey, Op.cit., pp. 501-505.
2. U.S. Davar, 'Business Organisation', p. 28.

One singhe agency may do business in trade of different comsodities, may control number of different industries, and number of mills at one time. This tends to form commercial rather than industrial enterprise, to the deteriment of industrial and economic development.[1] This system continues even today.

The position of an agent varies from secretary to that of a manager and a director; but in practice the agent "directs the directors", and their power tend to increase overtime affecting the large turnover in the professional management cadre of the individual mills,[2] interfere in day-to-day business, thus affecting the labour discipline and labour efficiency.

Another characteristic of the managing agency system is that, as they accumulate more money from various sources, more and more enterprises tend to be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, based on family system, hereditary in character and the power to transmit the enterprises to members of their family, or the power to sell the mills to other agents in the capacity of directors. Such a hold leads to short-term motive to earn profits or to appoint family members to key posts, strengthening the hold over individual mills at the cost of integrity, administration and efficiency.[3]

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1. V. Anstey, Op.cit., p. 502.
2. S.D. Mehta, ICTI, Op.cit., pp. 54-57.

The over-riding influence of these managing agents makes the professional management cadre ineffective in forming uniform and organised policies, in maintaining discipline, in enforcing the work regulations. Usually these agents have power to appoint and dismiss the employees down to the level of jobbers. Thus, the assistants identify themselves with the managing agency, rather than the mill or the management they are associated with.

It is being stated that the agency system suited the earlier years of industrialisation, when capital was scarce, and native managerial and technical skill was difficient and scarce.[4] And that so long as these agencies were in the hands of men of integrity and capability, the industry progressed, but when more and more inefficient and corrupt people entered, due to inherent contradiction of heriditary versus efficiency, the industry suffered, and the pattern of its operation converged into numerous abuses, which came under attack from the press and public figures.[5] For, these agents were mainly concerned with their commissions, even if the mills ran into heavy losses.[6]

(Footnotes contd. from previous page)

3. For discussion of these points, see S.M. Rutnagar, Op.cit., pp. 55-61, 62-65; P.S. Lokanathan, Op.cit.; Morris, Op.cit., pp. 34-38; Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 165-172.

4. S.M. Rutnagar, Op.cit., pp. 49-65.

5. Indian Textile Journal, various issues, especially during 1890's; S.M. Rutnagar, Op.cit., pp. 49-65.

6. ITJ, IX, No.99, Dec.1898, p.66; 'Report' ITB, Cotton Mill Enquiry, 1927, LV, p.405; PP 1888, Cmd, 5328, p. 116; R.E. Enthover, 'Cotton Factories of the Bombay Presidency', 1897, pp.35-37, 168-170; S.M. Rutnagar, Op.cit., p. 62.

They produced as much as they could to earn commission in dis-regard to market conditions. Since during the early years, commissions were paid on poundage, and coarse products amounted to high weights, they resisted finer counts of yarns and retarded the technological development. Another evil became more clear during 1920's and between 1939-45 period when large number of mills were changed frequently to other agencies under the selling rights of the agents, thus reducing the years of management by a particular agency to a particular mill, the impact of which on the administration of such mills, as a result of these changes, is obvious.[1] Similar point is noted by a scholar: "There is no doubt that the managing agency system was one factor contributing to such (making profits at all costs), attitude, often inducing slackness, corruption, and a speculative fever where discipline, integrity, and a long-range view were needed."[2]

The Jobber Systems: The discussion so far on the managing agency system has made it clear that the system impeded the smooth functioning of the internal administration of the mills, although the extent of interference varied from mill to mill. This system as a result had a profound effect

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1. S.D. Mehta, CMI, pp. 162, 208.
2. M.D. Morris, Op.cit., p. 34.

on the labour discipline. It is time to emphasize the role of the jobbers on the labour discipline, who represented the first line of management.[1] The jobber system is ubitiquitous in Indian industries,[2] and is by far more important in the heirarchy than its position suggests. Because of its overriding importance in the industrial management and its effect on labour, it is important to discuss its origin, its functions and its effect on the labour force that emerged in Bombay cotton textile mills.

Where did the jobbers come from? No definite answer can be given. There seems to be two categories of jobbers, one category of jobbers seems to have come from educated class of India, who knew English as well as Marathi or Gujarati - the dominant languages of the labour force since the majority of workers were Marathi in their linguistic origin, and majority of managers and technicians were English speaking people, this category of jobbers must have been responsible to bridge the linguistic gap between the management and the workers. They may be called as 'interpreter' jobbers, and these jobbers because of their

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1. The jobber's role on labour supply, instability of labour force, working and living conditions has already been emphasised in earlier chapter, but it is the time that its role on administration is emphasised, besides the recapitulation of certain points.

2. RCL, 1931, 'Report', p. 23.

educational and technical background moved up the hierarchy.[1]

The other category of jobbers is more important to discuss than the first one, for they influenced the millorganisation and the workers.[2]

These jobbers seems to have come either during the construction of the mills as fitters but not acquainted with the processes of spinning and weaving,[3] or must have been drawn from docks, raw cotton trade or railways as established recruits of labour.[4] These jobbers had been drawn from the same social strata to which the most workers belonged, who know individually the workers very well, owing to caste, language, region, or familial acquintance.[5] Or they may have been selected from amongst the workers on account of their being more intelligent and with better

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1. Discussion alongwith these lines is suggested by M.D. Morris, Op.cit., pp. 130-131; also see, S.M. Rutnagar, Op.cit., p. 289.

2. The skilled or educated jobbers could move up the hierarchy, and is not the main concern here, for there is nothing complained against these employees, or regarding their scarcity, instability or inefficiency. See S.D. Mehta, CMI, Op.cit., Chapter VIII; S.D. Mehta, ICTI, Op.cit., Chapter III regarding the technical cadre.

3. S.M. Rutnagar, Op.cit., p. 289.

4. A.R. Bunett Hurst, 'Labour and Housing in Bombay', London, 1925, passim for discussion of the point, see, Morris, Op.cit., pp. 130-131.

5. R.K. Newman, Op.cit.

physique, or with more experience and skill, and usually from military race like Gurkhas and Sikhs - "often he is an ex-serviceman and always dressed like a soldier", and sometimes unprincipled persons occupied these posts.[1]

Wherever these jobbers must have come from, but there is no controversy that they had same background as the workers had. This category of jobbers may aptly be called as 'intermediaries', for they performed this role in recruitment and administration of the work-force for the upper management.[2] Their existence in the Bombay mills had been reported as early as 1864.[3]

Among the most important duties of the jobber was to man the machines, through casual hiring practices, in the section under his control, and if failed to do so was liable to be dismissed, and could have lost the power on his workers, in their economic and social life, both inside and outside the factory. To make his control over the workers more articulate, he did recruit the workers, mostly from his caste, village, or linguistic groups, either from the mill-gate or if necessary from the nearby villages; gave them advance to be recovered after the workers were

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1. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 416-417.
2. S.D. Mehta, ICTI, Op.cit., p. 67.
3. Ibid, p. 67.

paid their wages, at the rate of 1 to 10% interest,[1] and often made arrangement for their lodging. Sometimes, he will act as an agent to money-lenders, who paid him commission, by forcing the operatives to buy ration from the shops he suggested.[2] He will advise in family matters and arbitration in personal disputes of the operatives, will collect money for 'tamashas' and for celebrating festivals and marriages.[3] He will involve himself in mill-politics and in municipal elections.[4] Thus, he acted as a leader in various capacities to the operatives under his influence. Besides, he will provide jobs to those known to him both on permanent and temporary (badli) posts and will get 'dasturi' (bribe) or 'bakhshish' from the operatives at the time of appointment, and even later as periodical payments, or will forcefully let the operatives retain advanced money to earn interests. Thus, he had strong financial and social motives to keep a reserve

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1. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 337-338; RCL, Evidence, 1:1, London, 1930, p. 185.
2. Bunnett-Hurst, Op.cit., pp. 46-47.
3. N.M. Joshi, 'Welfare Work in Bombay Cotton Mills', Journal of Indian Industries and Labour, 1:1, Feb. 1921, p. 21.
4. R.C. James, 'The Casual Labour Problems in Indian Manufacturing', Quarterly Journal of Economics, 74:1, Feb. 1960, p. 108.
5. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., pp. 337-338.

pool of badlis around himself and to provide a balanced link between the management and the workers.[1]

His duties inside the mills were largely technical and supervisory: he will differentially distribute the reward to the operatives depending on the level of attachment or closeness of the operative to the jobber - in alloting work, granting leave, giving training to the mill-hands (assuming that technology was simple), repairing minor disorders of the machines, and will enforce the Company's work regulations. He gave meaning and content to the formal work regulations that were framed in very general terms by the company.[2] In practice, he was responsible for fining the workers for misconduct, late attendance, damage to machinary or cloth, although the rules were framed by the Company, and dejure execution and enforcing them was the responsibility of the Supervisors.

Thus, the jobber, in fact, had the wide ranging functions to perform: for the recruitment of labour, for deductions and additions of wages, maintaining discipline inside the factory; for their training, continuation of their jobs, to provide loan, tenament, to participate in mill and municipal politics. Because of wide ranging functions, he owed wide ranging power, and the control on

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1. R.K. Newman, Op.cit., p. 279.
2. Morris, Op.cit., p. 145.

the operative was absolute. Since "absolute power counts absolutely", the jobber system led to considerable abuse, affecting the production and efficiency adversely, to the disadvantage of both the workers and the management. His motives and short-time outlook towards the workers and the Company was reinforced by his illitracy, his background, lack of advanced technical skill, as he would not move above the post of head jobber, and will resist technical changes and long-term stability.[1]

The institution of jobber came under attack, especially during 1910's from the general public, the government, and the employers, but only when it had become a "necessary evil" both for the employers and the labour,[2] because of his hold over workers. But as the general level of technical and formal education increased, consciousness among workers heightened; and as the foreign and upcountry mills' competition became more intense, the demand for more variety of piece goods and yarn of high counts increased, the technology advanced, and stability of workforce took a definite shape, the hold of the jobber over workers

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1. Ralp C. James, 'Labour Market Insulation and Technical Change: Rationalisation in Bombay Cotton Mills', Economic Weekly, January 1959, p. 217.

2. See various articles in BMOA, ITJ and Bombay Government Reports.

gradually declined.[1] And despite various efforts to reform the jobber system, although even in 1920's the jobbers system was defended by the employers, for he had a decisive role as a strike breaker,[2] the institution continued. The inter-war period characterised by number of general strikes, and the heightened second world War production activity postponed his degradation, and seems to have been surviving as late as 1960.

Morris[3] has rightly pointed out that institution of jobber survived not because the jobber was the 'interpreter' for the management and the labour, because of linguistic and social bridge between them, but precisely because the highly formalised system of recruitment would have been very expensive which the employers were unwilling to adopt, because the employers were guided by myopic profiteering and because the technology was simple - not requiring special technical training, and that the jobber system of recruitment and training was best suited to the circumstances.[4]

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1. S.D. Mehta, ICTI, Op.cit., pp. 60-72; Morris, Op.cit., pp. 137-141, 148-151 on the attempts to reform the jobber system.
2. Kunj M. Patel, Op.cit., pp. 40-41.
3. M.D. Morris, Op.cit., p. 37.
4. ITB, 1927, 11, pp. 347-348.

A brief analysis of the formal work regulations[1] and administration of the labour force[2] of Bombay will further clarify the allegation as to why the Bombay cotton textile worker was considered instable, indisiplined and inefficient.

5.2 Work Regulations and Administration:

Before 1890, there is no evidence of complaints of indiscipline of the workers,[3] thereafter the labour movement seems to have emerged. During the earlier years, because of lack of consciousness of the 'power of combination' on the part of the workers, the individual disputes or cases of indiscipline could have been amicably settled between the management and labour, largely through fining instrument or giving some extra wages, especially due to the overriding influence of the jobber. But the general discontent was smoldering to find an explicit expression - it sometimes resulted in occasional, ephemeral and limited strikes,[4] and its is from this period that the operatives were alleged as indisciplined.

The early mills seem to have their own formal and informal work-regulations and usually the master-servant

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1. See Ibid, Chapter VII.
2. Ibid, Chapter VIII.
3. Ibid, p. 106, fn. 2,
4. The Labour movement will be discussed in Chapter VI.

relationship existed. There are evidences to the fact that general rules were written and posted somewhere in the premises of the mills. No care was taken whether the operatives had read them and known under what service conditions they were working. Soon after the passage of Factories Act of 1891, the BMOA held a general meeting to frame 'the uniform code of work regulations' for the workers in 1891,[1] and were to come into force in 1892. This code dealt with attendance; wages, fines, forfietures and dismissals.[2] It is stated that the code fairly represented the general regulations already in vogue.[3] But because of the lack of punitive powers of the BMOA, individual iddiosyncracies of the mills continued. In fact, no effort was made to popularise and to enforce the rules of the code. Despite the efforts and claiming to the contrary, there has not been any substantial change in the matter of discipline, until the BMOA in 1937, introduced the 'standing orders for the mill hands in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry',[4] only after the external pressure obliged the millowner to adopt the uniform code.

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1. BMOA 1891, pp. 15, 172-75.
2. Ibid.
3. Mr. Brewett, RCL 1892, p. 132.
4. BLO 1934, pp. 260-263.

According to 1891 BMOA regulations, the workers had to come in the scheduled time, even on days the mill was closed for less than 30 consequtive days, that they should work regularly inside the mill for the scheduled hours of work, should not smoke inside the mill, prohibited theft, bribe, strike and conspiracy against the Company, could quit only after one month's notice period had been exhausted.

These rules were very formal and wide and their administration was equally casual, main instrument against all these offences was to fine according to the wish and whim of the supervisors; although dismissal was also formulated in severe cases of breach, but was rarely awarded. Fines, combined with the mode and time of payment of wages, by withholding payments of wages, usually of 3 weeks duration, were the formal instruments to combat indiscipline, retard turnover and protecting the employers against strikes. The jobber usually gave the form and content to these general regulations, thus increasing his hold over his gang of workers. All the regulations favoured the employers but their enforcement was quite lax.[1]

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1. FC 1875, FC 188 and FC 1890.

Loitering: This laxity on the one hand and the uncomfortable environment inside the working sheds, on the other, gave much to the loitering and made a case for indiscipline, against the workers, which in fact, can be explained away by the varying hours of work from season to season and mill to mill; excessively long hours, absence of regular lunch or rest breaks, inadequate and unhygenic toilets, no water supply inside the shed, and the fact that number of badlis appeared everyday at the gate of the mill in search of employment, giving an observer an idea of loitering. For all of these circumstances, the workers cannot be blamed but the employer, who was satisfied with this arrangement and discipline.[1] A quotation will make the point more clear; thus, 'in no two factories are the departmental working or routine rules the same, and the majority of the illitrate operatives, tacitly accepting them are wholly ignorant of the conditions under which they enter service".[2] and this wide variation in rules and disciplinary practices was admittedly by the BMOA in 1927.[3] The behavior of the employers was guided by short-term gains, and as such failed to develop a system of precise rules and their proper

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1. For instance, Dr. K.N. Bahaduri, BMOA 1891, pp.44-45.
2. ITJ, XXII, No. 257, Feb.1912, p. 170.
3. Govt. of Bombay, Report of the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee, 1928-29, p. 178.

administration. For labour costs were low, a large number of operatives were paid on piece-rate basis, production of yarn and cloth was of lower counts, the technology was simple. These factors made them to disregard discipline and to concentrate on to see that the machines worked at maximum speed with maximum hours of work, so that more is produced, more commission are paid to the agents and more dividends to the shareholders. But situation changed after 1922, when large scale structural changes were demanded, but the previous patterns of labour utilisation had become institutionalised which was difficult to change, which ultimately led to labour unrest. Besides no serious attempts were made at least as late as 1927.[1]

Strikes: Because of these longstanding grievances of the workers and the poor administration of the employers, a number of strikes took place: 1918-19, 1924, 1925, 1928. During the 1928 strike the Joint Strike Committee was formed in which one of the demands of the workers was the standardisation of work rules and work practices in the industry,[2] to which the BMOA responded with a proposal,[3]

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1. Morris, Op.cit., p. 160.
2. Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee, 1928-29, pp.154
3. Ibid, pp. 178-179.

which was rejected by the workers,[1] for not putting restrictions on the behaviour of the employers, which in turn was rejected by the Fawult Committee.[2] The outcome of these conflicts was the better precision in work rules, with an emphasis on strict administration. Both parties were subjected to restrain: on the issues of fines, dismissals covering all the employees, including the weavers, who were traditionally being exempted from recording their timings of arrivals. It also restricted the time for eating except in the scheduled time, rationalised the system of fining regarding the weaver who were to buy the spoiled cloth at selling prices. It also introduced the concept of permanent, and temporary worker, who could not be discharged at will. Also, it established provision for formal leaves to induce more stability. Rule changes were not to be arbitrarily introduced or, repeated or replaced, without consideration of their effects on the disciplinary pattern of the entire industry.[3]

Another strike following the unsettled issues of the 1928 strike, took place in 1929, and the preparation of the new regulations by the EMOA were delayed upto 1931 and could be introduced in 1932. But individual pattern

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1. Ibid, p. 13.
2. Ibid, pp. 13-14.
3. Ibid, pp. 17-20.

of work regulations continued without much significant change. Even the external pressure from ITB 1927, the general strikes of 1928 and 1929, and the Fawult-Committee deliberations of 1928-29 did not yield significant results.

The Government eventually introduced the 'Trade Dispute Concilliation Act' in 1934, which made the provisions of labour officers, but even such attempts, by and large proved futile and the industrial peace remained a mirage. The 'Payment of Wages Act of 1937' was enacted to cope with the standardisation of wages and work regulations, which imposed legal restrictions on the employer's disciplinary powers, and made the provision for fining the workers for offences more precise and binding. As a result of these state measures, some standardization could become a reality, but for the lack of punitive powers of the BMOA, Government further enacted in 1938 the 'Bombay Industrial Disputes Act' to cope with the mounting restlessness among workers. But it should be remembered that gradual entry of the State into the labour management relations owes mainly to its concern with law and order situation - a threat to the British colonial power in India. Nevertheless, it affected changes in labour deployment, system of production, wages and working hours, withdrawl of any customary concessions, previllages and usages.

In case of disagreement the case could be brought to government conciliation and arbitrations. Work discipline and organisation in the broadest sense, had become a matter of public regulations.[1]

These work regulations so gradually generated and evolved out of the tripartite interaction of the labour, employer and the state, were then enforced in practice, and the kind of labour force that emerged is the concern of further discussion.

From the very beginning the interference of the managing agents in the day-to-day affairs of the mills administration, and the lack of power on the part of the professional managers to appoint and discharge of the supervisors and assistants, led to the identification of the jobbers to the agents - some were even spying inside the mill for the agents. And the jobber in turn guided the total control of labour discipline, largely shaped by organisational weakness, very general and indefinite rules and systems of recruitment. He tried to make best use of his position, knowing full well that the position he was holding is the highest that he could acquire, thus disregarded long term efficiency of his workers.[2] Besides, his peculiar

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1. Morris, Op.cit., pp. 127-128. In fact, I would call it a "matter of colonial regulations".

2. RCL 1931, 'Report', p. 19; Mehta, ICTI, p. 71 says it the weakest link in the mill organisation.

position made him to disregard the merit - nepotism was the criterion for recruitment, and this way he could easily transplant the caste and linguistic groups into the mill industry.[1] He also gained through frequent absenteeism and large turnover in the mills,[2] although he reduced the mobility of the workers in the labour market for the competitive jobs.[3]

In sum, it may be said that the managing agency system gave birth to the loose industrial organisation, that in turn gave birth to the jobber system, which proved one of the worst causes of instability and inefficiency among the mill operatives, that in fact impeded the progress of sound organisation. The other most important reason is the colonial policy towards industrialisation, which did not take positive steps to facilitate better organisations and to facilitate more industries to come up. The system of work regulations, and disciplining and structuring the labour force evolved to a more advance stage, largely under the external pressures from the government and the threat of strikes by the labourers. To some extent the rural links of the operatives might have brought about some difficulties in adjustment to the new industrial culture. But over the years these links exerted less and less pressure on the operatives.

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1. R.K. Newman, Op.cit.
2. Morris, Op.cit.
3. Daniel Thorner, Op.cit.

CHAPTER VI

LABOUR MOVEMENT, THE STATE AND THE LABOUR DISCIPLINE

Every movement in the beginning is always unstructured, unorganised. Usually it begins when there is disbalance in the system, When a group of people suffers from some kind of social, economic, religious or cultural disability in relation to the other. It is in the interest of the governing or responsible elite to channelise this force into a constructive direction, otherwise it results in sudden changes and large sufferings for the individuals.

The labour movement in India, like other movements, was unorganised, but too slow to gather its momentum is a bit surprising. An explanation will be sought here by taking into account the factors that were largely responsible for its delay. The responsibility either lies with the labour, the employers, or the government, or a combination of circumstances.

Bombay cotton textile industry after originating in 1854 progressed, on the whole, satisfactorily, but the distribution of this satisfaction between the groups involved had not been fair, viz., between the employers and the labour - unfavourable to the latter. The memergence of this new industrial force is impeded by the poverty conditions in the country, employer's short-sighted

policies; the passive, and at time the attitude of animosity of the British government in India.[1] The emphasis here will be on the labour discipline, characterised by the strikes, out of the interaction of the labour, the employer, and the state.

It is a truism that the rate and direction of industrialisation depends on the conscious policy of the state. Generally speaking, the British colonial rule in India never intended to industrialise India, on the contrary, its policies were largely guided by the colonial interests[2], and the pressure from Lancashire and Manchester, in particular; in so far as Bombay cotton textile industry is concerned ".... the economic policy of the Government of India remained geared to the purpose of preserving the British Imperial Order".[3]

In this context, it is being intended to see how the labour-management relations in the Bombay Cotton textile

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1. I have already discussed some of the points regarding the role of the employers', and the government in proceeding chapters.

2. A.K. Bagchi, 'Private Investment in India: 1900-1939' Orient Longman, Cambridge University Press, 1972, Chapter 14. He emphasises that India served as the biggest market for British textile goods, and provided a stability to the 'Balance of Payment' of British metropolitan economy, gave jobs to Britishers, and profits on capital in India and a political apparatus to Pax Britannica (P.420).

3. Ibid, p.421.

mills operated in the British colonial framework, and especially to see why the allegedly indisciplined labour force emerged.

Assuming that labour supply was easy and any individual resorting to indisciplined behavior could be removed and replaced by another one, there hadbbeen no complaints of strikes in early 1870's. For, by and large, master-servant relationship existed, and there would have been no question of resistance on the part of the operatives to their supervisors, especially the jobber who had been instrumental in making the rustic an industrial labour. Although there are reports of strike as early as 1874, but they were confined to individual mills and individual sections and such strikes were not uncommon in the 1880's.[1] It should be noted that first Factories Act of 1881 concerning the female and child labour has nothing to do with these strikes. By the 1890's strikes had become "of frequent occurrance in everyone of the mills in the city",[2] and this frequency had been referred to as a "strike mania".[3]

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1. Presidency of Bombay, Annual Report, 1874-75, p. 137; and FC 1875, pp. 24, 42 and 82; RCL 1892.
2. RCL 1892; evidence of N.M. Lokhan- dé, p. 169; BMOA 1892, p. 11, 28-29.
3. ITJ, III. No. 27, December 1892, p. 64.

An important event regarding the labour movement took place. After the passage of 1881 Factories Act, the pressure grew from Britain for further labour legislation, and a commission was set up in 1885. In the same year, N.M. Lokhande organised a conference of Bombay factory workers to draw up a memorandum to be presented to this commission, in which such demands as weekly holiday, noon-time recess, limitation of working hours, compensation for accidents and prohibition of undue delay in the payments of wages,[1] were put forward, but the government did not respond to these demands.

However, further pressure from Britain came on the Indian Government, and the Factories Act of 1891[2] was enacted, in which few of the demands of the Millworkers' Association were incorporated, like the hours of work and weekly holiday. But its enforcement had not been adequate. The Mill workers' Association was organised by N.M. Lokhande in 1890, when 10,000 workers signed a memorandum. It is clear, contrary to the popular belief, that labour movement was not absent in Bombay mills. Yet this Association was not a trade union, for it had no fixed

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1. T.R. Bhasin, 'Evolutionary Perspective of Labour Legislation and Policy in India", 1856 to 1956', Delhi.

2. Some pressure came as a result of International Labour Conference in 1890. S.M. Rutnagar, Op.cit., p. 475; R.K. Das 'History of Indian Labour Legislation', University of Calcutta, 1941, pp. 52-53.

membership, no organisation, no labour leader, no financial resources. It was, in fact, the welfare organisation. But even this weak movement declined in the next decade because of enormous difficulties like the difficult market situation, imposition of countervailing duties on Indian cloth goods, plague of 1895-98, China market glutt, famines in the countryside, and Chinese and Japanese competition was beginning to be felt.[1] All these factors caused great instability and shattered the emerging cohesion of the workers. This situation continued till 1904 when the industry experienced a cotton boom, helped by longer hours due to the introduction of electricity for illumination, situation in countryside was normal - famines have been overcome - there was sufficient and genuine supply of labour available to the mills. They were earning large profits, but labour was not given its due share. These grievances were aired by the Swadeshi movement.[2] Besides Lancashire[3] was alarmed at this expansion of cotton mill industry, they sympathised with Indian labour. Because of these factors the mill workforce grew refractory and there appeared sporadic strikes in the Bombay mills.[4]

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1. S.D. Mehta, CMI, p. 64.
2. For the effects of Swadeshi movement on mill industry, see S.D. Mehta, CMI, pp. 91-94.
3. D.R. Gadgil, Op.cit., p. 305.
4. ITJ, XI, No.129, June 1901, p. 235. For the strikes after 1904, see, M.D. Morris, Op.cit., p. 174.

Forced by these circumstances, the Goverment set-up another Factories Commission to investigate the working conditions of the workers, which gave report in 1908 and noted, ".... while the operatives fully understood the machinery of strikes...., they are as yet unable to combine over any large area with the object of securing a common end by concerted action".[1] On the recommendations the Government Legislature introduced a bill on labour laws which was passed in 1911 as Factories Act, which included male operatives in its provisions, some improvement regarding the hours of work, holiday etc. took place.

But in the mean time, such welfare organisations as Servants of India Society in 1905, Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha in 1909, Social Service League in 1910 have come into existence[2] and they were playing a marginal role of welfare - wage function of the unions, but they lacked almost all the characteristics of the modern trade unions. However, the local strikes and the role of these welfare organisation, coupled with their living and working together, with common socio-cultural base of the majority, provided them a sense of identity and a consciousness

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1. IFLC, 1908, p. 10.
2. The Millhand Association by this time has disappeared.

of their disabilities.[1]

In 1914, the First World War broke out, that gave boost to industrial production. Profits rose, and prices also rose in sympathy, but real wages declined. The labour grew refractory, the threatening strikes were laid to rest by giving cost of living allowance.[2] But the prolonged war conditions gave further decline to wages. The profits rose further, but the employers did not accede the demands of further rise in wages. As a result of consciousness of their circumstances the labour struk work in 1818, that involved 1,50,000 workers, lasting 12 days.[3] By this time, the labour has acquired some sense of direction, had learnt full well the advantages of strikes especially when this strike resulted into a success, on which a report speaks, "there is no doubt that the movement have come to stay in India".[4]

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1. I have not been able to explain as to why the labour movement was so delayed. Probably the poor economic conditions and illitracy of workers, the individual dealing of the jobbers with the operatives, antipathy of the employers and apathy of the government is responsible for this delay, and if came after 1918-19 strike, it could not generate its own momentum.

2. An Industrial Commission was set up by the Government to investigate the labour conditions and for the development of economy through industrialisation in 1916-18, for the war had made it clear how difficult was it to do without native industrialisation.

3. For detailed analysis of this strike, see, Ravinder Verma, "Bombay Textile Mills Strike of 1918-19", IESHR, 1971, vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 1-29. The strike demand was regarding wage rise to 25%.

4. PP 1922, XVI, Paper 171, p. 202.

(The way the 1918-19 general strike in Bombay took place is called by a scholar as 'Jacquerie'[1] a sudden uprising, without any previous organisation or a plan to that effect. The proceedings that led to the solution of this labour employer conflict shows clearlythat the employers hated the employees for using such means as strikes to achieve their end which was a new experience on their part. The employees hated the employers for their unpatterned employment, discipline and retrenchment policy.[2] This kind of feeling was also due to the absence of genuine trade unions)- having no articulate character of demand, no clearly defined leadership, usually represented by outsiders which the employers did not like.[3] These characteristics of the trade unions continued till the general strike of 1928, without any change in the outlook of the employers. "There was unrest without discipline, strike without organisation",[4] and employers were obviously against such strikes.[5] The government on its part looked

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1. R.K. Verma, Op.cit.; See also C.S.Deole, "The Bombay Strikes", Journal of Indian Economic Society, II, 4, Dec. 1919, pp. 193-202.
2. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 430.
3. RCL, 1931, 'Report', pp. 317-318.
4. Industrial Disputes Committee, 'Report', 1922, p.2.
5. BMOA, from 1919-1921.

at such strikes as the blot on the prestige of British Government in India, and the movement as a revolution".[1]

To sum up, the development in the labour management relations in Bombay during the colonial rule upto the period of 1922, it will be better to emphasise a few points. (By the labour legislations and by the way they were enacted,) it becomes clear that the British Government of India, was largely guided by the pressures and interests from Britain, and under the disguise of 'laissiz faire' policy, remained almost aloof from the industrial situation, and the mediation in disputes that was done in an unofficial capacity, and that was due to its concern with law and order situation rather than with the industrial peace for the purpose of industrial development or labour welfare.

(The labour movement, on the other hand existed, at least quite weakly in 1880's, but fizzled out during 1890's due to the attitude of the employers, conditions of the mills, poor economic conditions of the labour force.) It revived gradually during the World War I, but still weak and inarticulate, largely guided by outside influence and by and large, the labour agitated peacefully, rather than voilently. The causes of most of the strikes were immediate, for instance, due to wage cuts, bonus withdrawl,

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1. D.H. Buchanan, Op.cit., p. 430.

or stoppage of allowances, or in support of jobbers,[1] in case they came in conflict with their superiors, who were assisted by middle class educated persons,[2] usually lawyers, outside the labourforce. The consciousness that they derived, was mainly from their working and living conditions, usually coming from the adjacent districts and villages with common background,[3] although the diversity of race, caste, language acted as disintegrating forces.[4] But the movement lacked the characteristics of a modern trade union.

Most of the legislations that came into existence, or at least the attitude of the government, considered strikes as illegal and there was no check on the behaviour of the employers. The concern of the employers was to earn profits for short term period. Both the Government and the employers failed to create among the workers, a sense of identity with their jobs, or a sense of discipline that was so needed for peaceful relations - failed to create the industrial institutions for the benefit of

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1. Morris, Op.cit., p. 24.
2. G.L. Nanda, 'Labour Unrest in India', Indian Journal of Economics, III, part 4, Jan. 1921, pp. 462-463.
3. Ravinder Varma, Op.cit.
4. RCL, 1931, 'Report', pp. 340-342.

labour, employer and the society. The identification was strengthened towards the jobbers, rather than the industry, owing to faulty labour discipline and industrial organisation.

But after the 1918-19 strikes, and the success that followed, demonstrated the workers the strength of combination and concerted action. The employers also realised that it was better to deal with a disciplined union rather than a mob backed by outsiders. The Government also realised that law and order can be better maintained if there was industrial peace, based on sound industrial organisation and disciplined trade union movement.

By 1922, the trade depression had set in. The competitive strength of Japan had phenomenally increased, both in India and China yarn market. It was difficult to earn profits, the employers in 1923 discontinued the bonus that the mill-operatives were getting since 1917.[1] The operatives reacted to it and struck work in 1924. Some outsiders as usual intervened, formed a committee, appealed to the Government to intervene who appointed a committee to consider the question of bonus.[2] The committee recommended that the bonus be discontinued and the strike

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1. V.B. Karnik, "Strikes in India", Manaktalas, Bombay, 1972, p. 142; S.D. Mehta, CMI, p. 137.

2. A. Mukhtar, 'Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes in India', Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., Madras, 1935, p. 137.

collapsed. Over 116,000 operatives were affected by the strike, the loss in working days being close to 8 million,[1] but no violence took place, although it was protracted, and no trade union emerged.[2]

The employers encouraged by the collapse and forced by economic depression resorted to a wage cut of 11½%.[3] This led to the general strike of 1925 affecting 1,45,000 workers and 76 mills.[4] Some leaders intervened, requested the Government but the Government showed its inability to do so because the Governor had no statutory powers; the strike continued for six months. Considering poor conditions of the operatives, it is difficult to understand how could they continue the strike for such a long period, against the adament employers. It is explained "that about 60 per cent of workers had returned to their villages, where they had some work to do in that season[5] and who remained were eking out some sort of an existence through employment in other industries or through hawking vegetables, fruits and other articles".[6]

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1. Ibid, p. 138.
2. Although the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (GKM), with Communist leading existed at that time.
3. V.B. Karnik, Op.cit., 1972, p. 145.
4. Ibid, p. 146.
5. This point is noteworthy about the strong links of the operatives to their villages in 1924.
6. R.R. Bakhle and N.M. Joshi quoted in V.B. Karnik, Op.cit., p. 147.

In the meanwhile the employers assisted by the nationalist government pressurised the Government to repeal the existing duties of 3½ per cent which were eventually repealed, the wage cuts were restored. "The employees used the strike as a weapon to get their demands from the Government. And yet workers and their leaders are accused from time to time of resorting to strikes for political ends!"[1]

Soon after the 1925 strike, N.M. Joshi and R.R. Bakhale in conjunction with other labour welfare groups brought Bombay Textile Labour Union to existence, and claimed a membership of 9,800 in 1927 - slightly more than 6% of mill employment.[2] But its membership fluctuated over time, and it never generated an independent movement[3] So far the Unions were called as "Strike committees".[4]

In the meantime, because of changed attitude of the Government, the Indian Trade Unions Act of 1926[5] was passed. Even employers favoured this legislation. But except the recognition and registration of Unions, nothing

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1. Ibid, p. 148.
2. Morris, Op.cit., pp. 182-183.
3. Ibid, p. 183.
4. R.K. Das, 'Labour Movement in India', p. 36.
5. For details, see P.K. Mukherjee, "Labour Legislation in British India", Calcutta, 1937, pp. 200-222.

substantial was achieved by the Act.".[1]

At around 1928, the Communists made their appearence,[2] among Bombay mill workers in the form of the Communist Girni Kamgar Union (GKU).[3] In fact the strained labour management relations, and increased militancy of the workers gave an opportunity to the communists to make a headway. (BTLU was largely dependent on its leaders who were outsiders and busy with other activities, besides the moderate policy did not give an appeal to the workers and its membership never went above 1927 peak of 9,800 members. The rationalisation scheme, after the recommendations of ITB 1927, thweatened the stability of employment of the milloperatives, which created discontent among workers and was tapped by the Communists. (The GKU agitated against this scheme and a strike took place in 1928, to which BTLU was initially against. It is here that the political rivalry between the Communists and Congress becomes clear in the GKU and BTLU conflict. But BTLU also joined the

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1. T.R. Bhasin, Op.cit., p. 14.

2. Gail Omvvaidt, "Non-Brahmin and Communists in Bombay", EPW, April 21, 1973, pp. 749-759. He states that communist movement has its roots in the villages from which the mill operatives came. But I have not been able to make out why the mill industry could not have the communist movement in Bombay earlier than it appeared.

3. GKM had claimed a membership in 1923 of 900, in 17 mills and rose to 35,000 to 4,000 in 1926 and 1927 respectively when it finally converted into GKU. See, R.K. Newman, 'Labour Organisation in the Bombay Cotton Mills: 1918-1929' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Sussex, 1970), pp. 36, 184.

strike due to mass pressure, and participated in forming the Joint Strike Committee. The strike lasted for six months. The Bombay Government looked at this communist movement with concern and to overcome the law and order situation instituted Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee (BSEC), also known as Fawcett Committee of 1928-29. During its working the trouble continued.

The more militant GKU got the strength of 54,000 members, whereas BTLU membership declined to 6749 members. Besides, the GKU had more representation in more mills than the BTLU which was confined to a few mills.[1] In March 1929, the Fawcett Committee recommended a thorough going strengthening of labour discipline in the mills based on the cooperation of the Unions and Millowners' Association. While the association and BTLU representatives agreed to support the proposal, the GKU refused, and another general strike developed in April, 1929, which lasted five months before it was finally broken,[2] and the membership of both BTLU and GKU declined. The Unions have collapsed, but the tension mounted. Due to growing economic depression, the employers resorted to wage cuts and lockouts, generating

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1. Morris, Op.cit., p. 183.

2. M.D. Morris, 'Labour Discipline, Trade Unions and the State in India', Journal of Political Economy, LXIII, Aug. 1955, pp. 293-308.

more tension and resulted into 1934 strike which also collapsed due to unyielding attitude of the employers to push through the rationalisation schemes.

In the meantime, threatened by communist revolution, the Government imprisoned communists in Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1929, following the 1928, 1929 strikes, under the court of Enquiry,[1] under the provision of Trade Disputes Act, 1929.[2] The other factors that gave a blow to communist movement were the caste elitism, the confused and changing instructions to the communists from Moscow.[3]

To this period, a scholar observed,[4] "trade union leaders and other political and social workers helped employees in conducting their struggles, but the factors which led to these struggles were not their creation. They were the creations of employers and the Government or, to shift the blame further, of the economic crises through which the country was passing."

Between 1929-34, number of strikes took place due to wage cuts and rationalisation schemes. As a result of these disturbances, the All India Textile Workers Conference

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1. The 1929 Act provided Court of Enquiry and Board of Conciliation, RCL 1931, 'Report', p. 338.
2. Bombay Labour Gazetteer, October 1929, p. 104.
3. Gail Omvedt, 'Non-Brahmins and Communists in Bombay', Op.cit., pp. 800-805.
4. V.B. Karnik, Op.cit., p. 179.

(AITUC) held in Bombay and general strike was resorted in Bombay, Nagpur and Sholapur.[1] In these strikes both moderate and the militant Communists took part, but the growing impatience of the Communists brought a split. And owing to the un-yielding attitude of the employers and the joint committee of the workers, compliad with government repression brought an end to the strike without much success. The Government made use of the provisions of 1929 Trade Disputes Act by declaring the strikes illegal, but the Bombay High Court rejected the plea of the Bombay Government to prosecute Union leaders.[2] After this judgement the Government of India brought forward a Bill to amend the particular sections of the Trade Disputes Act that were dropped due to protest. And finally, the Bombay Trade Disputes Conciliation Act was passed in 1934 to deal with disputes in the textile Industry in Bombay with a view to suppress communist movement and provide easy channels to labour discontent.

In fact, the Government abandoned its policy of non-interference in 1929 through Trade Disputes Act, but in a limited sense. The RCL 1929 which reported in 1931 suggested tripartite industrial council, provincial autonomy which were incorporated in the Government of India

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1. V.B. Karnik, Op.cit., pp. 256-259.
2. B. Shiva Rao, 'The Industrial Worker in India', p. 195.

Act of 1935. The labour was brought to the concurrent list of the Centre and the Provinces. Under this Act of 1935, the provincial elections took place and the Congress came to power in Bombay in 1937.

But in the mean time in 1936, the Government passed the Payment of Wages Act. This Act together with Bombay Trade Disputes Conciliation Act of 1938 brought repressive as well as other moderate channels to suppress labour unrest. This intervention of the state in a rather more direct way brought some discipline in the ranks of operatives.

In 1937, the Congress came into power, who basically had sympathesised with the Bombay textile workers during the election campaign. Finding their own government, the operative got more restive to meet the demands for better wages and more favour. "The Comparative peace of last five years (in India as a whole) was mistaken by the provincial governments and the employers for a willing acceptance of the conditions obtaining in the industry. The strikes are the expression of so far repressed but otherwise do-nothing policy of the provincial governments of the last several years - a failure of old administration to deal with the workers in a spirit of fairness and justice. It is the heavy burden they have left for

the autonomous provinces today."[1]

The Congress Government in Bombay amended the 1934 Act to make it a Bombay Industrial Disputes Act of 1938, which made more stringent provisions to deal with strikes and lockouts, and general labour discipline-- by providing an elaborate machinary for conciliation and arbitration, and making the award binding on both parties,[2] which was opposed by the workers, and communists in particular, but the provisions and enforcement were more direct and strict. Another thing that the Congress in Bombay did was to set up the Bombay Textile Labour Inquiry Committee in 1938, which recommended an increase of 12½% in the wages of the textile workers.[3]

But War broke out in 1939, the Congress failed to cooperate with the British India Government and resigned. The British Provincial Government ordered ordinances to contain industrial peace - for high level of production to meet the War needs.

Initially both the Congress and the Communists were against the War in which the Indians were not consulted

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1. National Trade Union Federation, Report of the Third Session, pp. 30-31, in B. Shiva Rao, Op.cit., p. 195.
2. See, on the labour policy of the Congress Government, L.G., XVI, N.72, Aug. 1937, pp. 923-24; LX, XVIII, No.3, Nov. 1938, pp. 183-191.
3. Textile Labour Inquiry Committee, 1938, pp. 89-94.

before declaration. As a result, there were two political protests in Bombay: one on 2 October 1939, and another on 26 January 1940, and were mostly organized by the Communists.[1]

But another strike in Bombay took place on the issue of dearness allowance in March 1940, earlier the issue was referred to a Board of Conciliation, award of which was acceptable to the mill owners but GKU was not satisfied. Thus strike took place in all mills, affected as much as 1,57,000 workers, but the strike collapsed, due to a government repression, unyielding attitude of employers and, the weakness of the trade unions.

In 1941, the Communists, on the direction of Moscow, supported the War efforts, and they affected discipline in the mills to maintain high level of productivity to meet War efforts. They found favour with the British Government and the leaders were released, while Congress leaders remained in jails. It increased the hold of communists over the Bombay trade union movement. In 1941, the Governor issued orders 'to contain strikes' and made clear that if conciliation failed, the case could be

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1. V.B. Karnik, Op.cit., p. 295.
2. Ibid, p. 299.
3. Ibid, p. 295.

referred to the state, whose decisions would be binding on both parties.[1]

The membership of GKU rose to 36,500, but declined in 1945 to 26,000 for no substantial amelioration took place in the conditions of workers, and that GKU leaders lacked effective control over its members.[2] In late 1945, after the War, the Congress created Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sabha (RMMS) and due to its efforts, especially after coming to power in Bombay in 1946, its claimed membership increased to 32,000 as against 39,537 of GKU, soon after Independence. The latter years are marked by the discrimination against the Communists, making use of the Bombay Industrial Relation Act of 1946, which created an elaborate machinery for conciliation, Industrial Court and Labour Courts and the concepts of "representative" and "approved Unions" were made use of to discriminate against Communists.[3]

These developments reflect as how much refracting the Bombay textile labour had been. But this restlessness

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1. L.G., XX, No. 9, May 1941, p. 653.
2. P.D. Kulkarni, 'Textile Trade Unionism in Bombay', Indian Journal of Social Work, VII, Dec. 1946, pp. 224-238.
3. M.D. Morris, 'Labour Discipline, Trade Unions, and the State in India', Journal of Political Economy, LXIII, Aug. 1955, pp. 294-308.

was not generated by the workers themselves. For this, the role of the employers, the Government and the political and trade union rivalry had been the main causes.

The employers on their part did not care for labour discipline so long as mills made profits. But whenever there was a crisis, labourer was the first to be attacked to overcome their difficulties. The necessity of restructuring the labour discipline was felt after 1922 due to changed internal and international political and economic environment. But the earlier practices had become institutionalised and the workers gave tough resistance to any change that affected or threatened them to effect adversely. Before the 1918-19 strike the dispute could be handled on individual level, but thereafter a series of strikes welcomed the employers - the major general strikes being in 1924 and 1925 on bonus and wage issues, 1928 and 1929 against rationalisation; on bonus issue in 1934 and on dearness allowance issue in 1940.

The role of the government throughout had not been constructive. The labour legislations upto 1922 that went into operation were largely enacted due to external pressure, especially from Lancashire; Later the outlook of the government changed and most of the enactments came due to internal circumstances but they were guided by the

"law and order" concern to contain industrial and general peace to pursue colonial interests - especially the government reacted sharply to communist threat. Rather, the behavior of the government becomes clear in their treatment with the communists. When the peace was threatened in 1929, they were arrested in the Meerut conspiracy case, when they in 1941 supported the War efforts, the government sided with them.

The labour movement that could generate after a prolonged gestatation period was marred by the political rivalry, between the Congress and the Communists, inviting increasing intervention from the State through a series of enactments.

The factors that impeded the labour movement may be summerised here: Employers attitude against workers, increasing government intervention, political and union rivalry, lack of effective leadership, role of jobbers, poverty and illitracy of workers,[1] lack of craft unions due to large number of semi-skilled and unskilled workers owing to simple technology,[2] and to some extent effect of such divisive factors as caste, religion, language, and regional affiliations.[3]

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1. This point is elaborated in RCL 1931, 'Report,' pp. 327-328.
2. M.D. Morris, Op.cit., 1965, p. 196.
3. See, Gail Omvaidt, Op.cit., and RCL, 1931, 'Report', pp. 340-342.

The movement has failed, despite the long history of Bombay Cotton textiles, to generate a union based on sound organisation, where members could be fairly attached to union for long term gains. Both the functions[1] of trade union - wage-welfare and disciplining labour force - were performed largely by the State. It has failed to produce its own leaders that could have worked independently of the political rivalry. As such could not develop that could have provided self-generated discipline. The necessity of self-strength was emphasized as early as 1931 by the RCL, and that no amount of outside help either from employers or the State could create a healthy trade union movement.[2]

It has also been observed in the foregoing pages that the periodity in the labour movement, as reflected in membership of GKU and BTLU, the frequency and the intensity of the strikes, owes itself to immediate causes like the issues of bonus, wage cuts and dearness allowances, thus economic rather than social in nature. Communist ideology had an appeal for the labour as it provided a militant expression to its discontent. The Congress

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1. M.D. Morris, 'Labour Discipline, Trade Union and the State in India', Journal of Political Economy, LXIII, Aug. 1955, pp. 294-308.
2. RCL 1931, 'Report', pp.327-328.

moderate policies and ideology had less appeal. Both the Communist and Congress political parties were struggling to muster the support of the textile labour force in Bombay to realise the political ends. These political groups usually provided the labour force with leaders that were outside the working class. This weakened the internal organisation of the emerging trade unions and further repressed by the British Government. Most of these leaders were from the middle or upper middle class of the pre-industrial social structure. The labour force largely came from the lower strata of the society whose interests were not safeguarded by the leaders, be it the Congressman or the Communists.

The labour force that emerged was weak in its strength, poor in organisation, lacking in appropriate leadership, could only marginally improve its position. That too largely owing to its peculiar and important position in the industrial set up. Some amelioration took place in its working and living conditions, with better discipline, stability and commitment. But socio-political character of the labour force improved even to a lesser extent.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

It was proposed to study the emergence of Bombay textile labour force to see if the labour force is committed to industry and industrial way of life. It has been found that the commitment theory is inadequate to explain the kind of labour force that emerged. It was further found that efficiency or labour productivity was more appropriate an indicator of the nature of labour force rather than the concept of commitment. It is to this fact, that the Bombay labour is inefficient as compared to the labour of other countries like Japan, China, Britain and the United States of America, that the study was reoriented.

To the allegation that the Indian labour is inefficient owing to its roots in the rural-agrarian social structure, and that it led to the retardation of the pace of industrialisation in India, the emphasis is found to be shifted to the employer's policies and the retarding influence on industrialisation of the British colonial policy in India.

The economic conditions of the masses at the eve of industrialisation were generally depressed. This situation arose in history due to the drain of wealth from India to Britain. The artisans were uprooted due to the

competition of British cheaper industrial goods and decline of courets. The agriculturists were uprooted because of tyrannical taxation policy. The conditions in the Western India, especially Konkan and Deccan were pretty bad.

To the contention that labour supply to Bombay industry was short, it has been found after examining the evidences, that there had not been any short supply of inexperienced hands, but scarcity of experienced hands did occur, because of increasing demand due to expansion of mills. Since real wages in the Bombay textile mills were more than the wages in Bombay in other than textile employment, and much more than rural areas from where the labour force came. The pressure on land 'pushed' the workers to join factories. There were complaints of scarcity but they were either exaggerated or were for the experienced hands, or were for the instability of the workforce. Besides, the metropolitan character and long attracted experience with commercial activities, Bombay attracted more labour.

Most of the labour force came from the periphery of 101 to 200 miles from Bombay, especially from Konkan and Deccan districts, where economic conditions were very bad. But over the period of time the proportion of labour

came from more distances and the share of Bombay-born population also rose. This points to the fact that mobility increased with the change in attitude of workers, increasing unemployment, better means of communication. The operatives from long distances together with Bombay settled population provided an increasing proportion to the settled and more stable labour force. However, the migrants coming from Konkan and nearby districts showed less tendency to settle down in the city and they maintained rural links.

To the age and sex composition, it may be said that the mill employment favoured to able bodied males. The proportion of female had always been less than a quarter. Besides they were employed in spinning departments which did not affect the main production process of the mills. They were disfavoured because of the fact that they were unstable, besides the mobilisation of female labour due to social customs was not easy. Only low caste female could join the factory employment. The children were proportionally low represented. Firstly, they were understated as certain legal restrictions were put-forth on their employment. Secondly they worked as helper which was not considered a necessity by the employers.

Most of the operatives were illitrate because of lack of means, poverty, inadequacy of schools which was deliberately neglected by the Colonial Government. No emphasis was placed on technical education because of simple technology of the mills. Although its effect on efficiency is obvious.

The question of caste has been found most intractable and inexplicable because of complexity and diversity of jatis. But it has been showed, th ough with scarce evidences, that the 'depressed classes' and the low castes first moved into the industry. The jobber facilitated this transition from rural to urban setting and transplanted the casteism in the industry. As a result low caste and depressed class people were found in rather unclean and low paid occupations. The situation improved over time, with the progress of industrialisation and less important caste taboos were shed off, since, gradually the proportion of higher castes increased.

The commitment theory has been found inadequate after an examination of the related indicators. The indices of absenteeism, turnover, indiscipline and low productivity proved insufficient to explain the kind of nature force that emerged in Bombay. Initially the labour turnover was high but due to the influence of jobber,

employer policy and to some extent strong rural links. But as the influence of jobber declined, employers' policies changed and the rural links weakened, the turnover rate decreased.

Absenteeism from the very beginning to the end of the period examined remained high, owing to bad statistics and lack of provision of holidays and excessive hours of work. Besides it has been found that low labour turnover and high absenteeism are compatible with labour's commitment to industry. Some seasonality in monsoon and festival and marriage months had been noted that underlines the rural links and influence of traditional social structure, although this tendency weakened with increasing stability among the workers.

The indiscipline that is found among industrial workers was largely exaggerated by the employers. Most of the loitering was induced by discomfort owing to high temperature and humidity inside the factories, coupled with excessive hours of work. For which the employers and the government were more responsible rather than the labour. These circumstances explain also the relatively low productivity of the labour.

The working and living condition had a great toll on the health and efficiency of the workers. The hours of work were excessive for the operatives, which decreased due to increasing influence of the government, either due to pressure from Lancashire or Indian public opinion. Besides there were variations among mills in regard to hours of work which gave instability to the workforce. Another cause for instability of the labour force was the lack of standardisation of wages. Operatives moved from mill to mill in search of better employment conditions and better wages. This situation could only be improved only slightly by the intervention of the State. Besides, the regulations of maintaining discipline were very general and casually reinforced. Jobber had an overriding influence over these matters.

The general working conditions inside the mills were unsatisfactory, despite the claims to the contrary and individual mills differed in this regard also. The dust, dirt, sanitation, temperature, humidification, and safety against accidents were largely unsatisfactory.

The standard of living of the operatives was low, because of high cost of living, Housing, food, clothing and education all were at subsistence level. The employers failed to take welfare measures owing to their short-sighted

policies to earn easy profits. The role of the Government, on the whole, in this regard had been unsatisfactory. The most pressing problem that the employers and the government could have solved jointly was housing. The chawls were found to be too overcrowded to healthy human mental and physical development. The conditions were good for subhuman beings.

The effect of all these working and living conditions on the health, development , and the efficiency was obvious. Besides, as the majority came from rural areas where living conditions were much better than the Bombay slums. This situation pressed the operatives for periodic visits to villages.

The mill organisation from the very beginning was based on very unsound principles, and the administration of labour force was quite loose. The managing agency system contributed much to the instability of both the managerial and technical cadre, and the labour. The managing agents earned money from diverse directions making industrial enterprise as commercial ventures where emphasis was on easy profits rather than industrial development. The agency made the role of professional management less effective by interfering in the day-to-day business of the mills.

The jobber had been more influential in disciplining the labour force than its position in the management as the first line in the organisation suggests. These jobbers had the responsibility of recruitment, discipline, fining and retrenchment of the labour, giving to an abuse that exploited the labour and harmed the long-term development of the industry. Despite intensive efforts this institution of jobber could not be uprooted during the period upto 1947. It largely survived because the method of recruitment and maintaining discipline was found to be more economical than the expensive formal system. Latter the jobbers survived because of their function as strike breakers, owing to their complete control over the labour force.

The system of rules and regulations was never cared for so long as mills earned profits. The rules were general and their application was casual. Besides, the rules from mill to mill varied. Here again, the labour protest and belated government action brought some standardisation in work regulations, their implementation and in standardisation of wages. Because of illitracy and economically vulnerable situation of the workers, allowed much of the abuse that it could otherwise have not been possible. All these circumstances had a very profound effect on the stability of the workforce.

The labour movement that could come into existence upto 1922 had been very weak. There was hardly any trade union due to employer's and government's attitude of hostility against it. Only a few welfare organisations existed that tried to protect the interests of the labour. The labour legislations that were brought about to this period were enacted on the behest of the Lancashire pressure or concern with law and order situation.

After 1922, the world wide economic depression set in. The employers tried to make wide ranging changes in the administration of labour force that met with stiff resistance from the labour and a number fo general strikes took place. The rising tide of national movement gave a phillip to the repressed discontent to take violent shape But this movement, as splitted it was between Communists and Congress, gave a split to the infant movement in the form of BTLU and GKU union rivalry. The growing national movement with increasing labour unrest forced the government to intervene step by step in the industrial relations. When the labour needed protection during the earlier days of industrialisations, the government remained aloof and where an independent movement was needed the Government intervention increased disproportionately, largely concerned as the government was with law and order situation and stability of the colonial rule in India.

Thus, it may be concluded in a few words that the kind of labour that emerged in the Bombay textile mills was the joint responsibility of the employers and the government which they have failed to perform;some blame may be put on rural nexus, but this is only marginally responsible. And it may be concluded that Indian labour force is fairly committed, if commitment theory represents some reality.

APPENDIX I

Progress of Cotton Mills in the City and Island of Bombay: 1865-1947

Period	No. of mills**	Spindles installed* ('000)	Looms installed* ('00)	Average daily** employment ('00)
1	2	3	4	5
1865	10	250	34	66
1866	10	274	32	67
1867	10	278	36	76
1868	10	283	36	77
1869	10	286	37	79
1870	10	291	41	81
1871	10	306	43	86
1872	11	314	43	88
1873	14	395	46	107
1874	15	462	57	114
1875	27	752	78	136
1876	29	817	80	147
1877	31	895	84	203
1878	32	955	103	269
1879	32	981	109	289
1880	32	988	109	294
1881	32	992	109	314
1882	36	1056	113	318
1883	38	1127	117	347
1884	43	1252	120	360
1885	49	1347	120	415
1886	50	1389	121	441
1887	55	1447	122	453
1888	61	1457	128	478
1889	69	1591	134	525
1890	70	1896	138	591

(contd...

APPENDIX-I (contd...

1	2	3	4	5
1891	67	1909	143	620
1892	68	1935	149	651
1893	69	2041	167	679
1894	69	2027	183	706
1895	69	2124	202	757
1896	71	2186	213	785
1897	75	2187	213	695
1898	82	2227	214	707
1899	82	2411	222	772
1900	82	2537	222	729
1901	81	2571	224	822
1902	80	2524	228	861
1903	80	2533	251	869
1904	79	2534	241	899
1905	81	2561	290	929
1906	84	2614	288	1008
1907	85	2614	320	981
1908	86	2735	360	1015
1909	89	2800	395	1058
1910	89	2824	419	1046
1911	87	2891	425	1045
1912	86	2885	434	1097
1913	90	2926	453	1100
1914	85	3009	488	1099
1915	86	2994	518	1119
1916	86	2985	532	1183
1917	87	2934	579	1257
1918	87	2885	592	1242
1919	85	2934	608	1264
1920	83	2965	606	1402

(Contd...

APPENDIX-I (contd...

1	2	3	4	5
1921	83	3025	628	1477
1922	82	3117	655	1498
1923	81	3349	689	1488
1924	82	3428	711	1484
1925	82	3456	783	1500
1926	83	3472	737	1491
1927	83	3487	755	1544
1928	82	3451	748	1295
1929	81	3447	764	1067
1930	81	3431	767	1368
1931	81	3427	770	1364
1932	81	3442	770	1431
1933	78	3310	733	1292
1934	75	3170	699	1053
1935	74	2990	684	1361
1936	74	2985	685	1373
1937	69	2890	668	1392
1938	69	2906	673	1681
1939	68	2851	672	1560
1940	65	2749	652	1401
1941	64	2789	653	1757
1942	66	2820	661	1924
1943	66	2831	663	2107
1944	65	2834	662	2124
1945	65	2803	662	2131
1946	65	2833	659	2080
1947	65	2851	658	2072

Sources:

** Morris, Op.cit., Appendex I, pp. 213-214.

* D.A. Podar, 'The Cotton Mill Industry: Nation's Premier Enterprise', BMOA, 1959.

APPENDIX II

Index of Money Wages, Cost of Living and Real Wages in Bombay Cotton Textile Mills: 1900-1947

Year	Index of Money Wages 1934 = 100	Bombay Working Class cost of Living Index 1934 = 100	Index of Real Wages 1934 = 100
1	2	3	4
1900	45	105	43
1901	46	102	45
1902	46	98	47
1903	46	100	46
1904	46	91	51
1905	46	106	44
1906	46	99	47
1907	53	99	53
1908	56	109	52
1909	57	101	56
1910	57	103	55
1911	49	102	48
1912	52	103	50
1913	52	106	49
1914	60	107	56
1915	62	120	51
1916	62	125	49
1917	62	147	42
1918	77	157	49
1919	91	175	52
1920	113	202	56
1921	118	184	61
1922	116	166	70
1923	120	162	74
1924	120	173	70

(contd...

APPENDIX II (Contd...

1	2	3	4
1925	120	155	78
1926	127	155	82
1927	127	154	82
1928	127	147	86
1929	127	149	85
1930	127	137	93
1931	127	110	115
1932	127	109	116
1933	127	103	123
1934	100	100	100
1935	100	101	99
1936	100	101	99
1937	104	106	102
1938	118	106	111
1939	130	106	123
1940	130	112	116
1941	140	122	115
1942	160	157	102
1943	226	231	98
1944	234	237	99
1945	231	233	99
1946	256	259	99
1947	325	279	116

Source: K. Mukherjee, "Trends in Real Wages in Cotton Textile Mills in Bombay City", Arthavijnana, Vol. 1, No.1, March, 1959, pp. 92-93.

APPENDIX XXI

The Course of Rural-Urban Wage Differentials: Industrial and Agricultural Earnings: Bombay and Konkan: 1900-1937

Year	Bombay Industry average daily wage (piece) (1)	Rural Konkan: field labour daily wage (piece) (2)	Ratio (1) to (2) (3)	Index of column (3) 1900 = 100
1	2	3	4	5
1900	90.76	37	2.45	100
1901	92.90	39	2.38	97
1902	92.97	38	2.45	100
1903	92.97	37	2.51	102
1904	92.97	38	2.45	100
1905	92.97	38	2.45	100
1906	92.97	40	2.32	95
1907	106.04	43	2.47	101
1908	113.43	44	2.58	105
1909	114.17	47	2.43	99
1910	114.17	47	2.43	99
1911	98.95	48	2.06	84
1912	104.20	50	2.08	85
1913	104.94	54	1.94	79
1914	120.89	56	2.16	88
1915.	123.89	58	2.19	89
1916	123.91	59	2.10	86
1917	125.61	60	2.09	85
1918	155.67	65	2.39	98
1919	202.77	70	2.61	107
1920	227.08	77	2.95	120

(contd...

APPENDIX XXI (contd...

1	2	3	4	5
1921	226.19	94	2.41	98
1922	234.02	107	2.19	89
1923	241.85	116	2.08	85
1924	-	-	-	-
1925	241.85	111	2.18	89
1926	255.21	108	2.36	96
1927	255.21	108	2.36	96
1928	255.21	99	2.58	105
1929	255.21	114	2.24	91
1930	255.21	-	-	-
1931	255.21	-	-	-
1932	255.21	78	3.27	133
1933	255.21	75	3.40	139
1934	201.23	70	2.87	117
1935	201.23	72	2.79	113
1936	201.23	78	2.55	104
1937	210.02	76	2.76	113

Source: Adapted from D. Mazumdar, 'Labour supply in the Early Year of Industrialization: The Case of Bombay Cotton Textile Industry', Economic History Review, vol. 26, 1973, pp. 477-496; Appendix on p. 495.

APPENDIX XV

Average Daily Employment of Men, Women, and Children in Bombay Cotton Mills (all shifts), 1884-1947 (per cent)

Year	Adults		Children	Year	Adults		Children
	Men	Women			Men	Women	
1884	76.50	22.20	1.30	1919	77.47	20.33	2.20
1892	69.80	24.63	5.57	1920	77.72	20.38	1.90
1893	69.22	25.87	4.91	1921	77.96	20.49	1.55
1894	70.47	24.74	4.79	1922	79.50	19.68	0.82
1895	71.01	24.74	4.25	1923	79.09	20.46	0.45
1896	71.11	25.30	3.51	1924	78.10	21.49	0.41
1897	72.91	23.30	3.79	1925	77.66	22.15	0.19
1898	73.81	22.37	3.82	1926	77.34	22.62	0.19
1899	74.02	23.54	2.98	1927	77.88	22.10	0.04
1908	74.02	22.23	3.75	1928	78.23	21.77	0.02
1909	75.12	21.36	3.52	1929	78.56	21.42	-
1910	75.35	21.00	3.65	1930	77.11	22.86	0.02
1911	76.09	20.34	3.75	1931	78.01	21.96	0.03
1912	75.62	20.69	3.69	1934	81.96	18.96	0.03
1913	75.46	20.61	3.93	1937	84.08	15.92	-
1914	75.45	20.37	4.18	1939	85.07	14.93	-
1915	75.86	19.65	4.49	1944	87.86	12.14	-
1916	76.03	20.59	3.38	1947	88.83	11.17	-
1918	78.04	19.89	2.07				

Source: Morris D. Morris, Op.cit., Table IX, p. 66.

Remarks: For absolute figures and sources see, Morris, Op.cit., Appendix II, pp. 217-218.

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