
CHAPTER 3: LABOUR FORCE IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY AT
ICHALKARANJI

The rapid growth of population of the town has been largely due to the expansion of the textile industry. The population of Ichalkaranji was 9,107 in 1895¹ and in 1961 it rose to 50,978². In 1981 the figure went up to 1,33,704.³ These figures indicate that the population of Ichalkaranji is rapidly growing since the last 20 years. Important cause of increase in the population is the growth in the industries which has created employment opportunities. Immigration of people from the neighbouring areas and villages into the town to seek employment has contributed to the rise of population.

The workers in the textile industry are working in the household industries and also in the industries other than household. Other than household industries means the spinning mills, processing centres etc. The meaning of household industry has been stated by Census, "as an industry conducted at home in urban area. A household industry is not run on the scale of a registered factory. In the urban areas, household industry is related to production, processing, servicing or making and selling of goods. Persons working in another person's household industry as paid employees are also workers in household industry."⁴

We can state that the workers in manufacturing industry other than household industry include "those engaged in all types of production, processing, servicing or repairing of goods."⁵

In the present study we can see the labour force in textile industry which is related to trade union only in Ichalkaranji city. For the labour force, Ichalkaranji is mainly dependent on the surrounding area (Kolhapur District and Belgaum District). The labour force in Ichalkaranji mainly contains different social groups, so it is essential to review the various characteristics of the workers mainly relating to the points like age, marital status, caste, mother-tongue, education, monthly payment etc.

Age - The age factor is very important in the textile industry because this work is laborious. For the study purpose, the workers in the age group of 18 to 55 years was considered. The three groups of workers were classified according to the age. For the present study only 56 workers have been brought under study.

Table

Groups of workers according to age

18 to 25	26 to 40	41 to 55	Total
17 (32.50%)	28 (50%)	11 (17.50%)	56

The above table indicates that in the textile industry, the total strength of workers below 40 years was 82.50%. The workers above that age are incapable of carrying out the laborious work as it requires a great deal of stamina for continuous and tedious work for more than 10 hours per day.

Caste and Religion - The religion is a dominating factor in the Indian society. In Ichalkaranji, the workers are distributed in Jain, Lingayat, Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Dalit or Scheduled castes. The number of Brahmin workers was negligible, as they belong to upper caste and are not interested in laborious work. Labour force is generally exclusive of Brahmins.

Mother tongue - As we have seen, workers from different religious communities participate in this industry. So, their mothertongue also differs according to their religion. A majority of the workers are Marathi speaking, their percentage being over 90. Though there were some workers who could speak Marathi, their mothertongue was Kannada or Urdu. Their number was not more than 10%.

Education - Education is not very important in the textile work. After achieving some skill or guidance from the skilled worker, any illiterate person can work in this industry. So, in this industry, the number of illiterate workers was very high. Further, it was not essential to have any specific educational qualification prescribed for the textile industries. Hence it is found that a majority of the workers have little or no education.

Technical Training - Technical training is essential for the workers. This training may be divided into short term training courses, training in ITI etc. As we have stated above, in the textile industry, the workers need not necessarily achieve any

specific training; because this work is dependent on the skill. Hence the textile workers had low proportion of technical training. More than 60 thousand workers are engaged in this work at Ichalkaranji. Yet, "the weaving centre at Ichalkaranji lacked training school. Systematic training of apprentices will go a long way in enhancing the efficiency of the weavers and consequently their earnings."⁶

The Regional Plan also had pointed out the need for technical institution at Ichalkaranji. It stated: "ITI should be opened at Ichalkaranji. In addition to ITI a school imparting training in textile faculty may be opened at Ichalkaranji by the Maharashtra State Powerloom Corporation."⁷ This has been the constant need of Ichalkaranji.

Skill - The textile industry relies on the skilled labour. The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 has divided the labour force in four categories as follows:

- (i) Highly skilled,
- (ii) Skilled,
- (iii) Semi-skilled, and
- (iv) Unskilled.

Further, this Act has given the definition for every category:

- (i) A highly skilled employee is one who is capable of doing high degree of precision work and can work on drawing and

can direct a group of skilled and other employees at times. He is capable of organising day to day work under him.

(ii) A skilled employee is one who is capable of working independently and efficiently and turning out accurate work. He is capable of reading and working on simple drawing, if necessary.

(iii) A semi-skilled employee is one who has sufficient knowledge of that trade to be able to do repetitive work and simple job with the help of tools and or machines.

(iv) An unskilled employee is one who does work that involves the performance of simple duties which require the exercise of little or no independent judgement or previous experience although a familiarity with the occupational environments is necessary."⁸

In textile industry highly skilled and skilled workers fall under the category of skilled workers. So, the distribution of workers from the skilled point of view is divided into three categories - skilled workers, semi-skilled workers and unskilled workers.

Table

Distribution of workers according to skill.

Skilled workers	Semi-skilled workers	Unskilled workers	Total
23 (41%)	26 (47%)	7 (12%)	56

The above table indicates that most of the workers in textile industry belong to skilled and semi-skilled categories. But actually, in textile industry, the number of semi-skilled workers is greater than skilled workers.

Labour Recruitment in Textile Industry

Generally, two types of mechanisms are useful for the recruitment of labour. They are:

- i) Formal mechanism of securing labour through newspaper advertisements and employment exchanges, and
- ii) Informal mechanism of securing labour through relatives, friends, office staff or personal contact.⁹

The formal approach for recruitment of workers is useful. There are certain advantages of this mechanism. A wider selection is available and employees with different and broader experience may be secured. The informal approach is not suitable for the

recruitment. Because the worker recruited may or may not be having technical qualification and experience needed for the job.

In Ichalkaranji, the workers were asked how they got the present job. The answers were classified into three parts:

- i) Some powerloom owners advertised on the blackboard near their factory and rarely they published their advertisement in newspapers.
- ii) Some times the relatives, friends, jobbers and members of office staff informed about the vacancies.
- iii) Occasionally the owner, manager, director used to appoint the workers directly.

We have already cleared the two forms of recruitment for the appointment of the workers. So, it is essential to classify the workers according to these forms.

Table

Distribution of the workers' recruitment according to the formal and informal mechanism.

Formal mechanism	Informal mechanism	Total
(Applications)	(Relatives, friends, owner etc.)	
21 (36%)	35 (64%)	56

The above table indicates that more than 60% of the workers were appointed through informal mechanism like relatives, friends, owners etc. The relatives and friends were important factors who inform their relatives and friends about the new posts being created in their factories. With the influence of these workers the owner or director recruited the relatives and friends of the workers.

Textile Industries (according to their size)

Textile industry in Ichalkaranji is known as powerloom industry. More than 40,000 looms are there in this city. Powerloom industry is basically a small or cottage scale industry. It consists of units having four or fewer number of looms. These loom owners are known as "Kharchiwala". The term "Kharchiwala" means a small powerloom owner having maximum four looms, and doing only job work. He only takes labour charges per metre of cloth.¹⁰

Generally the factories had been classified into five divisions. But for our study purpose, we have considered three categories of factories, small, medium and big units. It is not essential to consider the first and last units viz., employing below 5 workers and employing 1,000 and above workers.

Table

Distribution of textile industries according to the size.

Small units 6 to 99	Medium units 100 to 499	Big units 500 to 999	Total
5 (50%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	10

The above table has been prepared with the help of ten industries which have the different numbers of the workers. Hence this table indicates that the textile industry in Ichalkaranji had a collection of small, medium and big units. Membership of the union, or participation of the workers in trade union movement of the medium sized units is undertaken for the study.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1
Maharashtra Magazine (Marathi) Poona, 1942, p. 33.

2
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3
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4
Census of India, 1971, District Census Handbook, Kolhapur, p. 68.

5

Ibid., p. 68.

6

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7

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8

The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, pp. 124-68.

9

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