

CHAPTER TWO

GROWTH OF INDUSTRY AND WORKING CLASS IN 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY MAHARASHTRA

Industrial Growth in Maharashtra

The development of modern industry in India really began in the second half of the nineteenth century and was confined mainly to the plantations and a few consumers' goods industries like textiles. There was also a limited development of mining, particularly coal. The ownership of these industries, except in the case of the textile factories which, too, were never exclusively under Indian control was predominantly European a fact which accentuated the feeling of frustration over India's industrial backwardness. The pattern of industrial development which had emerged in the 19th century, confined to a limited sector and concentrated in a few unevenly distributed areas - remained virtually unchanged till the beginning of World War I though within these narrow limits the years 1905-1914 witnessed a relatively rapid growth.

Cotton Industry

The cotton mill industry of India is by far the largest of the private sector industries in the country, and ranks second in the world (excluding the communist countries) both in total production and total exports of cotton goods. It contributes nearly 22 per cent of the total factory employment, 1.8 per cent of the total national income, 21.2 per cent of the total industrial income and 10 per cent of the total foreign exchange earnings of India in 1955-61.¹ Unlike some other important industries of India

the cotton mill industry has been pioneered, financed and managed mostly by Indians from its inception in 1851 in Bombay without receiving any assistance from the Government for development until 1927, when for the first time a small tariff protection was granted. It has been developed mainly in Bombay city, Ahmedabad, the rest of Bombay State, Kanpur, Madras State and West Bengal since the second half of nineteenth century.²

By the nineties of the last century the textile industry was well established in the Bombay region under Indian entrepreneurship. But the famines and agricultural depression of the nineties, which continued till the early years of the twentieth century, severely affected the domestic market and production was further reduced through scarcity of labour caused by bubonic plague. The comparative recovery of agriculture around 1905 and increased demand in China, the main market for Indian yarns, led to a brief boom in the textile industry which was cut short by the trade depression of 1907.³

The cotton mills were concentrated in Bombay and Ahmedabad before the First World War. In 1911 Bombay city occupied 33 per cent of the total number of mills, 45 per cent of the total spindleage, 42 per cent of the total loomage and 45 per cent of the total workers of the industry; correspondingly, Ahmedabad held 19 per cent, 16 per cent and 13.6 per cent respectively. Fortyfive mills situated in the rest of Bombay State in 1911 were widely scattered in Solapur, Baroda and other minor local centres.⁴

Table 1.5

Growth and dispersion of mills in 1911, 1941 and 1954 (in '000 except the number of mills)

Localities	No. of mills			No. of Spindles		
	1911	1941	1954	1911	1941	1954
Bombay city	87	65	65	2,890.6	2,789.1	2,975.1
Ahmedabad	50	75	74	934.1	1,783.0	2,067.2
Rest of Bombay Province	45	62	72	696.2	1,248.9	1,451.8
Total	182	202	211	4,521.0	5,821.0	6,494.1

The progress of cotton industry was continued well after the depression and in 1914 the cotton industry was a growing and a fairly prosperous industry. Two tendencies may be noticed in the beginning of the century (i) the more rapid growth in the number of looms as compared with the number of spindles, and (ii) the tendency of the cotton manufacturers to turn out a finer class of goods. The first of these tendencies will be easily seen from the table 2.6.

Table 2.6

Cotton industry, 1895-1914

	1895-6	1900-01	1904-5	1907-8	1913-14
No. of cotton mills	611	290	206	227	576
Persons employed	1,46,552	1,56,355	1,96,369	2,25,367	2,60,847
No. of looms spindles	37,278	40,542	47,305	66,718	96,688
No. of spindles	38,52,611	49,42,290	51,96,432	57,63,710	66,20,576

The reason for this growth of the weaving industry is not far to seek. It is to be found in the violent fluctuations of the last twenty years. The yarn market for the Bombay industry was mainly China and the home market. For its exports depended almost entirely on the China market. Here it had to face the competition of Japan and Lancashire. As regards the home demands, this also varied with the fortunes of the agriculturist. The Bombay industry was, therefore, always trying to find new markets for its yarn products, but in this it had not been particularly successful. Considering this it was natural that the industry should now turn to the stabler weaving markets. The market for woven goods was very largely the home market, only about one-sixth to one-seventh of the total production being exported. Now the home market for mill-woven goods, not being dependent on the poorest classes, was much more stable than the market for the products of the hand-loom. Thus, there were no phenomenal profits to be reaped in this branch of the business, but the prosperity of the industry was more stable. The other tendency, that of the production of finer counts of yarn, was due to the same causes.⁷ Thus, the growing industry had to turn its attention more and more to the home market and here the production of finer yarns and piece goods was the most promising field.

There was good reason for the noticeable concentration of mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad at the initial development of industry. As the then British Government of India was totally indifferent to

the industrial development of the country, there was no politically created capital formation. Labour, raw material and probably the markets might be available in India, and technology and machinery were obtained from abroad. But how and from where could the capital and entrepreneurs be secured ? The British traders doing lucrative business in India were generally reluctant to see the possibility of starting a cotton factory in India and directly competing with the growing industry of Lancashire. Therefore, if cotton mill industry was to be started in India, mainly the home available commercial capital and enterprise were to be mobilized. Hence the initial concentration of mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad was because these two places and specially the former had gathered the then most wealthy and enterprising Indian business communities about the middle of the 19th century.⁸

Bombay was developed as the most important trade centre of Western India since the end of seventeenth century. As the commercial importance of Bombay grew, many enterprising merchants of various communities and creeds such as the British, Parsis, Bhatias, Khojas, Gujaratis and Jews poured in and further promoted the trade of Bombay. During 1820 and 1880, 70 to 90 per cent of the total exports from Bombay were composed of the two most important items: opium and raw cotton, mainly sent to China, and 40 to 60 per cent of the total imports were cotton cloth and yarn from England. During the above period not only the value of the total imports and total exports was augmented 10 times and 14 times respectively, but also there was constant large surplus of exports and imports. In

addition to the increasing accumulation of commercial capital, Bombay had another unexpected inflow of wealth during the American Civil War of 1861-65 which caused a short-lived raw cotton boom in India and particularly in Bombay and is said to have added Rs. 70 to 75 crores to the wealth of Bombay alone during the 5 years.⁹

Besides the British, it was Parsis above all who most actively responded to and participated in the prosperity of Bombay during the 19th century. Under such an economic situation, Mr. Cowasjee Nanabhoy Davar (1814-1873) an enterprising and representative Parsi tradesman of Bombay promoted the first cotton mill of Bombay in 1851 under the title of Bombay Spinning and Weaving Co. Ltd. equipped with 5,000 throstle spindles imported from England. The tradesmen of Bombay well established in their traditional business naturally questioned much if even the model of a cotton mill had found its way to Bombay".¹⁰ The first mill started working in 1854 and proved so successful that the Company paid the first year's dividend of Rs. 1,000 to the share of Rs. 5,000. Following this success another mill called Bombay Throstle Mills was started in 1857.¹¹ This initial success must have given a strong impact on the accumulated commercial capital of Bombay. Many wealthy tradesmen followed in starting cotton mill companies, so that during 1851 and 1915 nearly 73 mercantile firms, apart from many collaborators and participants directly promoted 96 mills in Bombay with 30 lakhs of spindles, 51,000 looms, 1,12,000 workers and the paid-up capital of Rs. 7.66 crores.¹²

Specially after 1880 when the Chinese market for Bombay yarn was opened as discussed before, 39 spinning mills were started during 1882 and 1899 as against 17 combined mills of spinning and weaving. In 1924-25 a total of 81 mills in Bombay were managed by 41 managing agency firms.¹³

Some of the most important managing agents among the Parsis were Petits, the Wadias and the Tatas. Among the British merchants Messrs Greaves Cotton and Co. and Messrs Bradbury, Brady and Co. most actively joined the industry.¹⁴ Most of the Hindus were Bhatias, neither Gujaratis nor Marwaris being active in the industry of Bombay during this period. Mohammedans were represented by the Khoja family of Ibrahim Currimbhoy. Jews were the Sassoon Family.¹⁵ But most of the Parsis, Bhatias, Khojas, Jews and Europeans would transfer their influence to the hands of Gujaratis and Marwaris during and after 1930s.

Between 1929 and 1956 the total spindleage increased by 39 per cent and the total number of mills by 35 per cent while the total loomage expanded only by 18 per cent. It corresponds to the increase in the handloom production from 1,256 million yards in 1924-25 to 1,820 million yards in 1939-40 and to 1,600 million yards in 1954-55 except some years after the second World War when the production of yarn was greatly reduced. Another tendency during this period as a whole was the shift of capital and enterprisers to the minor local towns and cities with lower cost of labour and raw materials and more accessibility to the vast local consumers, as

against the remarkable concentration of mills to a few large cities. This means that the financial condition of the mills situated particularly in Bombay, which was disadvantageous in terms of labour cost, raw materials and consuming markets, was not always bright during the depression period before 1939. However, the Second World War brought an unprecedented boom to the industry. The Government introduced the Excess Profit Tax and Compulsory Deposit Scheme in 1940. Yet the peak was attained in 1943 when the cotton mills in India were reported to have earned a gross profit of Rs. 109 crores as against Rs. 7 crores in 1940 and a net profit of Rs. 21 crores. In 1944 the gross profit was Rs. 85 crores and the net profit Rs. 18 crores.¹⁶ After the War the financial prosperity of the industry seems to have slightly declined.¹⁷

As regards the stability of the mills in India, during the period under review, we find again the repeated changes of managing agents and frequent liquidation of mills. It is reported that during 1940 and 1954 nearly one third or one-half of the total mills in India experienced the change of their managing agents. In Bombay City alone during the War, 15 mills disappeared out of which 11 mills were reorganized under new names and new agents, while 5 mills met the change of agents.¹⁸ These events were caused mainly either by the voluntary sales of managing agency, financial domination of the agency firm or the managed company by outsiders or the financial difficulty of the agent and the company.¹⁹

One significant result of these frequent events, was the rapid decline or disappearance of Parsis, Bhatias, Khojas, Jews and Europeans in the Bombay cotton industry and the further rise of Gujaratis and Marwaris. In 1953 it was reported that out of 53 mills of Bombay city 19 were managed by Gujaratis, 18 by Marwaris, 5 by Parsis, 8 by non-Indians and 3 by others. In other words the industry was dominated by a few business communities. Another result of the events was the decrease in the concentration of mills to a few managing agents inside the industry. We may estimate that in 1955 the most important 13 agency firms which together managed about 49 mills out of the total 461 mills in India controlled a little more than one-fifth of the total equipment and labour of the industry. One more result was the small but significant rise of the mills which are managed by agencies other than the managing agency system.²⁰

Before the First World War, engineering and railway workshops, iron and brass foundaries also grew. The growth in this class was due very largely to the extension of railways in India and to the introduction and extended use of cycles, motor-cars, tramways etc. They also indicate a somewhat larger use than before a small machinery in ordinary operations such as small pumps for lifting water, the introduction of small motors in workshop industries, where mechanical power had not been used before, and also the establishment of small flour or oil mills etc.

It is, indeed, in this direction of a slow spread of the

use of improved machinery in various operations, the introduction of small motors where no power was used before, and the establishment of small local and isolated factories in industries in which no very complicated processes were required that the real industrial progress, whatever its extent, took place in India during 1895-1914. The definition of a factory was taken to be any industrial establishment employing on an average more than 20 hands. Out of all factories in India a little less than two-thirds used mechanical power in some form or other, while the rest did not make use of any mechanical power in their industrial processes. The industry was not only small, but its character also was very limited.

Cottage Industry

Before the advent of the Europeans in India, specially during the 17th and 18th centuries, India had her own industries. During the Moghul period, the handicrafts were highly organized and integrated possessing advantages due to specialization of tasks and localization and large scale production in Karkhanas under master-artisans.

Of the different forms of industry in India the only one that reflected the impact of new outside forces by a continuous change in its organization, was the indigenous urban handicrafts. It is the only form of industry in which the effects of these new forces can be studied. All the crafts, indeed, declined in artistic

importance throughout the period, but many for which the old demand still remained, e.g., gold and silver work, cotton and silk fabrics, brass and copperware, etc. or for which a new demand was found e.g., the carpet industry - still retained some of their commercial importance. Another well-marked tendency was the abandonment of the highest class of products and the production of cheaper kinds of wares.

India had its own home industries of traditional pattern. Working conditions and the wages to be obtained in domestic industry were far from satisfactory. In this whole group the worker was badly paid and had also little chance of improving his condition. With the advent of factory organization he was taken away from home, and whatever independence in his methods of work he might have possessed was lost, but on the other hand, his wage increased and his material condition decidedly improved. There is no comparison made here between the independent artisan and the factory worker. Unfortunately, the field in which the independent artisan still existed was very restricted and he was fast disappearing from the urban industry of India.²²

In common with the ordinary urban industry, the cottage industries of India suffered from want of organization, the non-adoption of improved methods and the want of a proper exploration of industrial possibilities. As regards the supply of raw materials and their preparation conditions are also very bad. No doubt a certain amount of improvement has taken place in the conditions in

rural and urban artisan industries since 1850, but a great deal remains to be done in the investigation of cottage industries suited to particular localities and in the organization and improvement of those that already exist.

Growth of Industry in Satara District

Satara district consists today's all talukas plus Tasgaon, Walwa and Khanapur talukas from today's Sangli district. The old State of Aundh was also included in the Satara District. In 1947 the district was divided into North Satara and South Satara. From North Satara Tasgaon, Walwa and Khanapur talukas were detached and were annexed to South Satara along with some area of Sangli and Miraj States. Later on South Satara was named as Sangli District. Satara District for our purpose would mean all the talukas of the present Satara District plus Tasgaon, Walwa and Khanapur talukas of the present Sangli district, which were the part of the old Satara District.

History of industrialization in old Satara districts dates back to 1910, when Kirloskar Brothers established a factory at Kundal Road in Tasgaon Taluka, which later came to be known as Kirloskarwadi.²³ Now this factory is in Sangli District. In 1916, a glass manufacturing factory was established at Ogalewadi in old Aundh State.²⁴ The year 1916 also gave birth to an electricity generation plant in the district. The pace of industrialisation was, however, very slow.

No new industries were started during the period following the first World War. Worldwide economic depression might be the cause. Of course, there were other reasons like lack of proper transport e.g., roads and railway, electric power supply and necessary primary resources. A groundnut decorticating factory was established in 1928. Increase in the area under sugarcane cultivation gave impetus to the starting of a sugar factory in 1933 at Phaltan. Before that sugarcane was used only for the production of gul. The sugar factory was a landmark in the history of industrialisation of the district. The sugar industry ranks second among the major industries in the country next only to cotton textile. The sugar industry is one of the important industries from the point of view of employment; it gives employment to cultivators in growing sugarcane and to skilled and unskilled workers and university educated men in factories, besides a large number of persons in the sugar trade, transport, subsidiary and accessory supply industries.²⁵

One of the very important features of this industry is the organisation of cooperative sugar factories which has been actively assisted by the State Government. The co-operative factories are set up with share capital raised partly by sugarcane growers, partly by the State Government and with the assistance of the Industrial Finance Corporation of India. Naturally, co-operative sector is slowly growing in this district. Three out of four sugar factories in the district, namely, Phaltan,

Rethare and Bhujinj are working on a co-operative basis. Only one, that is, Sakharwadi is in a private sector.

The Phaltan factory had an investment of Rs. 6,05,848 in plant machinery and buildings and Rs. 14,34,039 as working capital in 1958. The Sakharwadi factory had a total investment of Rs. 2,22,90,340 including Rs. 1,85,80,616 as working capital in 1957-58.²⁶ The third one is a recent addition, so no statistics is available.

Though it is a seasonal industry working from November to May, it maintains permanent as well as seasonal labour. Permanent labour is used to overhaul machinery after the season. The total employment in both factories was 2,700 including permanent, temporary and seasonal workers. The seasonal workers are employed during the season only when the factories work in three shifts. The total wage bill of both was Rs. 38,70,855 in 1958.²⁷

There were five engineering units. Two of them are very small units, situated at Koyananagar, which repair equipment and manufacture trays, bolts, nuts etc. The third manufactures agricultural implements situated at Karad. It is a small scale unit which had Rs. 66,444 as fixed assets and Rs. 56,047 as current assets in 1957. The total wage bill of this unit was Rs. 43,759 in 1957.²⁸

The fourth concern which is a large scale unit, is situated

near Satara Road railway station of the Central Railway lines. This Cooper Engineering Works at Satara Road have established a countrywide reputation for the manufacture of Oil Engines, spare-parts, machine tools, power-looms, and agricultural implements. This factory had an investment of Rs. 1,21,33,565 including Rs. 72,48,698 as working capital in 1958. The total wage bill of employees in the unit was Rs. 37,51,587.²⁹ The products of the factory were marketed all over India as well as to Middle Eastern and Far Eastern countries. The total employment in the last two concerns was 2,081.

The fifth, Kirloskar Engineering Works, which is by far the most important manufacturing concern in the district, manufactures machine tools and iron and steel agricultural implements. Besides it produces powerlooms and dobbies, crude oil engines and many other iron and steel articles.

This factory was established by the late Shri Laxmanrao Kirloskar in 1910 now works as Kirloskar Brothers Limited. The achievement of Kirloskarwadi in terms of major business expansion and technical advancement are just two vital contributions to Indian enterprise. For Kirloskarwadi is the foremost example of an industrial centre developed in the countryside, an outstanding example of how an industry can revitalise village economy and village life. In 1910, when the factory went into production, the number of workers engaged was only 50. In 1960 it rose to 1,700.³⁰

Surrounding villages were the source of labour supply to these concerns. Kirloskarwadi has its own model township inhabiting about 2,000 people. Special transport facilities were arranged for those workers coming from the surrounding villages.

There is a factory producing glass and glassware, lanterns and enamelwares at Ogalewadi. Started in 1916 as a small proprietary concern, it has made considerable progress during the last 45 years, e.g., in 1960. Originally its output was restricted to glass articles, but subsequently, the factory began to manufacture hurricane lanterns². Its investment was Rs. 5,00,000. During the Great Depression of the thirties, when it lost much of its market, the factory began to produce safety stoves and stainless steel utensils. The Second World War offered opportunities for expansion of the factory and it started producing other glass articles. In the post-independence period a loan of Rs. 20,00,000 was given to it by the Industrial Finance Corporation of India for further expansion. The factory produces electric motors in addition to the items enumerated above.

The investment in fixed and current assets of the concern was Rs. 51,53,877 in 1958. It had Rs. 25,00,000 as authorised capital and Rs. 14,87,315 as subscribed capital at the end of 1958. The total employment in this was 1,644 including 195 persons as supervisory and other staff. Nearby villages are the source of labour supply. A skilled worker is paid between Rs. 55 and Rs.100 as basic pay per month, a semi-skilled worker between Rs. 30 and

Rs. 50 and an unskilled between Rs. 26 and 56. The monthly wage bill was Rs. 1,37,900. The factory works in three shifts.³¹

There are eleven oil mills and decorticating factories in the district. Of these four oil mills, information for which was available, were situated at Karad. One each was started in 1947 and 1948 and the remaining two in 1956 and 1957. Groundnut seeds which are mainly crushed in them are locally available. One mill crushes groundnuts and Karanjee seeds. In 1957, the total investment in these factories was about Rs. 8,50,000 including Rs. 4,00,000 as working capital. In 1957, 59 persons were employed in these factories.³²

At Karad a factory manufacturing brass and copper utensils was started in 1948.³³ The Ayurvedic Pharmacy at Satara is the only one of its kind in the district started in 1941 with an investment of Rs. 34,000 and employment of 11 workers it has expanded greatly during the last 20 years. There were 63 workers of whom 39 were permanent and 24 temporary. A male worker was paid Rs. 1.25 and a female worker rupee one per day.³⁴

A factory, twisting and dyeing silk yarn situated at Satara was started in 1929. The aggregate capital invested in it was Rs. 1,50,000 including Rs. 60,500 as working capital in 1957. The total employment was about 55 persons who were paid Rs. 12,000. This factory has been closed long back.

There were other small scale industries or cottage industries

like electric generation, Gur making, edible oil industry, copper and brass works, plastic industry, printing and book-binding, powerloom weaving, brick manufacturing, basket making, tanning, blacksmithy, leather works, oil crushing, handloom weaving, Khadi weaving, wool weaving, rope making, hand-made paper, carpentry etc. But these all industries, except electric generation, were on very small scale in which the whole family was engaged. Outside labour was not called in most of the industries. Traditional workers' families from Balutedars and Alutedars were working in these fields. Naturally, these industries remained basically cottage industry. Very little help of modern mechanisation was taken.

From this account it can be found that the industries which can be called factories were very few in number and those were situated at Kirloskarwadi, Ogalewadi, Satara Road and sugar factories at Sakharwadi and Phaltan.

Growth of Working Class in 19th and 20th Century Maharashtra

The Indian working class has had a somewhat different historical origin than that of its compeer in most of the Western industrial societies. In most of the Western societies the origin of the industrial proletariat is traced to the town-dwellers - the artisans and other social groups of the town economy. No doubt, labourers from the countryside kept on swelling the ranks of the

industrial proletariat but such migrants were quickly assimilated in the newly developed industrial centres. The rural affiliations of these migrants were very rapidly loosened, and the children of the city-bred migrants hardly retained a trace of their peasant stock.

But the Indian industrial working class originated mostly from the nether most stratum of the traditional village society based on hierarchy of castes. The early migrants of India who joined the industrial centres were not independent farmers but socially and economically disabled groups habitually inured to exceedingly unfavourable economic and social circumstances. They migrated to cities in search of employment only under extremely difficult circumstances namely famines. We find that the two decades, i.e., 1872-81 and 1891-1901, in which the movement of rural population towards towns was most marked, were both decades in which there were wide spread famines in India.³⁵ It is no wonder then that these rural migrants were "pushed, not pulled, to the city". But this movement was not more than temporary, unless the industrial organization expanded at a sufficiently fast rate. In the absence of such a condition the crowds of migrants returned to the villages, as soon as they could find rural employments. The result was obvious. The factory workers in India continued to ebb and flow from village to city and from city to village.

The social character of the Indian industrial proletariat

naturally took an inordinate time to change itself suiting to the needs of new environment. The delay was further accentuated due to slow and tardy growth of industrialisation in India. This explains the psychology of the great majority of the Indian factory workers who were till now at heart villagers and who could any time afford to go back to their family holding leaving the factory job either permanently or temporarily.³⁶

But over the years (and it took more than half a century) conditions changed. By 1908 the severance of the worker in the economic sense, from the land was certainly complete. The workers of Calcutta and Bombay and then the steel-town of Jamshedpur marked an advance over workers of other industrial cities. That the workers did not seem to have any direct connection with the land in Bombay is proved from the evidence tendered by a factory worker before the Factory Labour Commission (1908) in Bombay. One witness stated: 'The elderly people retired to their homes when they reached 40 or 45. If they had saved money they followed a small trade, and if not, they remained in Bombay and their children kept them.'³⁷

Then came the World War I which gave India a chance to industrialize. This stimulated the growth in India of a city proletariat. Among Indian workers a stable professional psychology was only beginning to be formed after the war. If the problem of industrial housing had been solved simultaneously, India would have had the formation of a permanent proletarian class. But

during the interbellum period and the war period that followed considerable progress took place in the industrial situation in India. This was reflected in two ways:

- 1) emergence of India as a major industrial power amongst the nations of the world;
- 2) the rise of a permanent industrial proletariat in most of the industrial cities.

Since the end of the Second World War and the political independence proletarianisation of the Indian industrial workers, in spite of the existence of certain resisting factors, has increased can be safely presumed in the light of two situations: 1) greater pace of Indian industrialisation with the foundation of heavy and basic industries since 1951, and 2) a steady increase in the ranks of the landless labourers compelling many workers to remain and settle in the industrial towns. The Indian industrial workers, though not completely "committed" are now well set on the road of proletarianisation.³⁸

Till the end of the 18th century India enjoyed a large export market, but with the end of monopoly of East India Company of the Eastern trade in 1913, which signified the rise of industrial capitalism in England in place of merchant capitalism, the process was reversed. This ultimately led to the disintegration of the old industrial organisation in India - both Urban and rural and the decay of the urban craftsman and the country artisan. This was achieved mainly through the policy of tariff discrimination against Indian manufacturers. The impact was so acute and rapid that millions of

artisans, craftsmen, spinners, weavers, potters, tanners, smiths alike from the towns and villages were uprooted and ruined. They had no alternative save to crowd into agriculture. The worst hit class was that of weavers engaged in the best organized cotton textile handicrafts industry. Their suffering was so pathetic that Lord W. Cavendish Bentick, the Governor General of India reported in 1834-35: "The misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."³⁹

With the establishment of plantation industry and introduction of modern means of transport and communication subsequently factory system began to grow slowly. The first cotton mill in India was established in 1851 in Bombay. This was the beginning of the modern factory ^System in Bombay Presidency and India. Bombay was the seat of cotton textile.

In India, as elsewhere, modern industrialism was preceded by the rise of the wage earning class. But the consequences were quite different. In England industrial revolution was preceded by an agrarian revolution - the disbanding of feudal retainers, dissolution of monasteries, enclosure movements, changes in the methods of tillage and the law of primogeniture. The displaced mass of workers there, were very rapidly absorbed in the rapidly expanding industries. But in India, the mass of workers mostly craftsmen and artisans uprooted from their traditional source of livelihood had no alternative except falling back upon agriculture.

The transference of population from the non-agricultural sector to agriculture together with rural pauperisation and impoverishment on account of increase of population, fractionalisation of land, rackrenting, defective system of revenue assessment and the exploitation of the cultivators by a class of money-lenders led to the creation of landless proletariat class for the first time in the Indian history. The age of hired labour began.⁴⁰

In the beginning this displaced population was absorbed in the construction of roads, railways and public buildings which was started under the aegis of Public Works Department of the Government of India in the middle of the 19th century. But when the plantations, mines and factories started making some progress in the sixties and seventies of the last century the demand for workers was keenly felt. But it was the virulent outbreak of plague in Bombay in 1896 that the scarcity of factory labour, for the first time in the industrial history of Bombay gave rise to a "Labour Question" comparable to those of Europe. This was the beginning of modern industrial wage-earning class in India.

This new class of wage-earners in India, a class though nominally free from the shackles of tyranny of village customs and social disabilities, created formidable problems of social and economic maladjustments.⁴¹ Socially its main problem was related to its status in an industrial society, and economically its problem was related to health, housing, welfare, hours of work, conditions of work and a host of other problems. The results of a

modern factory system was revealed in the Report of one T. Maloney on Indian Cotton Mills. It reads:

- 1) That the weight of the average (cotton) mill-hand compares very unfavourably with that of workers of the same wage earning capacity in other trades, which work short hours.
- 2) That the weight of the mill-operatives showed a decrease after a few months' service without leave, and -
- 3) That the weights of the operative increased appreciably when they returned to factory system from their upcountry homes after a long vacation.⁴²

The causes of the slow formation of the industrial wage-earning class were not far to seek. The slow and tardy growth of modern industry combined with inadequate attention paid to the problems of human adjustment of the worker in the industrial towns was responsible for the slow growth of industrial wage-earning class in India. It may be mentioned here that it was only the period of India's first five year plan, in the recent past, that took the first steps in a National housing programme for creating a "committed" labour force in the country.

The very concept of 'class' is concerned with the social differentiation of one group from the other group or groups. But the Indian working class, because of the low degree of industrialisation, the persistence of traditional attachment to

village and joint family, low wages, and its low composition in the overall population of the country remained undifferentiated as a class. Except for a few industrial centres, where the workers acquired some degree of stability, the Indian worker remained a peasant at heart. Instability of the industrial working force not only retards economic development of the country, it has affected very adversely the strength of trade unions as well.

Another important characteristic of the Indian working class is its social heterogeneity. India is a country where different castes, ethnic groups and regional languages exist. Of all the cultural and social differences the most important difference is that of caste. In India the caste phenomenon, based on fixed order of precedence and status, is so peculiar that it accounts for the division of Indian labour force between highly skilled class enjoying relatively a better economic status and the unskilled class passing its miserable existence on the lowest rung of the economic ladder. Thus, in India the skilled class and unskilled class of workers are separated not only on the basis of superior or inferior technical skill, as it does in the industrial societies of the West, but, also as a general rule, they are separated on the basis of caste differences.⁴³

Intense famines in the 19th century made the artisans and craftsmen to leave their villages and search for employment in industrial towns. Cotton textile industry is still the biggest industry in Bombay, where these workers sought employment. In

Bombay they worked in various factories out of necessity. But when they could save some money, their tendency was to take that money and go back to their respective villages and invest that money in small trade or purchase a small piece of land and work there as a farmer. They did not have any attachments for the jobs they were doing in cities.

Another characteristic of the Maharashtrian workers class was caste-differences. In initial stage, the workers who sought employment in the various factories were unemployed artisans and craftsmen known in Maharashtra as Balutedars and Alutedars. Though they were artisans they were not skilled in modern technics of productions. They learned these technics in factories only and they became skilled workers in their factories. Last came the untouchables. They were unskilled workers. In cotton textile industry weaving section needed skilled worker and this job was a better paying job. Naturally, skilled workers acquired those jobs, and untouchables could manage to seek jobs in other departments like spinning, folding etc. In the 20th century after First World War, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar agitated against this situation. His demand was that the untouchables should get the jobs in weaving department which was more paying job. His argument was that caste Hindus did not allow the depressed classes to enter this department. Unless they allow, they would not support the strikes sponsored by others, i.e., caste Hindus or political parties like Communists. High caste Hindus, especially educated, had

already occupied clerical and superintendent's jobs. So, the two characteristics which were applicable to Indian working class were also applicable to Maharashtrian working class.

Modern industrialism in India is characterised by slow progress, narrow industrial base, and concentration of organized industries in a few selected centres. These characteristics have determined the proportion of industrial working force in different groups of industries located in different centres thereby influencing the pattern of the Indian labour movement. The evolutionary character of Indian industrialism without corresponding change in the social structure reveals the basic weakness of organized labour in India. Moreover, the relatively less developed nature of basic industries in contrast with the growth of light industries in the Indian industrial process has subjected the Indian industrial working class to a very low position in the configuration of social classes in India with the result that the economic power of the industrial working class has remained very much limited. This factor has come in the way of the Indian working class evolving an independent outlook. This also offers an explanation for the political orientation of the Indian labour movement.

The concentration of industries in a few urban centres has been instrumental in giving prominence to workers in a few selected industrial centres in the Indian labour movement. The working class in Bombay has remained the spearhead of the Indian labour movement. In comparison with Calcutta the importance of Bombay is highlighted

because: 1) Bombay is the most highly industrialised State in India having the largest number of factories (10,626) and largest working force (10,75,944)⁴⁴ in 1960, 2) Bombay region has had the localisation of textile industry in India, which is still by far the most important organized industry in India.

The concentration of industrial activity in a few urban centres, which also enjoy the highest importance in the political life of the country, has given an overwhelming importance to the labour in the urban part of the Indian economy as against the labour in the non-urban sector. The result is that while labour in the urban-industrial sector has been able to enjoy a comparatively better status and a higher standard of living, because of its economic and political importance, labour in the un-organized rural sector has failed to secure a fair deal from the employers.

The real importance of the industrial working class lies not in its quantitative strength but in its economic and political position in the Indian society. Numerically the class of industrial workers is only 8.7 million, which is only 5 per cent of the total working force. A large majority of the total working force in India, nearly 70 per cent in the agriculture and allied sector and nearly 10 per cent in the small enterprises is scattered and diffused, and hence cannot be successfully organized. But in spite of its numerical weakness the class of industrial workers, concentrated as it is in the urban centres, is the best organized

and most vocal class. Politically it is patronised by practically every political party of major importance and therefore, it compels prompt attention from the government and the employers as well. At the time of general elections in the country, the "labour vote" becomes a decisive factor in the victory of party candidates from the industrial constituencies. Economically, it is centred in the "growth sector" of the economy i.e., key industries such as coal, transportation, docks, textile, and engineering. Thus, in India the industrial working class exercises political and economic power for exceeding their numbers.⁴⁵

Modern trade unionism is essentially an outcome of the factory system of production and the capitalistic order of society. In a modern factory a large number of employees work together. They have their common problems of low wages, excessive hours of work, poor housing etc. They have an opportunity to discuss these problems and if possible to find a common solution and take a common stand. The impersonal relationship between the employer and the employees in the modern factory, the increasing profits of the employers coupled with the low wages and poor standard of living of the workers create a class consciousness amongst them and prompt the workers to organise and take group action. So, when we study the working class it is necessary to study the labour movement.

Labour Movement

Meaning

The term 'Labour Movement' is used here to designate all the organized activities of wage earners to better their conditions either immediately or in the more or less distant future.⁴⁶ By its very nature the word 'Movement' signifies a dynamic process having its own origin, growth, development, progress and even recessions propelled by changes in the structure of relations. The word 'Labour' has been used by economists of different schools - the classicists and the Marginal Utility School - in an abstract form, completely detaching it from its social significance. It is only in Marx's doctrine that the concept of labour becomes, as do all economic concepts, a social category. Accepting therefore, the social, or to be more precise the sociological significance of labour, we find that labour does no more mean a worker, a farmer, or an independent businessman; it means the organized labour, that is, workers who are organized first into an informal group, and then into a formal organization, developing in due course of time, a permanent basis of organization, conventions or rules, and norms of behaviour and like any going institution, a set of "rationalizations" which may be called its ideology or goal. Organized labour is a movement in every sense of the word "with an organization, philosophy, a strategy, a hard core of almost fanatical constituents and a goal."⁴⁷

But organized labour, though a concomitant of labour

movement, is not to be taken as synonymous with labour movement, since we find that labour in mediaeval times, both in the oriental and occidental countries, was organized into corporate organizations known as guilds. But it was in modern times, after the Industrial Revolution, that the old society became more differentiated socially and economically than the "proletariat" composed of free individuals, propertyless and concentrated in large masses, as a class acquired structure. This 'proletarial' class, according to varying social and historical situations in different industrial societies, organised itself, and since then the labour movement emerged as a distinct movement, cutting through the traditional social structure and feeding itself on new secular concepts of social, political and economic organisation.

Labour movement, therefore, stands for a modern complex social organization of the propertyless workers - wage-earners in the regular sense, as well as salary-drawing persons doing non-supervisory work and their organized efforts over time and in a given national area in order to improve their status in an ever-changing world. While the effort of defining 'Labour Movement' would always be fraught with difficulties since there cannot be an unanimity as regards the 'goals' and 'methods' and even origin of the movement, nevertheless we can attempt here an approximate definition of 'Labour Movement'. Labour movement may be defined as "an organized and continuous effort on the part of wage-earners to improve their standard of living over a national federations,

strikes, boycotts, lockouts, labour leaders, labour conferences and programmes injunctions, legal battles, prosecutions, co-operative societies, labour and socialist parties, a labour press and labour in artisan politics, labour lobbies in legislatures, and labour and educational experiments.⁴⁸

The first and the foremost peculiarity, which at once arrests one's attention, is that the history of the Indian labour movement is to a great extent, the story of labour in the organized industry, and there is no movement amongst the vast mass of labour in the primary sector and the small industries. Labour movement in India as remained confined only to the organised sector of our economy i.e., factories, plantations, transport and communications and the mines and labour in agriculture and small establishments is conspicuously unorganized. Labour in the small industries generally, unlike its counterpart in the large scale organized industries, still lacks sense of group solidarity and concerted action.⁴⁹

The utter lack of labour organization in the rural sector of Indian economy can be explained partly in terms of Indian systems of land organization and partly in terms of the peculiar nature of wage-earners in this sector, coupled with the rising trends of unemployment and under-employment. The problems of labour organization in the small and unregulated factories is not very much different. The workers are primarily agriculturists, and due to their scattered and sparse habitations, they lack "in

group" feeling they are neglected by the government and the labour leaders. In a word, they are simply incapable of standing on their own legs.

Thus, we see that labour movement in India has covered only a small fraction of the Indian working class i.e., the workers in the large scale organized industries and the vast multitude of the labouring classes of the country, i.e., workers in the agricultural sector and the petty establishments have remained, by and large, unorganized. Indian labour movement, truly speaking, is the story of labour in the organized sector of India's economy.

1875-1918

It was in the middle of the 19th century that the real foundations of modern industry in India were laid down. The first cotton mill in India was established in 1851 in Bombay. This was the beginning of the modern factory system in India. Bombay was the seat of cotton textile. Greater degree of industrial proletariat was concentrated in Cotton Textile industry in Bombay. The modern factory system in India brought in its wake employment of women and children, long and excessive hours of work; lack of education, poor housing and an excessively high death rate were the lot of the worker. The Secretary of State for India was kept informed of all these attendant evils of the modern factory system and the first Factory Commission was appointed in Bombay in the year 1875 and the First Factories Act was passed in 1881. The

sweating of workers in the cotton textile mills of Bombay became the focus of attention of public men, social reformers and humanitarians first in England and later on in India. The efforts of these persons outside the pale of the working class preceded the real beginnings of labour movement in India.

It was pointed out in 1874 by Major Moore, the Chief Inspector of the Bombay Cotton Department that in Bombay cotton factories women and children were employed in large numbers, that many of the children were hardly eight years old, that all of them had to work from sunrise to sunset with only half an hour's recess, and that they had no periodically recurring day of rest.⁵⁰ A striking fact about the conditions of factory labour at that time related to complete lack of effective public opinion against prevailing conditions of factory workers. Even the Indian National Congress was indifferent to it. Of course, during 1870's there was a great religious and social revival in India, but that movement did not arouse the social conscience in favour of the Indian factory workers' miserable conditions. Labour itself was helpless and inarticulate.

But the unsatisfactory conditions of factory workers in India and the Government of India's callous disregard in respect of the Indian labour drew public attention in England after the publication of Major Moore's Report in 1874. During this time Mr. Redgrave, the Inspector of Factories in England, in one of his

reports regarding labour situation in India, also pointed out the need of factory legislation in India. In England Public opinion in favour of factory legislation in India soon crystallized itself into an agitation which, subsequently led to the appointment of first Factory Commission in 1875. For some years after the report of the Commission the Government could not take any action except drafting a bill and allowing it to lapse in the face of opposition from the mercantile interests.

It was at this juncture when mercantile interests were too deeply entrenched against factory legislation that one Sorabjee Shapurjee Bengalee, a well known social worker of the time started a fresh agitation for factory legislation. He drafted the Bill and sent it to the Governor of Bombay in April 1878. The Bombay Legislative Council, however, did not accede even to limited legislation proposed by S.S. Bengalee. Bengalee, however, remained determined, and this time he changed the course of his action. He brought to bear upon the Indian governing classes the influence of the British Public opinion. The movement for factory legislation was completely humanitarian upto this time. But from this stage onwards it assumed a complex form, when "Lancashire Influence" also got intermingled with the efforts of the humanitarians. At this time public opinion in India too began to impress itself, the representatives of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha also evinced keen interest in the question. It is interesting to note here that in the brief period

between 1879 and 1881 an organized opposition was put up by the Bombay and Bengal Chambers of Commerce, the Mill Owners' Association, Bombay, the Calcutta Traders' Association, the British Indian Association, Managers of Mills and a host of private persons. The Bombay Mill Owners' Association made a representation in January, 1880 to the Government of India stating reasons for not introducing such a legislation.⁵¹ The Draft Bill (1879) of the Government of India was originally based on Bengalee's Bill, but in the face of opposition from the business and manufacturing class it was very much whittled down. The first Indian Factories Act of 1881 was permissive in character. It only provided for the regulation of children below 12 years of age and was meant to apply only to factories employing 100 or more hands and using mechanical power. The Indian Factories Act of 1881 is very significant in the sense that it led to the emergence of working class point of view in India in subsequent years and ultimately to the birth of the Indian Labour Movement.

Another Factory Commission was appointed in 1884, which was popularly known as Mullock Commission. Mr. Narayan Meghaji Lokhande, a co-worker of Mahatma Jotiba Phoolle organised a conference of workers in Bombay and drew up a memorandum signed by some 5,300 workers to be presented to the Factory Commission. This was the beginning of modern trade unionism in India. The memorandum submitted and adopted at this meeting demanded a weekly rest, half an hour recess, compensation for disablement, payment of wages not later than 15th of the month following the one in

which they were earned, limitation of hours of work from 6.30 a.m. till sunset.⁵²

The conditions, however, did not improve and, therefore, another representation was submitted to the Government in 1890. This representation also reiterated the demands of 1884 and was signed by 17,000 workers. In 1890 another Indian Factory Commission was appointed. S.S. Bengalee was the member of this commission. The Commissioners were assisted in their enquiry in each province in India by a selected representative of the mill-hands of that province. It was for the first time in the history of factory legislation in India that labour representation was sought by the enquiry. In the same year, the Bombay Millhands' Association was established under the presidency of Mr. Lokhandey. This was the first labour association in India. In order to provide an effective organ to the labourers a labour journal, Dinbandhu, was also started. The Bombay Millhands' Association submitted a representation before the Factory Labour Commission (1890) setting forth their demands.

The Bombay Millhands' Association cannot, however, be classified as a genuine trade union. The workers did not have any effective organisation of their own. The Millhands' Association had no existence as an organised body, had no roll of membership, no funds and no rules.⁵³

In the following year the Indian Factories Act of 1891,

largely based on the recommendations of the 1890 Commission was passed. It was an improvement over the previous Act. It incorporated all factories employing 50 workers, provided for a weekly holiday and an half-hour recess, prescribed the minimum age of children employed at nine, raised the upper limit of children's ages to fourteen; limited their hours to seven instead of nine per day; required the women's hours to be eleven per day with $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours rest at noon and it prohibited night work for women.⁵⁴

The fundamental cause of the movement was neither political, nor the effort of organization on the part of the Indian factory workers, but the humanitarian efforts of English philanthropists (the Lancashire agitation was only a contributing cause) and Indian social reformers who were instrumental in the appointment of Factory Commissions and passing the early factory legislation for the regulation of conditions of child and woman labour in India, that the failure of the factories Act 1881 proved to be the subsequent cause of the appearance of first labour leader, namely N.M. Lokhandey, that after 1875 the workers point of view emerged very slowly but surely; but only after the preliminary background was prepared by persons not directly concerned with labour like Hon'ble Sorabjee Shapurjee Bengalee who worked ceaselessly during the eighties of the last century. Though he belonged to a higher strata of society, his sympathies went with the poor lot of factory operatives.⁵⁵

A large number of labour associations were started after 1890. Thus, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India and Burma was started in 1897, the Printers Union, Calcutta in 1905, the Bombay Postal Union in 1907, the Kamgar Hitvardhak Sabha, and the Social Service League in 1910. The Society and all other labour associations that were organized during this period were essentially labour welfare organizations. They could hardly be regarded as modern trade unions. These organizations wanted to mitigate the evils of the modern factory system and improve the lot of the workers. Social welfare workers were mainly responsible for the organisation and working of these associations. They discussed the problems, gave definite shape to the grievances of labourers, represented their case before the government and pressed for suitable labour legislation.

Modern trade unionism pre-supposes the existence of an industrial proletariat class which is dependent upon factory employment as its chief source of living. Though the modern factory system had come to stay and was progressing yet there was no permanent factory labour class. The workers were all migratory and sought industrial jobs only as a temporary support. There was no class consciousness amongst labourers and there was incomplete and ineffective realisation of the evils of modern factory system. The few attempts that were made during this period were simple manifestations of some local grievances that were strongly felt. Common action of workers was mainly actuated

by this of caste, kinship or common place of origin. Once these local grievances were solved or decided, the unions of labour associations become extinct or non-entities.

Another feature of this period was that unions were generally organised amongst educated sections like postal and telegraph workers and railways which had the earliest organisations. This was so because most of the employees in these concerns were literate or partially literate and also because a fair proportion of the workers in these categories belonged to the domiciled European and Anglo-Indian communities.⁵⁶

For all these reasons and also for lack of radical leadership unions or labour associations during this period mainly relied on constitutional methods for getting their grievances redressed. The leadership and the labour movement had essentially social outlook. They cooperated with government in various schemes. The leadership relied mainly on making representations, filing petitions and agitating for the enactment of various labour legislations. The labourer was not directly obsessed with any political themes. He noticed the current of political life only when it touched him and then he left it with poise or silent condemnation.

The most notable feature of this period was the absence of strikes as a means of getting grievances redressed. The Royal Commission on Labour observed that before 1918 a strike was rare.

This does not, however, mean that strikes were completely absent. There were a few strikes even before 1918. The Ahmedabad weavers declared their first official strike in 1895. When the Ahmedabad Millowners Association decided to substitute a fortnightly wage system for a weekly one, the weavers struck work, though they failed. There were several strikes in Bombay in 1897 after the plague epidemic. Quite a good number of these proved successful or at least partially successful.

These strikes were organised not on any planned basis and were arranged only to get local grievances redressed. There was no solid, stable and well-organised union to utilise the right to strike effectively. Strikes during this period were only exceptional.

This period has been characterised as the social welfare period of our early trade union movement by Dr. Punekar.⁵⁷ Dr. R.K. Das has divided this period into two. The first period between 1875-1891, according to him, was devoted mainly to the regulation of women and child labour in Indian factories. In the second period (1891-1917) the objective was the amelioration of conditions of Indian emigrants to various foreign countries and British colonies like South Africa, Canada etc.⁵⁸ Very little was done except placing memoranda and representations before commissions and committees.

1918-1946

The second stage of the Indian labour movement covers the history of nearly three decades during which the movement having established trade unions of durable type underwent a variety of experiences, moderation, splits, crises, trials and continual political alignment which in spite of internal strifes and dissensions added colour and variety to the movement. Broadly speaking, this stage was a transitional stage during which the Indian Labour movement discovered itself, established permanent trade unions, acquired all India stature and learnt first lessons of political trade unionism.

The declaration of war in 1914 very much helped in the growth of labour movement in India. The entire economic situation was changed. The war and the consequent shortage of shipping facilities led to restricted imports of commodities. There was also an enormous demand from the Allies and other neutral countries for Indian products. The effect of these factors was a considerable increase in the prices of essential commodities like salt, cotton, cloth, kerosene etc. Speculation was rampant which worsened the situation even further. The entrepreneurs were making enormous profits and trade and industry were having a period of unprecedented boom. The cost of living was steadily increasing and wages lagged behind. This worsening economic situation created discontentment amongst workers and a class consciousness among them. The traditional patience of labour was

exhausted and their ideas about paternal attitude of employers received a rude shock. This economic distress was the main reason for labour unrest in India and prompted labour to organise and try collective action. The labourers were living from hand to mouth. They had no reserves to fall back upon. Their already low standard of living was lowered further. These were signals for the organisation of labour. Employers, on the other hand refused to adjust themselves to the changed circumstances and their rule of thumb methods continued.⁵⁹

This economic distress could be easily exploited by the political leaders. The home rule movement and the martial law in Punjab had set the whole country thinking. The political agitators knew that a powerful army of organised town labourers would be an asset of considerable value to their cause. Labour had a large number of grievances. They needed proper guidance and leadership. The non-cooperation movement of Gandhiji and his teaching of identification of leadership with the masses provided willing leadership to the labour movement. These people were prompted to work for the common man and they were prepared to undergo any sacrifice for their cause. The working class who could not become vocal for want of good leadership, got the right type of men to guide them.

The Russian revolution and the establishment of U.S.S.R. had its own favourable effect on our trade union movement. The setting up of International Labour Organisation, a tripartite

body, was also helpful in the organisation of labour associations in this country. All these factors brought about a change in the moral and mental outlook of the workers. They were unwilling to take things lying down. The general awakening thus created led to a movement towards the organisation of labour. The formation of All India Trade Union Congress, though primarily to send representatives to I.L.O. conferences and sessions, gave status to the labour movement and provided a platform where labour problems could be discussed and debated.

In 1918 seven new unions were started. Out of these four were started in Madras, two in Bombay and one in Calcutta. In 1919 another ten unions were organised - five in Bombay, two in Madras and one each in Bengal, U.P. and Punjab. By 1920 a large number of unions were formed. In the same year was organised the All India Trade Union Congress and to it were affiliated 64 trade unions with a total membership of 1,40,854. The following Table summarises the position of trade unions affiliated to AITUC in 1920.

Table-3⁶⁰Trade Unions affiliated and sympathetic to AITUC in 1920

	No. of affili- ated and sympathetic unions	No. of affi- liated unions	Membership of affilia- ted unions
<u>1. According to provinces</u>			
Bombay	56	44	46,881
Bengal	5	1	2,505
U.P.	8	3	15,800
C.P.	6	2	128
Sindh	2	1	128
Madras	16	8	3,559
Bihar	1	-	-
Punjab	9	4	70,253
Delhi	2	-	-
Indian States	1	1	1,600
Ceylon	1	-	-
Total	107	64	1,40,854

2. According to Industries

Railways	21	11	91,427
Textiles	12	9	7,719
Shipping	4	3	19,800
Transport	4	2	2,470
Chemical	7	6	856
Engineering	8	7	7,590
Posts & Telegraphs	15	5	1,685
Printing and Paper	7	3	1,844
General	29	18	7,463
Total	107	64	1,40,854

The International Labour Organisation estimated the total membership of Indian Trade Unions at 5 lakhs. Dr. Punekar regards this figure as an exaggeration. He is of the opinion that in 1920 there were 125 unions with a membership of 2,50,000.

The spread of trade unionism was accompanied by large number of strikes. The year 1918 was a record one for the prosperity of the cotton-mill industry. The end of the year was, however, far from auspicious. The trouble began on 27th December, 1918 with an unexpected strike at one mill in Bombay. The strikers were unable to obtain their demands by persuasion and coercion. They forced a general strike, which led to complete stoppage of all the mills by 11th January, 1919.⁶¹ By the middle of the month, the strike assumed a more serious turn; there were cases of lawlessness and rioting, and the military had to be called upon. Through the intervention of the Governor a settlement was subsequently arrived at, and the mill-owners announced on 21st of January that they were prepared, if the operative assumed work, to give them a 20% increase in the war allowance, and bonus of Rs. 10/-. , Rs. 15/-. and Rs. 20/-. according to the number of months attendance in the year. The unrest, which was mainly due to very high cost of living spread also among workers in the Dockyards, the Mint, the engineering works, the shipping companies and the cloth market, but the increases given in the wages brought about a settlement of the disputes. The biggest, however, of the strikes experienced by the textile industry was at the beginning of 1920. In magnitude that strike affected every

textile factory in Bombay and in duration it involved the stoppage of work for full one month. Even Solapur was also affected by general strike. Industrial strike became almost general in organized industry in India, and the worst affected region in this respect was the Presidency of Bombay.⁶²

The large number of strikes should not lead us to the conclusion that all these associations that were formed during this period had become stable and permanent organisations. Most of these unions were started with an immediate objective. Unions were formed when demands were to be formulated or when strikes were to be declared. They dissolved as soon as the strike had taken place in the wake of boom period in industry, were of short duration with the end of boom a steady decline in the number of strikes and a strong tendency to an increase in their duration and in the proportion of successful strikes were observable. From 1922 with fall in prices and the depression in trade the period of successful strikes came to an end. But it did not adversely affect the future development of trade union organisation in this country. Individual unions died but the spirit of unionism survived.

The first organization on the lines of a modern trade union formed in India was the Madras Labour Union, in the year 1918. It was principally an organization of textile workers employed in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills. It began, however, as a general union of all workers and in the initial stage,

tramway men, rickshaw pullers and workers of many other trades joined the union along with the textile workers. One of the leaders of the national movement, B.P. Wadia, was responsible for the organization of the union.⁶³

Secretary of State for India had sympathetic attitude towards forming trade-unions in India. In pursuance of this policy the Government of India accepted in 1921 the resolution that N.M. Joshi moved in the Central Legislative Assembly requesting legislation for the registration and protection of trade unions. Five more years were to pass before the Indian Trade Unions and trade union workers enjoyed no protection against civil or criminal action, but that did not defer them from going ahead with their activities for protecting and advancing the interests of workers.

The war affected a distinct change in the outlook of many workers. Many Indian soldiers had been to Europe to fight war. They saw the conditions of life in those countries. Many of them had fought shoulder to shoulder with British and other European soldiers and had realised that they were in no way inferior to others. When they came back at the end of the war, they brought some new ideas as well as aspirations spread in cities and villages and this affected the outlook of many workers. A new sense of confidence and a new awareness of injustices perpetrated against them developed amongst many sections of workers. They were now prepared to stand up for their rights and to resist

their ill treatment and exploitation. This new psychological atmosphere also helped the growth of unions.⁶⁴

The cotton and other industries in Bombay city draw their labour force from the neighbouring districts of Konkan and the districts of Satara and Kolhapur. A certain percentage of workers in Bombay have still maintained their link with their village. Such migration, however, is not in the nature of an exodus and most of the workers who are permanent, return to work after the expiry of their leave or holidays. It is understood that in recent years the labour force in cotton mill industry in Bombay city has become much stable than was the case in a few years ago.⁶⁵ So, because of insufficient land a considerable number of poor agriculturists from the Satara district who have no sufficient land of their own, had to migrate to Bombay, Solapur and other trading centres during the years to supplement their income by field labour.

In post-war period, because of migration, the labour from Satara district was not in a position to organise. But those who were for sufficient time in Bombay mills, were the members of the trade unions. In Satara district in this period only one trade union was established. The Satara Postal and R.M.S. Union was formed in August 1919. The office bearers were Sardar V.N. Mutalik as President and V.G. Darble as Secretary. The number of members was 404.⁶⁶ None other than this union was formed in the early days. The workers working in Post and R.M.S. were educated or partially

educated people. That was the cause of their organization.

In the period after the 1st World War, labour organizations sprang up in big cities. But the Satara district had very few industries. These industries were scattered in the various places of the district. Naturally the organisation was difficult. Lack of leadership was another important reason for the lack of labour organisation in the district.

On national level, in its formative years the AITUC was only a top organisation with no commendable record of real organization service or achievement except that it used to meet at the end of every year to discuss important matters, pass resolutions and recommend candidates for the International Labour Conference at Geneva. Organisational efforts were lacking in the AITUC, this gap was slowly being filled by bringing in more of politics in the AITUC. During the period 1921 and 1925 some leaders were urging to organise workers. Leaders like C.R. Das, who believed that there was no conflict of interest between the national movement and labour movement in India and that the two could be integrated. In fact, he exhorted the National Congress to take up special interest in labour and thereby serve the higher ideal of Swaraj. Others believed to organise strong and self-reliant trade unions on the lines of labour movement in England. The most representative leaders of this group was the late N.M. Joshi, V.V. Giri and Dewan Chamanlal.⁶⁷

During the same period there emerged another group of labour leaders, younger in age, who were educated in the Marxian lores. They came to be known as Communists. Regular activities of communists started in India from the year 1922, but its first interaction with the Indian labour movement took place in 1921 through the greetings of the Red International of Labour Unions, Moscow, sent on the occasion of the second session of the All India Trade Union Congress held in Jharia. The Red International had also invited the AITUC to join the new great world movement of international solidarity on absolutely equal terms.⁶⁸ Political situation in India of that time was particularly favourable for the reception of communist ideology. In fact, most of the political leaders in India were sympathisers of Russia's new regime. For them the common chord between Indian nationalism and Russian communism was their high idealism and a determination to liberate the masses from misery and starvation. It was, therefore, not at all surprising that the AITUC in the Jharia session reciprocated the greetings of the Red International by passing a resolution sympathising with the starving people of Russia and calling upon the workers of the world to help them. In the meanwhile, some of the Indian communists had started organizing trade unions round about 1923 in such centres as Bombay and Calcutta. Some younger workers in the movement were won over to the communist way of thinking. They were young intellectuals who had participated in the Non-cooperation Movement, had developed doubts about the efficiency of the Gandhian technique and were attracted by

socialist slogans and ideas. They did not become communist overnight. They took a long time to become full-fledged communists.⁶⁹ Thus, the 4th session of the AITUC proved the "baptism" of communism in the Indian labour movement.

The amount of discontentment and unrest and the large number of disputes and strikes that took place during this period were because of the leftist influences that had crept in the Indian trade union movement.

The Government wanted to put a check to the growing communist influences. A trial of communist leaders was held in Kanpur in 1924 on the charge that they were organising conspiracy to overthrow the Government by violent means. The Kanpur trials could not check the popularity and the growing influence of the communists. They organised the workers and peasants party in Bombay. Most of the strikes in Bombay had been led by the communists where they were successful in forming a sizable group consisting of S.A. Dange, R.S. Nimbkar, K.N. Jogalekar, S.S. Mirajkar, S.V. Ghate and some others.

The communists were also active in the AITUC. They found a favourable climate for increasing their influence inside the AITUC under Dhundiraj Thengdi, President elect of the AITUC in 1925. They also achieved success in getting S.V. Ghate, a well known communist elect as one of the secretaries in 1927. From control of the executive, they moved outward to consolidate their

control over the organisation. The effect of 21 months Bombay Textile General Strikes of 1925 had hardly over when in 1928 another general strike became imminent. The Communists had, by that time, strongly entrenched themselves in the Bombay labour. Their most powerful union, however, was the Girni Kamgar (Red Flat) Union. The strike movement reached the high water-mark in 1928. During 1928 the centre of the stage of strike movement was Bombay. The communist activities were in full swing. The leadership of the moderates was being thrust aside. The Government felt alarmed.

The Government tried to counteract the strike offensive. The Public Safety Ordinance was promulgated in the spring of 1929. The Trades Disputes Act was passed in the same year with a view to prohibit lightning strikes. The Bombay Riot Enquiry Committee and the Royal Commission on Indian Labour were set up. The Government took quick and successive action on all fronts. But to cap all these actions, the Government launched the Meerut Trial in which thirtyone leading trade union leaders, Communists, Congressmen and members of Youth League were arrested simultaneously in half a dozen different cities, and was ostensibly directed against the Communists. All the accused were charged under Section 121: conspiring to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty of British India. The proceedings of the case lasted more than 4 years and cost the Government 20 lakhs. The trial created a favourable public opinion for the unionists.⁷⁰

Labour Measures and Constitutional Changes

The general conditions of Indian labour both in the constitutional and legislative field were very much unsatisfactory. In the Central Legislative Assembly labour had no representation before 1919, and in respect of protection and welfare of Indian labour the only legislative measure was the Indian Factories Act. Under the Government of India Act of 1919 labour was given limited representation in provincial legislatures through nominations. Under the Act, the provincial legislatures had very limited powers to do anything in the field of labour legislation. Since the introduction of Montague-Chelmsford Reforms it passed a number of measures, of these the most important act, which affected the Indian labour movement directly, was the Indian Trade Union Act of 1926. Before this, there was no trade union legislation and the old conspiracy principles of common law applied to combinations of labour. To remove this basic difficulty N.M. Joshi placed a resolution before the Central Legislature in 1921. It came into force from the 1st May, 1926. The Act was designed to meet the comparatively simple needs of a young movement in India. The Act incorporated most of the elements of the British labour code, in milder form. A political clause in the Act was also provided with a view to enabling the Indian workers to secure the candidature of their representative on political bodies.⁷¹

The Government of India Act 1935 brought an improvement in

the position of labour representation. Thirtyeight seats were allotted to labour in the Provincial Assemblies, and ten in the Federal Assembly. As against this employers belonging to the commercial, industrial, mining, planting and land-holding groups, were allotted 93 seats in the Provincial Assemblies and 18 seats in the Federal Assembly. Thus, the effect of the increased labour representation had been nullified.

Congress ministries were formed in seven out of nine provinces in India in 1937-38. A number of bills were drafted by different provincial ministries in order to improve the conditions of workers, but they could not be piloted through because of the resignation of the Congress Ministries after a brief period. However, the Bombay Ministry passed two acts, namely, Shops and Establishment Act of 1939 and the Industrial Disputes Act. The former one was meant to give protection to workers in shops and establishments and the latter one was passed with a view to prevent lightening and unnecessary strikes. The Industrial Disputes Bill, however, had to face a terrific opposition from some of the labour leaders at that time. On the occasion when the Bill was being piloted two interesting things happened: 1) A full-night session was held, and 2) the Communist member, Mr. S.A. Dange spoke for nine hours opposing the Bill. The real significance of the Act lies in this that practice of compulsory adjudication of disputes in India started since the passing of this legislation. Lastly, a noteworthy action of the congress Ministries was the appointment of committees to inquire

into the conditions of workers in a number of provinces, one of which became the basis of interim relief to the workers in Bombay.⁷²

Splits and Unity

The subsequent history of the Indian labour movement from 1929 to 1938 is the story of splits and unity. The first split took place at the 10th session of the AITUC held in Nagpur in 1929. The position of the AITUC after the Nagpur session was this. The moderates had formed the Indian Trade Union Federation. The Communists had gained control of both the General Council and the Executive Committee of the AITUC with the help of the Left-Nationalists, but still they were not powerful enough to force the split with the movement for national independence. This they tried to achieve at the Eleventh Session of the AITUC held in Calcutta in 1931. The cleavage between the extreme communists and the main group of nationalists, headed at that time by Subhas Chandra Bose, became inevitable. The extreme communist group led by B.T. Ranadive and S.V. Deshpande left the AITUC and formed the All India Red Trade Union Congress. Divisions in the Indian labour movement at such a critical time, when with deepening of the depression in economic conditions and wage-cut, was proving very costly for the Indian working class. In 1933, more than 50,000 workers in Bombay city were thrown out of employment. By 1934 almost every mill in Bombay brought down wages by substantial portion. The workers were powerless to resist. The

last intensive effort was made by the Communists to launch a determined offensive against the scheme of "rationalisation" in 1934 which resulted into general strikes in the textile industry in Bombay, Nagpur and Sholapur. The Government came down with the Emergency Powers Ordinance. The Communist Party was banned, and more than a dozen registered trade unions were declared illegal. Leaders of the strike were detained and some of them were prosecuted under the Trade Dispute Act, though the Government was not able to prove that the general strike caused prolonged hardship to the public. Under the circumstances, unity in the labour movement against the employers' offensive was very essential. J.N. Mitra, a Royist and the President of the Twelfth Session of the AITUC made a fervent appeal for trade union unity on the basis of 'Platform of Unity' framed by the Kamgar Union of Bombay. In 1935 the Red Trade Union Congress was merged into the AITUC. A new political group i.e., the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), at this time also joined the AITUC. An agreement was signed between the CSP and the AITUC according to which the former undertook to affiliate its unions with the latter and the latter pledged to support the Party as the political party of the working class. The Socialists had come to the AITUC with a strong bias in favour of unity in the labour movement. When the next AITUC Session was held in 1936 in Bombay, the political climate was specially favourable for the demand of complete unity in the ranks of labour for forming an anti-imperialist front. A joint committee was formed to work

out the detailed conditions of unity between the AITUC and the National Trade Union Federation. The path to unity was later on paved in Nagpur in 1938 when the AITUC finally decided to accept the conditions of merger as laid down by the NFTU. One of the main conditions related to the decision of political questions by two-thirds majority. The unity was finally achieved in 1940, when N.M. Joshi was made the General Secretary of the AITUC.⁷³

The immediate reaction of the Indian working class towards the World War II was in the form of the first anti-war strike on October 2, 1939, in which 90,000 workers struck work. The strike was completely political; perhaps it was also an expression of the then prevailing nationalist sentiment of the Indian workers after the resignation of Congress Ministries. But very soon with the sharp rise in the cost of living consequent on war, the Indian workers resorted to Dearness Allowance strikes.

The Indian labour movement since the unity of the AITUC in 1938 was manifesting one uniform policy and line of action. But very soon the unity was broken, and different political groups started defining their attitude to war according to their own political predilection. A section of the leaders headed by M.N. Roy, who did not approve of the neutral and lukewarm policy of the AITUC and who wanted a more positive policy towards war efforts, especially after the declaration of war by Germany on Russia, formed an all India Federation of their own to be known as Indian Federation of Labour. The Federation made steady

progress, partly because the congress and socialist leaders were behind the bars because of the 1942 Quit India Movement. The Federation was recognised to be the most representative organisation in 1942 by the Government. It lost its representative character after the termination of war. The AITUC with large membership in 1946 again became the most representative central federation of Indian labour. The war-time circumstances had given the Communists an opportunity to entrench themselves very strongly in the AITUC. In the field of labour legislation the Indian Trade Union (Amendment) Act, 1946, the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 and the Industrial Disputes Bill, were the most important measures from the trade union point of view in the coming years.

Labour Movement in Satara District

After the First World War there were three important large scale industries in Satara district and fourth one was started in 1933, these industries were namely, 1) Cooper Engineering Works, Satara Road, 2) Kirloskar Brothers Ltd., Kirloskarwadi, 3) Ogale Glass Works, Ogalewadi, and 4) The Phaltan Sugar Works Ltd., Sakharwadi. In the early stage the workers in these industries were weak. There were no labour organisations. All these concerns were in private sector. Big industrialists like Cooper, Kirloskar, Ogale and Apte started their factories with the help and encouragement of princes. Especially the ruler of Aundh State, the late Raje Bhawanrao alias Balasaheb helped a lot to start two big industries of Kirloskarwadi and Ogalewadi. He gave them land

free of cost and lones also were made available to them.

In 1936 the first outside communist worker started his work in Satara district. He was Shri V.D. Chitale. He started organising the workers of Satara Road in 1942. But before that the workers from Kirloskarwadi started agitating. After the First World War Kirloskar factory started gaining huge profit. The factory produced ploughs. The demand for production increased tremendously, to complete the demand factory started working in three shifts. Shareholders got good profit. But the workers could not get anything. With increasing cost of living, the company increased their wages. But the increase was negligible. Only officers were benefited more. The common worker remained unsatisfied. Naturally, the situation created discontentment among the workers.

This was the beginning of industrial unrest. The workers slowly started coming together after the working hours, prominent among them being Govindrao Khot, Mahadba Sule, Bahiroba Mali, Sakharan Thanekar, Tukaram Bapu Ugale, etc. They used to read the paper 'Nawa Kal' a Marathi version of 'New age' published by Communist Party. The public reading of the newspapers and discussion of the condition of workers brought them awareness gradually. They realised that personal applications and requests were of no use. This made them feel the necessity of organisation. They started collecting money, collecting information about other labour organisations. Local leaders of National Congress

like Shri Ganapatrao Manjarekar and Narayanrao Walvekar helped them to organise themselves. They started correspondence with company as representatives of the workers. But company did not give any response.⁷⁴

In 1939, the workers struck the work. Under the leadership of Govindrao Khot workers stopped work first in moulding section and then in other sections of the factory. This was the first strike in Satara district. To solve the problem Shri Shankarrao Kirloskar took the meeting of company directors. After a long discussion, it was decided to organize Workers' Council with the joint representatives of company directors and workers. He called workers meeting and told them the idea of Workers' Council. Workers discussed the project in themselves and agreed to the idea of such a Council. Workers elected their ten representatives. In the Council there were ten workers' representatives, seven managing members and three from the general public. With the joint meeting of company directors and workers' representatives some minor problems were solved. But directors did not give consideration to the increase in wages. The management never gave a faithful picture of the profit and loss account of the company. The workers naturally suspected the attitude of the management. The Council remained ineffective.

Under the leadership of Govindrao Khot, workers started Kirloskar Kamgar Union in 1940. It was registered on 1st April 1944 under the Aundh Trade Union Registration Act. From every

section money was collected. Mahadba Sule as a President, Bhairoba Mali as Vice-President and Govindrao Khot as General Secretary were elected. This union was not registered. The union workers met regularly. Some educated persons who were working as officers, like Bhaskarrao Parulekar, Baburao Nayak, were also interested in labour movement. They even contacted Bombay Communist leader Comrade K.N. Jogalekar. Workers demanded wage-increase, leave with pay etc. On 16th Dec., 1944 the Union sent a letter containing the demands of the workers, and an intimation was given to the employees that unless those demands were duly considered within a fortnight, the union would call out a strike.⁷⁵ But the company directors did not pay any attention to it. Workers submitted their demands to Shrimant Appasaheb Pant, then the ruler of Aundh State. In the Aundh State there was no Industrial or Labour Act yet passed. In spite of that Appasaheb Pant called company directors and workers' representatives for conciliation. Both the parties in the dispute submitted their points of view in writing to the Minister on 29th December 1944.⁷⁶

Accordingly, Shankarrao Kirloskar and Nanasaheb Gurjar from company and elected members of workers like Govindrao Khot, Manjarekar, Walvekar, Bahiroba Mali and V.A. Kulkarni alias Kulkarni Master met at the Aundh palace in 'Ram Hall'. After discussions it was decided to appoint an award (Lavad). Aundh Government appointed an award, with late Dadasaheb Mawalankar as its arbitrator.⁷⁷ Thereafter the union, by a letter dated 22nd

January 1945, submitted certain more points for consideration mentioning some cases of victimisation of workers.⁷⁸ The matter was heard in Poona. From Company's side Shri Shankarrao Kirloskar, Gurjar, P.D, Dikshit and advocate Joshi were present. From Union's side Govindrao Khot, Walvekar, Engineer Parulekar, Baburao Nayak, Comrade Joglekar, Kulkarni Master, Bahiroba Mali and others were present. Kakasaheb Gadgil worked as advocate from the side of Union.⁷⁹ After discussion arbitrator gave his award.

In consultation with both the parties the following issues were framed for consideration:-

- 1 Four months' bonus.
- 2 Privilege leave with pay.
- 3 Casual leave of 10 days in a year with full pay.
- 4 Daily wage workers on temporary list should be transferred to permanent list.
- 5 Revision of basic scales of pay
- 6 Two minimum of basic scales of pay should be fixed.
- 7 Fixing scales of grades of pay.

Most of these demands were met except the fixing up minimum basic scales and instead of four months' bonus workers got three months' bonus. Besides this, the workers were given profit sharing bonus which came nearly to Rs. 1,30,000 per year on the whole. These were distributed among efficiency bonus, attendance bonus, prosperity bonus and the remaining sum was utilised annually

for the purposes of revision of pay and scales thereof. All these facilities should cover three years.⁸⁰

This was the greatest dispute in Kirloskar Brothers Ltd. from the start of the factory. In the distribution of bonus some unpleasant things happened. The company declared nominal increase in scale. Angry workers struck the work. With the help of Aundh Government each and every worker's increase was declared. In these Shri Parulekar played his role on behalf of workers. When all demands of workers were accepted naturally the company victimised Shri Parulekar. The company dismissed him. In 1946 the union resorted to strike against his dismissal and demanded his reinstatement. The company asked Congress leaders Shri Shankarrao Deo and Ravsaheb Patwardhan from Poona to interfere in the matter. They called workers' representatives to Poona. Shri Kulkarni Master and Bahiroba Mali went to Poona. In the discussion nothing came out and workers' strike continued.

The strike was hundred per cent successful. The factory was closed for fortyfive days. Workers stopped the supply of milk, vegetables, water etc. to the industrial establishment. The workers who were living in colony suffered a lot due to lack of supply of foodgrains and water. At last the company requested the late R.K. Khadilkar to come to the Wadi as a representative of Shankarrao Deo. Khadilkar talked with the management and with workers. The case was admitted to the Court. In the Court of Justice Diwatia the case was started. Advocate Dhawale from Satara

pleaded for the management. Workers did not engage any advocate. Kulkarni Master put forward Parulekar's and Union's side. In result Parulekar received three months' pay; since he himself did not want to work in the factory, there was no problem of taking him back.⁸¹

The management was not happy on the Parulekar's case. They started to victimise some workers, who were more active in the union. After War there was again depression. So, on that pretext they started retrenchment. According to the prevailing Labour Act, if the labour case is admitted in the Court or it is in Conciliation, the management cannot do retrenchment without the permission of the Court. So, the union admitted a Court case for bonus. Actually, the company had not shown any profit due to depression, so there was no question of bonus. But because of court case they could not retrench the workers. With bonus the union asked to take back the workers who were retrenched. The union showed the court that the company had not given correct picture of their accounts. They showed some expenses on repairs, administration etc. If there was no profit how can they spend on repairs etc. ? At last the company agreed to give half a month's bonus. From workers' side advocate N.S. Deshpande and from the Company's side Narayan Swami pleaded the case. Another problem of taking back retrenched workers was put before Industrial Court. Some workers were taken back and others received some compensation.⁸²

Before independence in Aundh State rule Kirloskarwadi Union received another award known as Joshi Award. After Mavalankar Award there was no increase in the wages because Mavalankar Award did not agree to fixation of scale. Without scale workers did not get regular increase in wages. In fact the production was increased. The company got sufficient profit. So, the union asked for increase in wages. The case was admitted in the Justice Joshi's Court in Aundh State. The Union's usual advocate Shri Kakasaheb Gadgil was not available. Simultaneously a case was going on on the issue of Company dismissal of the Union leader Shri Diwan in the Court. Kulkarni Master himself argued the case and won it. When this case was going on, an eminent lawyer from Satara Shri V.N. Patil was present in the Court. He heard all proceedings of Diwan's case. When he learnt that the Union has no advocate he himself agreed to work for the union without fees. Proceedings of the case took place at Satara because of plague epidemic in Aundh State. Kulkarni Master worked for day and night and prepared all the details about the company's accounts. Advocate Patil argued for seven hours at a stretch and in the end won the case. Workers got enhancement in their wages.⁸³

Cooper Engineering Works was started in 1922, at the village Padali now known as Satara Road. The late Shri Dhanjisha Cooper, Bhaurao Patil and others established the factory. This firm also started to manufacture anchors in the initial stages. In the 1930 depression, the factory suffered severely. In 1930 there were

two hundred and fifty workers working. Due to depression the management started retrenchment and no increase in wages was granted. Naturally, the workers were discontented. But as the freedom struggle was in full speed, no body gave attention to the discontentment of the workers. There were some minor clashes between workers and officers. As a cause of depression the factory also remained closed for six months. After six months the factory again started working with workers receiving low wages.⁸⁴

In 1933, the factory started manufacturing oil engines and looms. The number of workers increased. In 1933-1940 there were some labour problems, but they were solved by mutual understanding. There was no union of these workers. Workers worked for nine hours daily without any dearness allowance. In 1940 Cooper took Walchand Hirachand as his partner. Cooper wanted to take his financial support. About three to four hundred workers worked in the factory. The second World War started and with that cost of living again rose up. Usually the factory workers came from the surrounding villages but the production of engines and looms attracted more skilled workers from outside. The skilled workers were class conscious.

In 1941 V.D. Chitale led a foundation of communist activities. He organized several meetings of workers. Shri Vishnu Babar, a worker from village Bhaktavadi was prominent co-worker of Chitale. With Chitale Ranade and Abhyankar the party members from Poona started the work. In 1940 one Shri Mani Master made five hundred

members for the organisation. After the coming of Abhyankar the number of members went to fifteen hundred. Workers were getting five annas per day (sixteen annas made a rupee) which means today's thirtyone Paise.⁸⁵

At Satara Road first strike took place on 12th June 1943. The day was Saturday. Workers worked whole day and in the evening at five O'clock they declared strike. The next day was Sunday, a holiday. On Monday workers did not turn for work. At night on Monday the case was submitted in the Court. On Tuesday owners accepted some demands of the workers and in the afternoon work started. The strike continued for two and a half days. The prominent leaders were Chitale himself, Vishnu Babar, Yaseen Bhaledar from Satara and Dandekar. The management agreed to give dearness allowance, according to which workers got some increase in pay from one rupee to ten rupees. The daily wages increased from 5 annas to eleven annas. In the strike to give the workers counter-offensive management appointed some new workers. The strike was a complete success for the workers. Not a single worker was on duty. Pickets were placed by the union officials in the neighbouring villages and near the factory premises to prevent new labour and any supply of food, milk and vegetables to the manager. When the case went to the Court Chitale himself advocated the case.⁸⁶

The Cooper Engineering Ltd. Kamgar Union started in November

1942. In the start there were only 70 members. G.K. Mali was working as President and M.G. Ranade as the Secretary. The Union was registered on 4th February 1943. In June 1946 the membership increased to 902. S.N. Bhosale worked as the President and B.K. Abhyankar as the Secretary.⁸⁷ Keshavrao Vichare, an old leader of Satya Shodhak Movement gave his full support to the Union.

Again in 1946 another strike was launched on 22nd April. Workers' demands were increase in daily wages, grant of victory bonus, eight hours' work instead of nine hours etc. Strike was a complete success. Only officers and essential services were on work. Chitale, Yaseen Bhaladar, Ramchandra Dandekar were the important leaders. Aba Khadilkar, Anna Pawar and Bhagwan Chavan were the local leaders. Police promulgated Section 144. Pandurang Borate, an underground leader of the 1942 movement and famous Prati Sarkar worked as intermediary. People were sympathetic towards the underground leaders; at the same time communists lost the sympathy of the people because of their war strategy. Government declared Kamerkar award. Workers could not get their complete demands but they got dearness allowance, pay scale and some leaves. Dispute ended on 4th July, workers started work. Total strength of the workers at this time was about one thousand to twelve hundred. Slowly the production in the factory increased and with that the number of workers also increased.⁸⁸

After the successful strike of Satara Road in 1943 Chitale

started a Union at Ogalewadi. Ogale Glass Factory, which had made good beginning, suffered during the great depression of thirties. But again the second world war offered opportunity for expansion. It started producing other glass articles. But in spite of that it was not a flourishing industrial unit. Naturally, the workers did not succeed in forming strong organisation. Chitale tried his best. He started the Union in 1943. But the factory area was a stronghold of Prati Sarkar. A village, Kundal, near Ogalewadi was the capital of Prati Sarkar. National movement swept the people. Ogale Glass Works' workers were the farmers of nearby villages. They were very much influenced by National movement of 1942, the Quit India Movement. The policy of Anti-Imperialist war of the communist party went against Chitale's activities. He could not make much impression in Ogalewadi Union. Chitale's other workers were Rajaram Patil of Kale and Ramaji Patil. After 26th June 1946, Shri K.R. Pendse, Madhukar Bhise and Suryavanshi took lead in the Union. All of them were the product of National Movement. This Union worked under the Shetkari Kamkari Sangh. Vyankatrao Pawar and Yashwantrao Chavan were also working in the Union. After independence the union became more active.⁸⁹

Before 1930 sugarcane was used for making gur. In 1933, first sugar factory was established at Sakharwadi, near Phaltan. Another factory started in 1954, in Phaltan. The establishment of sugar factories in rural areas opened new avenues of

perennial and seasonal employment. Sakharwadi sugar factory was owned by Apte group of industrialists. The ruler of Phaltan state helped them to establish the factory. This factory is located on the right bank of Nira canal. It has crushing capacity of 650 tons per day.⁹⁰ Though it is a seasonal industry working from November to May, it maintains permanent as well as seasonal labour. Permanent labour is used to overhaul machinery after the season.

When the factory was established, the management, with the help of Phaltan ruler, took the lands of nearby villages on rent for the cultivation of sugarcane. In 1932 they made agreement with the farmers of these rented land for twelve or eighteen years. As a result, these landowners became landless. They had to seek employment in the factory or sugarcane cultivated lands. This situation started to build discontentment. The feeling that they were landless made them restless. They were sentimentally attached to their land though their holdings were small, only a small piece of two or three acres. With this feeling of landlessness they started coming together. In early stage there was no outside leader of any political party. In 1944 the first agreement of twelve years rented land was ended. Such peasants whose agreement was ended came together and asked for the return of their lands. Phaltan State rulers interfered but these peasants were firm. Their local leaders were Bajirao Kadam, Babanrao Hadsul and Krishna Balaji Nalavade alias Dada Nalavade. Peasants got back almost 1,200 acres of land.⁹¹ This was the first movement in Sakharwadi and villages nearby before

independence. After independence the communist workers entered in the organization and established a regular trade union.

The working class movement in Satara district was more active in post-independence period especially in Kirloskarwadi and Satara Road. While other centres were comparatively passive. The employment of labour in rural area is totally different from that in urban industrial centres. The latter brings a change in the environment and consequently adjustment becomes difficult. The migration from rural to urban area entails risk of disease, mental conflicts and sometimes moral downfall owing to a separation from family and the temptation of city life. These problems hardly arise in rural industrial areas.

In the rural areas the employers are also at an advantage as they can get cheap labour supply from the nearby villages.

Labour for the industries in Satara district came generally from the district itself. The distance between the workers' home and the industry being short, visits to their original places were easier, facilitating thereby the solution of some social as well as economic problems involving family segregation, unnecessary and considerable expenses on long journeys, the stress and strain of travelling and the question of leave etc. As the factory area is located within the reach of a large number of workers, they can have family life and at the same time have economic security owing to continuous employment. In some cases

it has found that the perennial workers supervise their farms with the help of hired labour. Some of the perennial workers earned subsidiary income by way of rearing cattle.

Way of life and social habits of rural workers undergo changes due to presence of a large number of educated employees and their association with them. It has avoided the crushing disabilities of urban industrialisation and the evils of unemployment. While the land is directly relieved of some of its burden of population, the seasonal fluctuation of business and consequently of employment can be balanced by partial reabsorption into agriculture.

All these socio-economic factors made great impression on the workers' attitude. On the whole there was no feeling of bitterness between management and workers. Even in the places like Kirloskarwadi the manager himself presided over so many meetings conducted by the Union. The workers were loyal and faithful in their work and as far as possible both the parties came to an agreeable settlement if there was any dispute in the factory.

Today, in the trade union movement class-consciousness in the workers is very important. Without this consciousness trade union movement cannot remain active. This consciousness was lacking in the post-independence period of working class movement in Satara district. The distance between big industrial centres

like Bombay and these industrial centres was the other cause which could not make any impression of outside influences. Again, except Satara Road other centres were situated in one or other princely state. These centres were not under the British rule. British Industrial or Labour Acts were not applicable to them. Naturally, the workers remained outside the protection of these Acts. Another reason for less activity of trade union movement was national freedom movement. All people in general were interested in the 1942's Quit India movement. Workers were not exception to that. They did not pay much attention to the labour movement. Only when the factory made more profit and workers' pay remained low the workers agitated. Otherwise the relations between management and workers remained amicable.

But after independence these relations changed considerably. After independence princely states, Aundh and Phaltan, merged in India. With the merger all industrial and labour acts including Bombay Industrial Relations Act of 1946 and the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 of the Government of India, became applicable to the industrial centres in respective princely states. Then other outside influences started coming forcefully. These factors made labour unions more active after independence.

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