CHAPTER - III

SAKHAR KAMGAR UNION: EMERGENCE, DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURE

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This chapter is mainly devoted to outline the origin, development, the organizational features and major achievements of the Sakhar Kamgar Union, Kolhapur.

A) Chh. Rajaram Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana : A brief Historical Background:

The idea of starting a sugar factory at Kolhapur was conceived because of the well known reputation of the jaggery produced in Kolhapur and the excellence on the crops of sugarcane grown around about Kolhapur on the banks of the Panchganga river with rich sugar contents and the very heavy duty protective levied on foreign sugar the Government of India, in order to help sugar industry of the country.

The Kolhapur has a sugarcane area of about 30,000 acres and in more than 2000 acres sugarcane is grown, in and around about Kolhapur proper. The river Panchganga runs along the suburbs of Kolhapur and the lands lying on both banks of the river are well suited for sugarcane plantation (Jadhav, 1982 : 84).

The Government of India granted tariff protection to the Indian Sugar industry, which paved the way for the development of sugar industry in India. Chh. Rajaram Maharaj of Kolhapur State decided to organize a sugar factory in his State, in order to pay better returns to the cane-

growers. In 1932, he invited and persuaded an industrialist of Bombay, Ruia, to establish a sugar factor in Kolhapur state. He also promised to provide financial and administrative support. A site was selected near Kasba Bavda and a factory, named as "The Kolhapur Canesugar Works", was registered in the year 1932. Orders for sugar machinery, having a crushing capacity of 500 tonnes per day, were placed. The initial capital was fixed at Rs.10,25,000/-. In the beginning Rs. 15,40,000/- were invested in sugar machinery and Rs. 5,40,000/- in the construction of the factory building. The factory took its first season in 1934, records 'Kolhapur Gazette'. In 1947-48, 412 persons were regularly employed in the factory. Besides, there were 1,700 temporary workers, 500 canecutters and 500 bullock cart drivers. The factory had its own sugarcane farms in Kasba Bavda area in Kolhapur district.

Upto 1985-86, the factory operated in the private sector. During 1983-84, the processes of cooperativisation of the factory started and the Government of Maharashtra appointed a joint management committee to look after the day-to-day management of the factory. The crushing season 1983-84 and 1984-85 were completed under the joint management committee (Jadhave, 1992 : 23).

Cooperativisation of the Kolhapur Sugar Mill :

In 1955-56, other factories in Kolhapur district, such as Warna, Panchaganga, Kumbhi-Kasari and Bhogawati began to work on cooperative principle. The other cooperative sugar factories in the district were paying better sugarcane price to the farmers than 'The Kolhapur Cane Sugar Works'. Therefore in order to get better price for their sugarcane

produce, the farmers of Kasba Bavda area decided to form an organization. In 1957, they organized themselves and founded 'Kolhapur Sugar Factory Uskari Shetkari Sanghatana.' In 1958, they organised a morcha and demanded increased rate of sugarcane.

Again in 1962-63, farmers stopped giving sugarcane to the factory, as a result, factory was kept closed. The Government mediated and the rate of sugarcane was increased. Farmers got Rs.51/- per ton. Consequently, enthusiasm of activists increased and 'Uskari Shetkari Sanghatana' became more stronger than what it was earlier.

In 1969, Factory was again kept closed. The farmers decided to keep factory closed till they get the over dues. The discussion took place with Shri Vasantrao Naik, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra. The farmers got the difference of Rs.4/- per ton. Again in 1970 the factory was closed. That time the main demand was that they should get rates of sugarcane equal to that of other cooperative factories. The farmers compared private and cooperative factories. Only cooperative factories were providing facilities such as schools, colleges, houses, advance etc.

For 1971 to 1976 they made an agreement. It was decided that the Factory should see what other five factories pay (these factories are Panchganga, Warna, Bhogawati, Dudhaganga-Vedganga, Kumbhi-Kasari) it should draw the mean payment of these factories and should pay the average rate. In 1977, they demanded more than the average of these five factories.

In 1979, factory was closed for 69 days, farmers sat down on the road. They did not give sugarcane to the factory. 'Uskari Shetkari

Sanghatana' could gain support from the government also.

Government made an agreement. They managed a committee. Capt.Mohite, Mr. Gokhale and Mr. Rane were in the committee. This Committee worked for a year. They observed witnesses, proofs and over dues.

In 1979, workers from the factory asked government authorities to solve the problems of their payment for the period of 69 days (which was the period when factory remained closed due to 'Uskari Shetkari Sanghatana'). The workers were on the side of the owners. The role of the workers was that if the factory gives more rate to the farmers, it will affect the bonus and payment of the workers. They did not support cooperativisation.[1]

All the property belonging to the Kolhapur Canesugar work limited was transferred to the newly named Chh. Rajaram Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd., Kasba Bavda on 31st October, 1986. The joint management committee, under the chairmanship of Bhagawanrao Powar and Hindurao Tanekar took lead in collecting members and the share capital and the Kolhapur District Central Cooperative Bank also provided the necessary help.

Area of Operation :

The area of operation of the sugar factory includes the villages from Karveer, Panhala, Shahuwadi, Gagan-Bavda, Hatkanangle, Radhanagari and Kagal talukas of Kolhapur district as also Chikodi taluka of Belgaum district of Karnataka State. The table shows the area of operation and the villages supplying sugarcane to the factory as in the year 1990-91.

Area of operation and villages under the command area of the factory

Name of the Taluka		District	State	Number of villages
1.	Karveer	Kolhapur	Maharashtra	30
2.	Panhala	Kolhapur	Maharashtra	18
3.	Shahuwadi	Kolhapur	Maharashtra	10
4.	Gagan-Bavda	Kolhapur	Maharashtra	14
5.	Hatkanangle	Kolhapur	Maharashtra	32
6.	Rahdanagari	Kolhapur	Maharashtra	14
7.	Kagal	Kolhapur	Maharashtra	4
8.	Chikodi	Belgaum	Karnataka	91
			Total	213

(Jadhav, 1992 : 24).

B) Emergence and Development of the Sakhar Kamgar Union :

1) Emergence of the Kolhapur Sugar Mill Kamgar Union :

In 1932, 'Kolhapur Sugar Mill' was established in Kolhapur state. It was in the private sector. Ruia, an industrialist from Bombay, was the owner of the factory. During those days workers' payments were not being made in time, duty hours were not fixed, there was no security of service to the employees. Hence, workers organized themselves and established 'The Kolhapur Sugar Mill Kamgar Union' in 1943.

2) The Strikes :

In 1944, the workers went on strike to press their demands such as increase in wages and bonus. The strike was going on for 12 days wherein

8 workers were dismissed from the work; because they had participated in the strike. An arbitrator was appointed to go into the demands of the workers in consultation with the management. Workers' demands were partially fulfilled. They got increased wages and dearness allowance. Consequently, the strike was withdrawn.

Again in 1946, a prolonged strike of 63 days took place wherein 250 workers were dismissed from the work. The management also used police force to supress the strike activities. At last, the union unanimously withdraw the strike in view of limited strength of the workers. Consequently, the demands were not considered.

In the year 1949, after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, a ban was imposed on the union and on the Navjeevan movement. In 1949, during the period of ban, the attempts to organise the union once again were unsuccessful due to the arrest of two union leaders viz. Shri Madhukar Katre and Com. P.D. Dighe.

3) The Emergence of Sakhar Kamgar Union :

In the beginning, the union was named as 'Kolhapur Sugar Mill Kamgar Union'. In 1951, attempts were made once again to organize the workers and to establish a union. Taking into consideration the establishment of Bhogawati Sugar Factory, at Parite, Dist. Kolhapur, union leaders took a decision to organize the workers from Bhogawati Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana and accordingly the union was renamed as 'Sakhar Kamgar Union' after incorporating necessary modification in the constitution. This union was registered in May 1951. In 1952, in accordance with the B.I.R. Act, an approval was accorded to the union as a representative recognized

union. Then onwards the union got stability. Now the union i.e., "Sakhar Kamgar Union" is representing workers belonging to three cooperative sugar factories. These are 1. Chh. Rajaram Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd., Kasba Bavda; 2. Bhogawati Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd., Parite, 3. Kumbhi-Kasari Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd., Kuditre.

C) Organizational Features of the Union :

1. Affiliation :

'Sakhar Kamgar Union' was working as 'independent' union from 1951 to 1963. From 1963 to 1975, the union was affiliated to AITUC. But, because of ideological disputes, in 1975 the union decided to cancel its affiliation. Again it became 'independent' organization. At present 'Sakhar Kamgar Union' is affiliated to 'Maharashtra State Sakhar Kamgar Mahasangha'. 'Maharashtra State Sakhar Kamgar Mahasangha' is not affiliated to any central union organization like INTUC, AITUC.

2. Membership Strength : Sakhar Kamgar Union, Kolhapur :

The following table shows total workforce in the establishments in which the union operates and the number of employees who are members of the Sakhar Kamgar Union as on 10th September 1993.

Sr. No.	Name of the establishment factory	Total workers	Union members
1.	Chh. Rajaram Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd., Kasba Bavda	895	525
2.	Bhotawati Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd., Parite	1220	750
3.	Kumbhi-Kasari Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd., Kuditre	952	700
4.	State Farming Corporation Kolhapur	350	200
	Total	3417	2175

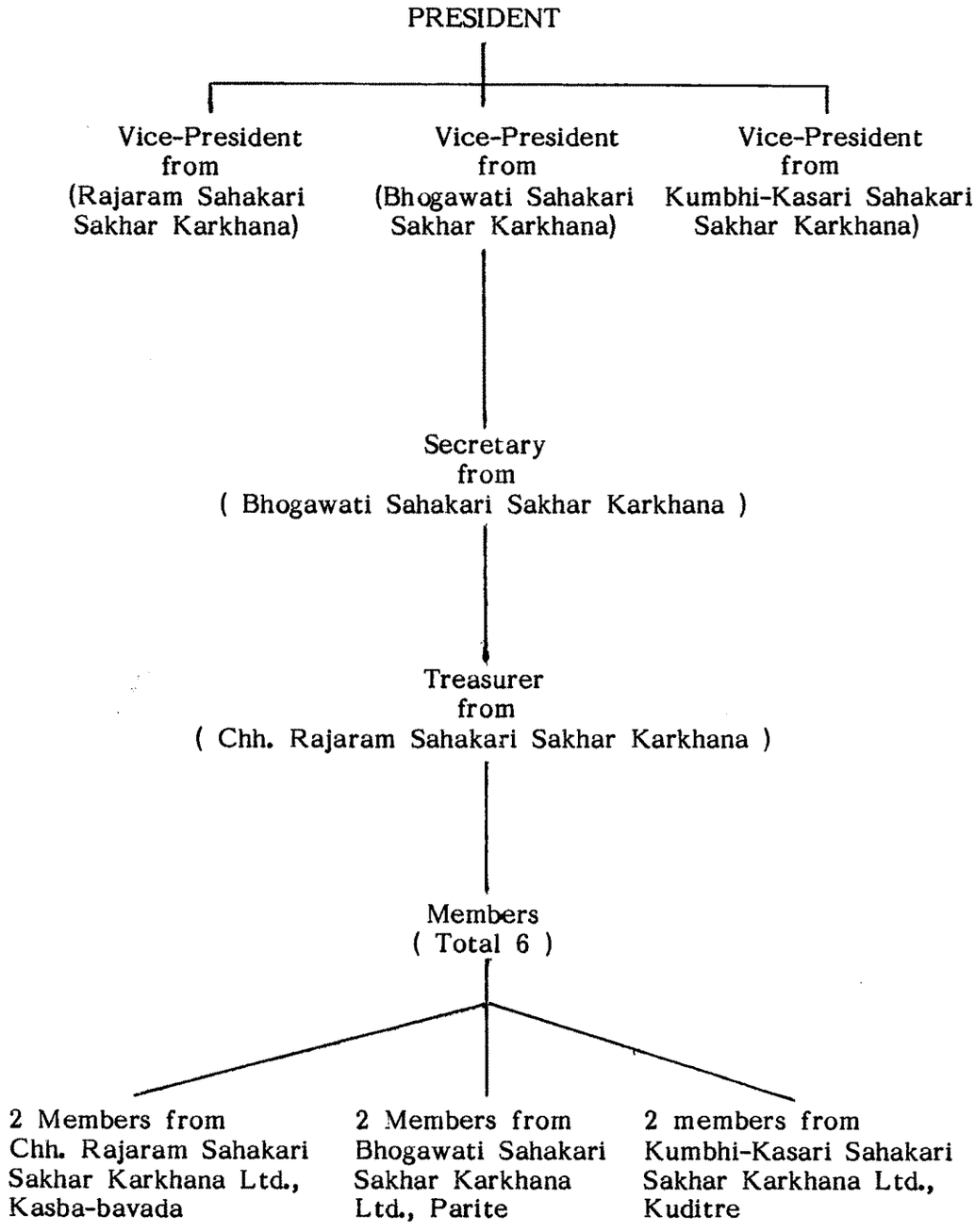
3. Economic Condition of the Sakhar Kamgar Union :

The leaders of the union described the economic condition of the union as 'satisfactory'. A copy of the Union's general fund account (see appendix) also indicates the same. As indicated by the Union's general fund account, towards the credit side of the union, more amount comes from 'donation fund' and 'membership contribution'. On debit side, the union spends more money on payment of officers, allowances and travelling allowances, payment and allowance of establishment section. Union collects donation fund from the workers. Saving of the union can be said to be satisfactory. In general, financial conditions of the union can be described as satisfactory.

4. Organizational Structure of the Sakhar Kamgar Union :

A chart showing organizational structure of the 'Sakhar Kamgar Union' is given below. It represents authority structure of this union. It can be seen from the chart that the managing committee includes President, 3 Vice-Presidents (one each from three sugar factories in which the union operates), Secretary, Treasurer and six other members representing workers from the trhee sugar factories. Thus, the managing committee of the Sakhar Kamgar Union includes six office-bearers and six ordinary members. Of these, one is 'outsider' (President of the Union) and all others are 'insiders'.

Organizational Structure of the Sakhar Kamgar Union



5. Constitution :

The constitution of the Sakhar Kamgar Union is given below. The constitution also makes clear some of the important characteristics of this union.

Constitution and Rules of the Sakhar Kamgar Union, Kolhapur

1. Name : The name of the union shall be the Sakhar Kamgar Union, Kolhapur and it shall, in the following rules, be referred to as the 'union'.

2.A) Objects : The objects of the union shall be -

(a) to organise and unite the workers employed in the sugar factories in the Karveer taluka and to regulate their relations with their employers;

(b) to secure to the members fair conditions of the life and service;

(c) to try to redress their grievences;

(d) to try to prevent any reduction of wages and if possible, to obtain an advance whenever circumstances allow;

(e) to endeavour to settle disputes between employers and employees amicably so that a cessation of work may be avoided;

(f) to endeavour to provide against sickness, unemployment infirmity, old age and death;

(g) to endeavour to secure compensation for members in cases of accidents under the Workmen's Compensation Act;

(h) to provide legal assistance to members in respect of matters arising out of or incidental to, their employment;

(i) to endeavour to render aid to the members during any strike brought about with the sanction of the union or a lock-out;

(j) to obtain information in reference to the sugar factories in India and outside;

(k) to co-operate with organisations (of labour) particularly those having similar objects, in India and outside;

(l) to help, in accordance with the Indian Trade Union Act, the working classes in India and outside in the promotion of the objects mentioned in this rule; and

(m) generally, to take such other steps as may be necessary to ameliorate the social economic, civic and political conditions of the member.

B. For the attainment of these objects, the union may organise centres in various localities of the Kolhapur District.

Admission of Ordinary Members :

3. Any person employed in the sugar factory who has attained the age of 15 years shall be entitled to become an ordinary member of the union on payment of a monthly subscription of Re.1/- provided he agrees to abide by rules and bye-laws that may be made by the union time to time.

Admission of Honorary Members :

4. Persons who are not eligible to become ordinary members of the union may be admitted as honorary members of the union for purposes of being elected or co-opted to the managing committee and they shall be honorarymembers of the union during the period of their office,subject to the provisions of Section 22 of the Indian Trade Union ACt, 1926, their number shall not exceed five.

Fines and Forefitures :

5. A member failing to pay his monthly subscription for six months with the permission of the managing committee or three months without the permission of the said committee shall cease to be a member of the union. But he shall be entitled to rejoin the union on paying his arrears.

Benefits :

6. No member of the union shall be entitled to any benefit that the union may decide to give to its members unless he has been a member for at least six months and has paid all contributions.

7. A member of the union who is in arrears with his subscription or dues shall not be entitled to any benefits until all arrears have been paid and a period of two months has elapsed from the date of payment of such arrears.

8. Shold the members of the union go on strike without the sanction or approval of the managing committee, they shall not be entitled to any benefits whatever.

Register of Members :

9. The union shall keep a register of all its members containing their names and particulars of their place of work, their residence, etc.;

10. The Register shall be open to inspection by any member or officer of the union at the Head office during the hours during which the office of the union is open on any week day ecluding holidays.

Office-Bearers :

11. The union shall have a President, nor more than two Vice-Presidents

a General Secretary, not more than two Joint Secretaries and a Treasurer. All of them shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of General Council and they shall be eligible for re-election.

Management of the Union :

12. The management committee subject to the provisions of Section 21 of the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, the affiars of the union, financial and otherwise, shall be conducted by a managing committee consisting of the office-bearers and fourteen other members elected at the General meeting. The same managing committee will continue functioning till the new one is appointed.

Vacancies and Removals :

13. Should a vacancy occur among the office bearers or the members of the managing committee it shall be filled by the Managing Committee by co-option.

14. Any office-bearer of the union or a member of its managing committee can be removed by the General Council of the members by a three-fourths majority for committing any fraud or having acted against the interests of the union, provided the office-bearer or the members to be removed is given adequate opportunity to explain his conduct.

Meetings of the Managing Committee :

15. The Managing Committee shall meet at intervals of not more than 3 months on such days and at such place as may be fixed by the Genral Secretary in consultation with the President.

16. The presence of at least one-third members of the Managing Committee shall be necessary to form a quorum. No quorum is necessary for adjourned meetings.

17. At least three day's notice shall be given for a managing committee meeting.

Duties of the Office-Bearers :

18. The President and the Vice-Presidents

The President shall preside over all meetings of the union and the managing committee preserve order, sign all minutes and shall be allowed to give a casting vote only. The President shall have power, if necessary to call special meetings of the managing committee or of the union, whenever necessary. The vice-President shall function in place of the President in his absence.

19. The General Scretary :

The General Secretary, shall take minutes of all unions and committee meetings, conduct all correspondence, convene all meetings, keep all accounts, exercise a supervision over the affairs of the union and shall also keep a correct account of all receipts and expenditure. He shall prepare a balance-sheet annually showing clearly every item of receipts and expenditure. He shall be responsible for submitting to the Registrar of Trade Unions, all returns and notices that should be sent to that officer under the Indian Trade Union Act, 1926. He shall have power to engage, in consultation with the President and subject to the approval or confirmation of the managing committee, any assistants shall be for

organising and clerical purposes be considers necessary and all such assistants shall be under the control of the General Secretary.

20. The Joint Secretary

The joint secretary shall generally help the General Secretary in his work. He shall perform the duties of the General Secretary in his absence.

21. The Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be responsible for all sums of money which may from time to time paid into the union and for duly banking them. He shall make payments towards all expenditure sanctioned by the managing committee. He shall not have the power to draw money from the Bank without first having the cheque signed by the General Secretary.

22. (A) The Supreme Body of the union will be the General Council. The General Council will consist of delegates elected in a meeting specially called for on the basis of one delegate for every 20 ordinary members, provided that the members will be entitled to elect at least one delegate, if the number of members in that concern is less than 20. All resolutions passed either by the managing committee of the General Council of the union shall be recorded in a minute book or minute books kept for the purpose.

(B) The election of the delegates to the General Council may be held in the month of February or March every year.

(C) In case a vacancy occured, it will be filled by a by-election from the constituency of the vacating member.

(D) The delegates of the General Council elected by the members shall continue to be delegates until replaced by new members.

(E) There shall be held in the month of April or May an Annual General meeting of the General Council to transact the following business :

a) To adopt the report of the work done by the union and the audited statement of accounts,

b) to elect the office bearers and other members of the managing committee for the current year; and

c) to transact such other business as may be brought forward with the permission of the Chairman.

23. The President or the General Secretary may call a meeting of the General Council of the members of the union whenever he thinks necessary and shall call it on a requisition signed by one-fifth of the total strength of the union within twenty days of the receipt of the requisition. In case the President or the General Secretary fails to convene such a meeting, the requisitionists themselves shall call a meeting after due notice and the proceedings of the meeting shall be binding on the union.

24. At least 15 days' notice shall be given to the members for a General Council.

25. The presence of at least one-third members shall be necessary to form a quorum at a General Council. No quorum is necessary for adjourned meetings.

General Funds :

26. The General Funds of the union shall, consist of the subscriptions from members, donations etc. They shall be deposited in a bank or banks,

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approved by the managing committee in the name of the union and the account shall be operated by the Treasurer and the General Secretary. The General Secretary or the Treasurer shall not keep more than Rs.100/- with him for current expenses.

Objects on which the General Funds can be Expended -

27. Subject to the provisions of Section 15 of the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, the General funds of the union shall not be spent on any other objects than the following namely :

a) The payment of salaries, allowances and expenses to officers of the union;

b) the payment of expenses for the administration of the union including audit of the accounts of the General funds of the union;

c) The prosecution or defence of any legal proceedings to which the union or any members thereof is a party when such psosecution or defence is undertaken for the purposes of securing or protecting any rights of the union as member such orany rights arising out of the relations of any member with his employer.

d) The conduct of trade disputes on behalf of the union or any member thereof;

e) The compensation of the members for loss arising out of trade disputes;

f) Allowances to members or their dependents on account of death, old age, sickness, accidents or unemployment such members;

g) The issue of, or the undertaking of liability under policies of assurance on the lives of members or under policies insuring members against sickness, accident or unemployment;

h) The provision of educational, social or religious benefits for members or the dependants of members;

i) The unkeep of a periodical published mainly for the purpose of discussing questions affecting workers as such;

j) The payment in furtherance of any of the objects on which the general funds of the union may be spent, of contributions to any cause intended to benefit workmen in general, provided that the expenditure in respect of such contributions in any financial year shall not at any time during the year be in excess of one-fourth of the combined total of the gross income which has up to that time accured to the general funds of the union during that year and of the balance at the credit of those funds at the commencement of that year and;

k) Subject to any conditions contained in the notification, any other object notified by the appropriate government in the official Gazette.

Annual Audit :

28. The union shall make due provision for the annual audit of the accounts of the union by competent auditors appointed by the Managing Committee in accordance with the Rule 18 of the Bombay Trade Unions Regulations, 1927. An auditor appointed by the State Government may audit accounts of the union at least once in each financial year.

Inspection of Books of Accounts :

29. The books of accounts of the union shall be open to the inspection of any member of officer at the head office of the union during the hours which the office of the union is open on any day excluding holidays.

Amendments of Rules :

30. The rules may be amended, altered, replaced, rescined or added to at any time by majority of the members present at a General Council provided previous notice of at least seven days is given to the members of the proposed alterations.

Dissolution of the Union :

31. The union shall not be dissolved except by the vote of a majority of three-fourth members present at a General Council called for the purpose, provided the total number of votes cast at such a meeting is not less than two-third of the total number of the members than on the rolls of the union.

The funds of the union after meeting all the liabilities shall be disposed of in accordance with the decision of the dissolution meeting.

D. Major Achievements of the Union :

In order to collect the comprehensive information about the major achievements of the union, namely Mr. P.D. Dighe was contacted and interviewed. The following paragraphs give an idea about the major achievements of the union.

Since its establishment the union is constantly trying to safeguard the interests of its members. The industrial tribunal announced a decision in 1953 over the demands, made in1952 and considered Rs.23.25 as workers basic pay. As the mill was situated in the city limits, Rs.24/- pay was admissible. But the workers had to approach industrial tribunal for sanctioning the same. The demand made in 1954 to grant bonus to all

casual and temporary workers was considered. The union played a crucial role in this connection.

The casual workers were not getting bonus in the past. But as a result of the agreement carried out by the union, the casual workers as also the workers engaged in the task of sugarcane cutting were entitled to get bonus. The workers were not given status as permanent employees in the service for years together but the union approached the labour court and succeeded in making 90% workers permanent. An act to the effect that the Retentional Allowance be given to the off-season workers is passed. The union successed in extending the benefit of Retentional Allowance to off season workers, which was not being given until 1960. The provident fund scheme, gratuity scheme were also introduced.

In 1957, different categorisation of workers like skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled was made and the wages were paid according to these categories. After the appointment of 'Sugar Wage Board' by the Central Government in 1957, it was decided to ventilate the grievance of the workers in sugar industry. The demand of wages and dearness allowance were agreed to in 1969. At the same time, the union had proposed a second wage board. A national wage board was constituted in Maharashtra State under the presidentship ofShri Shankarrao Bajirao Patil, Labour Minister to go into the grievances, problems of workers in sugar industry.

The Kolhapur Sugar Mill had its own agricultural land. This land was cultivated by employing the labours on contract. A demand was made by the union to discontinue this contract labour scheme. Accordingly,

in 1982, this contract labour scheme discontinued and the work was allotted on job work basis.

All service benefits like pay, permanancy which were hitherto given to regular employees of the sugar mi , were also extended to the contract labourers.

A tripartite agreement was entered into between Kolhapur Sugar Mill (K.S.M.), Kolhapur Canesugar Works (KC.W.), Sakhar Kamgar Union, Kolhapur (S.K.U.) to the effect that all service benefits which the sugar workers are enjoying all over Maharashtra should be extended to the workers in Kolhapur Sugar Mill.

Thus, it is very clear from the above details that, the Sakhar Kamgar Union has played an important role in protecting and promoting the mainly the economic and job related interests of its members.

SAKHAR KAMGAR UNION : WELFARE FACILITIES :

The leaders of the union told that the union is not in a position to provide any welfare facilities to its members, mainly due to the financial constraints.

Thus, this chapter was devoted to outline the origin development, the organizational features and major achievements of the SakharKamgar Union, Kolhapur. Against this background in the next chapter the data regarding socio-economic background and some aspects of union involvement of the leaders and members of Sakhar Kamgar Union are presented and analysed.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

NOTE : The information about the co-operativisation of the Kolhapur Sugar Mill was obtained from Shri Ravindra Sabnis Ex MLA. who was one of the activists who strove for co-operativisation of the Kolhapur Sugar Mill.

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