

CHAPTER-VIII

EXTENT OF EXPLOITATION AND PROBLEMS OF THE WORKERS

In fact nature exploits the drought region and the people living in the drought area. However, people desirous escapes from this, and shelter in the sugarcane cultivation belt at least for 6-8 months. However, exploitation continues even at the work place, but the exploiters are different. To some extent people may sustain manmade exploitation, but does not nature's. Man made exploitation may be removed or reduced, but no one can sustain the nature's. That can be removed only if macro-level plan strategies accompanied with huge capital investment are made possible for attaining the desired level of development.

Exploitation, means, if a worker in a prevailing work conditions or situations or other available socio-economic (national) conditions, does not get fulfilment of his needs, in comparison with other workers; or in an absolute terms a worker does not get fulfilment of his basic needs even when the employer has a capacity to pay.

Exploitation of unorganised workers is more serious fact indeed, because the collective bargaining of these workers is rather less than that of organised workers. The unorganised workers have to sustain not only the economic exploitation but exploitation in other respects also.

Seasonally migrating workers are being exploited at every stage of their life of destination. They sustain all odds and obstructions only because of the drought conditions of their original places. Even wages at destination are comparatively higher than drought area. The sugar

factories benefit from these workers. Apparantly, if the gap between demand and supply of labour force widens the incentives have been made available to the workers by sugar factories. The exploitation continues only because of the sychophancy of workers, which is again due to the natural odds (i.e. drought) at original places of the workers.

The nature of exploitation of sugarcane harvesting and transport workers at various stages is explained as under.

8.1 COST OF LABOUR :

The statutory price of sugarcane is fixed by the Central Govt. on the recommendation of the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) on the basis of the cost of cultivation of sugarcane and relative price movement of administered prices of other agricultural commodities. The Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices (BICP) periodically undertake investigations into cost structure of the sugar industry. The study basically covers the conversion cost of sugar. The conversion cost includes expenses on 13 items normated by BICP. The expenditure on cane centre is one of the cost item of conversion, which includes salary and wages of staff engaged in collection of cane (not cane harvesters and transport workers), expenses on temporary sheds, scales and weigh bridges etc. The expenses in cane development include subsidy for planting of special variety; subsidy on seeds/fertilizers, serial spray of insecticides, staff salaries etc. The normative cost of transport of cane as determined by BICP is accounted for in the zonewise conversion cost.¹ Thus, broadly speaking the cost of raw-material i.e. sugarcane is comprised of (a) the cost of cane (b) cane development expenses and (c) transport charges.

The BICP has not specifically mentioned the wages of harvesting and transport workers in its norms. The norms are mostly applicable to the factory sector workers. The BICP methodology is independent of cane cost. The Maharashtra State Co-operative Sugar Factories Federation (i.e. Sakhar Sangh) has strongly recommended to consider the cost of harvesting and transport of sugarcane in the BICP norms.²

Gopal Guru³ has pointed out that, the percentage of the cost of labour in the total cost of production of sugar is 10 per cent for the entire country, while in Maharashtra, particularly, in Southern parts, it is lower - some where between 4 to 8 per cent. Further, it is stated in this context that it is quite surprising to note that, the Third Wage Board contends that the sugar factories do not have the capacity to pay.

It is inconsistent to accept that, the wages of harvesting and transport workers are not included in the total salaries and wages of the workers of sugar industry. This is rather an advantage taken of from the weakest agrarian strata.

Jan Breman⁴ has pointed out that, the advantage, which is taken of the need of the weakest agrarian strata to leave their habitat after the rains; the gruelling work that must be done by man, woman and child in the campaign; the ultimate call that can be made on them during the harvest; all these are points which would well be summarised by the word 'exploitation'. The major justification for this term lies in the vast disproportion of the amount of work, the cane cutters have to get through and the wages they receive in return for it.

Sugar co-operatives in Maharashtra usually estimate the cost of harvesting and transport of sugarcane per tonne every year. Table 8.1 illustrate the average cost of cane harvesting and cane transporting per tonne at the current price during the selected years and of selected sugar factories in Kolhapur and Sangli districts. The average cost of cane harvesting and transport seems to be increasing. The cost has gone high after the wage revision during 1986-87, 1988-89 and 1989-90 because of the strikes in 1980 and 1986.

TABLE No. 8.1
AVERAGE COST OF CANE HARVESTING AND TRANSPORT
(PER TONNE)

Name of the Sugar Factory	(Rupees)					
	Years					
	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Bhogavati	34.63	34.43	46.31	45.50	47.35	59.03
Vasantadada	NA	37.35	43.48	53.40	49.14	64.65
Mahakali	NA	NA	66.31	67.71	58.86	68.05
Warana	NA	39.80	45.61	53.61	62.53	70.97
Datta (Shirol)	39.13	39.02	42.74	57.27	NA	65.88
Chh. Rajaram	NA	43.14	53.27	57.31	59.53	75.10
Gadhinglaj	NA	38.79	46.57	64.62	62.55	72.05
Panchaganga	38.11	40.24	45.55	53.78	55.64*	NA
Average Cost :	37.29	38.96	48.73	56.65	56.51	67.96

*Note : As on 31-3-1989.

Source : Annual Reports of respective sugar factories
from 1984-85 to 1989-90.

Table No. 8.1 illustrates the varying cost averages of sugar co-operatives during different years. This is because of the following reasons :

- a) The sugar factories have transported the sugarcane from a long distance.
- b) Rise in the wage of harvesting and transport workers.
- c) Due to increase in fuel oil prices.

8.2 WORK AND WAGES OF THE WORKERS - AN ESTIMATION

Here an effort is made to find out the average cane cutting per day and the daily earnings of the workers engaged in sugarcane harvesting and transport workers during the selective (See table No.8.2) seasons. Table No. 8.2 is an outcome of the data collected from all sugar factories located in Kolhapur and Sangli districts, for the crushing seasons from 1987-88 to 1990-91. The table illustrates the fact that the workers do not get full work. One worker can harvest one tonne of sugarcane a day, but actually average cane harvesting per worker is declining since 1987-88 to 1990-91. This is because of the increase in the migration of labour force towards sugarcane belt. Automatically earnings of the workers remained less than the minimum wage specified for Zone-A in Maharashtra. Apart from this, three factories of Kolhapur district and two factories of Sangli district were unable to harvest all registered or recorded sugarcane area during 1990-91 seasons. This was because of (a) excess sugarcane area over the enrolled sugarcane area, (b) irregularities in the operation of sugar co-operatives (c) scarcity of harvest and transport workers at the end of the season and (d) natural odds like rainfall.

TABLE No. 8.2

AN ESTIMATE OF DAILY WORK AND EARNING OF THE WORKERS

Sugar Factories	Installed capacity (TCD)	Cane crushed (MT)	Available days	Crush rate per day (22 hours) (M.T.)	Capacity utilization	Number of cane cutters including cart workers	Average cane cutting per worker for a season	Average cane harvesting per day worker (M.T.) Col. 8 ÷ 4)	Average daily wage per H.C.W.* (cane cutting)	Cost of harvesting & transport per M.Ton @
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10	11
Kolhapur District :										
Bhogavati										
1987-88	2000	497016	179	2777	138.85	2916	170.44	0.95	21.95	45.40
1988-89	2000	431576	160	2697	134.85	3689	116.99	0.73	16.86	47.35
1989-90	2000	420278	150	2802	140.10	3136	134.02	0.89	30.71	59.03
1990-91	3000	495712	192	2580	86.00	3495	141.83	0.74	25.53	N.A.
Chh. Shahu										
1987-88	1250	252177	160	1576	126.08	720+	350.25	2.19	50.59	N.A.
1988-89	1250	229141	146	1569	125.52	856+	267.69	1.83	42.27	N.A.
1989-90	1250	277128	176	1576	126.00	756+	366.57	2.08	71.76	N.A.
1990-91	1250	291455	188	1550	124.00	743+	392.27	2.09	72.11	N.A.
Datta Asurle										
1987-88	1250	242884	159	1528	122.24	2635	92.18	0.58	13.40	N.A.
1988-89	1250	210609	150	1404	112.32	2901	72.60	0.48	11.09	N.A.
1989-90	1250	240357	186	1292	103.36	2933	81.95	0.44	15.18	N.A.
1990-91	1250	235888	203	1163	93.04	3041	77.57	0.38	13.11	N.A.
Datta Shirol										
1987-88	2500	474121	190	2495	99.80	3565	132.99	0.70	16.17	57.27
1988-89	2500	428875	173	2479	99.16	4023	106.61	0.62	14.32	-
1989-90	2500	530813	224	2370	94.80	3702	143.39	0.64	22.08	65.88
1990-91	5000	713135	204	3498	69.96	7080	100.73	0.49	16.91	69.13
Daulat										
1987-88	2000	358615	178	2015	100.75	1616	221.92	1.25	28.88	N.A.
1988-89	2000	280183	142	1973	98.65	1420	197.31	1.39	32.11	N.A.
1989-90	2000	343652	165	2083	104.15	1580	217.50	1.32	45.54	N.A.
1990-91	2000	324376	169	1919	95.45	1390	233.36	1.38	47.61	N.A.
Dudhaganga-Vedganga										
1987-88	3500	460661	144	3199	91.40	5272	87.38	0.61	14.09	57.08
1988-89	3500	411127	118	3484	99.54	6039	68.08	0.58	13.40	59.80
1989-90	3500	400430	133	3011	86.02	5346	74.90	0.56	19.32	64.62
1990-91	3500	453498	173	2621	74.88	5854	77.47	0.45	15.53	N.A.
Gadhinglaj										
1987-88	2000	379847	177	2146	107.30	1600**	237.40	1.34	30.95	64.62
1988-89	2000	277876	131	2121	106.05	1580**	175.87	1.34	30.95	62.55
1989-90	2000	371809	168	2213	110.65	1700**	218.71	1.30	44.85	72.05
1990-91	2000	402822	196	2050	102.50	1498**	268.91	1.37	47.27	N.A.
Kumbhi-Kasari										
1987-88	3000	518469	160	3240	108.00	4578	113.25	0.71	16.40	N.A.
1988-89	3000	462578	150	3084	102.80	4900	94.40	0.63	14.55	N.A.
1989-90	3000	502046	156	3218	107.27	4823	104.09	0.67	23.12	N.A.
1990-91	3000	555547	191	2904	96.80	4947	112.30	0.59	20.36	N.A.

TABLE No. 8.2 (Contd...)

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
Panchaganga										
1987-88	5000	913483	194	4709	94.18	5287	172.78	0.89	20.56	53.78
1988-89	5000	732942	163	4497	89.94	6524	112.35	0.69	15.94	55.64
1989-90	5000	880196	189	4657	93.14	6200	141.97	0.75	25.88	N.A.
1990-91	5000	771991	204	3790	75.80	6900	118.88	0.58	20.01	N.A.
Warana										
1987-88	3000	582485	172	3387	112.90	3970	146.72	0.85	19.64	53.68
1988-89	3000	536022	159	3371	112.36	3575	149.94	0.94	21.71	62.53
1989-90	4000	683109	197	3468	86.70	4140	165.00	0.84	28.98	70.97
1990-91	4000	720395	203	3541	88.52	5600	128.64	0.63	21.74	N.A.
Chh. Rajaram										
1987-88	2200	353405	163	2168	98.54	3200	110.44	0.68	15.71	57.31
1988-89	2200	309267	142	2178	99.00	3280	94.29	0.84	15.25	59.53
1989-90	2200	388537	170	2285	103.83	3170	122.57	0.72	24.84	75.10
1990-91	2200	388798	180	2158	98.09	3618	107.46	0.60	20.90	N.A.
District Total :										
1987-88	25720	5034153	171 Δ	29439	114.46	35359	142.37	0.83	19.17	N.A.
1988-89	25720	4310196	148 Δ	29123	113.23	38787	111.12	0.75	17.33	N.A.
1989-90	26720	5038353	174 Δ	28956	108.37	37491	134.39	0.77	26.57	N.A.
1990-91	31220	5353617	188 Δ	28477	91.21	45225	118.38	0.83	21.74	N.A.
Sangli District :										
Managanga										
1987-88	1250	350029	175	2000	160.00	1960	178.58	1.02	23.56	N.A.
1988-89	1250	215992	153	1412	112.96	1880	114.89	0.75	17.32	N.A.
1989-90	1250	235355	241	977	78.16	2090	112.61	0.47	16.21	N.A.
1990-91	1250	323858	236	1372	109.76	2220	145.88	0.62	21.39	N.A.
Hutatma Kisan Añir										
1987-88	1250	278239	171	1627	130.16	1370	203.09	1.19	27.49	55.68
1988-89	1250	257252	162	1588	127.04	1468	175.24	1.08	24.94	55.68
1989-90	1250	313112	195	1606	128.48	1435	218.19	1.12	38.64	63.68
1990-91	1250	283279	183	1548	123.84	1526	185.63	1.01	34.84	62.98
Mahakali										
1987-88	1250	271112	181	1498	119.84	1760	154.04	0.85	19.63	67.78
1988-89	1250	233333	152	1535	122.80	2200	106.06	0.70	16.17	58.88
1989-90	1250	300912	196	1535	122.80	1900	158.37	0.80	27.60	68.08
1990-91	1250	270407	188	1438	115.04	1850	146.16	0.78	26.91	N.A.
Rajarambapu										
1987-88	2000	461774	205	2253	112.65	2314	199.55	0.97	22.40	N.A.
1988-89	2000	392016	182	2154	107.70	2230	175.79	0.96	22.17	N.A.
1989-90	2000	545901	234	2333	116.65	3540	154.21	0.66	22.77	N.A.
1990-91	4000	239101	213	3470	86.75	3802	194.39	0.91	31.39	N.A.
Vasantdada - Shetkari										
1987-88	5000	840794	178	4724	94.48	9019	93.22	0.52	12.01	53.48
1988-89	5000	833686	153	5449	108.98	10730	77.69	0.51	11.78	49.14
1989-90	5000	1027566	181	5677	113.54	10875	94.48	0.52	17.94	64.68
1990-91	5000	910892	208	4379	87.58	13044	69.83	0.33	11.38	N.A.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
Vishwas										
1987-88	1250	195423	173	1130	90.40	2000	97.71	0.56	12.93	78.00
1988-89	1250	201156	156	1289	103.12	2250	89.40	0.57	13.16	97.71
1989-90	1250	268313	212	1266	101.28	2180	123.08	0.58	20.01	240.95
1990-91	1250	261311	219	1193	95.44	2090	125.03	0.57	19.66	N.A.
Yashwant - Khanapur										
1987-88	1250	217007	153	1418	113.44	3088	70.27	0.46	10.62	N.A.
1988-89	1250	216680	153	1416	113.28	2892	74.92	0.49	11.31	N.A.
1989-90	1250	307183	206	1491	119.28	2774	110.74	0.54	18.63	N.A.
1990-91	1250	304208	223	1364	109.12	4028	75.52	0.34	11.73	N.A.
District Total :										
1987-88	13250	2614378	177 ^Δ	16465	124.26	21511	121.53	0.68	15.70	N.A.
1988-89	13250	2350115	159 ^Δ	14780	111.55	23650	99.37	0.62	14.32	N.A.
1989-90	13250	2998342	209 ^Δ	14346	106.27	24794	120.93	0.58	20.01	N.A.
1990-91	15250	3093056	210 ^Δ	14729	96.58	28560	108.30	0.51	17.59	N.A.

Note : ^Δ District average

*Daily earning is estimated as per the rates declared by awards.
The rates of wages for 1987-88 and 1988-89 Rs. 23.10 per tonne
for 1989-90, 1990-91 seasons Rs. 34.50 per tonne. The wage rates
of H.C. workers are considered because their number in total
workers is more than 85 per cent.

+ Migrated workers.

Source of cost of harvesting and transporting is from Annual
Report of Sugar Factories.

Includes migrated and local harvest workers.

Three sugar factories from Kolhapur and one factory from Sangli district have increased their installed capacities during the period 1987-88 to 1990-91. Besides the capacity utilization was more than the installed capacity during the period even when sugarcane areas were left unharvested in 1990-91 because of above reasons. The ratio of number of cane cutters to crush rate per day is also less than one because of large migration of workers in this sector. However cane cutting of a few sugar factories is better than this average because of better management of harvesting and transport plans.

An average cane cutting per worker per day varies during the period under review. This shows a weak harvesting and transport planning.

- Moreover, labour force is changing occasionally, it is not controlled and managed by sugar factories. The average number of workers is sustainable to the sugar factory and keeps the sugar factory safe, while a small number of workers keeps the factory worried. So whatever, the number of workers is ready to come for work, is allowed by the factories. This indicates the significance of these workers to sugar factories. This deserves a permanent arrangement for sugar factories as far as harvesting and transport of sugarcane is concerned. The cost of harvesting and transport has also remained changing during the period. There is no trend as such in the average costs of different sugar factories, but in comparison with the wages received by the workers the cost of harvesting and transport is too high (See table 8.3).

The data in table No. 8.3 has been computed with the help of the information from table 8.2. It is estimated that, the actual wages the workers receive is less than minimum wage prescribed for Zone-A. The sugarcane belt comes under Zone-A. Even the farm sector workers get less than the wages of unskilled workers involved in factory sectors. On an average the factory section unskilled workers earn more, between Rs.15.00 to 22.00 every day. Even if we categorise farm sector workers as unskilled workers, they are entitled to earn atleast upto wage level equal to the factory sector workers. The average cost of harvesting and transport has a tendency to increase and to decline during the period under review. Similar is the tendency in respect of actual cost of average cane cutting per worker per day. The percentage of wages received by the workers in the actual cost of cane harvesting and transport is increasing, this is because of increase in wages during the period due to the Rupwate Award of November, 1990.

It can be concluded from the table No. 8.3 that -

a) The workers are paid even less than the minimum wage. The minimum wages have been revised on May, 1986. Since then no revision followed. If we revise the minimum wage in relation to the consumer price index, then it will be about Rs. 50.00 a day. But even in comparison with 1986's minimum wage rates for agricultural labour, the farm sector workers are not getting anywhere near that. So, the trade union leaders are demanding an application of minimum wage to this category of workers.

TABLE No. 8.3

WORK AND WAGE ANALYSIS

(Average of Kolhapur and Sangli Districts)

	1987- 88	1988- 89	1989- 90	1990-91
1) Average daily wage per worker (Rs.)	17.43	15.82	23.29	19.66
2) Minimum wage as per Zone-A (Rs.) for agricultural labour	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00
3) Average daily wage per worker less than minimum wage (- decrease + increase) (Rs.)	-2.57	-4.18	+3.29	-0.34
4) Average wages of unskilled workers in sugar factories (Rs.)	33.00	36.00	39.00	42.00
5) Increase in wages of unskilled workers in relation with the wages of farm sector workers (Rs.)	+15.57	+20.18	+15.71	+22.34
6) Average cost of cane harvesting and transport per M.T. (Rs.)	58.53	107.71	84.49	65.71
7) Average cane cutting per worker per day (M.T.)	0.75	0.68	0.67	0.57
8) Actual cost (cane cutting and transport) of average cane cutting per worker per day (Rs.)	43.89	73.24	56.60	37.45
9) Percentage of wages received by workers in total actual cost of cane harvesting and transport	39.71%	21.60%	41.14%	52.49%

b) The average wages of the unskilled workers in factory sector are much higher than average daily wages of the workers engaged in farm sector activity.

c) The average cost of cane harvesting and transport is also much higher than the actual wages the workers earn. However, the percentage share of the wages is increasing.

8.3 LEVELS OF EXPLOITATION :

The exploitation of workers is perpetrated at different levels. particularly the intensity of exploitation by contractors, mukadams and by the sugar factories is much more severe than that of other exploitators. Let us take these various dimensions of appropriation in the order of the levels.

8.3.1 By the Labour Contractors :

The contractors have a direct personal interest in maintaining the labour force of cane cutters and bullock cart workers. Most of them have developed this as a profession. Not only this but majority of them have grown their personal wealth on this profession. They have created and maintained a good relation with the factory management and vehicle (truck and tractors) owners. Now-a-days vehicle owners are dependent on contractors and vice-versa because of changing industrial relations between the farm sector workers and the factory management. The factory and/or vehicle owners are in need of the such labour force, which is available only through contractors. The prevailing rates of commission for contractors is 10 percent of the total wage bill of the workers who are working under them. Commission is the major source of the income

at destination. The commission is given by the factory in addition to the wages of the workers. There is a special mention of rate of commission in the awards held earlier since the mukadamas and contractors had a representative in the awards. The Dadasaheb Rupwate Committee's interim award has not specifically mentioned the rate of commission, however, even today about 10 per cent of total wage bill of the workers is given to contractors by the sugar factories where the factories are dependent on labour broker's services. Brokers were claiming some commission from the workers where the sugar factory is not directly related to contractors. All mukadamas share in the work of cane harvesting, wherein they can get the wage equal to other workers while a contractor will not share in any work, he is just a labour broker. The mukadama is a leader of the gang, who can get the wage equal to other workers even when he does not work in the fields, but engages in getting the wage bill from sugar factory or vehicle owners or contractors, a runner-in-between the fields and the agricultural office of a sugar factory to make the vehicle available in-time for loading the cane bundles etc. to keep the daily muster roll of the Koyatas (male and female workers) i.e. half koyata, full koyata or absent etc. He also has to maintain a record of cane quantity harvested and sent to the sugar factory. He has to keep with him the weighing slips given by a factory, on the basis of which a sugar factory can pay the bill. Mukadama distributes the wage to the workers every fortnight in accordance with the muster roll of the workers.

Contractors and even a few mukadamas advance loans to the workers during off factory season. On an average each koyata unit receive an advance of Rs.5000.00 to 6000.00 and a bullock cart workers receive Rs. 6000.00 to 7000.00. An advances are mainly derived so as to fulfil their basic needs during off factory season, to carry on the ritual activities, to invest in some farm activities etc. The rate of interest charged by contractors and mukadamas is higher than the commercial banks. Sugar factories charge the rate of interest as per the rates of commercial banks. Some contractors have invested a good amount of money in this business. The rate of interest varies from contractor to contractors. The advance are recovered during the factory season from the wage bill. The contractors sometimes experience the non-repayment of an advances, particularly, by way of leaving the work or expressing inability to migrate for work. In such situations the contractor finds his own way of loan recovery. Further it was reported by a few workers that some contractors have really created a good reputation both among the workers and sugar factory's agricultural departments. While some others have built up a immoral relations with the female workers. The supposition that the under hand earnings are held in check by the priomordialties which a mukadama has with many of his koyatas is misconceivable.

Debt in the form of advance is indirectly binding and makes for vulnerability and submission. This type of indebtedness is a general phenomenon among the workers. Most of the debt amount is given against the commitment of the workers to migrate for work in sugar factories.

There is a competition among the contractors to accumulate large amount of labour force. So, they are dependent on mukadamas who are the leaders of the harvester's gang.

There were unaccountable frauds made by mukadamas, contractors and sugar factories at the time of distribution of the differences of wages calculated as per the awards, because of which the worker's representatives in Award's meeting compelled the other award members to resolve that, the amount of wage differences be paid in the presence of the authorised trade union leaders of the workers. The cashier of a sugar factory should have to confirm the person to whom such wage differences are being paid.

Of late the sugar factories are taking the help of trusts, societies and other organisations through which the labourers have been recruited to carry out the work of cane harvesting and transport. One of the defendent of the system said that, they are eliminating the involvement of contractors (labour brokers). But actually these institutions are again wholly dependent on the contractors. The concerned organisations are unable to recruit the workers without the help of mukadamas and contractors. Of course all such organisations are the subordinate bodies of sugar factories.

The bullock cart workers directly can make a contract with sugar factories, however, most of them are dependent on middlemen's (contractors) interference which is because of ignorance of the workers and shrewed strategy of the contractors. As contractors have good relations with the factory, officials, help in getting tyre carts from sugar

factory on hire basis. Besides the factory officials ask for reputed witnessess normally agreed and signed by contractors. Some contractors promise this as an incentive to the workers, as they will help in getting tyre cart from sugar factory.

Thus, contractors always estimate their accountability, while the workers in the process are being exploited.

8.3.2 By the Factory :

In fact the contractors are the major instrument of exploitation, by which workers are seriously affected. The workers are not fondled by the sugar factories, whenever the drought at origin prevails, an inverse relation will operate during better rainfall. Even "the payment of an advance before departure according to an inverse ratio principle the greater the emergency in drought area the lower the handout - guarantees the availability of enough cane cutters at the beginning of the harvest season. Further a priori bond and the low earning capacity which is partly a result of that, exploitation is compounded by taking on more labour than is strictly necessary. The retention of a reverse is economically justifiable for the factory because the cost involved - a small overhead apart - is passed on to the cane cutters themselves."5

Although the wages are paid irrespective of number of hands, the abundant supply of labour allows for flexibility in the production process keeps the rewards down for the workers, similarly weakens the bargaining power of the workers and ensure the factory management to proceed the harvest in a well marshalled manner. So, possibility of exploitation is much higher when the supply of labour is abundant.

Of late the factories are keeping in direct relation with the workers because of Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 and the decisions held by Supreme Court, High Court and Industrial Courts. Maintaining such indirect relations by the industry is a serious exploitation of workers, even when all court decisions are in favour of the workers.

No sufficient dwelling material has been provided by the sugar factories. The shed is not sufficient to protect from rain, heat and winter.

As stated earlier, sugar factories, now-a-days are establishing the Trusts/Societies. Such institutions have been shown only on paper and actually they are operated by the sugar factories. One sugar factory in Kolhapur district has established a trust. The constitution and bye-laws of the same trust were not made available by the concerned for review. This indicates a guilty conscience of the sugar factory towards such operations.

Only one factory was charging Rs.7.00 per day (24 hours) as hiring rates of tyre carts and others at rate of Rs.10.00 to 15.00 per day.

The advances given to the bullock cart workers from sugar factory are expected to be recovered during the same season. In fact advances are being paid only for a season. Sometimes workers are unable to repay advances taken from the factory or mukadama during a crushing season. Almost every sugar factory is handling some litigations and court matters in respect of recoveries of advances paid to the workers,

contractors, mukadamas, vehicle owners and other suppliers of useful material etc. This shows the factories' efforts to keep themselves safe from all obstructions during the season, which is rather natural and essential.

No bonus, provident fund, gratuity and other social security measures to the farm sector workers have been made available by any sugar factory. Nominal gifts like utensils were given to the workers. This is a strategy to satisfy the workers at the time of departure - so as to motivate them to migrate next season.

Similarly, no factory under survey except one (which pays wages linked to price indices) had paid full wages as per the Dadasabeh Rupwate • Interim Award. Three out of nine sugar factories have paid the wage differences. It is as observed during the survey that other sugar factories were preparing to pay the same during the next seasons.

An institution using the contract labour force has to register its name and eligibility. Similarly, a contractor who supply labour force has also to register his eligibility as an authorised contractor as per Contract Labour Act. Simultaneously both contractor and the employer (Sugar Factory) or atleast employer, if not the contractor, has to fulfil all other requirements subject to Contract Act. The survey reveals the fact that no sugar factory had registered as per the Contract Act. Some contractors have got their licences from the proper issuing authority. But the Bombay High Court recently has held the abolition of contract labour system in sugar factories.

Sugar factories are expected to provide the light and drinking water at the camps of workers, but actually they have not solved the problem a priori. Only in a few deserving cases the above facilities had been made available wherever possible in almost all sugar factories but not in all camps.

As the tyre carts are being issued by the sugar factories on hiring basis the sugar factories are expected to repair them in case of any damages to the carts. But it was reported by H.B.C. workers that the repair takes much time, which is a loss on the part of the workers. Moreover, tyre carts were issued only to those workers, who were pleased by their mukadamas and contractors and witnessed by them. Wherein a contractor can use his discretionery powers and relations with sugar factories. Sugar factories are highly dependent on contractor's services, which is rather harmful to the workers.

In a few cases, the transporting charges have been fixed on the basis of distance between factory and villages irrespective of the actual distance between the factory and the cane fields. Even the distance did not cover the gavan centre and cane fields. Every cart (OBC and HBC) loses the earning of 2 to 3 km. every day.

There is a great possibility that the huts may catch fire because of slight negligence of the female, while cooking the food at their camping site. Generally, women are in a hurry to follow their male workers with victuals and to help in work at cane fields, so such tumlut may harm to the whole camp, and meanwhile the male workers are not available to help at such occasions as they are away to harvest sugarcane early

in the morning. The employers do not care of such things. However, sugar factories nominally give some help for burnt of sheds and death of bullocks on a humanitarian aground, but not as a right of the workers.

It was observed that, no schooling facilities were made available by the sugar factories for the children of the workers at destination. Other basic requirements like maternity leave, other leaves, vacations, full wage at the time of cleaning of the factory etc. were also not provided by the sugar factories, which are rather essential for the efficient work. However, Kisan Ahir Factory had arranged the schooling facility for the wards of the workers, which is a praiseworthy effort of that factory.

8.4 PROBLEMS OF THE WORKERS :

- Here an effort is made to ascertain and acknowledge various problems faced by the workers through a survey. The workers were habituated to sustain varieties of odds and obstructions in their daily life. The capacity for patience of the workers is more in comparision with the local workers, who are involved in the same activities, because the migrant workers have to struggle for their (family) daily bread for which they purposively shifted from their original places to destinations. Not only this, but they also have to earn something more for the other family members who are settled at their original places, and also for leading their life during off factory season (June to October).

In the process of their work the workers face varieties of problems, which are enumerated below:

1) It had been repeatedly said by the tractor owners that, they had faced the obstructions like tyre puncture, traffic problem because of slow running; and slow running because of rough roads, heavy load on two trollies. This causes higher fuel consumption and delay in unloading, which directly affects the workers. Because of the moist soil, the vehicles get stuck in the soil, resulting into heavy work load or double work load on the workers for which no extra wages were given.

2) Cane harvesting after 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. is strenuous because of heat. Even it is hard and taskful during the odd showering.

3) The workers have no convenient, sufficient and protective shelter at their camps. Occasionally they have to shift (i.e. decamping frequently).

4) There was no provision of vacation for farm sector workers. Even hours of work were also not definite and determined.

5) The workers among themselves were not cooperative which is rather essential for a team work.

6) Workers have to walk away from their camps for work to cane fields every day.

7) A few factories have to depend on gate cane purchase of sugarcane, for which both workers and the vehicles have to go far away from the factory site. Vehicle sometimes create problems, ultimately workers have to suffer.

8) Some sugarcane farms were densely covered with dried leaves at the bottom of sugarcane stem, which makes it strenuous to remove and creates rush on the harvested space, where the cane bundles have to be led down. The volume of work is being determined on the quality and strate standing of the crop. Now-a-days the quality of the crop is deteriorating, which is because of poor crop management and crop protection measures. The per hectare yield of sugarcane crop is also deteriorating. This makes the workers to harvest a large space of sugarcane land area. The furrows in between two rows of cane crop are also full of weeds and dry leaves, which makes it difficult to harvest and clean the canes properly. Majority of land area belongs to this category - as experienced by majority of the workers.

• 9) Cane harvesting, loading and transporting requires sufficient good health and experience in the job but the workers are facing ill health because of poverty and backwardness.

10) The H.C. workers have to carry on the load of sugarcane bundle more than the registered distance (100 meters) between cane fields and vehicle standing at its convenient place. For which no body pays them extra. This work requires good physical strength and stamina, which is lacking in most of the workers.

11) Workers have to face number of physical pains, staminas, irritations, wounds, illhealth and other physiological disturbances, eventhough they continue to work. No one cared of their health problems.

12) Sometimes slip boy was unable to issue harvesting orders to the workers. Delay in this procedure results the waste of labour hours.

13) Vehicle owners many times refused to carry their vehicle in the mid-centre of the cane fields. The frequency of getting involved the vehicles into moisty soils was routine and that had lifted by the workers for which no remuneration was given either by the field owner, vehicle owner or sugar factory.

14) Sometimes slip boys and field men troubled the workers by number of ways and means.

15) At least two-three days in every fortnight went without work because of number of problems with vehicles, factory operation, decamping and other disturbances.

16) In a few cases it was reported that, the bullock cart workers had been asked for some amount of money by slip boys and fieldmen for allotting quality sugarcane crop area. One who opposes this, they were purposively allotted to worst quality crops. This creates ill-relations between slip boy and bullock cart workers. The workers always have to subtain the domination of factory officials.

17) The bullock cart workers did not take any concession of immediate pass of sugarcane to gavan for crushing. The hiring charges have to be paid even if the cart is waiting for unload. Couple of hours goes waste only in waiting. The carter workers deserve concessions in this respect because the workers are loosing more.

18) Bullock carts were always abused by other vehicles on road during the factory seasons.

19) Bullocks sometimes suffer from ill health because of heavy load, traffic troubles and unnecessary load had^{been}burdened on the bullocks while waiting for weighting and unloading. No medical aids for bullocks were made available by the sugar factories. The workers have to depend on private practitioners, whereas the private veterinary doctors exploits the workers by charging excess bills.

20) Bullocks have been feeded by only green leaves of sugarcane as the main fodder. Workers have to borrow other types of green fodder for nutritional/balance and maintaining good health of the bullocks otherwise physical strength of the bullocks may deteriorate.

8.5 CONCLUSIONS :

- The sugar factories are anxious about the supply of labour force to meet their requirement when the season begins. Excess supply of labour keeps the factories very safe. Factories can guess the rate of migration to sugar factories on the basis of climatic conditions prevailing in Maharashtra in general and in drought area in particular. The need of harvesters and transporters to the sugar factories is essential and significant even when the workers are being exploited at every stages. The mukadama and labour contractors exploits the workers. The sugar factories support the practices of contractors. Thus, workers face number of problems and obstructions on the way of their activities. So, the role of trade union is significant and inevitable.

REFERENCES

- 1) Third Wage Board, Para 100, p.19.
- 2) Notification in News Papers, op.cit.
- 3) Sugar Workers : The Maharashtra Scenario - Gopal Guru, Economic Times - 30-6-1990.
- 4) E.P.W., Aug. 1978, op.cit.
- 5) Jan Breman op.cit. CPW, 1978, p. 1351.