

PREFACE

The co-operative sugar industry has made its humble beginning in Maharashtra with the establishment of Pravara Co-operative Sugar Factory in 1950s. It is the first sugar co-operative with Government participation in share capital. Not only this, but the success of 'Pravara' enabled the Government of India to undertake the policy decisions in 1956 for giving the first priority to co-operative sector in licensing of new capacities. Pravara paved the way to develop sweet movement in Maharashtra. The rural leadership through co-operative enterprises has emerged and spread all over the Maharashtra State, and the co-operative movement has been accepted as one of the significant sector with special interest in socio-economic development of rural area.

The local initiative plus the State Government's participation in share capital, plus Central Government's policy and support of term lending institutions have contributed the sugar industry as a formidable force. Therefore, the number of co-operative sugar units went to 40 in 1970, 67 in 1980 and 96 in 1990. The number is expected to go upto 200 at the end of 2000 A.D. Recently new 36 units have got the letter of intent from the Central Government.

In 1956, the Rajya Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Sangh Ltd. (an association of sugar co-operatives) was established to protect the interest of the industry within the State. And in 1960 the National Federation of Sugar Co-operative Sangh was established under the Chairmanship of Dr. Gadgil to plead the interests of industry before the Central Government. Besides there are State level and national level federations

of privately owned sugar factories. Each federation either at State level or at national level seeks to protect the interest of the industry managed under either sectors i.e. co-operative or private or State owned.

As and when the number of sugar producing units went high, and the production capabilities of the units have expanded, the industry began to undertake irrigation schemes, land improvement programmes and other farm management activities as an incentives to the sugarcane growers, because of which the productivity had gone high during 1980s. Simultaneously, the demand for labour force also gone high. In 1972-73 to 1976-77, because of fall of drought in certain areas of Maharashtra, had made the small and marginal farmers to migrate towards Western Maharashtra, where there was no impact of drought on agriculture. Meanwhile the sugar factory managements were in search of extra labour force to harvest the sugarcane, because of the expansion of production capacities and establishment of new sugar units. So, two ends met and benefited by attaining and providing employment opportunities to migrant agricultural labourers. Since then the seasonal migration of cane cutters and bullock cart transport workers continued.

Since 1980s, the co-operative sugar movement in the State had been diversified to as ambiguate movement, because of number of factors responsible for hindering to the growth of sugar industry in Maharashtra. One of the factors was that, in 1980, cane cutters and transport workers went to strike demanding revision of wage rates. Favourable atmosphere had been developed to enter the trade union movement in this section of labour force. Again in 1986, the workers

went on strike demanding the same revision of wage rates. Since 1979-80 season, the wages are being revised for every three years recommended by the tripartite awards appointed by Government of Maharashtra.

Today the workers are conscious about their pay revisions and acquiring other benefits from sugar co-operatives. Dadasaheb Rupwate Committee is working on to recommend the Maharashtra Government to solve the problems of cane cutters and transport workers permanently. Meanwhile the committee has submitted its interim report recommending the revision of wage rates for different types works. Immediately after the crushing season of 1991-92, the revised rates will be expiring after the Government has to regularise the next revision of wage rates through an tripartite Award.

This work is a timely addition to solve the problem. This is rather an exhaustive report dealt with all important aspects of cane cutters and transport workers with critical analysis. This report is chiefly addressed to the serious trade union leaders, Government policy makers and the management of sugar units. It's primary objective is to analyse the problems of cane cutters and transport workers and the role of trade unions in solving their problems.

The selection of the problem is an outcome of my personal observation since my studentship. When I entered in the field of research in 1980, naturally my area of interest in research was automatically the sugar industry, sugar workers and rural transformation through agricultural co-operatives etc. I again come in close touch with them during 1980s and 1986s, when they went on strike. Meanwhile few of my

leftist friends were initiated to organise them for strikes. Two strikes, necessarily are responsible to organise them, which was a task before trade unions. Trade unions too were also waiting for an opportunity to unite the unorganised labourers in sugar industry. Today, to some extent, we may call them as organising workers. Although they are not members of trade unions, but they are under the control of scattered trade unions. Number of trade unions are operating in Western Maharashtra to concentrate on the current problem of cane cutters and transport workers. Unit level strikes have also been declared by the leaders, demanding, the provisions of unit level facilities.

Since the completion of my doctoral research work, I rushed to the problems of migrant cane cutters and transport workers. Originally a draft proposal was sent to ICSSR on, "An enquiry into the socio-economic life of migrant cane cutters in Maharashtra" for seeking financial support. The then Member Secretary of ICSSR, Iqbal Narain commented on the draft proposal and suggested to undertake the role of trade unions or the role of middlemen in seasonal migration of sugar-cane cutters and transport workers. I decided to work on the role of trade unions in wage negotiations and acquiring other benefits to migrant cane cutters. I am indebted to Iqbal Narain and ICSSR for assisting financial support to this research work. I am very thankful to expert consultants of ICSSR who commented on the draft proposal and suggested methodological improvements in research design. I thank, the officials of ICSSR for their direct-indirect help to carry out the research work successfully.

I am very grateful to Dr. Patangrao Kadam (State Minister for Education and Irrigation, Maharashtra) who really inspired this work as phenomenal. I also very thankful to Prin.M.S. Sagare and office staff of the A.S.C. College, Sangli for their encouragement and much needed help. I shall be always indebted to R.S. Gadage, Ambavadekar, Vilas Patil, V.A. Mane, D.K. Patil, P.D. Yadav for their help in data base. I must thank my wife Mrs. Yojana for assisting the whole project.

It is also my duty to thank my departmental colleagues for their constant encouragement, I have benefited immensely by Madhukar Katre, Santaram Patil and their functionaries by providing rich and detailed account of the trade union movement in the field and the role of Maharashtra Rājya Sakhar Kamagar Mahasangh. I thank A.B. Karveerkar and P.D.Dighe for their valuable comments on the labour laws.

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