

CHAPTER-I

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION :

Sugar industry is an important organised industry in Maharashtra, dependent in a major way on unorganised sector. Since the industry has been organised on the principles of co-operation, its responsibility is to transform the rural life. The socio-economic life of agriculturists has undergone a complete change since the installation of sugar co-operatives in rural areas. Dr. D.R. Gadgil, Yashwantrao Chavan, Vithalrao Vikhe-Patil, Vasantdada Patil were the pioneers in bringing the ideology of Agro-Industrial Co-operative Commonwealth into practice. The rural employment - both in agriculture and industry sector, has raised phenomenally since the inception of sugar factories in Maharashtra. Some subsidiary activities exist on the co-operative principles because of sugar co-operatives. So a vertical and horizontal link of co-operative enterprise has been systematically and effectively organised. The rural infrastructural facilities have also been made available to a sufficient extent. A common man is being involved in planning at micro-level. A sense of belonging has been built up among the members towards co-operative enterprises, which is absent in private and public sectors.

Although sugar factories in Maharashtra have made a great strides in the field of rural development, the industry is facing number of obstructions since 1980s. The labour problems, though not as a problem of factory management, but as the problems of labourers have become

more serious for industrial peace and harmony. The problems like conditions of work, hours of work and the wages of the sugar workers etc. are some of the important problems faced by the workers. Particularly the workers involved in farm sector activities, whose labour is hired seasonally, are facing a number of problems that include living conditions, because such workers usually migrate from drought affected zones of Maharashtra and Karnataka States. Sychopancy is but natural, because of natural odds and employer's graciousness.

The struggle for the betterment of sugar workers (both in factory and farm sector) has been there since the last four decades. The sugar workers may be categorised into two classes viz. the factory sector workers and farm sector workers. The farm sector workers are referred to as harvesting (cane cutters) and transport (bullock cart) workers. It was first time that the trade unions have initiated to struggle for the betterment of farm sector workers involved in sugar factories. Later on the movement spread among the factory sector workers. Now both factory and farm sector workers collectively or separately agigate to protect their interests. Here an attempt is made to examine and account for the role of trade unions in tackling the problems of harvesting and transport workers; hence referred to as farm sector workers. The farm sector workers today have no separate trade unions at factory levels, however, the State level federation of factory sector workers has taken initiative to focus on the problems of farm sector workers. At last they are referring to the problems of farm sector workers. Of late, some leaders have organised unit level trade unions of farm sector workers. It is difficult to organise such an union because of seasonal nature of work because the workers frequently

change the factories over seasons, because of their interests in groups, relatives, villagers and regions, and because of the factories' incentives etc. State level federation of factory sector sugar workers are organising the State Level Conferences so as to ascertain and discuss their problems including the problems of the farm sector sugar workers.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM :

There is a favourable atmosphere to unite the farm sector workers with the initiative of the State level federation of factory sector workers. The confidence of trade union to unite these workers had been confirmed since the State level strikes of 1980 and 1986. The role of trade union is immense, however, it no more related to unionisation alone. The on-going chapters explain the justification of this statement.

Basically the problems cane cutters and bullock cart workers still face are :

i) The implementation of wages determined by the awards.
 ii) The wage differences because of awards were not properly distributed.

iii) There is no continuity in work and even hours of work are not determined. They are involved in work whole day and night. During the day time they have to perform the work like cane cutting and binding of canes into bundles and to load the bundles in vehicles, if vehicle is available. There is no time table for arrival of vehicles, so workers have to waste some man-hours every day. And the bullock carts have to waste some man-hours in waiting for weighing and unloading the cane carts.

iv) Lack of motorable roads.

v) The problems regarding shelter, light, water and non-availability of basic needs at the camp sites.

vi) Problems of education of their children.

vii) No provision of retaintion allowance, provident fund, medical aid, holidays, re-employment etc.

viii) The farm sector workers are not considered as the employees of sugar industry even when the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 is in favour of the workers.

ix) There is irregularity in unloading the cane carts and vehicles, so no timely liftment of harvested cane bundles for crushing is possible which may cause a deterioration in recovery rates and earnings of workers and employment etc.

x) No provision of compensation for death of bullocks and fires to huts etc. And even if paid (small amount) that depends on the graciousness of the factory management.

xi) The workers are being exploited by labour brokers. Workers are heavily indebted.

xii) High rate of rent on tyre carts imposed by sugar factories.

xiii) No provision of bonus, gift, gratuity, maternity leave to women workers etc. which will held responsible to improve the efficiency of the workers.

Such, and other relevant problems are being faced by the farm sector workers since last 20 years. The question then arises; what is the role of trade unions in wage negotiations and acquiring other benefits to migrant cane cutters and bullock cart workers ? What are the problems being faced by trade unions to unite these workers ? What were the

strategies and basis of agitations organised by trade unions during 1980 and 1986 strikes ? Which of the demands still remained unabated ? What is the stand of sugar industry in regard to BIR Act, 1946 ? What are the future perspectives in regard to the farm sector workers ? What alternatives have been identified by sugar factories ? Which are the best honorable alternatives ?

It is indisputable that the two successive agitations compelled the Government of Maharashtra to call for a tripartite negotiations to determine the honourable wage rates for different groups of workers. However, the question remains unevaluated i.e. the unabated role of trade unions.

The role of trade unions is immense because the trade unions refers,

- 1) To tackle the job dissatisfaction of the workers.
- 2) To minimise and/or abolish the socio-economic exploitations and psychological depressions.
- 3) To create healthy relations among employers and employees.
- 4) To negotiate with the Government or management to protect the interests of the workers.
- 5) To safeguard the community's interests.
- 6) To acquire social security measures.
- 7) To study the work conditions, status situations and market situations.
- 8) To protect the immediate, instrumental and ideological interests of the workers.
- 9) To make leadership viable and effective.

- 10) To solve the problems of settlement of workers.
- 11) To identify the occupational discrepancies.
- 12) To achieve the viability of an industry.
- 13) To remove the sychopancy and poverty of the workers etc

Thus, the role of trade union is indisputable.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

On the basis of the socio-economic conditions faced by the workers, it was felt necessary to undertake a challengable and taskfull research work. Efforts were made to account in detail for the role of trade union in wage negotiations and solvig other problems being faced by this class of sugar workers.

The study aims to,

- 1) Ascertain the problems of harvesting and transport workers involved in sugar factories.
- 2) To account for the role played by trade union in uniting the farm sector workers and to solve their problems.
- 3) To assess the employment position in farm sector.
- 4) To evaluate the process of wage determination.
- 5) To account for the evaluation of trade union movement in farm sector workers.
- 6) To overview the statutory decisions in concern to farm sector workers and industrial relation.

7) To study the nature of work, hours of work and working conditions, etc.

8) To account the demands, wage negotiations and awards held so far to date.

1.4 SAMPLES :

The selection of the study area has been made purposively to the State of Maharashtra, however, some references have been referred to the Indian context. The sugar industry is a leading industry in the State. It is the birth place of co-operative sugar units with Government support. The State is called to be pragmatic one, with a long heritage of Phule, Ambedkar ideology of socio-economic equality. The first trade union movement had been organised by a good friend of Mahatma Phule i.e. N.M. Lokhande in Maharashtra, ultimately the trade union movement has a sound foundation in the State with ideological and practical ingredients.

The farm sector workers were purposively selected for study, because their life standard is the most adversely affected due to poverty which is because of drought at worker's original places.

Five sugar co-operatives from Kolhapur district and four sugar co-operatives from Sangli district were selected so as to ascertain the socio-economic problems of the migrant cane cutters and bullock cart workers involved in these nine sugar co-operatives (See Table No. 1.1). The socio-economic conditions of these workers are similar throughout the State. Such workers are migrants from Marathwada and Vidarbha

TABLE No. 1.1
SAMPLING AREA

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Name of the Sugar Factories	Sample respondents of farm sector workers
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<u>Kolhapur District</u>	
Warana	50
Chh. Rajaram	50
Gadhinglaj	45
Datta (Shirol)	50
Panchaganga	50
<u>Sangli District</u>	
Vasantdada	50
Rajarambapu	50
Kisan Ahir	50
Mahakali	26

Total :	421
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region and dispersing in the whole State for work, particularly, in Western Maharashtra as their destination. Even good number ^{of} workers goes to Gujarat and Karnataka States.

Fifty (50) workers from each co-operative sugar factories were interviewed. No specific criteria has been followed to select the respondents. However, it was strictly observed that only 10 workers from a camp were interviewed. A caution was taken that, the bullock cart workers be covered for interviews. The period of interview was from October 1990 to April, 1991. A structured questionnaire was administered.

Similarly the trade union leaders locally working for unorganised workers in general and for farm sector workers in particular were interviewed through a structured questionnaire, so as to ascertain their role and activities in the field of organisation of farm sector workers. But the response to structured questionnaire was scarce. An open discussion with them was fruitful, through which ample and empirical information and evidence were collected.

A structured questionnaire was sent to all sugar co-operatives operating (96) in Maharashtra during the season 1990-91 requesting them to provide an up-to-date statistical information about the number of cane cutters and bullock cart workers employed during the period from 1970-71 to 1990-91 (or since the installation of sugar factory as the case may be with some sugar factories). The response to this was 26 percent. In a few cases, no information was received, because the work of harvesting and transport was allotted to trusts and societies. This was because of the changing industrial relations and BIR Act, 1946. The corresponding chapters will illustrate the case in detail.

1.5 DATA COLLECTION :

The questionnaire method was followed and it was administered at three levels viz. - 1) Sugar factory level - to collect the total number of farm sector workers from 1970-71 to 1990-91. 2) Trade Union leaders- who were actually functioning in organising the scattered unorganised labour force, particularly those who were in touch with the problems of harvesting workers. 3) Actual cane cutters and bullock cart workers - who were employed during 1990-91 sugar season in harvesting and transporting activities of the sugar factories.

The response from first two categories of interviewees was the worst. No satisfactory response to questionnaire at factory level was achieved. Same was the experience with second category respondents, but their response to unstructured questionnaire and to open discussion was effective. Some empirical evidence and papers were collected from the trade union functionaries. Specially important documents from Madhukar Katre, Santaram Patil (both Secretary and President of Maharashtra State Sugar Workers Federation) were collected through which the role and perspectives of trade unions in respect of farm sector workers is obvious. There was no problem of response to questionnaire No. 3. The respondents were enthusiastic in giving detailed informations of their own, labour brokers and about factory management.

More than 125 worker's camps had been visited. Some important observations had been made to ascertain their problems in addition to what is recorded in the questionnaire. Of late the farm sector workers are interested in organising separate trade unions even at unit levels, which can be federated at State level to influence the Government and sugar industry.

No quantitative or statistical techniques have been followed to analyse the data. The whole report is intensively descriptive and analytical.

1.6 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CHAPTERS :

Chapter-I and II covers the research methodology so far followed and an overview of related literature respectively.

Chapter-III illustrates the employment position in farm sector of the sugar industry. While Chapter-IV enanciate the wage structure and wage rates of farm sector workers Involved in sugar industry.

Chapter-V describes the pros and cons of industrial relations between sugar industry and farm sector workers.

Chapter-VI account for the socio-economic conditions of the workers and their problems.

Chapters-VII and VIII illustrates the role of trade union and extent of exploitation respectively.

Chapter-IX illustrates the challenge of unionisation and an appeal.

Last Chapter-X put forth offer an alternative scheme to the present system.