

LABOUR IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY OF THE BOMBAY-DECCAN

A Thesis submitted for the Ph.D
Degree of the University of
Bombay.

By

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1950.

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P R E F A C E

After the grant of protection in the year 1932, the Indian Sugar Industry developed rapidly. Over 100 factories of an average cane crushing capacity of 600 tons per day have been established. In the Bombay Deccan, excepting one, all the remaining thirteen sugar concerns are a post protection phenomenon. The balance-sheets of these concerns are showing signs of stability and prosperity. Undoubtedly the Sugar Industry has now become a major industry. It was, therefore, quite natural to expect that the relations between capital on one hand [&] labour on the other may assume ever increasing importance with the passage of time. Though their nature and extent may differ from the organised and mechanised industries in urban areas I thought it quite essential to investigate them in detail and present first hand statistical data for being used at appropriate times by the interests concerned.

The second factor that encouraged me to carry out the survey was the peculiar nature of the Sugar Industry of the Bombay Deccan. As the captains of this industry have their own sugar cane plantations (estate) a large part of the industrial labour is of perennial nature.

Besides the labour force engaged in the factory section, more than 40,000 workers find employment in the Estate Section

(sugarcane plantations) attached to the sugar mills in the Bombay Deccan. This was an unexplored field, which deserved attention and a thorough study.

I wanted to know the economic conditions of the seasonal and non-seasonal estate labour along with its counterpart in the factory section. I was equally interested in knowing the changes that were brought about in their socio-economic conditions. (My attention was concentrated on understanding their terms of employment and conditions of work) I was curious to know how they live and what they eat. As a student I wanted to learn how far the workers in this industry in the Bombay State are organised and can influence terms of employment and conditions of work. With this end in view 298 workers' families comprising 399 workers in the factory section and 553 families having 1257 workers in the estate section were surveyed.

An attempt is being made to present a first-hand picture of factory and estate workers with reference to their employment, income, family and social life, housing, sanitation, nutrition, industrial relations etc. Further, evaluation of welfare work done by the management is also made and comments, suggestions and recommendations are put forth at the end of each section. While making these suggestions and recommendations I have taken enough care to see that their practicability is not lost sight of.

In introducing the subject I have traced the growth of the sugar industry in India right from the beginning. I have further pointed out how the grant of protection gave a fillip to this industry. In the Bombay Deccan this industry has a special significance. Therefore an attempt is made to present the history and the special features of this industry in Bombay Deccan. It is shown with the help of statistical data how owing to favourable climatic and soil conditions this industry can flourish and can expand to meet the deficiency of sugar in our State and can provide at the same time more employment to agriculturists and landless labour.

The consensus of opinion in India is that the sugar industry should prosper, but not at the cost of the consumer and the worker. The aim therefore of the captains of this industry should be to increase the quantity and quality of sugarcane - and there is large scope for doing this especially in the Bombay Deccan - and to minimise the cost of production with a view to bringing down the price of sugar. They should run the industry in the interests of the nation rather than merely for their own profits.

The crying need at present is greater production and an understanding between the employers and employees. It has been therefore suggested that in the present critical period compulsory arbitration should be welcomed and accepted by both the parties. It is further recommended that Government

should appoint a Wage Board for fixing minimum wage so that justice can be done to both the parties.

I have made use of a number of books and reports in preparing the questionnaire but almost all the data presented in this thesis is the result of my long and laborious investigations for a considerable period of time. It is worth mentioning that I lived among labourers and stayed in a number of villages to get first-hand information and to understand the worker and his problem.

Though actuated by an urge to present a first-hand picture of the labourers employed in this industry it would not have been possible to reach the desired end if I had not the inspiring and intelligent guidance of Prof. D.R. Gadgil, the encouraging attitude of Prof. V. Sovane and the helping hand of the staff of the Gokhale Institute of Economics and Politics. I am deeply indebted to the Hon'ble Labour Minister, Mr. Gulzarilal Nanda, for his appreciation and splendid and substantial help, and to Prof. M.P. Gandhi for making available to me a number of books and reports. I am grateful to a number of Government officials, Managing Agents, employees in the sugar factories in the Bombay Deccan, and Editors of newspapers without whose cooperation and assistance the collection of data would not have been completed. I am also thankful to a large number of workers for their kind hospitality. I must express my thanks to my friend Dr. S.V. Kelkar, for his

valuable suggestions.

Lastly, I cannot but express my thanks to Mrs. Padma Deodhar, who like a true partner gave me inspiration, encouragement and assistance which enabled me to submit this thesis.

S Y N O P S I S

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PART II - HISTORY OF SUGAR INDUSTRY IN THE BOMBAY DECCAN

History of the Deccan Sugar Industry - Mr.L.N. Vartak's Achievement - Causes of Failure of his Sugar Factory - George Curtis' Interest in the Sugar Industry in the Bombay Deccan - Establishment of the Belapur Sugar Syndicate under the Management of Marshall & Co. - Change of Management - Belapur Sugar Company's Success - Lallubhai Samaldas' Nira Valley Sugar Factory - Its Causes of Failure - Establishment of more Sugar Factories after the Grant of Protection - Details of each Unit - Factories on Lift Irrigation - Dr. Shantaram Shirgaonkar's Contribution to the Sugar Industry in the Bombay Deccan - A New Experiment in the Sugar Industry at Loni - Details of this Concern - Another Proposed Sugar Factory on the Nira Canal - Total Number of Sugar Factories in the Bombay Deccan with their dates of Establishment, Date of First Crushing Season, Capital at the Start, Present Capital - Acreage under Sugarcane in these Concerns - Production of Sugar in India and in the Bombay State - Requirements of the Bombay State in regard to this Commodity - Special Features of the Sugar Industry in the Bombay Deccan - Yield of Sugarcane per acre, Recovery, Mean Duration, Production of Sugarcane etc.

CHAPTER I

PART I - HISTORY OF SUGAR INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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