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MONOGRAPH NO. 156

General Editor: K. M. Panikkar

# THE WORKING CLASS IN INDIA

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## The Working Class in India

### Working Class Component in Man-Power—

The significance of man-power is not often realised in normal times. With a given volume of resources, and a given rate of economic growth, the man-power may appear to be an asset or a liability according as it is gainfully employed or not. For, in the latter case, the economy is faced with the problem of unemployment and under-employment, of tussle between labour and capital, of the growth of conflicting ideologies and labour organisations. Where, however, the economy is growing at a faster pace, as is the case with the industrial countries of Western World in the years following the second war upto now, they are, despite a higher rate of population growth—higher than in India—in a chronic shortage of man-power. In a developmental economy, as in a war economy, where a development is real rather than imaginary, the growth of population cannot keep pace with the growth of the economy. Hence the growing emphasis on mechanisation. Where, however, that is not the case, either the development is not really taking place or it is spurious, lop-sided, not definitely integrated to the economy and hence its benefits do not accrue to the country concerned. In India, some such process is going on during the last decade.

Even though in comparison with the rate of population growth in some of the industrial progressive countries of the world, the pace of population growth in India is much smaller, being barely one per cent per annum, yet during the last half a century, there has never been an

occasion when we have really complained of under-population. Rather, all through these decades, our problem has remained one of excessive growth of population, may be due to climatic and social factors, but principally due to a virtually unresponsive economy which is not ready to yield more output that we need. The stagnation of the economy could not be broken by two world wars, while the economic depression during the inter-war years gave her a staggering blow. All these decades, we complained of a lack of money-incentive, of the absence of a more positive policy on the part of the government. When, however, the monetary incentive came, as during the years of the second war, our agricultural system virtually collapsed and the country was in the grip of a severe famine. During the last decade, we have been making frantic efforts for the rehabilitation of the economic system through a conscious programme of development under the guidance of the government but we cannot say that we have been able to touch even a fringe of the problem. Undoubtedly, the planning has given the country a number of impressive structures here and there that satisfy the politicians' mania for gigantism; but in the absence of an integration of these with the economic system, the real problem remains unsolved.

With an unresponsive economy, therefore, population in India remains significantly large in quantity but poor in quality. The quantity is high, not because the rate of growth is high, but because the economic system is stagnant, non-cooperative, while the positive checks of nature,—infant mortality, for instance—are fast losing their potentiality under a growing programme of better medical care. Not that positive checks of nature are good in themselves, but in a country where man does not know how to improve his economic status, even these serve as

helpful palliatives, keeping partially in check a problem that man is otherwise unable to solve. If, therefore, the choice lies between infant mortality and starvation, the majority vote will go in favour of the former. For our qualitative standard, we have often found fault with our enervating climate and social and economic institutions; but we forget that these days these factors are amenable to control and need not cause any serious impediment to growth if everything else is okay. A factor to improvement may be the availability of training facility all over the country and its being within the reach of the lower income group. During the last decade, such training facility has no doubt increased, but how far it is adequate in quantity and quality may still remain a debatable issue. Besides, the cost of training, according to Indian standard is pretty high and hence it does not enable many people in the lower income group to avail of it. Then there is the bigger issue of placement, of putting right man to the right job, consistent with specialisation and aptitude and in this respect planning is yet to make up much leeway.

The real trouble with our population is the lack of diversified employment opportunities. Emphasis has been laid, since the days of the Industrial Commission (1915), on the need for a diversified employment opportunity in this country by each and every commission or committee connected with population growth or industrial development, and yet it is this that we are so miserably lacking. Despite all that is being done or has been done, the employment pattern has not assumed a diversified appearance, and the blame for this must be borne by an unresponsive economy that is unable to rise to the occasion. About two decades back, Colin Clark had laid down the conditions of economic progress.

According to his showing, the most progressive countries are those where the dependence of population on the primary sector of the economy is the least. Secondary sector of mining and manufacturing is not necessarily employment-generating in proportion to the volume of investment. Hence the population is left in these countries to lean most heavily on the tertiary sector of transport, banking, insurance and mercantile activities. In this country, the traditional leaning of the largest majority of population on the stagnant primary sector is a chronic feature, and since this sector has long ceased to be progressive, the subsistence that they get is miserably poor. A fairly high percentage of people in this country are dependent on the tertiary sector; but unlike that in the progressive industrial countries, this sector in India too depends for its sustenance mainly on the stagnant primary sector. Even there, this sector is under the constant fire of governmental criticism on the ground that it shelters too many middle men, many of whom hardly render any economic service to the society. Worse still, this sector, which is under governmental depredations in recent years, (e.g., nationalisation of road transport, of life assurance, of the Imperial Bank, and introduction of state trading), is not really growing from the standpoint of the creation of employment opportunities in the country. Monopolisation and concentration have, of course, their merit, but not surely under Indian conditions where they dislocate existing arrangements without providing a better substitute, and hence when it is shown that in the governmental sector, this monopolisation has created, say, ten fresh employment opportunities, it is surely at the cost of a hundred that have been denied it and of which there is no comparable record.

**Statistics of Working Population in India**

Census figures in recent decades lay much emphasis on economic data and are, therefore, useful for purposes of drawing economic conclusions. The population census in 1931 revealed that about 42 per cent. of the population in this country was gainfully employed. The census for 1951 did not show any appreciable change in this respect. In the 1951 census, out of a total population of 3,566 lakhs, 1,044 lakhs or 29.3 per cent of the total have been classified as gainfully occupied or fully self-supporting, 2,143 lakhs or 60.1 per cent of the total are non-earning dependants and 379 lakhs or 10.6 per cent of the total are earning dependants. As against this, in some of the West-European countries, occupied men number over two-thirds of all male population and the occupied man-power is almost identical with the fit population. The high percentage of dependant population in India may be in part due to a steady population growth in an unresponsive economy, but mainly it is due to a vast mass of involuntarily unemployed labour force, whose volume in the era of planning is mounting up rather than diminishing. These people are dependent, not because they should be so, but because they cannot help it for want of available openings and recent agrarian reforms have let loose forces that tend to swell their number to a further high level.

The census figure for 1951 revealed a rate of population growth to the extent of 12.5 per cent over a period of 10 years or slightly over one per cent per year. Since then, the Planning Commission's estimates have always presumed a higher rate of growth for which, however, there is hardly any occasion unless, of course, we cover by it only the urban areas where the impact of the population growth is being felt most owing to heavy rural-urban migrations in recent years. India's population, according



to the final census figures for 1951, is 356,829,485 and will not exceed 4,000 lakhs at the next census if the rate of growth during the previous decade, or even during the previous fifty years be maintained. Of these, those engaged in agriculture outnumber by more than 2 : 1 those engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. Classified by livelihood, the population falls mainly into these two broad categories, agricultural population being 249,122,449 and non-agricultural 107,571,940, further divided into four classes each as follows :

*Agricultural :*

Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned by them	167,346,501
Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned by others	31,639,719
Cultivating Labourers	44,811,928
Non-cultivating Owners	5,324,301

*Non-agricultural :*

Production other than cultivation	37,660,197
Commerce	21,308,871
Transport	5,620,128
Other services	42,982,744

**Statistics of Industrial Population in India**—So far as the statistical information regarding industrial population is concerned, they are 'non-agricultural' according to the census classification, and number 1,076 lakhs, of which 334 lakhs are self-supporting, 673 lakhs are non-earning dependants and 69 lakhs are earning dependants. The percentage of self-supporting population to the total non-agricultural population works out very similar to the percentage of self-supporting population to the total population. The 334 lakhs of self-supporting non-agriculturists have been divided into four sections as follows :

	Number in lakhs	% of self-supporting non-agriculturists
Employers	11	3.3
Self-employed	165	49.4
Employees	148	44.3
Non-agricultural rentiers, pensioners and miscellaneous income-receivers	10	3.0

Leaving aside the rentiers, pensioners and miscellaneous income-receivers, who number about 10 lakhs, the rest of the self-supporting persons in non-agricultural pursuits may be classified as follows :

	Number in lakhs	Percentage to total non-agricultural population, excluding rentiers, etc.
1. Primary Industries other than Mining and Quarrying	24.0	7.4
2. Mining & Quarrying	5.7	1.8
3. Processing & Manufacture (Foodstuff, Processing & Leather)	55.1	17.0
4. Processing & Manufacture (Metals & Chemicals)	12.4	3.8
5. Processing & Manufacture (others)	24.3	7.5
6. Construction & Utilities	15.9	4.9
7. Commerce	59.0	18.2
8. Transport, Storage & Communication	19.0	5.9

9. Health, Education & Public Administration	32.9	10.2
10. Services not elsewhere specified	75.4	23.3

It will be seen from the above figures that of the total volume of non-agricultural population, even less than 30 per cent are industrial, the rest being dependent on the non-industrial, non-agricultural pursuits. The total volume of non-agricultural population dependent on industries, including mining and quarrying, comes to 97.5 lakhs. Of these, those who work in factories and mines are less than one-third. The total number of labourers employed in mines in 1954 was 5,68,254 and that in factories coming under the Factories Act of 1948 in 1955 was 26,90,403. The mining and factory labourers, were distributed as follows :

<i>Mining Statistics</i>		1954 Figures
Underground		2,14,620
Open Working	{ men	1,10,948
	{ women	63,770
Surface	{ men	1,28,254
	{ women	50,662
Total		5,68,254

Mining labour in some of the important States were as follows : Bihar 2,29,682, Andhra 17,640, Bombay 11,762, Madhya Pradesh 85,930, Orissa 43,118, West Bengal 95,824, Hyderabad 17,830, Mysore 24,699 and Vindhya Pradesh 11,644.

The factory workers in India in 1955 numbered 26, 90, 403 in various industries, including agricultural industries and services. They were distributed as follows :

	Average number of workers employed daily
<i>Agricultural Industries</i>	
Processes allied to Agriculture (Gins & Presses)	1,02,924
Food except Beverages	3,36,682
Beverages	5,067
Tobacco	1,34,137
<i>Services</i>	
Transport Equipment	2,14,459
Miscellaneous Industries	1,29,308
Electricity, Gas & Steam	26,550
Water & Sanitary Services	5,430
Recreation Services	4,014
Personal Services	15,076
<i>Manufacturing</i>	
Textiles	10,43,222
Footwear etc.	12,442
Wood & Cork, except Furniture	27,616
Furniture & Fixture	8,597
Paper & Paper Products	25,298
Printing, Publishing & Allied Industries	75,192
Leather & Leather Products (except Footwear)	19,147
Rubber & Rubber Products	24,611
Chemical & Chemical Products	85,907
Products of Petroleum & Coal	11,782
Non-metallic Mineral Products (except Petroleum & Coal)	1,00,287
Basic Metal Industries	95,273

Metal Products (except Machinery & Transport Equipments)	60,471
Machinery (except Electrical Machinery)	96,359
Electrical Machinery & Apparatus, Appliances & Supplies	30,552
	<hr/>
	26,90,403

Of these 26.90 lakhs, only about 17.23 lakhs of people are engaged in manufacturing industries. It is significant that the industrial labour force that totalled 3 lakhs in 1892 and about 25 lakhs in 1951 on the eve of planning was mainly employed in the private sector of industry. During 1951-60, along with the private sector, the governmental sector has grown in importance and the total volume of industrial labour computed under the Factories Act of 1948 went up to 26.90 lakhs by the close of the first plan and to 34.91 lakhs in the second half of 1958. Owing to a high carry-over of unemployed people from the first plan period along with the fresh entrants in the category of the unemployed, measures were taken during second plan period to increase the volume of employment. A part of the increase of industrial labour may be attributed to this factor. A part may, again, be due to the extension of the coverage of the Factories Act to smaller units. The employment figures for mining industry in October, 1959 show a considerable fall as against the figures for 1954 already quoted. Mining statistics for October, 1959, were as follows:

	Average daily number of workers employed	Total number of Man-shifts worked
Underground	2,04,626	50,06,237

Open Working	40,011	9,91,637
Surface	1,14,039	27,93,132
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	3,58,676	87,91,006
	<hr/>	<hr/>

If the employment figures be any guide as to the pace of industrialisation, we cannot resist the conclusion that the pace of industrialisation has been distressingly slow during the two plans and that the unresponsiveness of the economic system remains virtually unbroken. In mining, despite all efforts to show a rise in output, the employment figure shows a considerable decline while in factories, a part of the increase in the employment figures shown is to be attributed to the extension of the coverage of the Factories Act from time to time and a part to specific measures for fighting against unemployment. The extent of genuine growth of employment during the two plans remains very small, disproportionately inconsistent with the volume of outlay in the public sector. Besides, in the constructional activity in the public sector, much of the employment is of a short-run nature, with the consequence that when the work of construction reaches completion, much of the labour force is retrenched, imparting considerable dislocational effects on the economy. Gradually, some of these people are re-absorbed in fresh constructional works; but the dislocation caused in the transitional period cannot be lost sight of, and no machinery has yet been evolved either by the Planning Commission or by the Government to ensure a smooth change-over from one job to another.

**Regional Distribution of Working Class—**  
Regional distribution of labour is significant for more reasons than one. It not only reflects the effect of

industrialisation in dislocating labour from their hearth and home, with consequential social injuries, it is also an indication, in a vast country like India, of the benefit of the industrialisation programme that is derived by different areas or States. The location of industrial activity has not, in the past, been guided by conscious social considerations, with the consequence that factories have grown up in particular areas in accordance with the overwhelmingly important economic considerations that had prevailed upon the organisers. This is responsible for one of the vices of the present-day industrial order which exists in the slum areas in so marked a contrast with the cleanly-maintained streets, parks and mansions of the metropolis. A social consciousness is, however, slowly dawning and industrial location is no longer relegated to empiricism or chance. Power has been taken in this country by the Government under the Industries (Development & Regulation) Act of 1951 for the licensing of new industries with a view to regulating their location in future. Obviously, there is a two-fold consideration behind the move, viz., first, that instead of the industries being concentrated in half a dozen centres and labourers moving to them, there should be a dispersal of industries all over the country so that they may reach the labour force within a reasonable distance which they may cover every day from their homes, and second, which follows from the first, that the dispersal should help a balanced growth of all regions and an integration of the modernised sector with the primitive one which will be helpful in pulling up the latter, and, in consequence, giving the whole country a modernised appearance. The regional distribution of the working population, however, shows that the objective has not been attained under the two plans, the areas benefitting

most being those that have already the largest concentration of industries. The regional distribution of industrial labour in India in 1956 and in 1958 has been as follows:

	1956	1958 (Provisional for Second Half)
<i>Maximum Concentration :</i>		
Bombay	10,51,878	10,17,070
West Bengal	6,82,297	6,80,757
Madras	3,07,665	3,27,081
U.P.	2,73,537	2,68,195
<i>Moderate Concentration :</i>		
Andhra	2,04,339	1,72,964
Bihar	1,76,840	1,81,521
Kerala	1,65,196	1,66,525
Madhya Pradesh	1,68,176	1,64,047
Mysore	75,105	1,87,150
Punjab	91,083	1,05,295
<i>Low Concentration :</i>		
Assam	74,698	77,884
Jammu & Kashmir	5,176	—
Orissa	22,614	26,076
Rajasthan	44,832	52,124
Andaman & Nicobar	3,835	2,427
Delhi	51,075	59,280
Himachal Pradesh	1,054	1,358
Manipur	298	—
Tripura	1,901	2,170
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	34,01,599	34,91,924

It will be seen from the above figures that of a total working class population of a little less than 35 lakhs, about 23 lakhs are concentrated in Bombay.



West Bengal, Madras and U.P., and another 10 lakhs in Andhra, Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Mysore and Punjab. If, despite governmental regulation, private enterprise has not been attracted towards the backward areas, the economic considerations, must be overwhelmingly against them. It is only the penetration of the governmental enterprise in these regions that can break their stagnation and help pulling them up.

**Has India a 'Committed' Labour Force?—** Industrialisation of a country demands not only a supply of labour, but a supply of what is called a 'committed' labour that is ready to adopt an industrial, as distinguished from an agricultural, way of life. In this respect, probably, we cannot say even after one hundred years' experience with industrialism—though, of course, its pace has been distressingly slow during the entire period—that there has been very much of a change in our attitude to industry. Industrial growth is in part linked up with the attitude of the people that intend to industrialise. In comparison with ourselves, Germany, U.S.A. and Japan has each a late start, all of them launching an industrial career after 1870 and Russia started only the other day, after 1928. And if these countries are today very much ahead of us, it must in part be attributed to the attitude of the people towards industrialism. We often complain that during the last one hundred years, we did not have the necessary governmental support; but during these years we did not have any hindrance from the government's side and with a necessary aptitude, a necessary attachment for industry, we could have been much more ahead of where we are at present. Other handicaps like scarcity of capital and raw materials and markets are as much present today as they were, say, fifty years back, and if these be the real impediments that hamper our progress,

then we cannot progress even now. This psychological factor is reflected in the fact that prior to 1925, the supply of industrial labour in India was extremely limited, and on many occasions, organised industry had to experience a shortage of labour, both skilled and unskilled. Plantations used to be in chronic shortage while in mining there used to be distinct shortages in certain seasons. The perennial factories were slightly better-placed with regard to the supply of unskilled labour. Factors which were generally responsible for this state of affairs were lack of attraction of industrial occupation, evils of excessive concentration and difficulty in getting housing accommodation, lack of suitable recruiting organisation and lack of any correspondence between wages and standard of living and cost of living. Since 1925, of course, Indian factories entered on an 'era of abundant labour', a state of affairs which was due not to any attraction provided by industrial occupations, but to economic pressure so much so that the Royal Commission on Labour wrote: "Competition among labourers for jobs is becoming keener which makes it all the more important for labour to organise itself and save itself from the danger of exploitation on the part of the employers."

This plethora in the supply of labour does not mean that the whole supply or even a considerable part of it is really committed to industrial jobs, or that this has been able to get rid of its agricultural upbringing and tradition. After about a decade and a half, since the Royal Commission reported, Shiva Rao wrote: "The mass of workers still represent the superfluous elements of India's rural population whom an impoverished land . . . is incapable of supporting. Socially and economically, they represent the most backward section of the population." After about another decade and a half since Shiva Rao

wrote, a recent writer tells us : "He (Indian industrial labour) is not quite willing or capable to break with the rural past nor is he quite accepted in the strange and indiffernt urban environment in which he is now trying to seek a footing." The Labour Investigation Committee (1946), however, makes a vacillating sort of observation in this respect. It desires to establish a thesis that India has conditions ripe in most of her cities for the development of 'an urban proletariat' and asserts that it has already developed in the principal industrial cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, etc.; but at the same time it admits that "even today...large masses of labour do migrate. .... The urban areas have not yet begun to provide for them the degree of social security which may be considered as necessary." The fact is thus established that one hundred years with modern industrialism have not yet given the country a truly industrial labour force which may be considered 'committed' to industrial jobs and hence despite the availability of abundant labour, it must be admitted that much of it is unable and/or unwilling to accept the discipline that a factory demands or the sort of life that the urban areas provide.

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## Industrial Labour in India

**Significance of Man-power**—The significance of man-power is not realised in normal times; often, too much of man-power is considered to be a nuisance. For the economy is faced with the problem of unemployment, under-employment, tussle between labour and capital, growth of conflicting ideologies and labour organisations. In a war economy, however, man-power assumes great importance not only as cannon-fodder but also for working in the factories and the farms. In other words, the supply of labour becomes more important, the supply both numerical and qualitative. In India, so far as the numerical strength is concerned, there has never been an occasion in recent history at least when we have complained of under-population. Rather, our problem has remained one of excessive population, partly due to climatic and partly to social factors, and we have often not known how best to utilise them. But our qualitative standard has often been poor, may be due to enervating climate, lack of training and adequate opportunities for training and, above all, lack of diversified employment opportunities. The result is, as the population census of 1931 revealed, about 42 p.c. of the population in this country were gainfully occupied. There is no cognisable reason to expect any appreciable change in this percentage figure in the population census for 1951. As against this, in England, at the last census of population in 1931, occupied men numbered over two-thirds of all males, and the occupied man-power was almost identical with the fit population. Not only this.

Even the occupational distribution of fit population is highly defective in this country. A balanced occupational distribution of population is one which represents the lowest pressure on the soil and the highest on commercial activities. In India it is the other way round, the highest concentration being on the soil. In this respect, the results of our population census of 1951 are available. India's population according to the final census figures, is 356,829,485 which represents 125 per cent increase in 10 years. Those engaged in agriculture outnumber by more than 2 : 1 those engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. Classified by livelihood, the population falls mainly into these two broad categories. The figures are—Agricultural population 249,98,449 and Non-agricultural 107,571,940. The two broad categories are further divided into four classes each as follows:

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3. Transport	5,620,128
4. Other Services and Miscellaneous Sources	42,982,744

**Industrial Labour**—The above figures lead us nowhere so far as industrial labour force is concerned. We may expect more detailed statistics when the Census Report is published. 'Production other than cultivation' actually includes many more things apart from



manufacturing industries. The latest position as revealed in the Government of India's *Indian Labour Year-Book, 1949-50* is as follows: about 28½ lakhs of workers in factories, 5 lakhs in mines, 11½ lakhs in plantations, 16 lakhs in Railways (including some 5 lakhs employed by the contractors' establishments), nearly 2 lakhs in Posts and Telegraphs, about 4 lakhs in the Central Public Works Department, about half a lakh in ports and about 2 lakhs on ships. The total comes to about 68½ lakhs actually employed. Of these, factories provide employment only to 28½ lakhs, in a country whose total population is 356 millions. What a serious unbalance in the occupational distribution of population in a sub-continent! And those who are still thinking in terms of more equitable distribution of land, without looking at this fundamental malady of inequitable occupational distribution are living in fool's paradise.

**Labour employed in Factories**—Under the provision of the Factories Act, 1948, registered factories submit annual and half-yearly returns on employment to the Chief Inspectors of Factories in the various States. All-India figures are compiled by the Labour Bureau of the Government of India and published in the *Indian Labour Gazette*. The following table indicates the number of factories and the average daily number of workers employed therein during 1929, 1939, and some of the following years.

Year	Perennial		Seasonal		Total	
	No. of Factories	No. of Workers	No. of Factories	No. of Workers	No. of Factories	No. of Workers
1929	—	—	—	—	7,153	14,55,092
1939	6,943	14,60,314	3,523	2,90,823	10,466	17,51,137
1942	8,046	19,80,970	3,681	3,01,318	12,527	22,82,288
1945	11,125	23,66,162	3,636	2,76,797	14,761	26,42,949
1946	11,011	20,61,873	3,194	2,52,714	14,205	23,14,587
1948	13,120	21,23,624	2,786	2,36,577	15,906	23,60,201
1949	—	—	—	—	19,829	24,33,988

A few explanatory notes be added. The figures upto 1946 are those for British India. The sudden decline in the figures for 1946 are due to the fact that they do not include figures for the Punjab and the N.W.F.P. The figures for 1947, 1948 and 1949 relate to the 9 Part A States of the Indian Union and the centrally administered areas of Ajmer, Delhi, Coorg and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The figures for 1949 show a sudden increase in the number of factories by about four thousand over the previous year though the number of workers do not register any proportionate increase. The increase in the number of factories is no cause of jubilation. The recorded increase was due to the wide coverage of the Factories Act, 1948, and many smaller factories which were formerly excluded are now made to submit returns. The number of workers do not show a proportionate increase apparently because of the fact that all the newly reporting factories were small ones. Besides, there was some reduction in the quantum of employment in the principal organised industries like cotton and jute on account of closure and retrenchment due to shortage of raw materials, accumulation of stocks, financial difficulties, etc. It will be apparent from above figures that during 1929-49, the pace of industrialisation in India had been exceedingly slow and the country has failed to industrialise by taking advantage of the Second Great War. The consequence is that the serious economic unbalance of the country as a whole which was a feature of our economy in 1929 remains in tact in 1949. The world may be dynamic, but ours is a static state.

**State-wise Distribution of Factory Labour**—The above analysis clearly sets before us two features of industrial labour in India. First, only a microscopic

proportion of total population is engaged in industrial occupation. Secondly, the number of industrial labour has not appreciably increased between 1929-49. The wartime increase was temporary, and that too not spectacular. This serious unbalance and comparative stagnation of the economy as a whole is also reflected in the analysis of the State-wise distribution of labour. Owing to uneven distribution of industries, the number of industrial labour in different parts of India is also unevenly distributed. Before the war, Bengal and Bombay had 15 and 5 p.c. of the total population respectively, but they had 29 and 23 p.c. of industrial labour. Since then the partition of Bengal has meant some reverses in the fortunes of this State while the 1949 figure for Bombay covers merged States such as Baroda and Kolhapur. These developments have altered the percentage figures of population and industrial labour for these two States, but not the facts and the two together support even now 14.54 lakhs out of 24.33 lakhs of industrial labour. All other States, with the exception of a few areas, have a smaller share of industrial population than would be justified on the basis of their total share in population. Of course, industrial concentration or otherwise is the outcome of various agglomerative and deglomerative forces; but the agrarian character of the economy of most of the States is not thereby altered. The industrial population of Assam is due to tea plantations and that of Ajmer-Merwara due to railway and engineering workshops. The following figures for 1949 showing the number of factories covered by the Factories Act in different States and the number of workers employed therein are interesting

Name of the State	No. of Factories in 1949	Average daily number of workers employed
Assam	774	61,132
Bihar	731	1,55,334
Bombay	6,835	7,89,463
Madhya Pradesh	1,062	96,273
Madras	5,432	3,23,950
Orissa	254	13,359
Punjab	744	39,364
Uttar Pradesh	1,349	2,33,837
West Bengal	2,197	6,65,008

According to the *Labour Year Book*, "the States which contributed mainly to the increase in the number of factories were Bombay and Madras. Smaller but considerable increases were recorded in Bihar, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal." We have left out the figures for Ajmer, Coorg, Delhi and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. For, together they have 451 factories and 56,268 workers. Even for the 9 Part A States, four are such who do not employ even one lakh workers per day in industries, and Bihar is just on the margin. It is interesting to state here that some of the former princely States employ greater labour force than some of the Part A States. The latest figures available for them relate only to 1947 and are as follows:

Name of the Princely State	No. of Fac- tories in 1947	Average daily number of workers employed
Baroda	212	47,797
Central India States	399	63,292

Hyderabad	676	77,062
Kashmir	61	65,267
Madras States	429	71,500
Mysore	333	73,186
Western India States	240	32,601
Others	333	56,223
Total	2,683	486,928

factories when the *Labour Year Book* writes of "considerable increases" these words have to be taken in a relative sense, relative to what the situation was before. The above figures are interesting in another respect. They reveal the deglomerative effect of labour legislation in British India which actually scared capital and it took refuge in princely States which had no elaborate labour legislation. On the whole, therefore, the position is this that of the 24 lakhs of people in industrial employment about 20 lakhs belong to Bombay, Bengal and former princely States, and only 4 lakhs to the rest of British India.

#### Industry-wise Distribution of Factory Labour

The strength of the industrial structure of a country depends not so much on the total volume of industrial labour employed as on the total volume of labour employed in basic industries. Because, it is the existence of basic industries that provide the basis to other existing industries as also to those which are yet to develop. In this respect, also, our position is very weak, for, of the total number of workers daily employed, not even 25 per cent are engaged in basic industries. The *Labour Year Book*, of course, makes no such distinction as between capital-goods and consumption-goods industries, and the respective labour force in each. But if we take engineering, mining and metallurgical and chemical indus-

tries as basic, the above conclusion holds ground. The industry-wise distribution of our labour force is given below:

Industry	No. of Factories in 1949.	Average daily number of workers employed
Textiles	2,208	10,46,752
Engineering	3,304	3,69,658
Minerals and Metals	807	1,08,973
Food, Drink, Tobacco	5,931	3,48,378
Chemicals, Dyes, etc.	1,930	1,19,864
Paper & Printing	1,507	85,325
Wood, Stone and Glass	1,429	1,05,407
Skins and Hides	401	28,755
Gins and Presses	1,519	74,268
Ordnance Factories	71	84,300
Miscellaneous	722	62,298
Total	19,829	24,38,988

It will be seen that the largest single group consists of textile industries which are responsible for two-fifth of the total labour force. These, along with labour employed in the production of food, drink and tobacco total 14 lakhs. So far as princely States are concerned, with the exception of a small percentage of labour, about 20 p.c., the rest is employed in consumption-goods or luxury-goods industries. Thus, out of a total of 4,86,928 in 1947, engineering, minerals and metals and chemicals dyes, etc., in the already-mentioned princely States gave employment to only 93,584 workers per day. The main industries in Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda and the Central Indian States are cotton ginning, pressing, spinning and weaving. In Kashmir the major industries are wool and silk. The other important industries in Hyderabad are

engineering, rice milling, tobacco manufacture, paper and printing and stone dressing. Mysore employs a considerable number of workers in silk mills, general and electrical engineering and iron and steel works. Cement, lime and potteries appears to be an important industry group in Hyderabad, Central Indian States and Rajputana. Rope works in the Madras States employ a considerable number of workers.

**Age & Sex Composition of Labour**—An important item of study in the age composition of labour is that related to different age-groups. But no such figures according to age-groups are available. The Indian Factories Act classifies labour into three groups, *viz.* Adults—men and women, Adolescents and Children. Under the 1934 Act, the minimum age for employment of children was fixed at 12 and persons between the ages of 15 and 17 were treated as children, if not, certified fit for employment as adults. The Act of 1948 has fixed the minimum age of employment at 14 and has raised the upper age limit of adolescents from 17 to 18. The average daily number of adults, adolescents and children employed in factories in 1949 were as follows for the 9 Part A States:

States	Adult		Adolescents	Children
	Men	Women		
Assam	46,058	12,492	2,141	441
Bihar	1,38,889	12,176	3,133	1,136
Bombay	6,92,109	87,135	8,923	1,296
Madhya Pradesh	73,891	19,730	2,407	245
Madras	2,47,074	68,369	4,253	4,254
Orissa	9,479	3,219	624	37
Punjab	36,954	1,800	244	366
Uttar Pradesh	2,30,298	2,394	786	359
West Bengal	5,97,568	61,667	5,044	729
Total	21,26,191	2,70,924	27,859	9,014

It will be seen that the States which employ women in considerable numbers are Madras, Madhya Pradesh,

Bombay and West Bengal. The percentages of women, adolescents and children employed in these States to the total employed were 23.7, 23.3, 12.3 and 10.1 respectively. The proportion of women, adolescents and children to the total number of workers employed was the highest in Orissa, being about 29.1 p.c. of the total. In Assam, the percentage was as high as 24.6. Much of this is employed in tea gardens. Cotton and jute mills account for nearly half the total number of women employed in all factories, the other main sources of employment for women being the seasonal factories, particularly cotton ginning and pressing factories and tea factories.

**Supply of Industrial Labour**—Prior to 1925, the supply of industrial labour in India was extremely limited and, at times, organised industry had to experience a shortage of labour, both skilled and unskilled. Thus tea plantations in Assam used to be in constant shortage while coal-mining experienced a distinct shortage in certain seasons. The perennial factories, however, were not so much in difficulty with regard to unskilled labour. Factor which was responsible for this state of affairs was, in general, the lack of attraction in industrial occupations. To be more specific, the evils of excessive concentration and difficulty of accommodation, lack of suitable recruiting organisation and lack of any correspondence between wages and standard of living, etc., used to operate as repulsive factors. Since 1925, of course, Indian factories entered on an era of abundant labour, a state of affairs which was due not to any attraction provided by industrial occupations but to economic pressure so much so that the Royal Commission on Labour wrote: "Competition among labourers for jobs is becoming keener which makes it all the more important for labour to organise itself and save itself from the danger of ex-



pletion on the part of the employers." When the Second Great War broke out, the main deficiency felt was with regard to the supply of skilled and semi-skilled labour, and not for ordinary labour. Thanks to the various schemes of training introduced by the Government of India for the training of labour both inside the country and overseas that we are today in a fairly comfortable position with regard to the supply of skilled and semi-skilled labour in many of the lines which we have got at present. And in not a very distant future, there may be a plethora of skilled and technically qualified labour in this country.

**Sources of Labour Supply**—In the industrial countries of the West, there has developed a supply of industrial labour from districts adjacent to the seat of industry. In India, however, with the exception of centres like Kanpur and Ahmedabad, the supply of labour comes from a distance, even from other States. In the jute mill industry in Calcutta, more than 80 p.c. of the workers come from Bihar, U.P., Orissa and the Telugu-speaking districts of the Madras State. In the cotton mill industry in Bombay, the labour force is drawn from the neighbouring districts of the Konkan, Satara and Sholapur. Deccan and U.P. also contribute a certain proportion of the labour force. Labour in the engineering industry at Jamshedpur is drawn from the States of Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, the Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Madras and is now more or less permanently settled at its place of work. Labour in coal mines in Bihar and West Bengal is generally drawn from the surrounding villages, although during war-time a certain number of workers were recruited from U.P. A certain proportion of the labour force in the coal mines in the Hyderabad State is also drawn from U.P. About 90

p.c. of the labour in Kolar Gold Fields comes from Tamilnad and a small proportion comes from the Telugu districts of the Madras State. In the plantation areas, especially in the north-east, workers mostly hail from Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Thus it will be seen that migration of labour to industrial areas is a feature of the industrial economy of this country, migration being inter-district, inter-State, or, as in the case of mines and in isolated factories in out-of-the-way places, from the surrounding villages.

**Effects of Migratory Habits**—The original labour force might have migrated from any place, nobody bothers much about that except a student of history. But what makes migration a special feature of Indian labour is the fact that it is in a continuous process of migration from year to year and from season to season. With the exception of skilled labour which is more or less settled, much of the unskilled labour is in such a state of flux and even though many of them may return after a break to some industrial occupation, they do not necessarily return to the same position in which they may have served, nor even in the same industry in which they may have gained experience. Thus much of the labour force being migratory in character, it cannot develop as a strong industrial labouring class. Some are pushed from agriculture to industrial occupations owing to sheer economic pressure while most labourers have a village upbringing and tradition.\* The effect of this

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\*The *Labour Year Book* writes "it would appear that the bulk of the immigrant factory workers have little stake in agriculture and their occasional visits to their village homes are more for rest and recuperation than for attending to cultivation."

The fact is that most of these people coming from villages belong to joint families where there are other members to look after farming. But the income from farming is not adequate and this has to be supplemented. Usually many of these workers

has not been favourable from the standpoint of efficiency. Not only as a fairly large section of labour is concerned, it has not been able to adjust itself to industrial life and has little interest in industrial occupations. Naturally, this reacts adversely on efficiency and productivity and stands in the way of the growth of a strong labour organisation. The migratory habit greatly affects the composition of the labour force in industry. It may have been noticed above that only a small number of women operatives work in industry, the reason being that many imported operatives leave their family in village home. This disparity of sexes is an important cause of frequent changes in labour force. Another difficulty arises from intermittent supply of labour. It has been the general complaint by millowners that intermittent labour supply necessitates the employment of a large number of operative, a times inferior and unskilled, thereby affecting the quality of the product. The Royal Commission on Labour and following it, many writers, have commended this village link as an agency for recuperating mental and physical energy of labour and as a force modernising the countryside; but it is too difficult to prove this beneficial effect, in so much as such a costly link essential either as a recuperating agency or as a modernising force, at the cost of efficiency and solidarity of labour. The village link as an insurance against unemployment and starvation and a vigour-gaining agency, however commendable, does not add to the credit of industry. If this country is to be converted from an agrarian state into an industrial state,

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come during slack and go back during busy season, not so much for 'rest and recuperation' as for looking after the work in the field. Stake in agriculture they have got, because that is their first source of income. And those who have no such stake and no family in the village to be maintained, naturally they do not go to village but become settled as industrial workers, whether they like it or not.

which we will have to do if we are to improve economically it cannot do with a labour force a major section of which is just a floating mass owing no permanent allegiance to industry. This can be done only by making industrial life really attractive.

**Labour in Mines & Oilfields.**—Complete information about labour employed in mines is difficult to obtain. For small quarries and mines, which are many in number are not covered by statistics. Information is available only for mines covered by the Indian Mining Act. The total volume of employment, according to such information, was as follows:

Year	Number of Mines	Total
1929	1,732	2,69,701
1939	1,864	3,05,444
1945	2,151	3,86,290
1947	1,976	4,07,263
1949	2,032	4,21,159

The considerable increase in the figures for 1949 over that in any of the previous years is explained to be "mostly due to the inclusion in the statistics of figures relating to certain merged States". An analysis of employment in mines by minerals produced shows that 75 p.c. of the total number employed are absorbed in coal mines. Besides, between 1939 and 1949, the volume of employment in coal mines has increased considerably. Thus in 1939, coal mines absorbed 1,98,754 workers (total employment in mines being 2,99,323) and in 1949 the number went up to 3,18,354 (total being 4,21,159). Although India is one of the important producers of iron, the total volume of employment therein is only 15,833 workers, though, it must be admitted that this is much

higher than that in 1939 when only 8,855 workers got employment in iron mines. Much of the mining industry is concentrated in Bihar and Bengal which together account for about five-sixths of the total labour employed in mines. Much of this employment is again in coal mines. In addition to coal, Bihar raises iron ore and manganese. With the merging of some of the smaller States with Bihar, this State is also emerging as an important mining State, produce coal, iron ore and manganese. Regarding the volume of employment in mines in the princely States, information is very scanty. According to the Director, Geological Survey of India, 1,16,718 workers in the mines in the States in 1947. Coal is the major mineral produced in the States and provided employment to 25,662 workers in 1948. In the Kolar Gold Fields for which upto-date information to September 1950 is available, 20,521 workers were employed. The volume of employment in Gold Fields has considerably declined even since 1939, when 28,315 workers were employed. Oilfields which are located in Assam only provided employment to 6,776 persons in 1949.

**Labour in Plantations**—Labour in plantations cannot really be called industrial because of the fact that the plantation industry is mainly agricultural in character. Plantation industry has never provided attraction to labour so much so that actually labour had to be entrapped by contractors and forced to settle and work on plantations. In fact, no other industry in this country has seen so much of emigrant labour as the tea plantations in Assam. Although the volume of emigrant labour in Assam has considerably fallen, yet it is by no means negligible and systematic statistics of this sort of labour is available which is given below.

## Number of Emigrants to Assam

Year	Men	Women	Children	Total
1929-30	33,510	14,117	12,169	59,796
1934-35	7,317	6,286	6,365	19,968
1939-40	9,488	7,792	7,497	24,777
1945-46	17,912	12,580	14,082	44,574
1948-49	13,264	9,838	9,330	32,432

The figures indicate that among the emigrants to Assam, women and children together exceed the number of men in all the year. Another thing to note is that the volume of emigrant labour in Assam is on the decline. This is due to the fact that many of the labourers have settled on the estates not only in the case of tea plantations in the north but also in the south. But in coffee and rubber plantations, outside labour still predominate and of this outside labour, a larger proportion is just temporary. In coffee plantations, a majority of the workers come from the neighbouring villages. In the rubber estates also nearly half the labour force comes from outside. The following figures give the actual position.

Plantations	Garden Labour	Outside Labour	
	Permanent	Permanent	Temporary
Tea (1948)	8,60,059	55,630	53,304
Coffee (1947-48)	56,356	22,556	72,665
Rubber (1948)	25,424	9,945	13,413

The total volume of labour employed on plantations is about 11.5 lakhs. Of this, about 9.5 lakhs are employed in tea plantations, 1.5 lakhs in coffee plantations and about 0.5 lakhs in the rubber estates.

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