INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

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Rajani Kanta Das, M.Sc., Ph.D.

(From the International Labour Review,
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In accordance with a resolution of the International Labour Conference, the International Labour Office has for some time been engaged on a documentary enquiry into working conditions in certain Asiatic countries. Some of the material collected in the course of this enquiry has been used by Dr. Das in the following study of a question on which little information has hitherto been available in an accessible form. After describing the increase in the number of women employed in the main branches of industry (plantations, factories, and mines) since the middle of the last century, he outlines the development of labour legislation over the same period, and then discusses—for each of these branches of industry in turn, and with special reference to women—conditions of employment, health and safety, hours of labour, efficiency of labour, wages and income, standard of living, welfare work, and social conditions. He concludes by indicating some directions in which reform is needed, and suggests a number of measures for the elevation of the political, social, and industrial status of women.

IN SPITE of the fact that women in India are deprived of many social and political privileges, they play an important rôle in the production of national wealth. According to the census of 1921, which is still the latest source of information on this subject, out of a total of 146 million actual workers or persons engaged in gainful occupations, 46 millions are women.[2] In comparison with some European countries, a very fair pro-

[1] In the preparation of this article, the writer has utilised his works on *Factory Labour in India*, Berlin, 1923 ; and *Plantation Labour in India*, Calcutta, 1931. Since the writing of the article, the *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India* has been published (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1931). Due reference has been made below to the few changes made in consequence.

[2] *Census Report of India*, 1921, Vol. I, p. 285.

portion of Indian women, therefore, is employed in the industrial activities of the country. Of the total number of persons gainfully occupied, for instance, the percentage of women is 31 in India, as compared with 29 in Italy, 30 in England and Wales, and 35 in Germany.[1]

The proportion of women in comparison with men is, however, much larger among the wage earners. Thus, out of 29 million wage earners in 1921, for whom definite information is available [2], 13 million, or 44 per cent., were women, as shown in the table below.

CLASSIFICATION BY INDUSTRY OF WAGE EARNERS IN INDIA, 1921 [1]

Category	Men	Women	Total
Field labourers	9,490,210	8,865,284	18,355,494
Farm servants	2,252,860	1,067,753	3,320,613
Domestic servants	1,710,157	821,709	2,531,866
Unspecified workers	2,894,236	2,257,164	5,151,400
Total	16,347,463	13,011,910	29,359,373

[1] *Census Report of India*, 1921, Vol. I, pp. 272-273.

The table above also shows that the majority of women workers were employed as field labourers and farm servants, forming together 9.9 millions out of a total of 13 millions, or 74 per cent. The preponderance of agricultural workers over other classes is due to the fact that about 73 per cent. of the people depend upon agriculture as a means of livelihood.[3] The distinction between field labourers and farm servants is not clearly defined, but in all probability the former are more or less free in the choice of their work, while the latter are attached to the land by custom, if not actually by law. In the unspecified group must be included a large number of casual workers.

The number of women employed in organised industries, such as plantations, factories, and mines, is, however, very small.

[1] Compiled from *Annuaire Statistique* (Paris), 1929, pp. 204-205. The figures for Germany refer to the year 1925.

[2] Besides the above figures, there are also workers employed on roads, railways and docks, and "the fluid mass of the general labour available for any kind of unskilled employment". The total number of such workers has been estimated at 6 million, but nothing is known as to the exact proportion of women workers.

[3] *Census Report of India*, 1921, Vol. I, p. 279.

In 1921, the total number of workers in large-scale industries or in industrial establishments employing 20 persons or more amounted to 2,681,125, of whom only 686,811 persons, or 26 per cent., were women.[1] There are two main reasons why so few women are employed in organised industries. First, in comparison with other countries, the proportion of modern industries is very small in India. The number of persons supported by industry, commerce, and transport, for instance, is only 18 per cent. in India, as compared with 65 per cent. in Great Britain, 62 per cent. in Germany, 50 per cent. in the United States, and 47 per cent. in France.[2] Secondly, social customs, such as early marriage, the joint family system, and the purdah (seclusion) system, prevent women from taking advantage of economic opportunities outside the household or the immediate neighbourhood.

Nothing is definitely known about the conditions of work and life of the labourers in unorganised industries, such as agriculture and domestic service, nor even in those organised industries which are still outside the scope of Government control. The employment of labour in large-scale industries, such as plantations, factories, and mines, is, however, regulated by labour legislation, and the present study is confined to the conditions of the work and life of women employed in these industries.

The Rise of Women Workers

Women on Plantations

By far the largest number of women workers are employed on plantations, which form one of the most important classes of organised industries in India, especially those for the production of tea, coffee, and rubber. The importance of these industries is best indicated by the fact that in 1928-1929 the paid-up capital of the joint-stock companies amounted to Rs. 51.59 crores [3], the value of their products exported to Rs. 30 crores [4], or about 9 per cent. of the value of the total export trade of the country,

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 266.

[2] Compiled from *Annuaire Statistique* (Paris), 1929, pp. 204-205.

[3] Comprising Rs. 12.90 crores invested by companies registered in British India and £29 millions invested by companies registered elsewhere. Cf. *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1931, pp. 625 and 629.

[4] *Review of the Trade of India*, 1928-1929, pp. 163-164.

and the total number of tea, coffee, and rubber plantations to 10,867.[1]

According to the census of 1921, out of 1,003,456 workers on tea, coffee, rubber, cinchona, and indigo plantations, 474,626, or 47 per cent., were women.[2] The present number of workers on all kinds of plantations is not known, but the average daily number of workers in 1929 was 930,472 on tea gardens, 92,504 on coffee estates, and 48,704 on rubber estates, that is, a total of 1,071,680.[3] The number of women on the same basis may be estimated at 503,689. The proportion of women workers on plantations is not only large, but compares very favourably with that of men workers.

There are several reasons why a proportionately large number of women workers is found on plantations. First, plantation work is only a special kind of agricultural industry, and is therefore more congenial to the majority of Indian women who are drawn from the rural districts. Secondly, the very fact that men workers have to live on, or in the vicinity of, the plantations gives their wives and daughters a chance to work with them. Thirdly, the system of labour contract based on the principle of utilising every able-bodied person in the family for labour, and of fixing the wage rates accordingly, compels many women to seek employment in order to balance the family budget. The contract system has been abolished, but the wage rates and the custom of woman labour still remain.

Most of the plantation industries are located in two areas, namely, the North, including Assam and Bengal, which employ an average daily number of 557,484 and 196,899 workers respectively, and the South, including Madras and Coorg, which employ 102,826 and 23,001 workers respectively. The most important areas in Assam are the Brahmaputra or Assam Valley and the Surma Valley, employing 400,995 and 156,489 workers respectively ; in Bengal, Jalpaiguri (the Doors) and Darjeeling (including the Terai), employing 125,632 and 65,522 workers respectively ; and in Madras, the Nilgiris, Coimbatore (the Anamalais), and Malabar, employing 43,560, 30,222, and 19,768 workers respectively.[1]

[1] Consisting of 4,714 tea gardens (1929), 3,371 coffee estates (1929-1930), and 2,782 rubber estates (1928). See the annual statistics published by the Government of India (supplement to the *Indian Trade Journal*) for these industries for the respective years.

[2] *Census Report of India*, 1921, Vol. I, p. 285.

[3] Including Indian States. The figures for coffee estates refer to the year 1929-1930. See the annual statistics for these industries.

Tea cultivation is by far the most important plantation industry in India. As noted before, out of 1,071,680 workers, 930,472, or 87 per cent., were employed on tea plantations in 1929. Although the tea gardens are scattered all over India, by far the majority of them are located in Assam. Thus, out of a total of 930,472 workers employed in all tea gardens in 1929, 557,484, or about 60 per cent., were in Assam.[2] Assam not only employs the largest number of tea-garden workers, but it is also one of the oldest centres in which plantation labour began to appear, and for which plantation legislation first began to be enacted. The condition of women workers on plantations may therefore be best studied in connection with those in Assam tea gardens.

The first available records on labour in Assam gardens are for 1877, when there were 59,923 men, 50,752 women, and 46,544 children living on the plantations ; in 1929-1930 these figures stood respectively at 341,580, 283,730, and 463,652, as shown in the table below, indicating an increase of over five times in the case of both men and women and of about nine times in the case of children. The table also shows that the largest increase in the number of all these groups took place in 1919-1920. This was partly due to the industrial boom at the end of the war, and partly to the sudden increase in the number of immigrants as a result of the previous year's famine in a larger number of recruiting districts.

LABOUR POPULATION ON ASSAM TEA GARDENS IN SPECIFIED YEARS[1]

Year	Men	Women	Children	Total
1877	59,923	50,752	46,544	157,219
1900	204,492	205,603	252,376	662,471
1919-1920	323,781	305,850	480,733	1,110,364
1929-1930	341,580	283,730	463,652	1,088,962

[1] Average annual strength, except for 1929-1930, the figure for which represents the number remaining at the end of the year. Adapted from the *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam* for the years indicated.

[1] Compiled from the annual statistics for the respective industries.

[2] *Indian Tea Statistics*, 1929, p. 6.

The number of women who are actually employed is, however, much smaller than the number living on plantations. Thus, out of 283,730 women living on tea gardens in Assam in 1929-1930, only 231,715, or 81 per cent., were workers. [1]

Until recently, a considerable number of plantation labourers were employed under the penal contract and the indenture system, which were introduced by the Assam Labour and Immigration Act of 1863, the Madras Planters' Act of 1903, and the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859. In Assam tea gardens, for instance, out of 110,675 labourers in 1877, 46,765 or 41 per cent. were indentured labourers, and of the latter 21,656 were women. Between that year and 1915-1916, when the indenture system was abolished, there was great variation in the number of indentured women. It will be seen that the number of indentured women rose as high as 69,056 in 1897 and declined to 2,152 in 1915-1916.

NUMBER OF INDENTURED WORKERS ON ASSAM TEA GARDENS IN SPECIFIED YEARS [1]

Year	Men	Women	Total
1877	25,109	21,656	46,765
1897 [2]	79,136	69,056	148,192
1915-1916	2,910	2,152	5,062

[1] Compiled from the *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam* for the years indicated.

[2] In 1897, the number of indentured workers was the largest.

As might be expected, the number of indentured workers as compared with free workers was highest in the early years, but gradually declined with the growth of settlements on tea gardens and with increasing facilities in transportation. Moreover, with increasing restrictions on the indenture system, planters found it more profitable to employ their workers under the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act. The actual number of women employed under this Act is not known, but the total number of workers,

[1] This number is the average for two months of the total number of women on the books. Compiled from the *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam*, 1929.

both men and women, amounted to 278,242 in 1921-1922. [1] The Act was repealed on 1 April 1926, but 17,978 workers were still under contract in Assam Valley up to 3 March of that year. At present there is no worker under the penal contract or the indenture system, except in Coorg, where it will terminate by the end of 1931.[2]

Women in Factories

The most important class of organised industries, however, is factories, especially cotton and jute mills, which were started near Bombay and Calcutta in 1851 and 1854 respectively and have since then become India's premier industries.[3] The importance of these industries may be seen from the fact that in 1928-1929 the paid-up capital of the joint stock companies was Rs. 37.9 crores in the cotton mills and Rs. 25.9 crores in the jute mills, and the total number of looms and spindles amounted to 148,847 and 7,653,033 respectively in the former, and 52,847 and 1,108,147 respectively in the latter.[4] The number of cotton and jute mills rose also from 58 and 22 respectively in 1879-1880 to 293 and 93 in 1928.[5] In the meantime, the factory industry as a whole has also made immense progress, the number of all classes of factories rising from 656 in 1892 to 7,863 in 1928.[6]

The earliest available records for workers in all classes of factories are for 1892, when the total number of workers was 316,816, consisting of 254,336 men, 43,592 women, and 18,888 children. In 1928 the total number of factory workers amounted to 1,520,315, consisting of 1,216,471 men, 252,933 women, and 50,911 children, showing an increase of 480 per cent. for women as compared with 378 per cent. for men and 170 per cent. for children.

[1] Compiled from the *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam*, 1921-1922.

[2] A. G. Clow: *The State and Industry*, pp. 164-165. Calcutta, Government of India.

[3] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908, Vol. 3, pp. 197 and 205.

[4] *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1931, pp. 681 and 691.

[5] *Statistics of British India*, 1921, Vol. I, pp. 55 and 74; *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1931, pp. 681-682.

[6] *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1900-1901, p. 265; *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1930, p. 17. It must be remembered that this increase in the number of factories has been brought about partly by the extension of the scope of the Factories Act to the smaller establishments, and partly by the growth of new establishments.

AVERAGE DAILY NUMBER OF FACTORY WORKERS IN SPECIFIED YEARS[1]

Year [2]	Factories	Men	Women	Children	Total
1892	656	254,336	43,592	18,888	316,816
1912	2,654	685,822	130,025	53,796	869,643
1922	5,144	1,086,457	206,887	67,658	1,361,002
1928	7,863	1,216,471	252,933	50,911	1,520,315

[1] *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1900-1901, p. 265 ; 1923, p. 654 ; *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1922 and 1928.
[2] The years chosen to indicate the number of workers are those when a new or amended Act came into force.

The real increase in the number of women is, however, still greater than that indicated above. Since 1892 there has been an increase in the minimum and maximum ages of girls, and many girls between the ages of 12 and 15, who were included among women before 1922, have been excluded from them since then.

There are several reasons for the proportionately larger increase in the number of factory women. First, increasing transport facilities have opened up greater opportunities to women in factories. Secondly, the gradual amelioration of working conditions has also attracted more women to factories. Thirdly, the stricter regulation of the employment of children has decreased their number and increased that of women.

The above table also shows that in proportion to men, the number of women is very small in factories in India. Thus, out of 1,520,315 workers in 1928, 1,216,417 or 80 per cent. were men, 252,933 or 16 per cent. were women, and 50,911 or 4 per cent. were children. Including girls, the total number of women was 260,848 or 17 per cent., as compared with 51 per cent. in Japan.[1] What is still more surprising is the fact that even in textile mills, in which by far the majority of the workers are women in other countries, the number of women is rather insignificant. Out of 657,433 workers in cotton and jute mills in 1928, only 113,546 were women and 3,150 girls, these forming together only 18 per cent. of the total number of workers, as compared with 81 per cent. in the textile factories of Japan.[2]

[1] Out of 1,936,249 factory workers in Japan in 1928, 987,373 were women. Cf. *Japanese Year Book*, 1931, p. 385.
[2] Out of 991,323 textile workers in Japan in 1927, 803,358 were women. Cf.. JAPAN, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY : *Factory Statistics*, 1929, p. 26.

There are various reasons for so small a proportion of women workers in factories. In the first place, social custom, to which reference has already been made, acts as a great obstacle to the occupation of women outside their immediate household, unless they are accompanied by their husbands and relatives, as in the case of plantations. In the second place, both spinning and weaving, especially the latter, are still carried on in the household with the help of women. According to the census of 1921, there were about two million hand looms in seven out of the ten provinces of India.[1] In the third place, the provisions of factory legislation fixing different working hours and rest periods for men and women were also responsible for the tardy growth of the number of women workers in textile industries. After the enactment of the Factories Act of 1891, for instance, 259 women were discharged from the Ahmedabad mills, where they were doing the same kind of work as men.[2] Finally, general illiteracy and lack of skill have made women as workers less profitable to employers in India.

Since women workers are mostly employed in textile mills, the majority of them live in Bombay and Bengal. In 1928, for instance, out of 252,933 women workers, 75,498 or over 30 per cent. were in Bengal and 75,092 or over 29 per cent. in Bombay. These were followed by Madras, with 32,095 or 12 per cent., and the Central Provinces and Berar, with 24,591 or 9 per cent. The remaining 18 per cent. were distributed chiefly among Assam and Burma.

DISTRIBUTION BY PROVINCES OF WOMEN FACTORY WORKERS IN INDIA IN 1928[1]

Province	Number	Per cent. of total
Bengal	75,498	30
Bombay	75,092	29
Madras	32,095	12
Central Provinces and Berar	24,591	9
Others	45,657	18
Total	252,933	100

[1] Adapted from *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1928, p 26.

[1] Compiled from *Census Report of India*, 1921, Vol. I, p. 270. The actual number was 1,931,071.
[2] See the present writer's *Factory Legislation in India* (Berlin, 1923), p. 83.

Women in Mines

Another organised industry which employs a considerable number of women is mining. Mining is an important industry in which the investments of joint-stock companies amounted to Rs. 146 crores [1] and the value of the products to Rs. 29 crores in the year 1928-1929. [2] Of the various mining industries, such as coal, manganese, mica, iron, and lead, the most important is coal. In 1929, the total production of coal was 23 million tons [3], and of 1,732 mines working under the Indian Mining Act 548 were collieries. [4]

The earliest year for which records of mining labour are available is 1901, when, out of 104,660 workers, 69,025 were men, 30,488 women, and 5,147 children. As a result of the Act of 1923, the employment of children under the age of 13 came to an end in 1926. In 1929, the number of men was 199,045 and of women 70,656, as shown in the table below, thus indicating increases of 174 and 160 per cent. respectively.

NUMBER OF MINING WORKERS IN SPECIFIED YEARS [1]

Year [2]	Men	Women	Children [3]	Total
1901	69,025	30,488	5,147	104,660
1924	164,402	87,434	6,381	258,217
1929	199,045	70,656	—	269,701

[1] Compiled from the *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the respective years.
[2] The years chosen to indicate the number of workers are those when a new or amended Act came into force.
[3] Under 12 years of age ; cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1924, p. 2.

By far the largest number of mining workers are employed in coal mines. In 1929, for instance, out of a total of 269,701 workers, 165,658, or 61 per cent., were in coal mines, and of the latter 42,477, or 25 per cent., were women. Most of these women

[1] This sum consisted of Rs. 39 crores invested by companies registered in British India and £81 millions invested by companies registered elsewhere but at work in British India. Cf. *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1931, pp. 625 and 629.
[2] *Indian Mineral Production in 1929*, p. 1.
[3] *Indian Coal Statistics*, 1929, p. 1.
[4] *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1929, pp. 97 and 107.

were employed in the coalfields of Jharia in Bihar and Orissa and of Raniganj in Bengal, employing 18,086 or about 43 per cent. and 12,667 or 30 per cent. of the women respectively. Of the other mines, manganese mines employed 27,233 persons, of whom 11,784 were women, and mica mines employed 16,555 persons, of whom 3,442 were women. [1]

A large number of women are employed underground. In 1901, out of 30,481 women, 19,247 or 63 per cent. were employed underground, and in 1929, out of 70,656 women, 24,089 or 34 per cent. were employed underground and at the same time 28,728 or 40 per cent. were employed in open workings—a classification which has been adopted since 1926. A considerable number of women who were formerly included among the workers employed underground are now classified as in open workings.

NUMBER OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN MINES IN SPECIFIED YEARS [1]

Year	Total	Employed in open workings	Employed underground	
			Number	Per cent.
1901	30,481	—	19,247	63
1924	87,434	—	60,375	69
1929	70,656	28,728	24,089	34

[1] Compiled from the *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the years indicated.

The women employed underground are found mostly in coal mines. Thus, out of 24,089 women employed underground in 1929, 21,880 or 90 per cent. were in coal mines; of the remainder, 1,483 were in mica mines and 726 in other mines. [2]

Labour Legislation [3]

The rise and growth of these industries, in which an increasing number of workers, and especially of women and children, were employed, made it necessary for the Government to bring

[1] Compiled from *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1929, p. 47.
[2] *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1929, p. 2.
[3] Cf. the present writer's article on " Labour Legislation in India ", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXII, No. 5, Nov. 1930.

them under control by legislative measures. This legislation has been enacted according to the needs of each industry, and even of each province, and there is therefore no uniform legislation for all classes of workers throughout the whole country.

The first organised industry to come under legislative regulation was plantations. Plantation legislation in India dates back to 1863, when, for the control of the abuses arising from the recruitment of labour by contractors, an Act was passed requiring recruiters to be licensed and emigrants to be registered. The Act was amended in 1865, fixing the scale of wages, making desertion and indolence on the part of labourers under contract punishable by law, and granting planters the power to arrest absconders without warrant. Thus the indenture system was established, under which men and women were employed on tea gardens in Assam.

From 1870 to 1915 the Act was amended several times, introducing such changes as free recruitment subject to civil contract, recognition of local contract, stricter restriction of recruitment, and better arrangement for sanitation. But by the Act of 1915 the indenture system was abolished, recruitment by contractors was prohibited, and provision was made for the creation of a Labour Board for the supervision of recruitment for Assam by local agents and garden *sardars*.

Reference has already been made to the application by planters of the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859. This Act was passed for the benefit of employers in general and was taken advantage of by planters. It gave them a hold over the workers and at the same time saved them the expense of importing labour from abroad. In 1920 the terms of the Act were somewhat modified, and in 1925 the Act was repealed, as well as the two sections of the Indian Penal Code under which workmen could be punished for neglect of duty. The new Act came into force on 1 April 1926. In 1927 the Government of Madras also repealed the Planters' Labour Act of 1903 which provided criminal penalties for breaches of contract, the new Act coming into force in the beginning of 1929. In the meantime the Coorg Assembly passed an Act in 1926 retaining criminal penalties for such employment until the end of 1931. Thus, except in Coorg, both the penal sanction and the indenture system under which women could be employed have been abolished all over British India.

The origin of factory legislation also dates back to the seventies, when attention was drawn to the necessity of regulating labour in the rising cotton mill-industry, which employed a large number of women and children and which at the same time aroused the spirit of rivalry among the Lancashire manufacturers. The first Factories Act of 1881, which failed to give any protection to women, was amended in 1891, and the hours of labour for women were restricted to 11 a day. A new Act was passed in 1911, but it did not affect the conditions of work in factories as far as women were concerned.

The war was followed by the inauguration of the International Labour Organisation by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. In the same year the International Labour Conference adopted several Draft Conventions and Recommendations, of which the most important, from the point of view of women, are the Draft Conventions on hours, minimum age of employment for children, and the employment of women at night, and the Recommendations for the prevention of anthrax, the protection of women and children against lead poisoning, and the prohibition of the use of white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches. Although the general principle of the Hours Convention was 48 hours a week, a concession was made to India and the weekly hours of work were fixed at 60. The minimum age of employment for children was also fixed at 12 for India, instead of 14 as in other countries. Some of these Draft Conventions and Recommendations were given effect to by the amendment of the Factory Act in 1922. The Factory Act was further amended in 1923, 1926, and 1931, bringing about minor changes, especially regarding the employment of children and the provision of better safety devices.

One of the most important effects of these successive amendments is the extension of the scope of the Act to smaller industrial establishments employing from 100 to 20 persons, and even 10 persons in special cases at the option of local Governments. Many small establishments, such as cotton ginning and jute pressing mills, in which a large number of women are employed, have thus been brought under factory legislation.

The next important class of labour legislation relates to mines, which, although established about the middle of the last century, did not come under legislative control until 1901, when the first Mines Act was passed. This Act only defined a mine

and provided for the appointment of the chief inspector of mines, who was empowered to stop the employment of children under twelve and of women in a mine where conditions, in his opinion, were dangerous to their health and safety. After the adoption by the International Labour Conference in 1919 of the Hours Convention, which applies to mining industries, and the ratification of this Convention by the Government of India in 1921, it became necessary to amend the existing mining law, and a new Mines Act was passed in 1923. By this Act, the hours were limited to 54 a week for underground work and 60 for surface work, and the days of work were limited to six a week ; and at the same time the employment of children under 13 years of age was prohibited. The Act was again amended in 1928, limiting the daily hours of work to 12 in 24 hours. But mines can work two shifts of 12 hours each if the shifts do not overlap.

Transportation is another class of organised industry which has been brought under legislative control as far as the employment of labour is concerned. But there are very few women employed in transport industries. Among the other classes of legislation which concern the employment of women must be included the Acts relating to social insurance, trade unionism, industrial disputes, and especially maternity benefits, some of which will be discussed later on.

The most important question of labour legislation, however, is administration, which differs for different industries in India. The enactment of plantation legislation lies within the power of provincial Governments, subject to the approval of the Central Government. When the indenture system existed, plantation legislation made specific provision for the forwarding of the recruits from the place of residence to the place of work, and also for health and sanitation on the plantations themselves. With the abolition of the indenture system, administration has been greatly simplified. The enforcement of the law is left mostly to the *ex-officio* inspectors, consisting of deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners, civil servants and other agents.[1] Mining legislation is within the competence of the Central Government, and inspection is carried on under the supervision of the Chief Inspector of Mines all over British India, which, for convenience, is divided into two circuits. The staff consists of a Chief Inspector, three inspectors, and four junior inspectors. The

[1] *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam*, 1930, pp. 2-5.

administration of factory legislation is different from both kinds of legislation mentioned above. While the enactment of the legislation is the concern of the Central Government, its administration is left to provincial Governments, which make special rules, subject to the approval of the Central Government, to give effect to the law. The inspecting staff differs in different provinces, the largest being eleven in Bombay, one of whom is a woman.[1]

Some idea of the efficiency of the inspection may be had from the proportion of industrial establishments annually inspected as compared with their total number. As far as the inspection of the Assam tea gardens is concerned, it must be mentioned that under the Act of 1882 as modified in 1904-1905 and 1915, tea gardens employing 50 persons or more are liable to inspection only every two years. A few gardens are also specially selected for inspection in a particular year because of their health conditions in previous years. According to these rules, out of 868 Assam tea gardens, employing 50 persons or more, in 1929-1930 only 434 were liable to inspection, consisting of 411 which were not inspected in the preceding year and 23 which were specially selected for annual inspection. Out of this number, 421 were inspected.[2] In other words, over 52 per cent. of the larger tea gardens were left uninspected during the year. Similarly, out of 1,732 mines in 1929, only 1,016, or 59 per cent., were inspected, although some of them were inspected more than once.[3] The system of factory inspection, however, is much more satisfactory. Out of 7,863 factories in 1928, 7,093, or 90 per cent., were inspected during the year.[4] As a rule, permanent factories are inspected once a year and even more. It is only some of the seasonal factories and out-of-the-way factories that escape annual inspection.

Another important question in connection with the administration of the law is enforcement. This involves prosecution and conviction for contraventions of the law, and the infliction of penalties. The number of persons convicted increased from

[1] Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, 1929, p. 250.

[2] Compiled from *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam*, 1930.

[3] The total number of inspections amounted to 2,388. Cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1929, p. 107.

[4] *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1928, p. 31.

72 in 1924 to 99 in 1929 in the mines, and from 223 in 1923 to 419 in 1928 in the factories.[1] This increase in the number of convictions is mostly due to the strict enforcement of the law.

Employment of Labour

Supply of Labour

The rise of organised industries in different parts of the country has created a new demand for labour, but in spite of immense potentialities there was until recently a shortage of labour in factories and there still is on plantations and in mines. The movement of labour from the sources of supply to the centres of industry is difficult in India for several reasons, of which the most important are ignorance of industrial opportunities outside the immediate neighbourhood, the caste and joint family systems, lack of transport facilities, and the extreme poverty of the masses. Some of the industrial centres are not attractive to labourers because of their unhealthiness, low wages, and bad housing. Moreover, women have some additional difficulties inasmuch as they are prevented by social custom from free movement, and can go to look for work only with their men folk.

Different industrial centres draw their labour supply from different sources. Plantations in the South are mostly located in the sources of labour supply and recruit their labourers from the surrounding districts. The tea gardens of Bengal depend upon Nepal, Sikkim, Chota Nagpur, and the Santhal Parganas for their labour supply. The Assam tea gardens draw their labour force from a much wider region, namely, Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, Chota Nagpur, the Santhal Parganas, and the northern part of Madras, only about one-tenth of the labour supply being recruited from the locality.[2] A considerable number of these workers belong to aboriginal races.

The workers in mines may be classified in three groups, namely, (1) those who belong to the locality, (2) those who have come there and settled permanently, and (3) those who are

[1] Compiled from the *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, and *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, for the respective years.

[2] Out of an adult labour force of 625,310 in Assam gardens, in 1929, only 60,716 were Assamese.

recruited from outside. The last group, however, is the largest. In the coalfields of Jharia and Raniganj, for instance, about 75 per cent. and 50 per cent. respectively of the workers are recruited from the Santhal Parganas, Birbhum, Hazaribagh, Munghyr, and Bilaspur.[1] The majority of the mining workers also belong to aboriginal races. As far as the women workers are concerned, about 75 per cent. are recruited in the locality.[2]

Factories are scattered all over the country and the sources of labour supply also vary in different industrial centres. Bombay draws its labour supply from surrounding districts, provinces, and even Indian States, although the bulk of its workers come from the nearby districts, such as Ratnagiri.[3] Calcutta depends for its labour upon Northern Madras, Orissa, Bihar, the Central Provinces, and the United Provinces. In the early years, the Bengalis supplied labour to the jute mills, but they have been gradually replaced by the hardier and cheaper labour from outside.[4] Jamshedpur gets its skilled labourers from all parts of India and its unskilled labourers mostly from aboriginal races in the neighbourhood.[5] Madras, Ahmedabad, Cawnpore, and Nagpur also depend on outside labour, although they draw it mostly from the areas closer at hand.[6]

Most of the workers, however, are still attached to their native villages. A large number of workers in Bombay city, for instance, live there as boarders, although they are married, and keep their dependants in their village. Even those who live with their family in industrial centres have some of its members living in the village. The average working-class family, for instance, consists in Bombay of 4.8 persons and in Ahmedabad of 4 persons, of whom 0.6 and 0.13 persons respectively live in the country.[7] The workers visit their homes regularly, either in

[1] Evidence of Mr. Amrit Lal Ogha, M.L.C., Member of the Mining Board, before the Royal Commission on Labour in India.

[2] Evidence of Mr. J. B. Wardlaw, Agent, Bengal Coal Company, Limited, before the Royal Commission on Labour in India.

[3] In 1921 only 16 per cent. of the inhabitants had been born in the city, and out of its 1,175,914 inhabitants, 235,566 came from Ratnagiri. Cf. Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 3.

[4] B. Foley, I.C.S. : *Report on Labour in Bengal*, p. 14. Calcutta, 1906.

[5] *Memorandum by the Tata Iron and Steel Works to the Royal Commission on Indian Labour*, pp. 2-3. 1930.

[6] In 1921 only 20 per cent. of the inhabitants of Ahmedabad had been born in the city, 25 per cent. came from the district other than the city, 20 per cent. from Baroda State, and the rest from other provinces. Cf. Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 2.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

the planting or harvesting seasons, or at some other convenient time, depending upon the seasonal fluctuations in industry or on climatic conditions in the industrial centres.

A permanent class of workers who are solely dependent upon wages as a means of livelihood and are wholly detached from the land is, however, rapidly growing in most of the industrial centres, such as Bombay, Ahmedabad, Cawnpore, Jharia, and Raniganj. Every year a number of people are driven from the country to the city by a diversity of causes, such as the scarcity of cultivable land, lack of suitable secondary industries, extreme poverty and heavy indebtedness, and the growing sense of inequity to which some of them are subject because of the caste system and untouchability. The amenities of town life are also attractive to some workers. With the increasing pressure on land and the industrialisation of the country, there is no doubt that the number of industrial workers will grow in the near future. [1]

A comparatively large number of women are found on plantations where workers live in families. This is due to the fact that plantations offer work to all the members of the family. Even the children from the age of five are found working there. This used to be more or less true also in the case of mines, where the employment of children under 13 was permissible until 1926. The gradual elimination of women from underground employment is also likely to affect the number of families that may be willing to live in mining centres. The number of families living in factory towns is, however, very small. Single women are also few in number among workers. Women of high caste scarcely ever go to work in factories unless they offend family traditions in some way or other and are thrown out of the caste or the family circle [2], and those of lower caste are too ignorant to avail themselves of industrial opportunities in a town unless they happen to be in the close vicinity. Almost all the girls are married before they become eligible for work in factories and mines.

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[1] " It might be said that a very large majority of the labour force is permanent, although workers without any connection with the villages form about only 20 per cent. of the working class population. " (GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 7.)

[2] Dagmar F. CURJEL : *Women's Labour in Bengal Industries*, p. 6. Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour, No. 31. Calcutta, Government Printing Press, 1923.

Systems of Recruitment

The scarcity of labour supply, as shown above, has led employers to devise different systems of recruitment, which may be classed under two headings, the direct and the indirect. The former means recruitment by employers themselves or by their paid and accredited officers, and the latter recruitment through intermediaries. In some cases the two systems may be modified or combined.

Almost all the labourers on plantations in the South are recruited through contractors called *kanganis* or *maistries,* who receive from planters loans free of interest from which they advance the money to individual labourers or families wishing to go to plantations. [1] The Bengal tea gardens recruit their labourers through *sardars* or agents. By far the majority of the workers are now settled on or near the gardens. The Assam tea gardens, however, have experienced great difficulties in recruiting their labour force. After long experiment with the contractor system, they have now adopted what is called the *sardari* system. The *sardars* are common workers who are sent out to their native villages for recruitment. They work under the supervision of local agents and the Assam Labour Board referred to above. In 1929-1930, for instance, there were 42,829 *sardars,* including both men and women, who recruited 58,150 persons, that is, an average of 1.35 per sardar. [2] The essential feature of this system is the recruitment of families rather than individuals.

There are several systems of recruiting labour for mines. First, some of the mines recruit their workers through contractors, but employ them under direct management. Most of the mines, however, engage raising contractors for mining coal and loading wagons for a fixed rate of payment. About 70 per cent. of the output at Jharia and 40 per cent. at Raniganj is mined by raising contractors. [3] In this case, the workers are recruited and employed by the contractors themselves. Secondly, some of the *sardars* bring workers to the mines and employ them in gangs, undertaking the responsibility for their work. Thirdly,

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[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 355.

[2] *Report of the Assam Labour Board*, 1930, p. 2.

[3] *Census Report of India*, 1921, Vol. I, p. 293 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 116 and 119.

most of the mines send some members of their staff to visit villages and make advances to prospective workers.

The system of labour recruitment for factories also varies in different centres. A number of migratory and local workers, specially of the unskilled type, present themselves at industrial establishments and are appointed on the spot, while others are recruited in their native villages by employers' agents.[1] The most common system of recruiting labourers is, however, through supervisors or foremen, both men and women, who are variously called jobbers, *sardars, mukkadems,* or *maistries.* The workers often belong to the same village or the same caste as the foreman.[2] The essential feature of this system is that the workers recruited by a foreman are employed directly under him, so that the foreman's control over the workers remains as long as the latter retain their jobs.

The *sardari* system of recruitment is objectionable on several grounds. First, it is liable to abuses. In the earlier days contractors and *arcattis* (professional recruiters) were accused of fraud, deception, and misrepresentation. Even to-day, garden *sardars* are not altogether above reproach, especially as they expect a commission of Rs. 10 in the Surma Valley and Rs. 20 in the Assam Valley for each recruit. Women are specially liable to become their victims. Secondly, it is wasteful. It has been estimated that every year the Assam tea gardens send out as *sardars* an average of 7 per cent. of their adult labourers to recruiting districts, of whom about one-half are unsuccessful and about one-third never return to the gardens. Thirdly, it is very costly. The cost of recruitment for mining industries, for instance, is estimated to be an average of 3 or 4 annas per ton of coal raised.[3] On the basis of the average *per capita* production of 135 tons in 1929[4], the total cost would amount to from Rs. 25 to Rs. 34 per person per annum. The advances made to recruiters by plantations in the South would average about Rs. 15 for each labourer.[5] The cost is, however, highest for

[1] *Census Report of India,* 1921, Vol. I, pp. 92 and 273.

[2] GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour,* pp. 8 and 9.

[3] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India,* pp. 118, 364-365.

[4] *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India,* 1929, p. 5.

[5] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India,* pp. 355 and 359.

Assam tea-garden labourers, for whom the average cost has been estimated to be Rs. 150 each. That the cost of recruitment for factories is also very high may easily be imagined. It must be remembered that the expense of recruitment ultimately comes from the wage budget.

The *jobber* system of recruitment as existing in factories is liable to more serious abuses. First, it leads to graft, which is prevalent in Bombay and other places. "That the system leads to intensive 'graft'", writes the Government of Bombay in its *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour,* "is indisputable, and both the jobbers and their female counterparts, the *naikins,* levy contributions from the workers."[1] Secondly, it has been reported that besides paying fees for a job, the workers have to continue to pay a part of their wages during the continuance of their service.[2] Thirdly, it is responsible for inefficiency, owing to the fact that it is not the best workers who are chosen by the jobbers, but those who can pay them the most, or in whom they are specially interested.

Nature of Occupations

Although organised industries have opened new fields of work for women, the kind and the number of occupations which are open to them are very limited. Women are employed on almost all tea gardens. Most of the mines, especially collieries, also employ women ; but the prohibition of their work underground will eliminate a considerable number of them from mining work. In factories their work is confined mostly to textile mills and to seasonal factories connected with ginning and pressing cotton, pressing jute, milling rice, curing tea, and manufacturing shellac. The women workers in cotton ginning and pressing mills amount to half the total number of workers employed in these mills.

Women's work consists mostly of plucking on tea gardens ; of carrying loads in coal, iron, and salt mines ; of drying, spreading, and turning rice, moving it from the hullers, and winnowing

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 9. The *Memorandum* also points out (p. 10) that some of the jobbers recruit children by entering into a contract with their parents to pay Rs. 30 per annum to the parents, and to feed, clothe, and house the children in return for their services.

[2] *Memorandum of the Bombay Textile Labour Union to the Royal Commission on Indian Labour,* 1930, p. 7.

bran in rice mills ; of stripping, grinding and sieving in shellac factories ; and of drawing, roving, and moving receivers and hand-sewing in jute mills. Only in those districts where there is a scarcity of labour are women found in other departments of a jute mill.

In cotton mills women are employed in a variety of occupations, such as winding, reeling, ring spinning, slubbing, mixing, carding, and warping[1], but by far the largest number are employed in the first three occupations. Out of 12,072 women employed in 16 mills in Bombay in 1926, for instance, 4,691 or 38 per cent. were winders, 3,140 or 26 per cent. ring spinners, and 2,097 or 17 per cent. reelers, as shown in the table below. In other words, over four-fifths of the women workers were employed in these three departments of cotton mills.

WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONS IN BOMBAY COTTON MILLS [1]

Department	Number of women	Per cent. of total
Winding	4,691	38
Ring spinning	3,140	26
Reeling	2,097	17
Others	2,144	19
Total	12,072	100

[1] Adapted from *Report of an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1926*, p. 80. Bombay, Government Central Press, 1930.

In certain kinds of work women's labour is preferable to that of men, but the main reason why women are employed in organised industries is the cheapness of their labour. Sometimes they are preferred to children because of their steadiness. A certain number of women also seem to be necessary to keep the men content.[2] This limitation of occupations for women lessens the demand for their labour and reduces the scale of their wages.

[1] There are practically no women in weaving departments in the Bombay Presidency. Only two women are reported to be employed in the weaving department of the Sholapur mills.

[2] Dagmar F. CURJEL : *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Sanitation and Comfort

Among the general conditions of labour sanitary conditions hold an important place, especially in the case of women, whose ill health is injurious not only to themselves but often also to their children and other members of the family.

As long as the indenture system existed, sanitary regulations for plantation labour related both to the forwarding of labourers from the source of supply to the place of work and to their working and living conditions on plantations. The plantation law included provisions for sanitation, with separate arrangements for single women, in places of accommodation, detention depôts, and transporting vessels ; the enforcement of the law was entrusted to inspecting, medical, and other officers. In spite of these provisions, the death rate among the immigrants both at the depôts and *en route* was appalling in the early years. With the growth of transport facilities and improvements in sanitation, however, the death rate was gradually reduced.

Although some of the plantations in both the North and the South have satisfactory sanitary arrangements, a large number of them still lack adequate drainage, pure drinking water, and sanitary conservancy. The result is that malaria, dysentery, and hookworm infect a large number of the plantation population, thus lowering their vitality and efficiency. It must be mentioned that plantations have often been opened up in forests and valleys which have never been known to be healthy. Malaria is the worst disease on plantations and used formerly to render many gardens in Assam " unhealthy ".[1] Medical help is now quite up-to-date on the larger plantations, but is still unsatisfactory on the smaller ones. Moreover, there is a lack of bathing and washing facilities on most of the plantations, causing great inconvenience, especially to women.[2]

There has, however, been a gradual improvement in sanitary conditions on plantations, as indicated by the vital statistics for Assam tea gardens given in the table below. The influenza

[1] An " unhealthy " garden is one where the death rate exceeds 70 per 1,000 inhabitants. Cf. *Report on Immigrant Labour in Assam*, 1883, p. 33.

[2] *Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee* (1921-1922), pp. 93-99 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 405-410.

epidemic was the cause of a high death rate in 1919-1920, and the figure was in fact as high as 61 per 1,000 in 1918-1919. At present both the birth and death rates are rather in favour of the gardens as compared with the Province as a whole, where they are respectively 31.2 and 22.1 per 1,000 of the population.[1]

BIRTH AND DEATH RATES IN ASSAM TEA GARDENS IN SPECIFIED YEARS [1]

(Per 1,000 of the population)

Year	Birth rate	Death rate
1878	31.9	66.1
1900	27.6	29.4
1919-1920	19.3	40.8
1929-1930	32.1	21.4

[1] Computed from *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam* for the respective years.

The birth rate was very low until 1923-1924, when it reached the same level in the tea gardens as in the rest of the Province. Among the most important causes of the low birth rate in the earlier years may be mentioned the inability of women to adapt themselves to changed conditions of food and climate, but miscarriages, still births, irregular marriages, and abortion were also partly responsible. This low birth rate was accompanied by a high death rate, which was brought about by several causes, such as the unhealthiness of the Province, changes in climate and food, comparatively poor physique of the immigrants who were recruited from the famine or poverty stricken regions, and the insanitary conditions of the gardens.

In contrast to plantations, where the work is mostly out of doors, factory work is generally done indoors and therefore involves a more complicated system of sanitary arrangements From the outset the larger factories have had good sanitary conditions. In 1906, the Textile Labour Committee found some of the mills a credit to their owners. [2] " There are factories ", says the Royal Commission on Labour in India, which has just

[1] *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1931, pp. 409, 425 ; the figures refer to 1928.

[2] GREAT BRITAIN : *Parliamentary Papers*, 1907, Vol. 59, Cd. 3617, p. 21.

finished its work, " which would compare favourably in lay-out, cleanliness, atmosphere and general well-being with any factories in the world." [1]

This remark is not, however, of universal application, especially in the case of the smaller and seasonal factories. Some of the factories are defective in construction and are not suitable to the Indian climate. Light and ventilation are poor, floor space insufficient, and methods of controlling gas and vapour inadequate. Dust and fluff are specially prevalent in cotton-ginning, rice-milling, and tea-manufacturing factories. The temperature in the hot weather is higher inside than outside, and humidity, which is necessary in some of the textile processes, causes discomfort. The latrine system is insufficient and insanitary, and in many cases there are no separate arrangements for women. Drinking water is insufficient in the hot weather. There are no washing facilities for women, nor is there any provision for dining sheds and resting places. [2]

Unlike outdoor work on plantations and indoor work in factories, work in mines is partly underground, and the question of sanitation therefore becomes much more complicated. In India, the coal mines, where most of the mine workers are employed, are shallow, few of them being deeper than 500 feet ; the seams are generally 10 feet or more thick ; the underground roads are spacious and the miners can stand upright at their work. Ventilation is effective in most of the larger mines, though inadequate in the smaller ones. Sanitation is, however, most defective. About 83 per cent. of the mines examined at Raniganj are contaminated with hookworm larva. It is estimated that 90 per cent. of the adult workers at Jharia and 70 per cent. of the underground men workers at Raniganj are infected with hookworm.[3]

As far as sanitation in mining districts is concerned, steps have been taken by such measures as the Bengal Settlement Act

[1] *Report*, p. 63.

[2] GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, pp. 38 and 58 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 56-59, 62-66, and 84.

[3] *Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1924, p. 14 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 115. Very unsatisfactory conditions exist in the salt mines owned and worked by the Government of India at Khewra in the Punjab, where inadequate sanitation and the polluted underground atmosphere contribute to the low standard of health among the workers. (*Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.)

of 1912 [1] and the Bihar and Orissa Settlement Act of 1921, and by the establishment of Boards of Health at Asansol and Jharia, to improve sanitation and health. Moreover, a Water Board has been installed at Jharia for supplying pure water.[2]

Although much yet remains to be done, there has been great improvement in sanitation and health in the coalfields of both Raniganj and Jharia, as indicated by vital statistics. In 1929, for instance, the death rate per 1,000 was 23.2 at Raniganj, as compared with 25.5 in the Province of Bengal. Similarly the birth and death rates per 1,000 of the population were respectively 27.75 and 19.57 at Jharia, as compared with 38.3 and 25.3 in the Province of Bihar and Orissa.[3] The reason for the lower birth rate in the coalfields is that the proportion of women is much lower than that of men, and a large number of women go back to their own villages before childbirth.

Safety and Accidents

Besides sanitation, workers, especially women, need safety from dangerous machinery and poisonous materials, which are often employed in organised industries, especially factories and mines. The necessity for special precautions in the case of women workers is twofold, namely : (1) the inadaptability of women to certain classes of occupations ; (2) the possibility that any injury to women may affect not only themselves, but also often their children.

Since the enactment of the first Factories Act in 1881, efforts have been made to secure adequate fencing and to enforce safety regulations. The law also prohibits women from cleaning mill gearing or machinery and from working between the fixed or traversing parts of any self-acting machinery while it is in motion.[4] Moreover, under section 20 of the Act of 1911, as amended in 1922, women are prohibited from employment in that part of a cotton-pressing factory in which a cotton opener

[1] Bengal, Act II of 1912.

[2] The water is brought to the coalfields from a distance of 16 miles and 1¼ million gallons of water are supplied daily to the important collieries. (*Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines*, 1927, p. 35.)

[3] *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines*, 1929, pp. 39-40 ; *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1931, pp. 408, 423. The figures for Bengal and Bihar and Orissa refer to the year 1928.

[4] India, Act XII of 1911 as modified up to July 1922, section 19 and 19b.

is at work, unless its feed end is in a room separated from the delivery end, owing to the fact that it has been a constant source of danger in the past.

Since the adoption of the International Labour Conventions on white phosphorus and lead and their compounds, the Government has taken steps to protect women in any occupation using these materials. The Phosphorus Act prohibits the use of white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches. The employment of women is also forbidden in processes connected with the treatment of zinc or lead ores and of lead, or in the cleaning of the workroom where any of the specified processes are carried on. If women are employed in operations where lead compounds are used, several precautionary measures have to be taken, such as efficient ventilation, prohibition of the consumption of food, and use of adequate and protective clothing.

Mines also often involve processes dangerous to women. The first Mines Act of 1901 provided that a mining inspector might prohibit the employment of women in a mine or in any of its operations which, in his opinion, were dangerous to their health and safety. This provision has been improved by the Act of 1923. Since then the employment of women underground, which is a most fruitful source of accidents, has also been prohibited, as will be shown later on. Moreover, the large mines have introduced up-to-date devices for preventing accidents, and adopted more precautionary measures, such as the "Safety First" movement.

In spite of safety provisions, there occur every year a large number of accidents in both factories and mines. Factory accidents include mishaps of all kinds that occur to workers during the hours of labour within the premises of a mill. These mishaps have to be reported only if the injured person cannot return to work within 48 hours of the mishap.[1]

Reliable data on factory accidents were first available in 1892, when there were 1,369 accidents. In 1928—the latest year for which data are available—the figure rose to 16,348. The numbers of fatal, serious, and minor cases in each year are shown in the table below. It will be seen that while fatal accidents increased a little over eight times, serious and minor accidents increased twelve times. In the same period the number of accidents per

[1] India, Act XI of 1891, section 13 ; Act XIII of 1911, section 34 ; and Act XXVI of 1926, section 34.

1,000 workers increased from 4.32 to 10.75, i.e. more than doubled.

FACTORY ACCIDENTS IN BRITISH INDIA [1]

Year	Fatal	Serious	Minor	Total	
				Number	Per 1,000 workers
1892	31	318	1,020	1,369	4.32
1912	122	1,019	3,367	4,508	5.18
1922	191	1,207	5,562	6,960	5.11
1928	264	3,494	12,590	16,348	10.75

[1] Compiled from the *Statistical Abstract for British India* for the respective years.

Since most of the women are employed in occupations using very little machinery it may be presumed that women in factories are comparatively safe. For instance, out of 1,358 accidents in the Madras Presidency in 1928, consisting of 12 fatal, 258 serious, and 1,088 minor accidents, only 6 women received serious and 7 women minor injuries.[1] The greatest danger to life and limb of women was formerly in cotton-ginning and jute-pressing mills, but there has been improvement as regards safety even in these industries.

Accidents are generally commoner in mines than in factories, but unlike those in factories, accidents, or more properly casualties [2], in mines are classified under two headings only, namely, fatal and serious, minor accidents not being recorded. A serious accident is one which involves any permanent disablement or injury, or enforces absence from work for 20 days, or which is declared by any medical officer to be serious.[3]

Full records of mining casualties are available since 1903, when the total was 168. In 1929, the figure rose to 938. It will be seen from the table below, showing the numbers of fatal and serious casualties in each year, and also the numbers per 1,000 workers, that fatal and serious casualties were three and eight

[1] Royal Commission on Labour in India : *Evidence*, Vol. VII, Part I, p. 57.

[2] In the report of the Chief Inspector of Mines, the term "accident" has been used both for the event and for a person injured by it. The word "casualty" has here been substituted for "accident" in the latter sense of the word.

[3] Circular of the Government of India, Department of Revenue and Agriculture, 4 September 1902 ; see also *Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines*, 1906, p. 72.

times more numerous respectively in 1929 than in 1903. The number of fatal cases was highest in 1923, when the proportion was more than twice as high as in 1903.

CASUALTIES IN MINES IN BRITISH INDIA [1]

Year	Fatal		Serious		Total	
	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers
1903	81	0.79	87	0.84	168	1.63
1923	387	1.65	344	1.46	731	3.11
1929	266	0.99	672	2.49	938	3.48

[1] Cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the respective years.

As might be expected, by far the largest number of accidents take place underground. In 1929, for instance, out of 212 fatal and 651 serious accidents, 153 or 72 per cent. of the former and 391 or 60 per cent. of the latter took place underground, involving 206 or 77 per cent. and 404 or 60 per cent. of the casualties respectively. The most common causes of fatal accidents are misadventure and fault of the deceased, which were responsible for 146 or 40 per cent. and 69 or 20 per cent. of the accidents respectively. Among the other important causes of accidents must be mentioned the fault of fellow workers, subordinate officials, and the management.[1]

A considerable number of women are victims of these accidents. In 1901, for instance, out of 102 fatal accidents, 14 occurred to women. The number of fatal accidents to women rose as high as 90 in 1923 and was 51 in 1929, as shown below.

FATAL CASUALTIES IN MINES IN BRITISH INDIA [1]

Year	Men	Women	Total
1901	88	14	102
1923	297	90	387
1929	215	51	266

[1] Cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the respective years.

[1] Cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the respective years.

As in the case of mining casualties in general, the majority of the casualties to women take place underground. As noted above, out of 266 fatal casualties in 1929, 51 occurred to women. Out of 672 serious casualties, 84 also occurred to women. Of these, 40 and 38 respectively occurred underground, as shown below. It will also be noticed that the proportions of fatal and serious casualties underground were respectively 1.66 and 1.58 per 1,000 women workers.

CASUALTIES OCCURRING TO WOMEN EMPLOYED IN MINES IN BRITISH INDIA IN 1929 [1]

Place	Fatal		Serious	
	Number	Per 1,000 women workers	Number	Per 1,000 women workers
Underground	40	1.66	38	1.58
Open workings	4	0.14	25	0.87
Surface	7	0.39	21	1.18

[1] Cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1929, p. 15.

From the above analysis it will be noticed that there has been a considerable increase in the number and proportion of accidents, both in factories and mines. There are several causes for this increase. In the first place, the increasing complexity of machinery and speeding up of production have not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the adaptability and efficiency of the workers on the one hand, and in the adoption of protective measures by the employer on the other. There has also been an increase in the number of small factories, such as cotton ginning and pressing mills, where accidents are commoner than in large factories. Similarly, there has been an increase in the depth of mining operations, involving greater risk than before. In the second place, increasing thoroughness in inspection and accuracy in reporting have also increased the number of known accidents, some of which were left unrecorded before. In the third place, there is a greater willingness on the part of the injured to report minor and serious accidents, with the hope of getting compensation as stipulated by the Workmen's Compensation Act since 1923.

Finally, it may be noted that work in factories and mines involves dangers not only to women, but often also to their

children. There is scarcely any provision for taking care of the children while their mothers are at work. Many women are obliged either to leave their babies at home, soothed with opium, or to bring them to the place of work, where they are exposed to the foul, hot, and humid atmosphere or to the noise and danger of the moving machinery. Cases of fatal accidents to children are not unknown. What is commoner is injury to their health. This subject has been under discussion by various committees and commissions for over a generation, and recommendations have been made for the provision of crèches ; but little progress has yet been made in this direction.[1]

Workmen's Compensation

The existence of accidents in factories and mines shows that there is a necessity for providing compensation for the injured workman or his family. Moreover, provision for compensation leads to greater care on the part of the employers to protect the life and limbs of their workers.

The demand for compensation was in fact made by the workers themselves as early as 1884. This demand was renewed from time to time, especially during the period of industrial disputes in 1919 and 1920. Proposals for legislation were first published by the Government in 1921 and the framework of a Bill was prepared in 1922. In the same year, the principle of compensation was given effect to in one of the provisions of the Factories (Amendment) Act of 1922, which empowered the courts to pay compensation to injured workers out of the fines imposed upon employers. A Bill for compensation legislation was also soon introduced, which was passed in 1923 and amended in 1926 and 1929, with a view to facilitating the ratification of International Labour Conventions and making other minor amendments. [2] Under these measures, over 3,000,000 workers in different industries, including factories and mines, are insured against accidents, including anthrax infection and

[1] GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, pp. 38, 58. This question is discussed in a later section of this article, entitled "Welfare Work".

[2] See the present writer's article on " Labour Legislation in India ", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXII, No. 5, Nov. 1930 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 295.

poisoning from lead, phosphorus, mercury, and their compounds. [1]

The employer is liable to pay compensation for accident or disease arising out of and in the course of employment. Persons claiming compensation from an employer for a disease must have been in his service for at least six months, and an injury must result in partial or total disablement within ten days of its inception. The scale of compensation varies according to the nature of the injury and whether the injured person is an adult or a minor. For adults the amount payable is 30 months' wages for death, 42 months' wages for complete permanent disablement, a fraction of the above amount, depending upon the extent of the loss of earning power, for partial permanent disablement, and half the rate of wages for temporary disablement. Compensation is generally payable in a lump sum. [2]

The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923 came into force on 1 July 1924. Since then the number of cases of accidents and disease coming within its purview has gradually increased from 4,168 in the last six months of 1924 to 18,865 in 1929.[3] Of the latter, 888 were deaths, 1,345 permanent disablements, and 16,634 temporary disablements ; the average sum of money paid per person as compensation was respectively Rs. 663, 295 and 76. [4]

Little information is available as to how many of these accidents occurred to women, and how much compensation they received.

Underground Employment

Insecurity to life and limb in underground work, as noted above, has brought the question of prohibiting such employment for women to the forefront. It is in fact an evil to women on a threefold ground, namely, health, safety, and morality. The questions of health and safety have already been referred to. There is also a moral question involved in the underground employment of women, although Indian women generally accom-

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[1] *Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Conditions in India*, 1923-1924, p. 201.

[2] India, Act No. XIII of 1923.

[3] *Workmen's Compensation Statistics for 1926* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1928), p. 3 ; *Idem, 1929-1931*, p. 3.

[4] *Idem, 1926*, p. 3 (computed).

pany their relatives in such work. In fact, there are few civilised countries where women are allowed to work underground.

This question was raised by the Secretary of State for India as long ago as 1890, when Lord Cross forwarded to the Government of India a report of the proceedings of the Berlin Labour Conference and suggested that the Government should consider the advisability of legislating for the regulation of the employment of women in mines. The Government of India took up the question, along with general proposals for the regulation of mines with a view to ensuring the health and safety of the workers. The Bill framed in 1899 for the inspection and regulation of mines contained a clause empowering the inspector of mines to prohibit the employment of women in any occupation whenever it was found dangerous or unsuitable to them. Another clause empowered the Governor-General-in-Council and provincial Governments to make rules prohibiting or regulating the employment of women below ground or on particular kinds of labour. The Secretary of State approved of these provisions and even suggested further careful consideration for safeguarding such employment. But the provisions for regulating the employment of women in mines were opposed by the mine owners, and when the Bill was passed in 1901 they were omitted on the ground that the conditions of employment in mines in India were different from those in western countries, and that if women were not allowed to work underground, men would also refuse to do so.

The second Mines Act, passed in 1923, also failed to make provision for prohibiting underground work for women. But the provision prohibiting the employment of children under 13 years of age in mines automatically prohibited the employment underground of girls under 13. What is more important is the fact that the Joint Legislative Committee on the Bill made an important recommendation in 1923 and asked the Government of India to take steps for the prohibition of the employment of women below ground within a period of five years after the present Act had come into force. The Government of India accepted this recommendation, and after prolonged negotiation with the provincial Governments and the mine owners' associations succeeded in promulgating regulations in 1929 to the effect that after 1 July of that year no woman might enter or remain in underground workings of any kind, other than the "exempted" mines, without the written authority of the Chief Inspector of

Mines. The exempted mines are the coal mines of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and the Central Provinces, and the salt mines of the Punjab. The underground employment of women in them was restricted to 29 per cent. of the total number of underground workers in the coal mines and 40 per cent. in the salt mines ; these percentages are to be reduced by 3 per cent. and 4 per cent. respectively every year, so that there will be no women employed underground after 1 July 1939. [1]

It must be noted that the first result of these regulations was to exclude only 3,000 out of 31,785 women employed underground in 1928, but the latter figure fell to 24,089 in 1929.

Hours of Labour

Next to health and safety, the most important question for workers is that of hours of work, which vary from industry to industry in India.

From the very beginning, the hours of labour on plantations, in particular on tea gardens in Assam, were fixed by the indenture system at nine hours a day for both men and women ; and although labour under the penal sanction has been abolished, daily hours of work remain practically the same. The actual hours of work, however, depend upon two things, namely, the *hazira,* or regular work, which lasts from four to five hours, and the *ticca,* or extra work. Since the payment of a fixed wage is contingent upon the completion of a certain amount of work (more than the *hazira*), the hours of work are rather long, especially for women. The number of hours worked is the same in Bengal and other parts of northern India as in Assam. In the south hours extend from 7.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., with a break of an hour or so far a meal at noon. [2]

In the early days of the factory system the hours of work were the same for women as for men in all factories. In 1891 the second Factory Act restricted their hours of labour to 11 a day ; a further reduction to 60 hours a week was made by the amending Act of 1922. In fact, these long hours are scarcely ever worked by women, except in seasonal factories, such as cotton ginning and pressing mills, which are now also subject to the regulation of 60 hours a week ; in non-seasonal factories

[1] *Gazette of India*, 9 March 1923, p. 335 ; *Indian Trade Journal*, 14 March 1929.
[2] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 400.

the actual hours of work for women are as a rule much less than those fixed by the law. According to an enquiry made by the Bombay Labour Office into sixteen cotton mills in Bombay, women worked 10 hours a day in nine mills, and from 8 to 9½ hours in others, in July 1926. [1] The hours of work in jute mills are regulated by the Indian Jute Mills Association according to the need of the trade. The number of hours of work depends upon the number of days the mills are worked during the week and the nature of the shift system. Except for a short period in 1920 and the year ending 30 June 1930, the hours of work in jute mills have been 54 a week. The single-shift system runs for five days, weekly hours being 54 for each worker. Under the multiple-shift system, the daily work runs 13½ hours, but the work is so arranged under an overlapping multiple system that no person works more than 11 hours a day or 44 hours a week. [2]

Taking all kinds of factories together, however, a little over half of the women work between 54 and 60 hours a week. In 1928, for instance, of all the factories employing women, 30 per cent. worked 48 hours or less a week and 14 per cent. worked more than 48 hours but less than 54 hours a week, and the remaining factories worked more than 54 hours a week. [3] It must also be mentioned that the hours actually worked differ greatly from the nominal hours spent in the factories. Workers, both men and women, stop work or go out for drinking, eating and other purposes at unauthorised hours, spending thus about one-fourth of their regular time on an average.

Until recently, there were no restrictions upon the hours of work for women in mines. Men and women worked together and for the same number of hours. The Act of 1923 limited the weekly hours to 60 above ground and 54 below ground for men and women alike. The daily hours of work underground were, however, often excessive, since the same body of workers, both men and women, remained in the mine from 16 to 17 hours at a stretch. In 1928, an Amending Act was passed restricting the hours of work to 12 a day from 1 April 1930. At the same time the Select Committee on the Bill recommended the introduc-

[1] *Report of an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1926*, p. 18. Bombay, Government Press, 1930.
[2] *Bulletin of Indian Industry and Labour*, No. 31, 1923, p. 8 ; *The Times* (London), 14 June 1930 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 48.
[3] *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1928, p. 3.

tion of 8-hour shifts. Some of the large coal mines have already introduced 8- or 10-hour shifts. The average hours of work for women in the coal mines of Bengal and Bihar and Orissa are 48 per week below and above ground at Raniganj and 48 below ground and 60 hours above ground at Jharia. [1] The mica mines and some of the iron mines in Bihar and Orissa work two 8-hour shifts, and hours of work in the manganese mines in the Central Provinces amount to 7 or 8 hours on the average. [2]

The rest period is also an important question. Continuous work over a long period is injurious, especially to women. Although plantation legislation does not provide any specific period of rest, the work of women on plantations is interrupted at midday, when they go home to prepare food. There is no regular rest period for women in mines ; they take it at their convenience. In factories the period of rest is fixed by legislative measures. A rest period of 1½ hours for women was made compulsory by the Act of 1891 for all women working for 11 hours, and proportionately less for a smaller number of hours. This compulsory rest period was often found inconvenient. There was not enough time for the women to go home and return, and they had often to spend the time in compulsory idleness. By the Act of 1911 this rest period was reduced to half an hour, but it was again raised to one hour by the Act of 1922.

The period of the day within which the work is done has also its importance, especially for women, most of whom have to attend to their households and often also to their children. In the early years, most of the mills commenced work at sunrise or even earlier, causing a good deal of inconvenience to women workers. The Factory Act of 1891 therefore limited working hours for women and children to the period between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m. ; the Act of 1911 altered these times to 5.30 a.m. and 7 p.m. respectively, thus limiting the period for work to 13½ hours, and granting women a continuous rest period of 10½ hours.

What is still more important for women is the question of night work. While fixing a certain period of the day within which their working hours must fall, as noted above, the Act of 1891 permitted night work in those factories where an approved shift system existed. The Act of 1911 prohibited night work for

[1] *Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1924, p. 5.
[2] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 124 and 126.

women in all factories except cotton ginning and pressing establishments. After the adoption by the International Labour Conference in 1919 of the Convention prohibiting night work for women, the Government of India in 1922 amended the Act of 1911, and prohibited the employment of women at night in all factories. The Factory Amendment Act of 1926, however, relaxed this provision in favour of fish-curing and fish-canning factories.

Another question is that of a weekly day of rest, which is not only a physical but also a psychological necessity. All industries working under labour legislation have a weekly holiday. Plantation work was restricted to six days a week for both men and women by the Act of 1870. This was, of course, a necessity for women who had to do a good deal of household work on the weekly holiday. Work in mines was restricted to six days a week by the Act of 1923. As a matter of fact, most of the coal mines at present seldom work more than five days a week. In all factories the weekly holiday has become customary. Provisions were also laid down by the Factories Act of 1891, subsequently amended by the Act of 1922, that no woman might work more than six days continuously without a day of rest. In 1928, for instance, out of 7,863 factories, 6,052, or 77 per cent., had a weekly holiday on Sunday or otherwise. [1] Even the exempted factories must grant a holiday to each worker, as no worker may be employed for more than ten days continuously without a complete rest of 24 hours.

As regards overtime, on plantations the system of extra work was laid down in the legislation regulating the indenture system, and wages depended on both the regular and the extra work. In spite of the abolition of the indenture system, the principle of extra work is still maintained ; it is however resorted to only in the busy season, when the tea leaves have to be plucked within the shortest possible time ; wages are paid for it at higher rates. For factories, the law provides that every person employed for more then 60 hours in any one week shall be paid for the surplus at one and a quarter times the normal rate. This rule is universally observed [2]; as a matter of fact overtime is not frequent except in seasonal factories during the busy season.

[1] *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1928, p. 28.
[2] *Report on an Enquiry into the Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry*, p. 1. Bombay, 1926.

Efficiency of Labour

The earnings of the workers depend not only on the system of wages and hours in force, but also on their own efficiency. An outstanding feature of woman labour in India is its extreme inefficiency. This is the result of several factors, including ill health, unpunctuality, absenteeism, excessive labour turnover, and ignorance.

Ill health and low vitality are general among Indian women workers, rendering them very susceptible to disease and unable to sustain continuous work. Among the causes of this poor state of health are the extreme poverty of the masses from which women workers are mostly drawn and the conditions of living —bad housing, overcrowding, and insanitary conditions—to which most of them are subjected. [1]

Unpunctuality is a common defect of Indian women workers. It is evident that in modern industries, where for the sake of economy the working time of machinery and mechanical power must be kept within strict limits, punctuality is of great importance. Women workers, however, are usually employed on a piece basis and in departments where very little machinery or mechanical power is used, and their unpunctuality is therefore of less consequence. Household duties and the long distances which many of them have to walk are among its causes.

Indifferent health and household duties are partly responsible for the high rate of absenteeism among women in almost all industries. A study of the average daily working force on Assam tea gardens, for instance, as compared with the total number of workers on the books, shows that 37 per cent. of the women were absent, as compared with 23 per cent. of the men and 30 per cent. of the children in 1929-1930. [2] Among workers in cotton mills absenteeism for women amounted to 11.8 per cent. in Bombay city, 7.4 per cent. in Ahmedabad, and 10.8 at Sholapur, as compared with 7.1 per cent., 8.0 per cent., and

[1] The average expectation of life in India is only 24.7 years, as compared with 52.6 in France, 55.6 in England and Wales, and 56.0 in Germany (figure for 1925). (Cf. *Annuaire Statistique* (Paris), 1929, p. 218 ; *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1926, p. 341.) These figures refer to the whole population, but there is not much difference between the sexes.

[2] Computed from the *Reports on Immigrant Labour for the Province of Assam*, 1930 : " Statements ".

12.4 per cent. respectively for men workers.[1] Absenteeism is thus commoner among women textile workers than among men in Bombay and Sholapur, though not in Ahmedabad.

Excessive labour turnover also affects the industrial efficiency of women. It has been noted that Indian labour is migratory and fluctuating. In some industries, the new workers engaged each month amount to 5 per cent. or more of the total strength of the establishment [2], thus giving an annual turnover of 60 per cent.

Lack of education and training is, however, a more fundamental cause of inefficiency among women. According to the census of 1921, out of 153.6 million women, 150.8 millions, or over 98 per cent., were illiterate. [3] This lack of general education precludes them also from industrial training, and there is no provision for them for apprenticeship. The very fact that Indian women marry in their childhood and do not remain long in any occupation they may enter makes it almost impossible for them to acquire any real efficiency in industry.

The most important effect of this inefficiency is that almost all women workers in India are employed in unskilled and less well paid work. Since the employment of women is now a permanent feature of modern industry, any improvement of their efficiency will mean both an increase of productivity for industry and an increase in earnings for the women themselves.

Wages and Income

In a vast country like India, both the rates of wages and the incomes of women workers naturally vary according to both locality and industry. There are, however, several other factors, such as the basis of payment (time or piece rates), the time and mode of payment, deductions from wages, concessions (allowances in kind, etc.), and bonuses, which greatly affect their income.

Work on plantations is mostly paid at piece rates. In Assam, there used to be two distinct bases, the *hazira* or regular

[1] *Report of an Enquiry into the Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1926*, p. 25. Bombay, Government Press, 1930.

[2] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 36.

[3] *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1930, p. 28.

work, and the *ticca,* or extra work, paid at a slightly higher rate. This system has been largely replaced by what is called the " unit " system, and payment is now made for each unit of work. In the Doors of Bengal, the old system of *hazira* and *ticca* or *doubli* has been largely replaced by a new system of *hazira* which can be finished in much less time. A worker may now finish three *haziras* in eight and a half hours. The piece system also exists in Darjeeling, including the Terai, and other parts of the North, as well as in Madras and Coorg in the South. For some of the work on plantations, especially in the slack season, payment is on a time basis. [1]

In factories, both time and piece rates are found. Some idea of the prevalence of piece rates may be had from figures for the cotton mills in the Bombay Presidency. In 1926, for instance, the proportion of piece workers among women was 52.62 per cent. in Bombay, 36.61 per cent. in Ahmedabad, and 72.6 per cent. in Sholapur. [2]

Practically all work in the mines is paid on a piece basis. The unit of payment for cutters and loaders is the tub.

The method of payment also differs in different industries and provinces. Money wages are almost universally paid in cash, but concessions, which exist in several industries, especially on plantations, are naturally paid in kind. The truck system of payment, by which employers issue orders on their shops in favour of their workers for provisions, exists only to a limited extent on plantations in the South and also in some out-of-the-way factories. [3]

On most of the plantations the workers are employed in gangs under the supervision of *sardars* or *maistries,* who, in addition to fixed monthly wages, receive a commission on the total earnings of the workers employed under them. This commission amounts to 1 pice for each *hazira* in the Doors, from half an anna to two annas in the rupee in Assam, and from ten to fifteen per cent. of the worker's earnings in the South. The worst feature of this system is the indirect payment which prevails in

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[1] *Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, 1921-1922*, pp. 31-40 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 383, 398-400.

[2] *Report on an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1926*, p. 34. Bombay, Government Central Press, 1930.

[3] *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines*, 1902, p. 2 ; *Bulletins of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 34, 1925, p. 25.

some cases. A number of gardens in the Doors, for instance, pay a lump sum to the *sardars,* who in turn pay their workers. [1]

Great inconvenience to the workers is sometimes caused by unduly long intervals between payments. Payment is made daily in the case of casual and unskilled labourers all over the country, and weekly in the coalfields of Jharia, the tea gardens of Darjeeling and the Surma Valley, and the jute mills of Calcutta. Payment is made by the fortnight in the cotton mills of Ahmedabad, and by the month in the cotton mills of Bombay, the tea gardens of the Assam Valley, and some other industries all over the country. [2]

What is still worse is the fact that before these wages are paid, the workers have often to wait for a long period, varying from two to five days in the case of weekly payment, from five to seven days in the case of fortnightly payment, and from ten to fifteen days and sometimes even longer in the case of monthly payment. Although an interim payment is made in the case of monthly payment, the inconvenience nevertheless remains for most of the workers. [3] On some plantations, the final settlement of wages is not made until the end of the contract period. In the South, for instance, the plantations make weekly advances for the workers' subsistence and make final settlements at the end of the contract period, which usually lasts from June to March. It is said that the workers take home in this way from Rs.30 to Rs.40 each season. [4]

The most objectionable feature of the wage system is, however, deductions from wages, which may be classified under four headings, namely : (1) fines imposed for disciplinary purposes ; (2) deductions for damage sustained by employers ; (3) deductions for bad or negligent work ; and (4) deductions for benefits provided by employers. Out of 1,231 establishments enquired into by the Bombay Labour Office in 1926, 441, or over one-third, had a system of deductions from wages for fines, damage, or benefits. [5]

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[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 381, 398-401.

[2] *Bulletins of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 34, 1925, pp. 10-24 ; GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, pp. 119-120.

[3] *Bulletins of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 34, pp. 10-24.

[4] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 401.

[5] *Report of an Enquiry into Deductions from Wages or Payments in respect of Fines*, p. 86 ; Bombay, Government Central Press, 1928. *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 217.

Some idea of the extent of deductions in textile mills, where most of the women are employed, may be had from the table below. In the first ten months of 1926, 45 textile mills in the Presidency of Bombay, employing 20,588 women, deducted a sum of Rs.4,158-7-3 from wages in respect of fines in 24,654 instances.

DEDUCTIONS FROM WOMEN'S WAGES IN TEXTILE MILLS IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, 1926 [1]

Subject of deductions	Number of instances	Amount deducted
		Rs. a. p.
Breaches of discipline	6,332	1,161 – 14 – 3
Bad or negligent work	15,334	2,585 – 6 – 6
Damage to the plant	1,077	225 – 12 – 0
Others	1,911	185 – 6 – 6
Total	24,654	4,158 – 7 – 3

[1] Royal Commission on Labour in India: *Evidence*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 82.

The wages on plantations are greatly affected by agreements among the planters almost all over the country. Both in the North and in the South there exist agreements called " labour agreements " or " district agreements ", and no one is allowed to raise wages without common consent. [1]

The rate of wages for women varies considerably, being from three to five annas per *hazira* (half a day's work) and three annas per *ticca* (extra work) in Assam, about three annas per *hazira* (from 2½ to 3½ hours' work) in the Doors, and five annas in Madras and four annas in Coorg for a day's work. A bonus of four annas for six days' work in the week is also added in some parts of Madras and in Coorg. On the basis of the existing rates, the earnings of women workers may be estimated to be from Re.1-12 to Rs.2-2 a week in the South, and about Rs.10-5-8 a month in the Doors, Rs.8-6-1 in the Surma Valley, and Rs.11-1-7 in the Assam Valley. [2] It should be noted that these figures

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 399-400.

[2] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 383, 389-400 ; *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam*, 1930 : " Statements ". The earnings on Assam gardens represent the average of two months, found by dividing the total sum paid by the average daily working force.

represent earnings for full-time work, which many women do not earn.

There are great variations in the rates and earnings in factories, since they are scattered over a much wider area. The wage rates for women workers in seasonal factories are six annas a day in the Punjab, from four to eight annas a day in the Bombay Presidency, and ten rupees a month in the United Provinces. Accurate data on wages in non-seasonal factories are available only for the cotton mills in the Bombay Presidency. In 1926 the average daily rate of wages was Re.0-11-11 in Bombay, Re.0-12-6 in Ahmedabad, and Re.0-6-8 in Sholapur.[1] The average monthly earnings of all women were Rs.17-12-4 in Bombay and Rs.9-15-7 in Sholapur, but the wages of those who worked every day in the month were much higher, as shown in the table below. It will be seen that earnings were highest in Ahmedabad.

AVERAGE MONTHLY EARNINGS OF WOMEN IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, 1926 [1]

Locality	All women workers	Full-time women workers
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Bombay	17 –12 – 4	20 – 4 – 6
Ahmedabad	—	21 – 1 – 6
Sholapur	9 –15 – 7	11 – 5 – 7

[1] *Report on an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry, 1926*, pp. 43 and 44. Full time means 27 days for Bombay and Ahmedabad and 26.7 days for Sholapur. Wages in Ahmedabad are paid by the *hapta*, varying from 14 to 16 days, and cannot be estimated on a monthly basis.

The rate of wages also varies considerably in the mines of different provinces. The wages of women are generally higher in Burma than in any other province, owing to the scarcity of labour. As far as woman labour is concerned, the most important mines are the coalfields at Jharia and Raniganj, the mica mines in Bihar and Orissa, and the manganese mines in the Central Provinces, figures for which are shown in the table below.

[1] Enquiries into wages and hours of work were made by the Bombay Labour Office in 1921, 1923, and 1926. The other figures relate to May 1926 in Ahmedabad and to July 1926 in Bombay and Sholapur. Cf. *Report of an Enquiry into the Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry*, 1926, p. 43 ; Bombay, Government Central Press, 1930.

It will be seen that average daily earnings vary from 4 annas to 9 annas, and are not always the highest for underground work.

AVERAGE DAILY EARNINGS OF WOMEN IN MINES, 1929 [1]

Nature and locality of mines	Underground	Open workings	Surface
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Coal : Jharia (Bihar and Orissa)	0 – 8 – 6	0 – 9 – 0	0 – 6 – 9
Coal : Raniganj (Bengal)	0 – 7 – 6	0 – 6 – 3	0 – 6 – 0
Mica (Bihar and Orissa)	0 – 4 – 0	0 – 4 – 0	0 – 4 – 0
Manganese (Central Provinces)	0 – 7 – 0	0 – 5 – 3	0 – 4 – 9

[1] Compiled from *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1929, p. 6. These rates are for the month of December. The average is derived by dividing the total payment by the average daily attendance during the month.

A few remarks may be added on the variations in wage rates. Exact data on this subject are hardly available, but a few instances may nevertheless give some idea of the movements of wages in recent years. From 1921-1922 to 1929-1930, the average monthly rates of wages rose from Rs.8-11 to Rs.11-09, or 30 per cent., in the Assam Valley, and from Rs.6-42 to Rs.8-38, or over 35 per cent., in the Surma Valley. As compared with 1928-1929 there was a slight decline in wages in 1929-1930, but there was also a decline in the price level. [1] For Bombay city, the basic rate was fixed either in the pre-war years or during the period between 1913 and 1918. The Mill-Owners' Association gave an increase of 15 per cent. in wages to all workers on 1 January 1918, and this was gradually raised to 70 per cent. after 1 November 1920. There has been no increase in this rate since 1921. In Ahmedabad wage rates were also increased in various departments at different times, but in June 1923 wages were reduced by 15 per cent. Since then there has been very little, if any,

[1] These averages were obtained by dividing the total earnings by the daily average of workers in March and September, representing the typical months of busy and slack seasons. Cf. *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam* for the respective years.

change in wage rates as a whole, but it has been reported that there has been some reduction in individual concerns. [1]

As regards the total income of the family, which determines the standard of living, reliable data on this subject are not available except in a few cases. The following table shows the average monthly earnings of a number of groups of families in various parts of the country in recent years.

AVERAGE MONTHLY EARNINGS OF SOME WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES

Locality and description of families	Date of enquiry	Number of families	Average number of persons or units per family	Average monthly earnings
				Rs. a. p.
Bombay, working class [1]	1921–1922	2,473	4.20	52 – 4 – 6
Sholapur, cotton-mill workers' families [2]	1925	902	4.68	39 –14 –10
Ahmedabad, working class [3]	1926	892	4.00	44 – 7 – 2
Rangoon, Burmese working class [4]	1927	992	3.71	58 – 8 – 3
Rangoon, Tamil working class [5]	1927	157	2.89	41 – 4 – 9
Rangoon, Telugu working class [6]	1927	139	2.8	45 – 5 –10

[1] The enquiry covered 2,473 family budgets and 603 single men's budgets from May 1921 to April 1922. *Report of an Enquiry into Working Class Budgets in Bombay*, pp. 6 and 10. Bombay, Government Central Press, 1923.
[2] The enquiry covered the period from May to December 1925. *Report on an Enquiry into Family Budgets of Cotton Mill Workers in Sholapur City*, pp. 3, 6, 62. Bombay, Government Central Press, 1928.
[3] *Report of an Enquiry into Working Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad*, pp. 4 and 13. Bombay, Government Central Press, 1928.
[4] J. J. BENNISON : *Report of an Enquiry into the Standard and Cost of Living of the Working Classes in Rangoon*, pp. 16, 108. Burma, Labour Statistics Bureau. Rangoon, Government Printing, 1928.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 34 and 146.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 34 and 147.

Some idea of the amount contributed by women to the family earnings may also be had from the following fragmentary data. In Rangoon the average contribution made by women to the family earnings was 10 per cent. in Burmese families, 13 per cent. in Tamil families, and 16 per cent. in Telugu families, as shown in the table below.

[1] GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, pp. 116-118.

CONTRIBUTION BY WOMEN TO FAMILY EARNINGS IN RANGOON, 1927 [1]

Nationality of family	Average monthly earnings of family	Earnings of women	
		Amount	Per cent. of total
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	
Burmese	58 – 8 – 3	5 –11 –11	10
Tamil	41 – 4 – 9	5 – 8 – 2	13
Telugu	45 – 5 –10	7 – 2 –11	16

[1] For references see the footnotes to the preceding table.

Besides the regular income, mostly based on cash wages, there are also various concessions which augment the family income. They consist mostly of the following : (1) free or partially free quarters in most of the mines and plantations and some of the factories ; (2) medical help in almost all industries ; (3) purchase of commodities at a reduced price and advance of money at a low rate of interest in isolated cases ; (4) free fuel in coalfields and plantations ; (5) land, either free or at a reduced rate, for gardening, pasturing, and cultivation in most of the plantations. [1]

There remains the important question of real wages. But on both wages and prices the data are neither reliable nor comprehensive enough for attempting any estimate on this subject. It may only be pointed out that the average annual cost-of-living index numbers of the Bombay working class rose from 107 in 1915 to 183 in 1920 and then gradually fell to 147 in 1928. [2] Since then there has been a still further decrease owing to the general economic depression all over the country.

Lastly, a few figures may be given to show that the earnings of women are much lower than those of men workers. In 1929-1930, for instance, the average monthly cash earnings of women in the Assam Valley were Rs. 11-1-7 as compared with Rs. 13-8-7 for men [3], and the average daily earnings of women employed

[1] *Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee*, 1921-1922, pp. 21-28.

[2] Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, Supplementary Note.

[3] *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam*, 1930 : " Statements."

underground in Jharia were 8½ annas as compared with 9¾ annas for unskilled men workers. [1] Similarly, the average daily earnings of women in Bombay cotton mills were Re. 0-11-11 as compared with Re. 1-8-0 for men in 1926. [2] In the last case, however, the figure for men's earnings includes those of jobbers and weavers, who are mostly men and who are the most highly paid workers. Nevertheless the earnings of women are generally much lower than those of men in all occupations in the cotton-mill industry.

The comparatively low wages of women are partly due, as pointed out above, to their inefficiency, arising from their illiteracy and inexperience. That they have potential efficiency is proved by the fact that in certain occupations women earn almost as much as men. For instance the daily earnings of women in siding in Bombay and Ahmedabad cotton mills were respectively Re. 0-15-2 and Re. 0-15-1, as compared with Re. 1-0-2 and Re. 0-15-2 for men. [3] The lack of industrial opportunities and of bargaining power are also among the important causes of their low wages. Moreover, there are some industries in which women are " sweated ".

Standard of Living

Family Budgets

How far the income of the workers is sufficient to meet their urgent needs is an important question, but adequate data are not available for a satisfactory answer except in a very few cases. Reference has already been made in the previous section to the family income in Bombay, Sholapur, Ahmedabad and Rangoon. The percentage of expenditure of various families on the principal consumption groups is indicated in the table below. It will be seen that over four-fifths of the total is expended on food, clothing, fuel and lighting, rent and household requisites. The remainder is mostly expended on interest on debt, ceremonials, sickness, travelling, remittances, liquor, tobacco, etc., leaving very little, if any, for educational and recreational purposes.

[1] *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1929, p. 6.

[2] *Report on an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1926*, p. 43. Bombay, 1930.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

PERCENTAGE OF EXPENDITURE OF VARIOUS FAMILIES ON MAIN CONSUMPTION GROUPS

Consumption group	Bombay working class (1921-1922) [1]	Sholapur cotton mill workers (1925) [2]	Ahmedabad working class (1926) [3]	Rangoon working class (1927) [4]
Food	56.80	52.76	57.90	52.80
Clothing	9.60	12.70	9.45	10.60
Fuel and lighting	7.40	10.28	7.04	5.20
Household requisites	—	1.08	1.16	2.60
House rent	7.70	6.72	11.74	13.90
Miscellaneous	18.50	16.46	12.71	15.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

[1] *Report of an Enquiry into Working Class Family Budgets in Bombay*, pp. 14 and 42. Bombay, Government Press, 1923.
[2] *Report of an Enquiry into Family Budgets of Cotton Mill Workers in Sholapur*, pp. 15-16. Bombay, Government Press, 1928.
[3] *Report of an Enquiry into Working Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad*, pp. 4, 14 and 15. Bombay, Government Press, 1928.
[4] *Report of an Enquiry into the Standard and Cost of Living of the Working Classes in Rangoon*, p. 16. Rangoon, Government Printing and Stationery, 1928.

Thus the expenditure on foodstuffs is more than half the total, and of this amount the largest part is spent on the staple article of diet. The staple differs in different geographical areas and is either rice, wheat, *jowari,* or *bagri* (two of the Indian millets), or a combination of any two. A considerable number of workers, especially Hindus, are vegetarians, depending mostly on cereals, pulses, *ghee* (clarified butter), and sweetmeats. Mohammedans eat both mutton and beef. Fish is a chief form of protein food in Bengal, Madras and Burma. Milk is used by all classes of workers wherever it can be had, but it is very costly and is rarely available in pure form in the cities. On the whole, the dietary of the working classes is very poor ; it lacks variety and is unbalanced and too bulky. There is also a lack of both vitamins and accessory food elements. It does not contribute to the powers of endurance and resistance to any appreciable extent. [1]

The clothing of Indian workers is very simple. In the severe winter which prevails in some parts of India, it is often insufficient to keep the workers warm. This is especially true in the

[1] Cf. *Labour Gazette* (Bombay), April 1925 : "The Food of the Worker."

case of women, who use scarcely any woollen clothing and almost invariably go barefooted. In most cases, clothing scarcely surpasses the decency limit.

Articles of furniture are very few in number. They consist mostly of utensils and bedding. Even a bed is not within the means of many. Objects of decoration are rare. The whole outfit of an average worker's house does not cost more than a few rupees. In fact, the worker's house lacks comfort and is uninviting.

Of the miscellaneous items, the most important are interest, and expenditure on drink and drugs.

The drinking of spirituous liquor is a common feature in most of the industrial centres. In the Sholapur budgets examined, for instance, the average expenditure on drink was 2.27 per cent. of the total. Among the drugs, the smoking of *ganja* (Indian hemp) is also prevalent among men workers. Neither Hindu nor Mohammedan women drink, but it is a pastime among women of aboriginal races.

Interest on debt is an item which tells heavily on the family budget. Indebtedness is common in all industrial centres. In Sholapur it amounted to 6.65 per cent. of the total expenditure. According to the family budget enquiries of the Bombay Office referred to above, the number of families which were in debt amounted to 47 per cent. in the City of Bombay, 69 per cent. in Ahmedabad, and 63 per cent. in Sholapur. In the city of Bombay the extent of indebtedness generally amounts to 2½ months' earnings of the family, and may rise as high as 14 months' earnings. The rate of interest is usually 1 anna per rupee per month, or 75 per cent. per annum ; it may rise as high as 150 per cent. [1] Among the most important causes of indebtedness may be mentioned undue delay in wage payment, the system of bribes for securing jobs, extravagant expenditure on ceremonials, such as births, marriages, and funerals, and drink and drugs.

In some centres, remittances to absent members of the family also form an important item in the budget. It has been shown that the average number of persons in the family is 4.2 in Bombay, 4.68 in Sholapur, and 4 in Ahmedabad, of whom 0.6, 0.11, and 0.13 respectively live in the village.

[1] Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, pp. 164-165.

It must be remembered that the above family budgets in the Bombay Presidency refer mainly to textile workers, who are much better paid than most of the workers in other industries.

Housing Conditions

Owing to extreme poverty, the standard of housing of the Indian masses is very low all over the country, but it has become worse in industrial centres owing to insanitation and overcrowding. The limitation of space and high price of land are mostly responsible for overcrowding, and the lack of proper town planning and of sanitary provisions are the causes of insanitation.

The housing accommodation of the workers in organised industries is supplied by four agencies, namely, (1) employers ; (2) public or semi-public bodies ; (3) the workers themselves ; (4) landlords.

Some employers build houses for their workers or help them to build their own houses. Almost all the workers on plantations and in mines are housed by the employers. A large number of factory workers are also supplied with houses. In Bombay, for instance, cotton-mill owners have supplied housing to 8.6 per cent. of their workers ; in Calcutta and the vicinity, 33 jute-mill owners have built 41,000 houses accommodating 131,000, or between 30 and 40 per cent., of their workers. In Ahmedabad, 35 cotton mills have provided houses for 16 per cent. of their workers. The employers in other cities, such as Cawnpore and Madras, also house a part of their workers. [1]

The help given by employers to workers to build their own houses is of three different kinds, namely : (1) grant of land ; (2) supply of building materials free of cost ; (3) advance of money without interest, or at a reduced rate of interest. Land and building materials are generally granted on plantations and in mines, and in some factories. Some employers also advance money for building sanitary houses. The Empress Cotton Mills at Nagpur, for instance, have advanced Rs.70,000 for such purposes. The Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur grants loans at 3 per cent. interest for building *kachcha* (made of mud and wood) and *pucca* (brick-built) houses ; the loans are repaid

[1] Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 44 ; *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1928, p. 5 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 272, 276, 277.

by monthly instalments, in one year in the former case and in five years in the latter. The total amount advanced by the Company up to 31 March 1929 was Rs.202,967. [1]

The housing accommodation provided by public and semi-public organisations has been best developed in the City of Bombay. The Government of Bombay, for instance, has built, since 1920, 207 *chawls* (tenement buildings) containing 6,524 single-room tenements, in which are housed 34,000 persons. The Bombay Improvement Trust has also built, up to 1 June 1925, 99 *chawls,* containing 8,896 tenements. [2]

There are also cases where the workers themselves build their own houses. Such instances are, however, rare in large cities, except in Nagpur and Sholapur. The workers of the Tata Iron and Steel Works have built 5,660 houses in the *bustees* at Jamshedpur. Most of the workers in seasonal factories and some in out-of-the-way non-seasonal factories live in their own villages and go to the place of work every day, although they have often to walk quite a distance.

In almost all the industrial towns by far the largest number of workers are housed by landlords. The houses may be either huts or *chawls,* and are usually to be found near the mill areas.

There are several systems of housing accommodation. First, the commonest system is that of " lines ", where houses are built in rows, mostly by the employers. They are to be found in all industries, such as plantations, mines and factories. Second, there is the system of *bustees,* or clusters of houses forming small hamlets. They are found in some plantations, mining districts, and even in urban areas where sufficient space is available. Third, the *chawls,* which are generally from two to four-storied buildings in Bombay and Ahmedabad. Lack of space is responsible for the growth of the *chawl* system. Fourth, there are also flimsy shelters or *cheries,* squatted on private land, to serve as homes in Madras. Finally, there are model villages, built partly by employers and partly by public and semi-public organisations, in such places as Nagpur, Madras, and Cawnpore.

In Nagpur, the Empress Cotton Mills have received, on favourable terms, from the Government an area of 200 acres of land, which has been parcelled out into small plots of 53 × 56 feet.

[1] *The Times of India* (Bombay), 10 Feb. 1931 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 282.

[2] Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 24.

Only one-third of the plot can be utilised for building. The houses are built with money advanced by the mills, but the workers eventually become the owners after repayment of the debt. The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras City have also built three villages with 459 houses and started another with 200 houses. The houses generally consist of a living room, a kitchen, and washing place, with a front verandah and yard. The British India Corporation in Cawnpore has similarly built 676 single quarters, 140 double quarters, and 12 bungalow cottages on an area of 26 acres, with paved courtyard, shade trees, and central water supply. Similar schemes are being carried out in other places, such as Jamshedpur. [1]

The kind of house differs in different places. On most of the plantations, the houses are constructed of mud plaster with thatched roofs, but the lines are usually substantial structures with brick walls and corrugated iron roofs. In coalfields, the houses are generally built of brick and cement in Jharia, and a large number of houses have tiled roofs in Raniganj. In the mines and quarries of Bombay the housing is partly in stone-built quarters and partly in matting lines. There are also huts built of wooden rafters and bamboo matting. In factories, the houses are of variable construction. Both the *chawls* and the lines are generally brick buildings, although the latter may have roofs of corrugated iron. [2]

By far the largest number of workers live, however, in tenements, which are mostly one-roomed. Out of 5,363 tenements in the City of Bombay, including 1,763 new ones, 73 per cent. are one-roomed. [3] The number of one-roomed tenements amounts to 73 per cent. in Ahmedabad. The average area of a room is 123 square feet in old tenements and 164 square feet in new tenements in Bombay, and 143 square feet in Ahmedabad. [4]

Even these one-roomed tenements are overcrowded. In the Bombay tenements referred to above, for instance, the average number of persons was 3.7 per old tenement and 4.25 per new tenement. The one-roomed tenement was occupied by one or

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[1] *The Times of India*, 10 Feb. 1931 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 275, 276, 282.

[2] *Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee*, 1921-1922, pp. 21-22 ; GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 26.

[3] *Labour Gazette* (Bombay), May 1931, pp. 875-895.

[4] GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 25.

two persons in 25.75 per cent. of cases, by three or four persons in 43.8 per cent. of cases, by five or six persons in 21.83 per cent. of cases and by seven persons or more in 8.52 per cent. of cases. [1] Sub-letting is a common feature in a considerable number of families, either because they cannot pay the regular rent or because they consider that money spent for rent is wasted. Some of the tenants also make a profit on their tenement by sub-letting. [2] It must be pointed out that in most cases the occupants do not sleep inside during most of the year, and even cooking is often done on the porch of one-storied tenements.

The house rent varies from place to place. A large number of employers providing housing accommodation charge an economic rent. The average rent for 8,548 one-roomed tenements in old buildings was Rs.5-0-2, and for two-roomed tenements Rs.10-4-4, in Bombay City in 1923-1924 [3], and Rs.4-6-1 for 635 one-roomed tenements and Rs.6-0-4 for 129 two-roomed tenements in Ahmedabad in 1926. [4] Nearly 65 per cent. of the families in Sholapur pay a monthly rent of less than Rs.3, 25 per cent. pay more than Rs.3 and less than Rs.4, and the rest pay more than Rs.4 a month. [5] The rent varies considerably in different industrial centres ; in the Tata Iron and Steel Works it is calculated as much as possible at 5 per cent. on the capital cost. [6]

In some of the up-to-date lines and in the model villages, sanitation is quite satisfactory. There is an adequate provision of good roads, surface drainage, septic tank latrines, and drinking water from municipal works or deep tube wells ; the houses are constructed under the control of municipal or health boards ; there are also sufficient light and air. But such houses are very limited in number.

The conditions in the majority of the houses in industrial centres are, however, most deplorable. Most of the lines and *bustees* have grown haphazard rather than been planned and laid out. The houses are built close to one another, without

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[1] Computed from data in *Labour Gazette*, May 1931, p. 890.

[2] GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 32.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[4] *Labour Gazette*, 1927, pp. 1026-1030.

[5] *Report on an Enquiry into Family Budgets of Indian Cotton Mill Workers in Sholapur City*, p. 20.

[6] TATA IRON AND STEEL COMPANY, LTD. : *Answers to Questionnaire of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 9. Bombay, 1929.

leaving sufficient space for streets and roads, the only approaches to them being winding lanes. They are often in a dilapidated condition ; the courtyards are full of dust, garbage, and filth. Lack of an adequate latrine system often pollutes the atmosphere. There is one latrine for each eight tenements in the majority of the *chawls* in Bombay, and there is no latrine in the upper floors of these buildings. Pure water is either lacking or inadequate : there is one tap for each eight tenements in the Bombay *chawls*. The houses of the *bustees* are without light and air, the only opening being a low door. Even where there are windows, as in the lines and the *chawls*, they are generally kept closed to shut out dust or bad smells from dirty surroundings. In some cases, the floors are damp and are flooded with water from the gutters during the monsoon. Sometimes even goats and other domestic animals are kept in a corner of the room or on the verandah. [1]

The above survey of housing conditions shows that the great majority of the houses in industrial centres are unfit for human habitation. [2] Insanitation and overcrowding are not only dangerous to the health of the workers themselves, but are also sources of disease to the neighbourhood. Outbreaks of cholera, smallpox, and plague in large towns are all too frequent. Moreover, these conditions are detrimental to the growth of family life in industrial towns. Their worst victims are women and children. Women suffer both physical deterioration and mental agony on account of the constant sickness of members of their family, or the death of their children.

Infant Mortality

One of the direct results of insanitary housing and overcrowding is the high rate of infant mortality, which deserves special mention because of its effects on both the body and mind of women.

Reference has already been made to the existence of a high

[1] *Report of the Indian Industrial Commission of 1916-1918*, Cmd. 51, 1919, pp. 154-155 ; *Labour Gazette*, May 1931, pp. 890-895 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 271-277.

[2] Messrs. A. A. Purcell and L. L. Hallsworth could not call them " homes " in any decent sense of the word. See their *Report on Labour Conditions in India* (London, 1928), p. 9. The Right Hon. Tom Shaw, M.P., went further and said that he found the houses of the Indian workers " a disgrace and a blot on the record of any Government ". See his *Report of Investigation into the Conditions of Indian Textile Workers* (May 1927), p. 7.

death rate among tea-garden workers in Assam in the earlier years. This was partly due to the high rate of infant mortality. There is also a high rate of stillbirths on some of the gardens. [1] The rate of infant mortality in mining districts, especially coalfields, is not considered very high as compared with that for the whole country. In 1929, for instance, the rate was 139 for 1,000 registered births at Raniganj, as compared with 178 for the whole province. [2] It must be remembered that a large number of women go back to their native villages before childbirth. Infant mortality is, however, much higher for workers in factories, which are generally located in large towns and where both overcrowding and insanitation generally prevail.

The most glaring example of a high rate of infant mortality is found in the city of Bombay. In 1927, for instance, while the rate of infant mortality per 1,000 registered births amounted to 161.42 for the whole Presidency, that of Sholapur was 199.05, that of Ahmedabad was 287.27, and that of Bombay City was 319.12. [3] While the above figures relate to all classes of the inhabitants, infant mortality among working-class women is also very high. According to an enquiry made by the Bombay Labour Office in September 1930 into 5,911 cases of childbirth among women workers, there were among them 190 stillbirths (33 per 1,000 births), and of the infants born alive 1,159 (202 per 1,000 births) died before reaching the age of one year. [4] It would thus seem that infant mortality is lower among working women than among the population as a whole. This comparison is, however, vitiated by the fact that the working women in Bombay are a fluctuating population and a large number of them leave the city before childbirth.

The direct effect of overcrowding on infant mortality is clearly shown by the figures for Bombay tenements given in the table below. It will be seen that the rate of infant mortality per 1,000 registered births amounted to 490 in 1927, in the case of the inhabitants of one-room tenements.

[1] In the five divisions of the Doom-Dooma Company, for instance, the number of children born alive was 569, and of stillbirths 113, that is, about 20 per cent., in 1919. Cf. *Reports of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee*, 1921-1922, p. 95.

[2] Computed from *Annual Administration Report of the Asansol Mines Board of Health*, 1928-1929, p. 11 ; *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1931, p. 412. Reference is to the death of children under one year of age.

[3] GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 37.

[4] *Labour Gazette* (Bombay), Jan. 1931, pp. 494-506.

INFANT MORTALITY IN RELATION TO NUMBER OF ROOMS OCCUPIED, 1927 [1]

Number of rooms, etc., occupied by family	Births		Infant deaths		Infant mortality per 1,000 births registered
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	
1 room and under	11,615	53.6	5,688	83.0	490
2 rooms	1,736	8.0	352	5.1	203
3 rooms	392	1.8	87	1.3	222
4 or more rooms	174	0.8	34	0.5	195
Hospitals	7,764	35.8	680	9.9	88
Homeless and not recorded	4	—	16	0.2	—
Total	21,685	100.0	6,857	100.0	316

[1] GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY: *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 37.

Granting that one-third of the infants dying in the city are born outside it, as claimed by the Bombay Government, the fact remains that the actual mortality is very high among infants. Although the presence of malaria and the practice of soothing babies by the administration of opium are also partly responsible, the main cause of the high mortality is overcrowding. [1]

Maternity Benefit

Both the high rate of infant mortality and the consequent physical and moral sufferings of mothers show the necessity of protecting maternity. This means that expectant mothers should be granted rest and benefit immediately before and after childbirth.

No precise data exist on the number of maternity cases among women workers in organised industries in India. But in some recent enquiries it was found that there were 12.34 maternity cases per 100 women workers per annum, as compared with

[1] This is the opinion of Major Covell, special malaria officer of the Government of Bombay. Cf. GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 33.

10 maternity cases per 100 women of all classes in Bombay, showing greater fecundity among working women. It was also found that out of 183 women enquired into more than half of the expectant mothers left the place of work two months before confinement. [1]

The importance of granting rest and benefit to expectant mothers has attracted the attention of the Indian public since the adoption of the Washington Convention to that effect by the International Labour Conference in 1919. India was absolved from the ratification of this Convention, but she was asked to make enquiries into the matter. [2] Accordingly the Government of India made a report to the International Labour Conference in 1921 showing the difficulties in the way of ratifying the Convention, chief among them being the migratory habits of Indian women workers and their custom of going home before confinement, and the shortage of medical women who would be necessary for issuing medical certificates. [3] The Government of India adopted, however, a system of maternity benefits for its own employees.

Enquiry into the conditions of woman labour on this subject was made by the Governments of Bombay and Bengal. A similar enquiry was undertaken by the Government of India to ascertain the extent of the voluntary maternity benefit system in industrial undertakings. It was found that schemes for maternity benefit existed only in some isolated industries. Most of the large tea gardens in Assam and Bengal had adopted this system, but in Madras and the Central Provinces its operation was limited to a few establishments, and only a few Bombay factories had any elaborate system of maternity benefit. There were no maternity benefit schemes in the mines and factories of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the Punjab and Burma.

In 1924 a private Bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly to prevent the employment of women in factories, mines, and certain tea estates, immediately before and after confinement, and to grant benefits during the period. The Government of India, however, opposed the Bill on the ground that the necessity of such a measure was not yet established,

[1] The investigation was made by the Bombay Labour Office. Cf. *Labour Gazette* (Bombay), 1924, pp. 384-393.

[2] *Report of the International Labour Conference*, 1919, pp. 178, 245.

[3] *Idem*, 1921, Part II, pp. 1134-1138.

that the principle of the Bill was questionable, and that the results of the measure might be harmful to women workers. [1]

The refusal by the Central Government to pass the Maternity Bill led the provincial Governments to take up the question. A resolution to this effect was moved in the Bombay Legislative Council on 30 July 1924 and a Bill was introduced in 1926. But it was not until 15 March 1929 that Bombay succeeded in having its Maternity Benefit Act passed. A similar Act was passed in the Central Provinces in 1930.

These Acts apply to women working in factories in Bombay and the Central Provinces. The maximum period for which the benefit is available is seven weeks in the former and eight weeks in the latter. The amount of benefit is 8 annas (about 8d.) a day in Bombay, and is at the average rate of the woman's earnings during the preceding three months in the Central Provinces. The woman must have been in the service of the employer from whom she claims the benefit for six months in Bombay and nine months in the Central Provinces. Moreover, she must not work in any other place during the period of benefit. [2]

It is thus seen that most of the provinces have not yet adopted any maternity benefit legislation. The importance of granting help to women at the most critical period of their life and thus benefiting both mothers and their infants is no longer denied ; but the relegation of social legislation to the provincial Governments, instead of making it an all-India subject, is the main cause of the tardy growth of maternity benefit legislation in India.

Welfare Work

The backward condition of the country and the absence of advanced social legislation make it necessary to secure to the workers the amenities of life by other means. The most important of these means is what is called welfare work, which consists in India of housing accommodation, medical help, aid to women before and after childbirth, care of newly born infants, provision of crèches, educational opportunities, recreational facilities,

[1] A. G. Clow : *The State and Industry*, p. 163.

[2] Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 54 ; Bombay, Act (VII) of 1929 ; *Labour Gazette* (Bombay), April 1931, pp. 789-793.

and co-operative societies, all of which are of special benefit to women. Housing and kindred subjects have already been dealt with, the others need special discussion.

As a result of the Recommendation adopted by the Sixth Session of the International Labour Conference in 1924, concerning the development of facilities for the utilisation of workers' spare time, the Government of India, in May 1926, instructed all provincial Governments to collect full and comprehensive information with regard to the measures taken to ameliorate the conditions under which the workers live when they are not actually employed. [1]

As a result of these enquiries, it became known that there are four main agencies by which welfare work is carried on in India, namely, employers, semi-public organisations, private associations, and the workers themselves.

The employers' activities for developing the physical, intellectual and moral powers of the workers are almost negligible, except in the case of a few large industrial establishments, such as the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras, the British India Corporation in Cawnpore, the Empress Mills in Nagpur, the Spinning and Weaving Mills in Sholapur, and the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur.

Among the semi-public organisations, the most important are the Port Trusts and the municipalities, especially that of Bombay, which have undertaken specific work such as the reduction of infant mortality.

Private organisations for special welfare work are comparatively few in number. The most important of them are the Social Service League, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association, workmen's institutions, and Seva Sadan organisations.

Among the workers' organisations undertaking welfare work, the only notable examples are the *Kamgar Hitawardhack Sabha* (Workers' Association for Welfare Work) of Bombay, the Labour Union of Ahmedabad, and some of the Postal Unions in the different parts of the Bombay Presidency, which carry on some specific welfare activities for the benefit of their members. Some of the unions have organised co-operative credit societies and various kinds of funds for specific benefits such as legal defence,

[1] Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 55.

death and retirement benefits, unemployment and sickness benefit. [1]

The commonest form of welfare work is medical aid. Medical service is a part of the establishment in most of the organised industries, whether plantations, mines, or factories. In a few cases this service is extended to the workers even when they are not actually employed. This is especially so in the case of plantations and mines, and some large factories where the workers live on the premises of the employer, but in the majority of the cases the service is neither adequate nor up to date. The greatest difficulty of the service is the absence of women doctors. Owing to their reluctance to consult men doctors, Indian women do not avail themselves even of the existing services.

Assistance to prospective mothers, newly-born infants, etc., is given on only a very limited scale by the Bombay Municipality. The work consists of visits by nurses to prospective mothers, attendance on confinement, maternity homes, an infant milk depôt, and infant welfare centres.[2] Similar work has been undertaken by the Asansol Mines Board of Health to help expectant mothers in the mining settlement of Raniganj.

An urgently needed form of welfare work is the provision of crèches for infants, to which reference has already been made in relation to the question of safety. But the work of crèches extends further than that. Although the importance of establishing crèches has long been realised, yet up to the year 1927 the number of mills providing crèches was only 13 in Bombay, 16 in Ahmedabad, and 3 in Sholapur. Outside Bombay, there are only a few industrial establishments, mainly in Madras and Nagpur, which have up-to-date crèches. These are practically unknown in the jute mills of Calcutta and most other important industrial centres. [3]

The older children, up to the minimum age of employment, also need attention, especially school education. The need of educating children for industries is of special importance in India because there is as yet no provision for universal primary education. Only a few establishments offer education to the children

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 55-70.

[2] During the year 1927 the municipal nurses of Bombay paid 37,397 visits to houses, *chawls* (tenements), and huts. They attended 2,910 cases of ordinary sickness and 1,330 confinements. (GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 38.)

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 58.

of their workers. Schools are known to have existed in the coalfields of Bengal and Bihar and the tea gardens of Bengal, and a few factories scattered throughout the country, such as the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras. But such education is meagre and can reach only a fraction of the vast number of children. There are no doubt several difficulties in the way of educating children in India, such as the indifference of parents, lack of a uniform language, objection on the part of the managers, lack of teachers and irregularity of attendance. Moreover, the education of children by employers may even lead to abuses of the Child Labour Law, namely, the employment of children under the legal age or beyond the legal hours. But these difficulties can be easily surmounted and the abuses can be brought under control. According to a Government report only 17 per cent. of the children in industrial centres were actually at school in 1913. [1] Since then, some progress has no doubt been made, and even a few workers' organisations—for instance, the Ahmedabad Labour Union—have also undertaken education. What is of far more importance is the fact that a few municipalities and rural areas have introduced compulsory primary education in their jurisdictions. In 1927-1928, the number of such municipalities and rural areas amounted to 114 and 1,529 respectively. But it will be long before such institutions can reach very many children. Until the central or provincial Governments introduce universal compulsory education, it is to the self-interest of the employers to undertake the education of the children of their workers so that they may secure an efficient body of workers in the near future.

The most popular forms of welfare work are recreational facilities, which consist of a variety of items, such as concerts, cinemas, games, sports, dramatics, gymnasiums and excursions. In a few cases the sports consist of even football, cricket, tennis, golf, hockey and billiards. Women take as much interest as men in these recreational facilities, but what is of more importance to them is the provision of recreation for their children.

Among other welfare activities must be mentioned co-operative societies, cheap grain shops, and cheap loan and selling departments. Efforts were made to establish co-operative societies as early as 1911-1912 with the object of relieving workers by grant-

[1] GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *The Education of Factory Children in India*, pp. I and II. Calcutta, 1918.

ing loans for a short period and supplying cheap groceries to their members. At present there exist several societies among the textile workers in Bombay Presidency, some of which are successful. Savings banks have been successfully carried on only by the Ahmedabad Labour Union. [1]

The above study of welfare work shows that it covers a very varied field, but benefits only a very insignificant fraction of the vast labour force.

Social Conditions

Social conditions are anything but satisfactory in most of the industrial centres. Social conditions, as distinct from the political and the economic, relate mostly to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects of life, which can scarcely develop under the existing working and living conditions. The effect of such conditions are most detrimental to women.

Reference has already been made to the employment of a large number of workers belonging to the aboriginal races, both on plantations and in mines. They generally live in families and preserve tribal traditions as in their original habitat. But on contact with " culture ", which is bound to take place under the new social and economic conditions, they have already shown signs of moral deterioration. The same is more or less true of a large section of the so-called low-caste Hindus, who are also extensively employed on plantations and in mines. The drinking and drug habits and other vices have already increased with their improved economic conditions. Neither the Hindu nor the aboriginal workers have made any appreciable progress in the intellectual, moral, and spiritual spheres of life.

The social conditions of the workers in the city is worse than those on plantations and in mines. The absence of " home " and family life as well as the disparity between the sexes are responsible for the increase of gambling, drinking, the drug habit, and prostitution. The extent of this sex disparity can be easily seen by the fact that per 1,000 men there are only 444 women in Rangoon, 500 in Calcutta, 524 in Bombay, 667 in Cawnpore, and 763 in Ahmedabad. [2] Venereal diseases are naturally the out-

[1] Government of Bombay : *Memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour*, p. 65.

[2] The figures refer to the census of 1921. The results of the census of 1931 are not yet available in all cases.

come of prostitution and many workers carry the germs of these diseases with them when they visit their native villages.

The worst conditions are, however, found among the single women in industrial centres. In order to avoid the attention of several men fellow-workers, a woman has often to choose one man with whom she has not only to live, but to whom she has also to give her earnings. When this man leaves the city, she has to find another man for protection. In some cases she is " deserted " and left with children. [1]

Such conditions are conducive neither to industrial development nor to social welfare. They keep away from organised industry the men and women of better intellectual abilities and higher moral principles, which are essentially needed for building modern industry. Moreover, if modern industry lowers the moral and spiritual standard of Indian women, which has up to now been their great pride, industrial towns are bound to become sources of social disease instead of centres of national welfare.

There are several elements which have contributed to the present social conditions. The aborigines, employed in organised industries, are mostly those whose ancestors resisted the Aryan invasion thousands of years ago and most of whom, even to-day, refuse to accept either Hindu or any other civilisation. They still adhere to the animistic cult and prefer a simple life. Nor are the other classes of workers, most of whom are drawn from the so-called low-caste Hindus, at a higher level of culture. Although castes and creeds are much less rigid now than formerly, especially in industrial centres, a large majority of the Hindu population are still ostracised by the high-caste Hindus. It is periodic famine and oppression by landlords and money-lenders rather than the amenities of life which force them to undertake work in industrial centres. Moreover, the widespread illiteracy, to which reference has already been made, is a hindrance not only to the growth of industrial efficiency, but also to the growth of intelligent manhood and womanhood. In these circumstances, it is no wonder that the workers have failed to take advantage of their improved economic conditions for the betterment of their social life and have not come to appreciate intellectual, moral, and spiritual values.

Women have some additional difficulties to overcome. Some of the social institutions stand against the normal growth of

[1] D. F. Curjel : *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

Indian women. Child marriage and immature motherhood interfere with the growth of their body and mind. Group behaviour, as fostered by family, caste, and creed, rather than individual conscience and personal responsibility, controls their moral conduct. The purdah (seclusion) system prevents them from any intercourse with the outside world and interferes with the growth of their character and individuality. Moreover, their subordinate and inferior status—both economic and social—as compared with that of men is a hindrance to the growth of mutual respect which is essential for the growth of a high sense of morality.

As a wife and mother the Indian woman occupies a distinct position in the community and commands high respect. But as a co-worker in modern industry she has not yet received social recognition. Being unaccustomed to free movement and free social intercourse, a women finds herself a complete stranger in an industrial centre. Social custom which has so long guided her conduct is no longer helpful to her in the new environment. No new moral code has yet developed to take the place of the old social discipline. She has neither sufficient education nor congenial environment to develop in herself that inner self-discipline which is the real spring of all moral conduct.

Conclusions

From the foregoing analysis it will be seen that women in India contribute as much to the production of national wealth as those in other industrially advanced countries. Of the women gainfully occupied, about one-third are wage-paid workers, and of the latter only a small proportion is engaged in organised industries. The advent of even so small a number of women in modern industries has given rise to several economic, political, and social problems.

It must be pointed out, first of all, that organised industries are a great boon to women themselves. Their most beneficial effects are as follows. In the first place, they have opened up new sources of income to many women who are in urgent need of supplementing their family income or of supporting themselves and their dependants. In the second place, economic independence has given women a better chance of self-expression. Being always dependent upon their fathers, husbands, or sons, most Indian women have scarcely any opportunity for an independent

existence either in thought or in action. Independent living, away from the native place, often saves them from the tyranny of social custom, which closely regulates every step of their lives. What is of more importance is that industrial centres offer larger social contact, more new ideas, and greater educational facilities, which are themselves a great stimulus to the growth of their individuality. In the third place, the class struggles, common in all modern industries, have awakened class consciousness and class solidarity even among women, who take an important part in all industrial disputes and make common cause in all affairs of class interest. This growing power for concerted action has special significance in the struggle for civic rights and duties in industrial centres where most of them live.

These economic, social, and political benefits to women are not without their special significance for Society as a whole. In the first place, the increasing pressure on land and the decline of cottage industries have created extensive under-employment among both men and women. Organised industries have not only created new industrial opportunities for the people but also equipped them with the modern tools and technique of production, which alone can make them industrially efficient against foreign competition. In the second place, organised industries have already helped in the breakdown of the caste system, untouchability, the *purdah* system, the joint family system, and child marriage, which have so long retarded the progress of society. In the third place, struggles for civic rights and duties, which have become a common feature in all industrial centres, have given rise to a new civic consciousness even among women, and thus have paved the way for the growth of modern democracy in India.

However beneficial organised industries may be to women, they are not without great danger to Society, even to women themselves, unless some of the problems raised by the entry of women into modern industries are adequately solved. Insanitary conditions, fatal accidents, long hours, low wages and sweating, especially for women, and overcrowding and congestion have already appeared in almost all the industrial centres of India. These problems may be conveniently considered from three distinct points of views, namely : (1) working conditions ; (2) living conditions ; and (3) social policy.

The most important problems of working conditions are those

relating to age of employment, recruitment, sanitation, safety, hours, wages, and insurance. Legislative measures were undertaken by the Government in connection with these questions as early as 1863 for plantation women, 1891 for factory women, and 1901 for mining women. Since the inauguration of the International Labour Office and the adoption by the International Labour Conference of the various Conventions and Recommendations, Indian labour legislation has been revised and amended with special reference to the work of women so as to bring it into harmony with the standard set up by the Conference.

An important change needed for labour legislation is the regulation of the minimum age for the employment of children on plantations and the creation of half-time workers on plantations and in mines on the same basis as in the case of factories, where boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 15 are so employed. Plantation legislation has not yet put any restriction on the employment of children. Some of them begin work even at the age of 5 or 6. Mining legislation prohibits the employment of children under 13 and allows them to work full time after that age. The main object of this provision was the prohibition of underground employment of children, especially of girls under that age. But underground employment is in process of elimination and the time has come for the creation of half-time workers in surface work in mines.

That the age of 12 is too low for the employment of children cannot be denied, but the minimum age of employment and maximum age of compulsory education should be raised gradually for the sake of convenience. What India chiefly needs to-day is free and compulsory primary education, the principles of which have already been accepted and applied to a limited extent. In order to be worth while, education should be compulsory up to the age of 12 and the maximum age of primary education and the minimum age of employment should be raised gradually up to 14 as early as possible.

The system of recruitment, whether direct or indirect, entailing as it does waste and corruption, shows the necessity for labour exchanges to be established by the Government. Provisions for sanitation and safety are inadequate, and need the introduction of newer methods, in accordance with the latest discoveries and inventions. Moreover, the time has come to reduce hours of work, which in the Washington Hours Convention of

1919 were provisionally fixed at 60 a week as a special concession to India, as compared with 57 hours a week for Japan and 48 hours a week for other countries.

The rate of wages is a very complicated question, as it is in general outside the scope of labour legislation. But, in view of the fact that women are often "sweated" in many industries and are unable to make collective bargains, it is the duty of the Government to fix a minimum wage, such as is already in existence in several countries, and has recently been recommended by the International Labour Conference. Moreover, the customs of long intervals and delay in wage payment, and of deductions by way of fines, are questions entirely within the scope of Government regulation.

As regards social insurance, it might be said that the scope of workmen's compensation is too much limited. The gradual separation of workers from their homesteads and the breakdown of the joint family system, in which the disabled, destitute, and even workless always found an asylum with some of their relatives, however distant, have made it imperative for the existing Workmen's Compensation Act to be extended and elaborated into a general social insurance system, covering all kinds of risk, including unemployment.

Administration of the labour law is another problem. It has been noted that the system of inspection is very inadequate, especially in mines and plantations. Labour legislation has no value unless it is enforced. Moreover, there is a necessity for employing women inspectors and women doctors in all industries.

The extension of the scope of the existing legislation is still another problem. It has been noted that labour legislation in India was enacted with special reference to particular industries and particular provinces. The time has come to consolidate all these measures into a series of general labour laws, covering groups of similar and kindred industries, and extending the scope of each to smaller establishments.

What is still more important is the improvement of the general conditions of life, including housing, education, recreation, and other kinds of social activities for enriching life and increasing moral and spiritual values.

Among these conditions the most important is housing. After the primary needs of food and clothing, a woman requires a

house where she can build up a home for her children as well as for herself and her husband. A home is in fact one of the best expressions of a woman's life. The lack of proper housing is the cause of high infant mortality, and of the low female population in the industrial centres, the prevalence of immorality, drunkenness, and gambling among men, the migratory habit of the working population, and the shortage of skilful and reliable workers.

The supply of housing accommodation by employers leads to the growth of a servile mentality and its supply by landlords tends to rack-renting. Nor can the workers be expected to build their own houses in large cities like Calcutta and Bombay. It therefore behoves the public and semi-public organisations to supply housing for industrial workers in large cities, where the workers can live without the fear of eviction and on payment of an economic rent.

A further question is the supply of accommodation for single women, including girls. For lack of proper facilities, many women in all industrial centres have become victims of unscrupulous men, both morally and economically. What is needed is that employers should be made to build dormitories for such women, and to employ responsible women for their care and supervision. The improvement of the living conditions of single women will not only raise the moral standard in industrial centres, but will also attract a large number of women from the country and help to solve the question of labour supply.

That housing accommodation must be accompanied by the provisions of proper sanitation, including adequate drainage, sanitary conservancy, and sufficient drinking water, goes without saying. What is equally important is to provide educational and recreational facilities, which are essential for the physical, intellectual, and moral development of women workers. While the undertaking of such work by the workers themselves must be encouraged their own efforts in this direction may scarcely be sufficient for the purpose. Welfare work should therefore be undertaken by social service workers at the expense and under the supervision of all municipal governments.

But behind all these questions lies the development of a social policy towards women workers in modern industries. The work of women in modern industries is not only beneficial to women themselves and to Society, as noted before, but it has become

inevitable. India is already an industrially important country, and, with increasing political and economic independence, industrialisation is bound to grow at a rapid rate in India, drawing a larger and larger number of women into modern organised industries.

The underlying principle of this social policy must be the fact that in spite of biological distinctions between the sexes, indicating functional differences in certain life processes, and in spite of the existing inferior position of women in most communities, which is more or less historical and accidental, men and women are equal partners in Society, and social progress depends largely upon the fullest expression of both in all social, political, and industrial spheres of life. This implies that women should not only enjoy the rights and privileges, but should also undertake all the duties and responsibilities of Society. The realisation of this fact has led to a rapid improvement in all kinds of women's activities in all advanced countries, benefiting not only women themselves but also the communities of which they form a part. The static and backward condition of India is to no mean extent due to the inferior position of her women. It is thus a question not only of social justice but also of imperative necessity that India should adopt a policy tending to equalise social, political, and industrial opportunities for men and women alike.

The problem of developing this social policy towards women workers is a complicated one under the present social, political, and economic conditions of India, and involves several measures, of which the most important are as follows :

(1) Free and compulsory education—both general and industrial—for girls, with co-education especially in the primary school, up to the minimum age of employment ; provision for continuation or extension schools for all half-time working girls until the minimum age of marriage, which is at present 14 ;

(2) The creation of new industrial opportunities for women by regulating working conditions with special reference to their ability and aptitude ;

(3) The abolition of child marriage, the purdah system, and the caste system with a view to giving women opportunities for devoting their childhood and early youth to the development of body and mind and to the achievement of character and individuality ;

(4) The political enfranchisement of women on the same basis as men, with a view to developing among them the sense of civic responsibility on the one hand and the power of taking the initiative in improving their own social and economic conditions on the other.

In short, the object of this social policy should be the elevation of the political, social, and industrial status of women, so that they may become not only wage earners but also good mothers, intelligent citizens, and responsible members of Society.

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