The Colliery Town and Labour Migration: An enquiry into the modern-industrial reproduction arrangement in an Indian coalfield, 1895-1970

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Dr. Dhiraj Kumar Nite*

Abstract: On the Indian coalfield of Jharia, during 1895-1970, circular migration of the mineworker coexisted along with the fact that workers became regular over time. Such a workforce, this paper suggests, emerged and developed as a result of the kind of pressures exerted by the migrant worker on the employer and the state-power for employee benefits. The development and nature of employee benefits and modern-industrial reproduction arrangement positively influenced the patterns of migration and settlement of workers. The employer, guided by a new industrial sensibility, came up with specific employee benefits, with an objective of continuous production from a group of the settled and stable workforce. However, the approach adopted by workers to the question of social security and the pressure exerted by them shaped the range and scope of their entitlement to employee benefits. My finding takes an issue with the thesis of cheap migrant labour. The latter thesis has insufficiently revealed the actual preferences of employees vis a vis what employers offered them. Additionally, it critiques another thesis which suggests that workers maintained a preference for the investment in rural homestead; therefore, they were circular migrants. Their struggles were primarily focused on wages and working condition rather than living condition. My study suggests that the early coalworker had a view that children, extended families, land, and livestock in the village were the means of social security. This conception was faced with the dislocation caused by the commodification of labour. Consequently, workers developed a notion of civilised, human form of life from the 1920s onwards. The self-respect campaign among the unprivileged caste groups, the movement of industrial democracy and national reconstruction and the ILO's advocacy of civilised and human life for workers, gave a spur to the politics of new reproduction preferences. Now, they sought employee benefits considered necessary for a dignified living and advancing life around Jharia.

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Labour migrancy was far from a transitional phase in the life world of workers in Indian industrial centres. The oscillating migrants, however, gradually became regular career mineworkers in an Indian coalfield around Jharia during 1895-1970. This paper explains the factors responsible for circular migration, on one side, and, on the other, workers becoming regular, career mineworkers. It traces a correlation between such a pattern of migration and stabilisation of employees, on the one hand, and the development of employee benefits, on the other. The coal industry came to be considered, in the long run, as one of the best serving in the private sector. The industry put in place some employee benefits, which the nationalised coal industry further broadened in scope and evened out its availability to workers since 1971-73. My study outlines the approaches of oscillating migrant and settled workers to the question of employee benefits, with an objective to account for the existence and development of these benefits.¹

There are three major perspectives on the subject, which this study engages critically. Some commentators argue that migrant workers acted as per their free and rational choices.² Workers were oscillating migrants in Indian industrial centres because they maintained a link with the rural home and their family therein. Their real wages were higher in comparison with that of the artisans and workers employed in other urban and rural wage-works. Neither was their quality of life nor was wage worse. The allegation that the industrial worker reeled under a low wage and poor incentive convinced few outside the labour union circle.³ The industrial employer, usually, secured the supply of labour from the intermediary or labour contractor, to whom they also delegated the responsibility of supervision, training, control, distribution of wages as well as that of provisioning of accommodation for workers. The labour contractor was at once responsible for solving many problems, including getting stable labour and the challenge of creating a new society.⁴ Migrant workers created community ties, teams and a social network with the labour agent for social insurance with the objective of adapting to the new condition of life.⁵ The

Keywords: Migration, Employee Benefits, Career mineworkers, Caste-upliftment campaigns, Ethnicity, Reproduction

Introduction
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unstability of workers was the product of a managerial failure, argues Morris. It had something to do with two other factors, argues Roy: First, the management continued to rely on labour contractors owing to a path-dependence effect; second, they were reluctant to bear an additional cost of the alternatives due to the uncertainty of sufficient returns on the investment and the high cost of capital itself.

The preceding viewpoint, it could be said, underestimates the coercion and constraint faced by workers and their preference and desire for a better future in the urban context. It overlooks the inadequacy of employee benefits and social conflicts over this matter that ensued. It maintains that industrial workers were able to assert themselves effectively on the basis of rural connectedness and neighbourhood links, which proved a drag on productivity and contributed to ‘economic backwardness’ and poverty. It conveys an impression that industrial workers were the victim of their own unreasonable choices and cultural pattern. My work brings to the fore another conception of incentive structure, as articulated by the working-class public; the relationship of this incentive structure with migration and settlement and, in turn, the productiveness and wellbeing of mineworkers.

The second viewpoint argues that workers migrated between cities and villages because it was the only option for their survival under the circumstance of constraints and wants. Oscillating migration suited the business requirement. Employers offered a fluctuating level of employment, low wages and inadequate social security (especially housing). The labour market was organised through non-economic forces: sub-infeudated social relations characterised the institution of recruitment, control and discipline of the workforce. Workers saw circular migration as one of the strategies toward keeping the rural household functioning as a means of social security and bolstering their positions in the village society. Such consideration of many migrants graduated over time to a stage, where the element of choice in their strategy gave way to crude necessity. Desertion and circulation of workers were an expression of the subterranean form of protest of semi-proletarians over the inadequacy of social security in the destination economy. This viewpoint is built on a presumption: had employers provided workers with a hospitable condition of living, migrant workers would have preferred to become a settled
workforce. Here, the actual gap between employee benefits on offer, on one side, and, on the other, workers’ preferences remains insufficiently examined. The preferences of semi-proletarianised and proletarianised workers have been conceptualised in the contrasting terms, and then essentialised. Our discussion below underscores the shifting contours of employees’ preferences and the struggle for fringe benefits. Unlike the cases in which the provision of employee benefits was noticeable by its absence, our study demands attention to the involvement of workers in what Polanyi terms the ‘countermovement’ against the destructing consequences of a self-regulating market, that is, the efforts at protecting working life by developing a modern reproduction arrangement.

Workers did exercise a certain choice even in the constrained circumstances, suggest other scholars. Migrant workers maintained their interests in building up the homestead economy in their villages. They did not fight for any employee benefits necessary for a settled life in the industrial centres, continues the argument, because of their attachment to the rural homestead economy. At times, workers targeted intensification of work, demanded inflation allowances and opposed high-handedness. Notwithstanding this, workers were ‘labourers in-between’, living partially in both worlds of city and village. This viewpoint inadequately reveals, my study shows below, the social struggle over employee benefits and the approach adopted by oscillating workers toward this issue. Even the oscillating migrant had a certain preference for employee benefits as a necessary means of social security and satisfying a desire for advancing life and comfortable living in industrial centres.

The following discussion shows that the development and nature of employee benefits positively influenced the patterns of migration and stabilisation of workers. It observes that the employer, guided by a new industrial sensibility, came up with [minimal] employee benefits, with an objective of continuous production from a group of the settled and stable workforce. However, the approach adopted by workers to the question of social security and the pressure exerted by them in this regard shaped the range and scope of their entitlement to employee benefits. My work suggests that the early mineworker held a view that children, extended kindreds, land and livestock were the means of social security. This exemplified the preindustrial social embeddedness of economic life of these workers, which was
now exposed to destructive consequences of the commodification of labour. Hence, the landless and land-poor sections among them keenly appreciated the welfare measures, howsoever limited, offered to them by employers and began to settle down around Jharia. Workers, generally, developed a notion of a civilised, humane form of life from the 1920s onwards. The self-respect campaign of the unprivileged caste groups, the movement of industrial democracy and national reconstruction, and the advocacy of International Labour Organization (ILO) for civilised and humane life for the working populace, brought about an impetus to the politics of new reproduction preferences.¹⁵ Now, workers sought specific employee benefits considered necessary for an improved living and advancing life. Their industrial struggle to realise enhanced reproduction supports formed the context in which a specific pattern of migration, settlement and stabilisation took place.

The discussion below is divided into four sections. The first section traces the social origins of the workforce and its initial formation. The second delves into the emergence of a new industrial sensibility responsible for an improvement in the living conditions of workers. The third deals with the approach towards the necessity of new social security adopted by the working class public. And the fourth dwells on the limitations of the social security programme and the untoward experiences of workers.

**Migrants and their social composition**
Social composition of the migrants and the initial formation of working population in the Jharia coalfields had a bearing on labour relations, colliery neighbourhoods and social struggles for employee benefits. From the early years of the coal industry in Jharia, since 1895, mineworkers hailed from multiple ethnic, caste, religious, gender, age and spatial groups. Their social composition altered as time wore on. The early mineworker, usually, belonged to what census enumerators described as the 'Aboriginal' and 'semi-aboriginal' (semi-Hinduised) populations: they are now known as the Adivasis and Dalit. The Santhals, Bauris and Bhuinyas together formed nearly two-thirds of the total workforce in the first one-and-half decades. They maintained their numbers until the mid-1920s but began to lose their share, accounting for close to two-fifths of the total. The Ghatwals, Kurmi-Mahtos and Turis were the other earliest lots who took up mining (See Table I).¹⁶ The Bhuinyas,
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Social origin of workers, drastically, altered following the removal of women from belowground mining during the mid-1920s and 1946. The traditional mineworkers, such as the Santhals, Bauris and Chamars were, usually, family-oriented labourers. Their numbers fell when the 1929 Mines (Amendment) Act, related to the prohibition on employment of women, was fully enforced. The Bhuinyas were the only group of traditional mineworkers who held on to their share. In their case, women successfully competed for works on the pit surface and the quarry and worked separately from their male members. New Bhuinya men were also available to do loading work, which others regarded as a feminine job. Their share in employment diminished in the 1950s, when another spate of replacement of women by men occurred in the aftermath of the Mines Act, 1952 prohibiting the employment of women from night works between 7 pm and 5 am. Men from the unprivileged and underprivileged caste-Hindus, including the Goala, Rajwar, Jolaha, Lohar, Dom, Dusadh, Pasi, Kahar, Nuniya, Beldar, and the Muslim came to take the place of women and men who vacated their positions in their search for an opportunity of family-oriented labour.

Social composition of workers shifted little in the decades following the early 1950s. The Santhal mineworkers, described as Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis), included 6,332 males and 1,727 females, accounting for just 5.7 percent of the total workforce in 1971. Among them, 4,025 men and 1,029 women, that is, two-thirds were rural persons and others urban, who migrated from the neighbouring district of Hazaribagh. Among the Bauris, Chamars, Bhuinyas, Rajwars, Dusadhs and Musahars, now called Scheduled Castes (Dalit), 34,580 males and 5,903 females were employed in the mines, accounting for approximately 29 percent of the total in 1971. Among them, 18,649 men and 2,788 women, that is, one-half were urban [immigrants]. The percentage of the rest, consisting of Muslims and underprivileged and privileged caste-Hindus increased by 1971; the latter accounted for about half
of the total.

The early workers, mostly, came from the neighbouring districts and moved in, pre-eminenty, as family-oriented labourers. The first flush of immigrants from the relatively distant areas, from 1905-06, did not alter significantly the balance between units of family-oriented labour, and those single men who maintained their family back home in the village. The number of single male migrants from the distant areas grew from the 1920s. The single female mineworkers, chiefly widows and separated, also constituted a small proportion of the total workforce. The share of local workers fell from two-thirds of the total in 1911 to one-third in 1921 and about one-fifth by 1971. They primarily belonged to the Santhal, Bauri, Rajwar, Ghatwal, Chamar and Kurmi-Mahto.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social groups</th>
<th>Census 1921 Percentage</th>
<th>Census 1931 Percentage</th>
<th>Bose's (1934) Percentage</th>
<th>Prasad Committee (1938) percentage</th>
<th>Census 1971 Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Manjhis/Santhals</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhuinyas</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bauris</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dusadhs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamars</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rajwars</td>
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<td>Musahars</td>
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<td>N.A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.67</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghatwals</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kurmis</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest others</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>50</td>
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</tbody>
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Social composition of workers, to an extent, coincided with the division of labour and influenced the labour process. The British and the natives of privileged castes, such as the Brahmin, Rajput and Kayastha, being the literati, occupied the
managerial, upper-rung supervisory and clerical positions. They formed about five to six percent of the total workforce. The natives of privileged castes, underprivileged castes and the Muslims occupied the positions of skilled and artisanal jobs, such as the surveyor, mining *sirdars* (foreman or shift bosses), firemen, safety-men, blasting-men, explosive-carriers, pump-men, banks-men, onsetter (liftmen), engine-men, boiler-men, machine-men, carpenters and timbermen, masons, electricians and the labour contractor. They constituted another nine to ten percent of the total. The traditional mining communities lost the positions of safety-men, mining *sirdars* and blasting-men, when the Mines Act, 1923-24 and 1937-38 imposed the criteria of literacy and certified training as prerequisites for somebody to perform such jobs. Initially, the traditional gang *sirdar* (headman or team leader) multitasked, doing jobs of supervision of his gang-men in the gallery and faces of mines, a preliminary inspection of the mining faces, blasting or coal cutting and recruitment. As the efforts at mechanisation and scientific management, slowly, advanced and the legislative mandate encouraged it, their illiteracy weakened their claim on such occupations. Henceforth, they were limited to coal cutting, hauling, loading and recruitment.  

Similar to the social composition of workers, their spatial origins also, to an extent, overlapped with the division of labour. The local workers were, pre-eminently, concentrated in coal cutting and loading jobs. The Musahars and Bhuinyas from Gaya and Hazaribagh districts were, primarily, loaders. The middle-caste workers from Munger district occupied the position of Trolley-men. The Oriyas, Nuniyas and Beldars were concentrated in surface works, such as earth moving and railway-wagon loading. The Bilaspuris mostly performed blasting, coal cutting and loading. Workers who hailed from UP and Punjab preferred mechanical and other better-paid skilled jobs.  

The ethnic and territorial features of labour relations factored, our later discussion will show, into the workers’ view of and social struggles for social security, and their unseemly experiences of worker welfare.

**Conditions of living and care**

During the early two-decades, mining companies worked on the principle of continuous renewal of the workforce through a supply of fresh migrants. They did
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not regard it as necessary to support the creation of a new generation of the proletariat within its immediate vicinity. The migrants recuperated their life energy in their immediate and distant villages. They hired the labour recruiter, called *sirdars*, on a commission to recruit, train and control mineworkers. Some of the companies purchased the zamindary rights on the land and used it to create a class of service tenants. The latter worked on the mines in return for their right to use the arable land. Unlike the Raniganj and Giridih coalfields, the Jharia coalfield was, however, known for a small percentage of service tenants, that is, about six percent of the total workforce in 1930. For the companies did not find abundant arable lands in this field.

Employers regarded the families of workers in the village and on the mines responsible for caring for the old, sick, injured and other dependent members. Workers received few means of social security. Employers took some interests in a temporary stay of migrants. Workers were, initially, housed in thatched huts. Workers constructed these huts themselves with materials provided by employers on the employer’s property. The local commuters preferred to live in their nearby villages. From the mid-1910s, mineworkers slowly moved into the colliery tenements, known as arched *dhowrahs*, allotted to them by employers. A colliery tenement, normally, consisted of around 60 to 70 back-to-back and side-by-side houses. Each of them had one room of 1000 cubic feet (twelve by twelve by seven sizes) and one tiny courtyard. The latter functioned as a kitchen. The cost of construction was Rupees 60 per tenement. The Santhal coalminer, however, did not appreciate back-to-back tenements and insisted on putting up separate huts with thatched roofs.

The number of tenements remained far short of the needs of workers. The tenements were ‘overcrowded’: Between two to three mineworkers' families, that is, six to twelve persons lived in each of them. The average size of a coalminer’s family was about five to six individuals – comprising husband, wife and three to four infants. Many of them also included two or three kin and the old parents. Most of them did various jobs on the mines. Mineworkers preferred to share a tenement with fellow workers of the same family, tribe, caste or territory (district or village). Over time, a neighbourhood (*para*) of such workers tenements came about and symbolised as a
community space. We hear, for instance, of the Bhuiyan *dhowrah*, Bauri *dhowrah*, Mahato *dhowrah*, Beldar *dhowrah*, Gaya *dhowrah*, Paschima *dhowrah* and the Muhammedan *dhowrah*. This form of spatial concentration of mining classes sharing a specific kinship and spatial network was, partly, a consequence of 'the segment and control' policy of employers. The latter encouraged, indeed planned, this kind of housing arrangements to obviate any prospects of potential class solidarity or threats of coalworkers' collective assertion or strike. The labour recruiter distributed tenements between his gang members consisting of persons from his caste, ethnicity, village and religion. Over time, employers deployed security guards, called *pehalwan* and *latthait*, to compel workers to come out of the tenements and start work as per schedule and conform to the managerial scheme of things.

The overcrowded tenements offered little privacy to any occupants. Women were the first to suffer in these circumstances. Smoke generated from coal stoves filled rooms, turning them inhospitable. Worker families frequently enjoyed the vital source of support from their extended family based in the village during the times of pregnancy and the postpartum, right through the infancy of the new-borns. However, workers faced a challenge of caring for their toddlers on the mines. One way devised was to share their tenements with other working families, who worked in alternate shifts, with the intention of collective care for each other's toddlers. Two-room set colliery houses offered relatively better comfort to the clerk and the supervisor.

Workers drew water from the wells for drinking. They approached the ponds and the pit water for bath and cleaning. They received coal as fuel from the companies. They burnt their waste and prepared coal ovens in the nearby fields. Wastewater flowed around tenements. Some settled mineworkers reared cattle and maintained cattle-sheds attached to the tenements. The colliery villages were initially greener. As mining swallowed more and more land, colliery villages turned into drab and smoky places. Dusty, brown shrubs occupied the unused lands. Cholera, smallpox, influenza fever, diarrhoea, malaria and plague regularly visited the colliery villages. In turn, the sick person frequently ran to the *Ojha* (Shaman) and the Hakim (the Unani and Ayurvedic medicine practitioner) for medical treatment. Observers
described the manner of living of workers as 'unsanitary habits' and their beliefs as 'superstitious.' E.C. Agabeg and J.H. Evans, empathetic investigators and engineers of long-standing on the Indian coalfields, equally advocated a plan for drastic improvement in the conditions of housing, water supply and sanitation.

The working-class family considered children the source of social security and their upbringing a fundamental life goal. Children of the mining families grew up and schooled on the colliery streets, at the workplace, and around the villages. As a rule, children grew to the labourer status, generally at the 'official' age of ten under the Indian Mines Act (IMA), 1901, of 13 under the IMA, 1923 and 15 under the IMA, 1935. As helpers to parents, however, they started working much before the official registers offered them any recognition. To the colliery operator, the socialisation of children as a trained and experienced mineworker was a positive input to their growth. They, therefore, did not see any need for crèche and school for workers' children. Consequently, Dagmar Curjel observed, healthy and 'un-stunted' children growing up on the mines were more of an exception than a rule. She noted how puzzled she was to see healthy Santhal children going below-ground with parents and how she found, on inquiring, that they spent most of the year in their village homes and only a short period in the mines.37

Workers regularly faced the dangers of accidents. The latter took a toll of about one person's life and more than four persons' limbs per thousand employees during 1900-1940.38 The government stipulated the Indian Mines Act, 1901 to fix the responsibility of the employer and managerial personnel for the prevention of workplace hazards and declared their failure a punishable offence. In this context, the dead bodies, injured workers and other witnesses began to disappear from the colliery where accidents occurred, as the Inspectors annually reported.39

Precarious life and the arrangement of Modern-industrial reproduction

The limits and contradictions inherent within the early-industrial reproduction regime, known for few social security and welfare measures, came to the fore soon enough. The inhospitality showed up more in the guise of bacteria, germs, rats, contaminated water and soil, unsanitary spaces, epidemics. All this wreaked havoc on the unsuspecting bodies of the mining people. A plague epidemic in 1906-7 and
water-borne cholera in 1907-8 removed several thousand workers, deaths alone running well over a thousand; a mass exodus followed the deaths. Indeed, a batch of employees frequently deserted a colliery and its huts when a few premature deaths occurred. Faced with the prospect of losing out on profits during the trade boom in 1906-8, some employers woke up to the threats that besieged the colliers’ bodies. They gradually developed a plan for improved living conditions for mineworkers. The plan proposed to replace makeshift straw and thatch huts with brick-built structures. It proposed to make available filtered and chlorinated drinking water in place of the pond water or pit water. Other provisions of the plan included the arrangement of drainage and regular sanitary inspection by the local Conservancy Committee, and the operationalisation of a colliery dispensary as a substitute for the shaman and Hakim. In 1909, the Indian Mining Association (IMAs: Organisation of the colliery owners since 1892) and the Manbhum District Board built a hospital with a dozen beds at Dhanbad.

The grave threats to the industry caused by repeated bouts of cholera which, for instance, caused 214 deaths and affected over thousands in 1913, along with recurrent outbreaks of smallpox and plague, reinforced a new industrial sensibility that called for some ameliorative measures. Subsequently, the Jharia Health Board (JHB, 1914) and Jharia Water Board (JWB, 1915) were formed under the Bengal Mining Settlement Act, 1912. The Bihar and Orissa Mining Settlement Act, 1919-20 was stipulated for worker housing. These legislative interventions addressed the two structural constraints by setting up dedicated institutions. The first constraint pertained to the budgetary limitation of isolated individual initiatives. The second was the threat that the indifference of a vast number of small and medium proprietors to the unsanitary and unhealthy conditions, posed to the neighbouring colliery populace. Such a measure was an instance of the state-power, which had so far only levied excise duties and other charges on the coal trade, stepping in to bail out the errant proprietors on both counts. On the two occasions, in 1915-6 and again in 1923-4, the state gave the industry the necessary loans on nominal interest rates to undertake the construction of Topchhanchi reservoir and other pipelines to ensure the supply of safe drinking water.

The Jharia Health and Water Boards initiated measures to improve the provision of drinking water, housing, health and sanitation, primary school and maternity and
child welfare. Inadequate financial resources, however, forced them to act only in fits and starts, their activities coming to an abrupt halt during the great depression. The Popular Ministry led by the National Congress conducted a fresh enquiry in 1938-41 with Dr Rajendra Prasad, who was then one of the Executive Committee members of the Congress, heading the Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee. The Prasad Committee report brought to the fore the fact that the housing arrangements were 'insufficient' regarding both number and living space. Even the best company efforts at providing housing, undertaken on the bigger mines, constructed not more than one-third to half of the required one-room tenements for the total workforce. The situation was worse in the smaller establishments.

Over a dozen collieries, out of the total 300 plus in the late 1930s, provided primary schools in their vicinity. These schools were the preserve of the *babus/sirkar* (clerical, supervisory and mechanical staff). They managed these schools and did their best to keep children of production workers away from these, citing either the low caste status or the allegedly 'uncared' bodies of the lowly children. Barely seven percent of the children of mining people including those of the *babus* had access to schools.

**Photograph 1. Topchhanchi Reservoir**
About a dozen collieries provided benefits of dispensary or hospital, and maternity and child care. The Jealgora group formed a contributory benefit fund, which offered support to mineworkers on occasions of marriage, birth and death ceremonies. A few others offered two to five rupees to the worker's family on the occasions of birth or death. Employers at 12.5 percent collieries or 37.5 of the more prominent mines provided Provident Fund (PF) benefits to the supervisory, clerical and managerial personnel. The Tata group of coalmines paid gratuity to the same class of its employees.

All employers liked to have a grog shop in the vicinity of their coalmines, which were supposed to attract mineworkers. J.E. Copeland, an investigator, observed in 1917 that there were no facilities, barring the liquor shops, in existence on the collieries.

The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923-24 asked the employer to pay monetary compensation and medical benefits to the victims. Subsequent to it, workers now and then complained against the denial of due compensation to them. In these instances, employers argued that either the victim was responsible for the accident or the victim did not bear the loss 'in the course and out of the employment in the mines.'

About a half dozen big establishments, like the TISCO (Jamadoba, Digwadih and Malkera groups), the Eastern Coal Company (Bhowra, Amlabad and Potkee groups), the East India Coal Company (Jela gor and Bararee), the Ranigunjee Coal
Mechanisation and safety regulations, introduced since the 1920s, especially required skilled, technical men and experienced, stable coalminers. To meet these new requirements, efforts were made to set up centres for mining classes and technical training institutions: for instance, the School of Mines at Dhanbad in 1926. A few big colliery proprietors and the Dhanbad Municipality, too, responded favourably to the pressures from official Inquiry commissions to provide facilities for schooling, especially in the wake of the prohibition on children's employment and of the politics of safety that demanded educated, informed workers.

By 1940, provisions for housing, drinking water, maternity care, child care, health care and schooling, indeed, enabled some colliery staff to live more comfortably as well as to support non-earning members. They were, mostly, the managerial, clerical, supervisory and technical staff and a few other colliers. They had formed the first labour union in Jharia, the Indian Colliery Employees Association, in 1920 and championed their cause from this platform. Nearly half of the total workforce
became settled, stable employees in the crowded tenements and as commuters in the nearby villages during a half-century of the industry. In 1921, about 15 percent of over 90,000 workers were settled ones, and another 10 percent were regular commuters.\textsuperscript{47} The situation slightly shifted in the next decade, as settled workers formed one-fourth of the total.\textsuperscript{48} The numbers rose to about 35 percent of the total workforce (132,000) at the end of World War II.\textsuperscript{49} This shift in the pattern of migration and stabilisation accompanied other changes. The rate of infant mortality halved, from what was in the range of 40-50 percent of the total live births to 20-24 percent of the total. There was no outbreak of the plague from the 1920s. Attacks of Cholera turned less menacing as compared to the earlier decades. Equally conspicuous by infamy were the facts that over two-third workers were indebted to the labour agent and colliery clerks; many were regular visitors to the grog shops. Half of the workforce remained circulatory migrants even by the mid-1940s. They appeared to have liked to invest their savings in the land, huts, and livestock in their villages.\textsuperscript{50}

The settled and stable workers were traditionally the family migrants. Men, the women and the children in these families performed various wage works. They seemed to have few land rights in their villages, excepting a homestead land and thereon a hut. They were keenly responsive to the opportunity for settlement in the destination economy. The number of such workers further swelled in the 1930s. The great depression (1929-35) broke down economic standing of the land poor and small peasants. The deeply indebted land poor were left to seek redemption at industrial centres.\textsuperscript{51} Men from this background replaced women mineworkers.

The modern reproduction deal evinced a mining regime that combined paternalist and market despotism. It offered employee benefits that were evidently unequal, inadequate and truncated. Such an offer and its impact on the pattern of migration and stabilisation of the workforce were partly, suggests my study, a product of business consideration.\textsuperscript{52} The management found that the creation of a fully settled workforce in the mining township was a drain on their financial resources on the counts of, for instance, housing and health expenditure. For they, frequently, sought to adjust with the fluctuating market of coal. Equally, they regarded a fully settled workforce unwarranted. Indeed, they favoured regular rural visits of mineworkers.
and presumed rural attachment of mineworkers useful 'in the interest of health regeneration.' They directed their resources to create the supervisory and technical staff (in the range of 15 to 16 percent of the total workforce), and part–settled, part-circulating production workers. Employers maintained this assumption that employees were essentially the migrants, who had a small plot of land in the village and whose extended family was responsible for the necessary support for the aged, injured and other dependent members.

**On social insurance programmes**

The approaches adopted by the working-class public on the question of employee benefits, I suggest below, modified the industrial reproduction deal and, partly, shaped its expansion. They constituted another component of the counter movement. Industrialists sought to control labour mobility and raise efficiency through a welfare incentive. By contrast, workers' concern for improved living conditions and advancement of life informed their politics of employee benefits. The working-class public increasingly set out the question of employee benefits in new terms in the aftermath of World War I. The labour publicists denounced the 'sub-human' treatment meted out to workers and their miserable conditions of living. They highlighted the instances of high mortality rates, infant and maternal mortality, and lack of opportunity for education and cultural growth in the working-classes. In 1919-22, the Workers Welfare League of India (WWLI: London), a participant body in the ILO convention, propagated in India the calls for measures to develop welfare facilities for childcare and schooling and provisions for housing. Associations like the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and its associates, the Indian Colliery Employees Association (ICEA), too, pressed for reforms. Political activists, like N.M. Joshi, Chaman Lal and Pd. Krishna Kant Malviya pressed for ratification of the ILO conventions and legislative interventions to provide workers with maternity care, crèches, insurance schemes related to sickness, work hazards, old age and unemployment benefits, together with measures to improve wage rates, equal wages for women, housing and schooling.

In this context, particularly significant were the public debates and movements concerning the question of ‘civilising’ or ‘humanising’ the worker's life. The new idea was that a well-managed and stable life of workers was integral to the emergence of
'advancing and healthy humanity.' The broader philosophy underlying this approach was that children as such should be free to participate in schooling and other creative exercises. 'Humanised' life, in other words, was defined by this approach as the ability of a person to freely participate in various cultural, intellectual and political activities. To meet such an end, went the argument, it was necessary to make reproduction independent of wage-centred everyday labour. This objective was to be achieved by setting up institutional supports to the reproduction needs of workers, known otherwise as social security programmes. Such institutions could come into being either through general protective legislation or be funded by the state or the industry in specific cases. This ideology was a movement away from the pre-modern presumption that the weak, the sick and other dependent were the sole liability of the family.\textsuperscript{57}

The colonial state, as well as the capitalist generally, tended to be evasive about proposals for maternity and child welfare. Colonial officials like A.H. Ley, the Secretary to the Department of Industry and Labour in 1924, for instance, was sceptical of social insurance policies of publicists like N.M. Joshi. He saw it as being ‘very much in advance of the public opinion in this country.’ Ley chose to highlight what he presumed the three formidable challenges that rendered the prospects of such schemes impracticable. First, he argued that it was hard to generate resources for such programmes from both the state as well as the employers. Second, he held up the floating nature of Indian working population as a major roadblock for insurance schemes. Third, he emphasised the responsibilities of the family and the breadwinner to take care of issues relating to maternity, sickness and old age.\textsuperscript{58} The concerns shared by the committee consisting of reformers and medical doctors, like Dagmar Curjel and Francis Barnes, from the women's medical service, often went beyond the narrower focus of the colonial government.\textsuperscript{59} The findings of these committees drew the official’s attention to problems of health and maternity care.

The agenda of labour activists based in Jharia in the early twenties, such as Swami Bishwanand, was often more sensitive to a few other [local] needs than national publicists. Bishwanand emphasised the needs for small schools and a prohibition on the sale of spirits, and a better wage rate for workers employed in the dangerous work.\textsuperscript{60} He too, unlike national leaders like N.M. Joshi believed that taking care of the
sick and the elderly was the sole responsibility of the family and its breadwinner and regarded facilities, such as maternity benefits or crèche schemes as an alien imposition. Therefore, movements around such demands did not pick up any momentum until the late 1930s.

The worker's pursuit of 'advancing humanity and self-respect,' alongside growing 'civilising' and 'humanising' concerns, appears to have equally defined their approach to workers welfare and employee benefits. They were all but a destitute and starving lot. They observed the campaigns for 'social upliftment.' The churning of the social (caste) upliftment campaigns took roots in more than a dozen caste-solida-rities belonging to the unprivileged and underprivileged social conditions from the second decade of the twentieth-century. They claimed for the higher social status of Kshatriya, Viskarma-Brahmin and Vaishya. Some of their characteristic pursuits included the adoption of *janeo* (sacred thread); the prevention of beggary and services of female labour in others' fields and in the distant market; the prevention of widow remarriage and child marriage; and the exhortation of the members for the education of children (both boys and girls). They sought access to educational and training institutions; the prohibition on drinking; and adherence to pious food habits and clean accommodation. The All India Chandravanshiya Kshatriya Mahasabha, together with similar associations having a prefix of Yadav, Kurmi, Koeri, Dosadh and Kahar-Rawani campaigned along this line since 1912, after the Census Enumerators declined their claim for Kshatriya status in the two successive censuses in 1901 and 1911. Their campaigns turned regular and reverberated in larger sections when they conducted annual provincial and national gatherings over the concerned subject. The All India Kurmi Kshatriya Association extended its activity into Chottanagpur region since 1923 onwards. The Satnami Mahasabha was formed amongst the Bilaspuri (Chhatisgarh) Chamars in the early 1920s and campaigned against caste distinction and for an improved living and dignified life.

'Social upliftment' campaigns brought about the new ethics amongst workers of social groups like the Goala, Kurmi-Mahto, Koeri, Kahar-Rawani and Dosadh. The members of these caste-upliftment and social reform campaigns wanted to educate their children and have a culturally initiated and varied life. Therefore, they exerted
themselves under the piece-rate payment system and liked to have female earning members than comforting homemakers.

Other groups, like the Bhuiyan, Chamar and Rajwar in the 1930s and 1940s, the Bauri in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Santhal in the 1960s pursued a similar family wage-work and code of respectability. The Coalfield Dalit Mazdoor Sangh and Harijan Kalyan Samiti promoted the conceptions of self-respect and improved working and living conditions. The Bauri youth formed the Harijan Sevak Sangh, and initiated the first reform efforts since 1945, following Dr B.R. Ambedkar's visit in Dhanbad district. Similarly, a group of the Santhal youth, associated with the newly formed Adibasi Parishad (1960) and Sanot Santal Samaj (Cleaner Santal Society, 1962-63) exhorted the Santhal workers to abandon drinking, to educate themselves so as to lead a contented and dignified life. They also urged their member to keep a close watch on the up-country labourer denying him any more chance to dishonour their women workers. In 1963, they wrote letters to the manager and contractor requesting them to 'cease the employment of illiterate young ladies with immediate effect. In a special case, she may be employed only on written permission from the Association.' The illiteracy of young women, they believed, made them too gullible to resist sexual advances on their own. These campaigns benefitted from the Jharkhand movement. The latter had been organising anti-usury agitations, campaigns for the restoration of tribals' claim on land and forest and the demand for statehood since 1955-1956, under the banner of the Jharkhand Party and Karantikari Morcha.

A restriction upon womenfolk's work outside their house, land and village was seen as essential for strong claims to respectable status in the brahminical caste order. The practice of family-oriented labour on the mines did not violate this 'reformist' [patriarchal] attitude to women's wage-work, for the family headmen exercised control over recruitment and supervision of women in the collieries. Their insistence on the continuation of family-oriented labour decidedly confronted the 'civilising' concerns of protecting women from dangerous occupations and reposing in their caregiving and house-making responsibilities. This cultural confrontation, it could be said, embodied the working-class subculture, their autonomous manner of adaptation to the contending pulls and pressures.
The caste-upliftment and self-respect campaigns were an aspect of the caste, ethnic and gender identities of workers. Indeed, these campaigns brought about a fruitful dimension in the labour movement organised on the question of employee benefits. This feature of the labour politics was as significant as, observed in many studies, the segmentary effect of such social identities as well as the function of social capital played by these identities in the mobilisation of economic resources and political strength.

Local, national and international pressures eventually led the colonial government and colliery management to bring about a semblance of uniformity in labour standards in line with the broader ILO trends. Some welfare schemes relating to housing, health services, sanitation, schools, maternity and childcare, and compensation to the victim of accidents were introduced in the 1920s and 30s', albeit in a slow and iniquitous manner. There were two areas of discordance with the modern reproduction deal as it was laid down. First, the marginalised coalminers fought either for their inclusion into the protected class of personnel or for an extension of the social security arrangement itself. Second, the notion of 'civilised,' 'human' life was an advancing one and became a springboard for the politics of improved conditions of living. Associations of miners, like the Jharia Coalfield Workers Union and All India Mine Workers' Federation, exerted consistent pressure on the authorities to make workers' welfare more efficient and non-discriminatory. They asked for improved housing, crèche, maternity benefits, schools and provident fund, together with improved wages. These were considered a prerequisite for a regular, efficient working life and comfortable living.

The above demands would have helped contain the cost of reproduction, hence were mutually consistent with the demand for a wage hike. However, the political investment in such an agenda signified much more than a pure desire for reduced reproduction costs, a point that the state officials who looked at workers' agitation in terms of political conspiracy and wage cum price question did not quite grasp. Prof. Abdul Bari (President of the Jharia Coalfield Workers' Union), Hazara Singh and Shyam Deo Narayan, all nationalist labour representatives, expressed the essence of this point during a 91 days strike at the collieries of Badroochak, Chaittabad-Katras, Loyabad and Muidih between 26 September and 27 December.
They should remain firm until the capitalist, who had grown fat by sucking their blood fell down on their feet so that the government which was on their back and which had locked their comrades in the jail set them free. The company is making a large amount from coal mines, having a palatial house, all comfort and luxuries of life, whereas labourer did not have the bare comfort of everyday life, they need sufficient water to drink, to bathe, or lavatory, do not have sufficient bread and clothes, nor accommodation in their dhowrahs. They were kept in dirty place, and there was no arrangement of education for their children. They need good accommodation. They need an arrangement for the education of their children. They need a proper hospital. They need provident fund. They need profit-sharing bonus and other allowance. …but when they demanded, there are lathi-charges.

The spirit of the movement that animated such poignant outbursts took firm root in the working-class politics and continued to reinforce itself through a series of long and comprehensive strikes from 1937-38 onwards.

Mineworkers rose in a mass revolt in the aftermath of World War II, when the Defence of India Act was revoked and the Bihar Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1947 was yet to be suppressive. Strikes and mass action took place even in those frontier coalmines, which were until then effectively untouched by the fighting political spirit. At the same time, the charter of demands expanded to include the payment of PF, provisions of hospital with full supply of medicines, improved drinking water supply, comfortable and airy quarters with electricity, double-room quarters with kitchen for married persons, pit-head baths, union office, workers' club with radio, dance and drama center and recreational facility among others. Mineworkers asserted the principle of equity in employee benefits: 'These benefits should equally apply to workers of contractors under the company.'

The social security and welfare measures already on offer and the Conciliation Board Award declared by the National Ministry on 12 May 1947 did not fully meet the workers' charter. What mineworkers viewed as particularly intolerable was the effort at enforcing the industrial reproduction deal militarily. They brought a
stoppage to work following a call articulated by Sadhan Gupta, General Secretary of Hindustan Khan Mazdoor Sangh, and an associate of Prof. Bari, who was shot dead on 28 March 1947. On the night of 16–17 June 1947, they barricaded the pit of Murulidih colliery with coal tubs, sleepers and bricks, the materials used in the very process of production and shouted slogans. The police used tear gas, but it did not produce much effect partly because the strikers used a wet cloth on their faces and threw sand on the bombs. Then the police opened fire, injuring twenty-two strikers and gunning down another five on the spot. One injured subsequently died in Dhanbad Hospital. On 4 August 1947, the joint meeting of associations of colliery owners, the Indian Mines Association (IMA), Indian Mines Federation (IMF) and Indian Colliery Owners Association (ICOA), decided to take recourse of lockout in case workers resorted to 'illegal' direct actions. The next morning, police arrested Sadhan Gupta under the Bihar Maintenance of Public Order Act (BMPOA). Subsequently, the police charged him with a mysterious murder case, leading to his lifetime incarceration in 1952. The detention of Gupta and other socialist and communist workers provided relief to the colliery management. The reinforcement of the police force in the coalfield sought to reassure them against the agitators. This instrument of the force was an addition to the existing gangs of musclemen whom workers described as the employers' mafia directed against the right-conscious worker.

The official view saw imprints of middle-class leaders on the charter of demands, hence avoidable. Labour historians have treated the workers' charter of demand as an expression of natural human requirements or an advanced social awareness of the employee. Our present discussion shows how it evolved to fruition in the shape of popular aspiration for the humanisation of industrial life. The ferocity with which mineworkers put their life at risk shows us how dramatic was the refashioning of their approach to social security and their choice for a 'civilised,' human life, as opposed to the image of workers of pre-bourgeois, hierarchical consciousness.

The colliery management and state-power appeared to follow what Sukomal Sen has called hoodwink and repression policy. The Mines Maternity Benefit and Crèche Act, 1941 was passed to assuage the agitating coalminer and to arrest the flight of miner's family, particularly the women miner, with a view towards
Public Arguments

The advantages of a centralised welfare plan were evident as the recalcitrant firms perforce fell in line with the vision of improvement. Secondly, it helped overcome the maintaining a high production level to meet the sudden demands because of WW II.

With the same intent, Dr B. R. Ambedkar, as Labour Member of the Viceroy-in-Council in 1942-1946, seized an opportunity in December 1943-January 1944 to lay down the programme of Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund (CMLWF). The government, he said, was responsible for making arrangements to 'provide the fullest facilities for growth to every individual according to his needs.' "It should aim at' ensuring, said Ambedkar, 'the basic right of all Indians to share in the industrial wealth as a means for a decent and dignified existence." Notably, the Labour Minister, Jagjivan Ram, of the National Ministry formed in September 1946, continued to vest political mandate with the government regulated 'worker welfare' scheme.

The CMLWF raised funds by levying cess (initially two Annas) on every ton of coal and coke despatched, and financed a host of schemes, including the construction and administration of central and regional hospitals, colliery dispensaries, ambulance, sanitation, maternity and child welfare centres, colliery schools, anti-malaria campaigns, and supplies of drinking water, and washing and bathing facilities. It also offered assistance to specific programmes undertaken by the companies. It registered a notable success. The number of lower and upper primary schools and makhtabs rose to 70, 18 and 15, respectively, in 1947. There were 199 dispensaries attached to the collieries in 1947, of which 27 had beds. The ambulance car belonging to the JMHB took care of emergencies. The total number of child and maternity centres managed by the Board rose to 23 in 1947. They were grouped in three circles, each under the charge of a Lady Health Visitor. Some neighbouring collieries were consolidated with the old clinics. As a result, the scheme was in force on 56 bigger and medium collieries, about 117 villages and Jharia, Katras, and Kenduadih bazaars. The CMLWF shifted its focus, since 1947, to build a few large central and regional hospitals equipped with necessary X-ray and other facilities. It set out the construction of a modern township of two-room set flats at Bhuli alongside other colliery tenements that would conform to the recommendation of Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee, that is, separate tenements of 1500 cubic feet each.

The advantages of a centralised welfare plan were evident as the recalcitrant firms perforce fell in line with the vision of improvement. Secondly, it helped overcome the
The compelling factor at work here, unlike the previous experience of the JMHB since 1915-16, was the representation exercised by the working classes vis-a-vis the employer, and the formal representation of women on the advisory committee of the CMLWF. They were, however, nominated by the central government. It partly redressed the old complaint of working people that they had no representation in the existing public bodies, which was responsible, Mukut Dhari Singh argued before the Prasad Committee in 1938, for the tepid performance of the bodies like JMHB.

Table 2. Workers' Housing on the Jharia Coalfield in Selected Years, 1929, 1944 and 1963

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coalmines, 1929</th>
<th>Daily Average No. of Workers</th>
<th>Number of Tenements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhowra</td>
<td>2082</td>
<td>1059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamadoba</td>
<td>2052</td>
<td>1224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kustore</td>
<td>2187</td>
<td>1292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyabad</td>
<td>3383</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure Jharia</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopalichuk</td>
<td>1185</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ena</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutgoria</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkend, 196</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Kujama</td>
<td></td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Barwabera</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonardih</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angarpathra</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kantapahari</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kesolpur</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jharia Coalfield, 1929: 71,709 (total 89,000) 32,793
1944: 101,457 (total 126,000) 33,738
1962-63: 142,600 (total 152,000) 58,202

Public Arguments

Photographs 3. Arched *Dhowrahs* and other Huts

Photograph 4. Two-room Houses.

Photograph 5. Water Tank
Career coalminers and their unseemly experiences

The social security programme also attracted criticism, for it became amenable in the long-run to selective and exclusionary implementation at the hands of various employers. The problem was evident to B.N. Srivastva, an Investigator of the Survey of Labour Condition in Coal Mining Industry, undertaken by Labour Ministry in 1962-63 to see the efficacy of its worker welfare initiatives. While the industrialist offered the benefit of three- or more- roomed houses to the managerial personnel, and two-roomed houses to supervisors, clerks, technical men as well as service staff, they refused to generalise it for production workers. Despite some efforts at constructing subsidised houses, improving its size and design, around 50 percent of sweat labourers (43 percent of the total workforce) received one-roomed tenements. The compounds, made of bamboos and timber were also erected at a few coalmines to lodge nearly one percent of the total workers. They were men known as the Gorakhpuri labourers, who were recruited on a yearly contract as ‘attached labour’
since 1944. Others demanded housing materials be made available to them so that they could build their huts. Moving to a separate accommodation was a pressing issue particularly to married couples because it was considered ungracious to crowd further the quarters offered to the parents.

The water supply facilities considerably improved following the expansion of Topchanchi reservoir and the installation of boring pumps at the Damodar River. Nonetheless, during the summer season, the short supply of drinking water compelled many a worker to fall back on the pit water. About 68 percent collieries provided medical services. In many of them, doctors offered their services for one to six hours a week. These mines were also known for providing canteens under the Mines Rules, 1955. About 65 percent of the big mines, employing over 400 workers, had primary schools, but the percentage dipped to just 22 in the case of all the collieries put together. Only in the big collieries did mineworkers' families had access to some recreational facilities, like reading and radio room, popularly known as chaupal or chal. Srivastva noticed a similar trend about crèche. Since 1945, mineworkers had made strong demands for crèche services, and provisions were made, under the Mines Rules, 1955 for a monthly paid medical check-up of children, cradles, beddings, milk, diet, soap, clean towels, and toys. The number of coalmines that offered these facilities was pitifully small. The small mines were defaulting even under the Mines Act, 1952 and the Coal Mines Pithead Bath Rules, 1959. As noted by Srivastva, mineworkers employed on the large mines received a better deal in all these respects than their counterparts employed by the small firms.

The difference in the provisioning of reproduction support facilities between the large establishments and the medium and small ones was a rather hard lesson to mineworkers. Notably, 21 percent of the total coalmines (465) in Bihar were large ones, and each of them employed more than 400 workers. The large coalmines produced more than two-thirds of the total output and employed a similar proportion of the total workforce. Other 45.8 percent were medium ones, and each of them employed 150 plus workers. They accounted for one-fourth of the total output and workforce. It is no wonder, therefore, why mineworkers' unions preferred that the small coalmines, often lacking in finance to run the enterprise responsibly and efficiently, be merged with the big ones.
Under the new scheme of the CMLWF, colliery firms, rather than adjusting their profit margins, transferred the welfare cost on to the consumer of coal. The Coal Board, a Central Government body that governed the pricing of coal, mainly ensured a guaranteed profit margin and immunity from any critical market fluctuation. Employers sought to fix the criteria such as a minimum of work, i.e., attendance and labour productiveness, for a mineworker to qualify for employee benefits, like rent-free housing and PF as opposed to any generalised commitment to the well-being of workers. However, the very criteria of attendance and productiveness could be, and were, used as means to deny the claims of mineworkers.

Let us take the case of PF. The National-ministry came up with the Conciliation Board Award (CBA, headed by W.R. Puranik) between 4 February 1947 and 12 May 1947. It recommended among other things, PF as a means for old-age care. The Government of India (GOI) approved its recommendation with an additional desire for the formation of a stable, contented, experienced and moral workforce. The conciliation boards and other tribunals from 1947 onwards took into account the principal concerns of industrialists to design an incentive structure in a manner that would push workers into being more regular, intensify their work effort, and ensure industrial peace. The disaggregation of wages into basic-wage, dearness allowance, bonus and PF dependent on the criteria of attendance, production and no participation in any 'illegal strike', came to satisfy those concerns. For their cooperation, the industrialists gained rewards. The state managed Coal [Control] Board fixed prices of coal in a way that largely neutralised the new cost of social overheads.

The PF scheme (two annas per worker per week under the Coal Mines Provident Fund and Bonus Act, 1948, and four annas since 1959) met the same fate, as it depended on the same attendance and other criteria, which the bonus scheme and paid leaves had. About one-third of the total workforce consisted of contractors' labourers and casual labourers as late as 1959. They were entitled to the same benefits as those of the permanent colliers under the ruling of the Conciliation Board Award (CBA) in May 1947, but employers succeeded in eluding their claims for PF benefits. The relentless struggle of workers forced the Companies to register regular contract and casual colliers as a permanent collier and offer them all the entitlements from 1962.
Since then, employers devised newer ways to circumvent their responsibilities; whence they managed to exclude about one-third workers from their claims of PF. About 20 percent of the big coalmines paid pension to its supervisory, technical and administrative employees. About 42 percent of the big mines paid gratuity to its permanent workers. Others opposed the recommendation of the Wage Board (headed by Salim M. Merchant) in 1967 for the payment of gratuity to all employees. Meanwhile, the miner’s organisations took up the problem of denial of PF. Finally, the Tripartite Coal Industry Council and Merchant Wage Board recommended that the criteria for the payment of bonus and PF be separate: The number of days of regular attendance required for PF was brought down to 125 days a year.

Mineworkers found themselves in a protracted battle over workmen’s compensation and the demands for safety arrangements against the increased rates of fatality, injury and occupational disease. Their success in the management office as well as the courtroom for compensation claims led to a significant rise in the compensation budget of employers. It increased from half anna to between three and four annas per tonne of coal despatched during 1924-30, which was also the insurance rate paid by employers. In response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour, the Amendment to the WCA, 1923 marginally raised the rates of compensation in 1933. Another significant revision in the rates and the adoption of the provision of the payment of compensation to every worker deceased or bearing the marks of serious injury since 1959 addressed the persistent complaints of the employee’s agency. The latter achieved a more fundamental change from the Indian Mines Act, 1952. Pneumoconiosis and silicosis now received recognition as compensable occupational diseases. A survey done by the Indian Council for Medical Research found that up to 45 percent of the Indian coalminers suffered from pneumoconiosis in the late 1960s. Such coalminers were, however, neither able to receive paid leave nor compensation. The management dismissed those workers on the charge of being 'medically unfit,' who reported the health difficulties. It struck fear among others. The labour unions asked for appropriate compensation and rehabilitation rules regarding occupational diseases. The Indian National Mineworkers Federation proposed to the Tripartite Industrial Committee on Coal Mining:
Now, a large number of workers are dismissed on medical grounds or being declared as medically unfit. A gratuity scheme is to be introduced to give compensation equivalent to retrenchment compensation, i.e., 15 days wages for every completed year of service.  

Employers opposed, as noted before, the recommendation for gratuity made by the Merchant Wage Board, 1967. The government decided to put this item on hold, even though its Coal Price Committee granted a corresponding increase in the price.

The pressure exerted by mineworkers upon employers and state-power, it could be said, influenced the politics of reproduction and settlement. However, the latter equally rested on the fact that the state regarded the mining sector as a strategic one, especially from the early 1940s, for overall industrial prosperity. Further, its guiding ideology sought to harness the productive energy of working classes; in turn, it recognised their claim for a better share in the economic richness that would enable them to secure humane and advancing life. This reproduction politics functioned through a class compromise, rather than class accommodation, among state-power, employers and mineworkers in one of the strategic sectors of the economy. Kaviraj has regarded an instance like this as a manifestation of reformist capitalism, which the Passive Revolution in India brought about during the 1950s and early 60s'. This was attributed to Nehru's passive revolution strategy, and the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the new bureaucracy that was relatively antagonistic rather than collusive, as argued by Kaviraj. In his framework, the modern-industrial reproduction deal was a part of the operation of governance (policy decisions) in the shape of a ‘vertical clientelist benefit coalitions’ among the subordinate classes. However, as brought to the fore in our discussion, Kaviraj's latter proposition misses the fact of a class compromise and the views and role of the working-class public in securing reproduction supports.

The extent to which an employer needed a set of regular, experienced workers and 'industrial peace' was inscribed on the kind of reproduction supports they eventually offered. Some big establishments, such as the TISCO, ISCO and Bengal Coal Company enjoyed access to the reserved coal market. Some others were relatively better placed to gain railway contracts for fuel supply. They presented an attractive
incentive structure, comparable to the principle of efficiency wage, to their employees. Notably, all this led to a hierarchisation in the working classes with managers at the top, followed by supervisors and clerks who in turn had regular mechanical, technical and other 'permanent' employees below them in terms of rank. In this pecking order of workers constructed on the basis of welfare facilities received from employers, the rest of production workers stood at the very bottom. The class of production workers consisted of both the better off permanent ones, although equally vulnerable to the scheme of attendance, productivity and 'illegal strike,' and lastly, probationers, temporary workers and casual ones.  

These work relations and reproduction politics were the context of an improved but still truncated and unequal employee benefits. The rates of infant mortality and other mortalities went remarkably down, and school attendance improved, amply testifying to the benefits the above initiatives brought to mineworkers. Stabilisation of the workforce, however, floundered and was estimated at just 46 percent, besides about ten percent local commuters, in 1970. Notwithstanding this, the phenomenon of seasonal rural visits of workers for participation in agriculture seemed to become a matter of the past. Such breaks spent away from the mines involved as many as half of the workforce until the mid-1940s. Labour absenteeism similarly fell from about 25 percent in the mid-1940s to nine percent in the mid-1960s. G.S. Jabbi, the Chief Inspector of Mines, considered the latter figure as a normal industrial situation. At this stage, the old feature of co-existence of the two types of mineworkers – target workers and career miners – in the mining industry, as noted by Ranajit Dasgupta, had disappeared in favour of the pre-eminence of regular, career coalminers.

A good section of the career mineworkers maintained rural links and sent savings to their family in the villages; nonetheless, they equally cherished a desire for advancing life and regular family life, which they sought to achieve through a new array of employee benefits. They successfully negotiated the payment for a return railway journey once a year to visit their rural home: The Mazumdar Tribunal, 1956 approved of this demand. The abolition of the zamindari system in 1947-49 and the land distribution movement for the enforcement of Land Reform Act, 1949-52 seem to have given a new lease of life to the rural homestead economy of the migrant,
career mineworkers. The removal of women from below-ground mining in 1946 and night wage-work in 1951-52 restricted the opportunities of the traditional family labour gangs, which seem to have militated against one of the purposes of expanded housing arrangements—to encourage the settlement of employees on the coalfield.

Employee benefits, as it came into existence over time, decidedly brought an additional income to the workers' earnings and increased the production cost (see Table 3). It would have contributed about 50 percent to the monthly income of a worker and formed nearly 30 percent of the production cost in an ideal scenario where every worker enjoyed these in the late 1930s. The actual situation, as discussed above, was far off: Especially, its variation between the coalmines appeared to range from one-quarter to half of the above percentages. The introduction of PF increased the share of employee benefits in the total workers' income by another approx. 1.25 percent (4.5 percent of the basic wage) since 1948-49. The share of employee benefits in production cost seemed to rise mainly owing to the expansion of its actual coverage in the range of two-thirds to three-fourths of the total workforce. This increase in its share from an average of 11.25 to 22.5 percentages seemed to have offset the gains made by instituting an improvement in the productivity, hence the complaints from employers. Around the 1920s-30s, for instance, the labour cost (wage bills) was close to 60 percent of the production cost. Mechanisation, as well as improved regularity and steadiness of workers, brought it down to about 40 percent particularly on the big collieries in the 1950s.

| Table 3. The Share of Employee Benefits in the Workers' Income and Production Cost |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Items of Fringe Benefits        | Costs a Month per Worker        | Costs a Month per Family (1.6 persons on Average) |
| Housing (i)                     | Rs 1-As 8-Pies 0                | Rs 1-As 8-Pies 0                |
| Fuel (ii)                       | 0-14-0                          | 0-14-0                          |
| Free conveyance (iii)           | 0-8-0                           | 0-9-9                           |
| Water-supply (iv)               | 0-7-6                           | 0-10-6                          |
| Bakshis, maternity and sickness allowance (v) | 0-4-0                          | 0-6-5                           |
| Medical-aid (vi)                | 0-3-0                           | 0-5-7                           |
Coalminers found in modern education an avenue to help their children escape the drudgery of mining and to bring some measure of prestige to the family, which they lost every other day to the *babus* and *Sarkar*. Increasingly, they enrolled their sons in colliery schools. A girl's education remained less critical than boy's. Three points are discernible in this regard. The families took great pains, wilfully suffering financial difficulties and absolving the school going elder son from all responsibilities otherwise incumbent on him. The increased share of education in household budgets and the fact that workers provided regular subscriptions to the labour organisation, unanimously evinced a favourable view every one of them took on the question of schooling.\(^{100}\) The third point is about unique debility that haunted the children of only the 'unprivileged' production workers. They faced discrimination and even persecution, because of their caste identity, at the hands of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kerosene oil (vii)</th>
<th>0-3-0</th>
<th>0-4-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workmen’s compensation (viii)</td>
<td>1-8-0</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (ix : i+ii+iii+iv+v+vi+vii+viii) (in 1938)</td>
<td>5-8-0</td>
<td>4-15-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF (x) (1948-49 onwards)</td>
<td>0-9-0</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF (xi) (1959-60 onwards)</td>
<td>1-2-0</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (xii : ix+ an adjustment with about 200 percent inflation + x). Or (xii: ix+ an adjustment with about 300 percent inflation + xi)</td>
<td>17-1-0 or 23-2-0</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Prasad Report (RBLEC)*, Vol. II, Pt. A, 1941, p. 352. *Srivastva Report*, 1966. The *Prasad Report* did not include the cost of workmen’s compensation, which a memorandum of Indian Mining Federation submitted to the Royal Commission on Labour (1931) had included under the category of *Bakshis* and declared the latter equivalent to Rs 1-8-0. Here, it means that table 3 presents a higher value of *Bakshis* as a whole, which I maintain with a view to compensating the absence of the cost of sanitation. The education is not included in the list because it was rarely free in colliery schools. Workers frequently paid a certain fee to the teacher.

The above context of workers' pursuit of employee benefits necessary for the actualisation of advancing and dignified life included the 'conflicting' experiences and problematic aspect of the quality of services accessible. Let us take up the case of schooling to elaborate on a 'conflicting' experience of 'workers welfare' within a capitalist order.
teachers and *babus* responsible for the management of colliery schools. These problems drew the attention of investigators, like B.R. Seth and S.R. Deshpande in 1938-1945.

Again, the schools, which have been provided by the employers at their cost in big collieries, are looked upon by the working classes as institutions for the education of children of the *Babus*, i.e., clerks and higher paid employees. This inferiority complex from which the workers suffer together with the discouraging and unsympathetic treatment that the teachers meet out to the workers' children, is greatly responsible for keeping away their children from schools. In not a few schools that were visited, it was found that benches were provided for the *Babus'* children while the children of the workers were made to squat on the bare floor. In three or four schools, miners' children were found to be sitting in the corners of the classrooms like untouchables. When some workers were questioned as to why they were not sending their children to schools, they not only complained about the big demand of the masters or their discriminatory and unsympathetic treatment towards their children, but also went so far as to say that the teachers do not pay so much attention to their children as they pay to the children of the *Babus* of high-class skilled workers. There may be some objections on the part of the caste Hindus to have their children educated in the same school with the children of the depressed classes, and who can say that some moral pressure is not brought to bear upon the depressed class workers not to send their children to schools.\(^\text{101}\)

B.P. Guha found in 1959 that about 18 percent of the children in the mining settlements attended colliery schools at the under primary level against seven percent of the children visiting colliery schools in 1938. Notably, the total literacy in Dhanbad district in 1960 approached eighteen percent, reaching 29.5 percent in 1971.\(^\text{102}\)

The *'Babus'* whom Seth referred to were only too ready to undermine these institutions designed to usher in 'civilised life' and for 'humanisation of working and living conditions.' The *babus* led the Swaraj campaign in the aftermath of WW I were beneficiaries of an earlier phase of improvement in the labour-management relationship.\(^\text{103}\) Many of them chose to confine their energies to ensuring proper implementation of the benefits concerning work hours, leaves and other facilities
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laid down by the IMA, 1923 (Amendment) and those of managed by the JMHB and JMWB. Other section of mining peoples and publicists had proceeded to launch an independent initiative during the great depression when the class conflict between employers and workers as well as between supervisors and production workers assumed a sharper edge on the issue of supervisory exaction.\textsuperscript{104} Ideological and political struggles that animated the working classes as a whole, as well as those between its different strata and within the class of \textit{babus}, mediated social relations between different sections of the working masses. The scenario in colliery schools represented the struggle as also the agreement reached between the liberal \textit{babus} and others against the reactionary (Brahmanical) \textit{babus}. Many of the former camps perceived the new agreement as advancement whereby children of the 'depressed' castes entered colliery schools. The reactionary (Brahmanical) \textit{babus} believed, noted Deshpande with disgust in 1945, that 'education would make the children of coal-cutters and loaders refuse to enter into the colliery.'\textsuperscript{105} This conservative worldview was the strongest hurdle that squarely confronted the children of production workers. Chapal Bhattacharya, General Secretary of the All India Mine Workers’ Federation, strongly disapproved of such myths in preference for the necessity of a better citizen and an educated, efficient mineworker. He complained about caste-based discriminatory practices found in colliery schools to the Indian Coalfield Committee on the eve of the formation of the Republic of India.\textsuperscript{106} This progressive worldview rationalised the relevance of universal schooling and slowly pulled down the cultural blockage.\textsuperscript{107}

The engagement of mining children with schooling produced mixed results. Some, like Ramjash Rawani, were fortunate enough to acquire a matriculation degree; many others were forced, after a few years in primary school, to give up and start wage work.\textsuperscript{108} The experience of Permeshwar Noniya stood in contrast to that of Ramjash Rawani, for instance. 'He could not spend more than some six years in school, before relinquishing his educational pursuit in favour of the idiosyncratic calling of subsistence, in the aftermath of the demise of his 'earning' mother (Kamla Noniya). His father was opposite in character to his 'caring' mother who made conscious efforts at ensuring schooling for her youngest son. His father was a regular drunkard who, along with one of his elder brothers (a coalminer), regularly visited a \textit{kalali} (grog shop). Often enough, there ensued a quarrel between them that
they took all the way home.\textsuperscript{109} Discordance within the family compelled him to drop out.

Syamnarain Rawani, a son of trolleyman Kesho Rawani, and Shatrughan Rajwar, a son of a mining sirdar, had altogether different lessons to learn. Their fathers sent them to colliery schools. They were socially not privileged enough to receive engaging treatment at the hands of the teachers and other schoolmates. The teacher at the primary level in Bhowra colliery frequently beat Syamnarain, and hence he opted out of school. He also felt that his father was not able to provide him with any pocket money besides regular meals at home. He, therefore, took up a construction job with a contractor at the young age of 12 or 13.\textsuperscript{110} The death of Shatrughan Rajwar's father put an end to his schooling, for he had to take care of his other siblings.\textsuperscript{111} Notwithstanding such instances of dropouts, the modern ideas of emplacement of children in school, away from the 'dark' colliery, defined the new ethico-politics of employee benefits. It opened up the possibility of development of a new socio-political force, of recognition of labour variations, and of the intellectual fitness of a person for different kinds of labour including those of fitter, clerk, surveyor, mining sirdar, overman, engineer, and political advocate. Not surprisingly, many of the militants in the movement seen in collieries in 1968-1975, for a variety of concerns including universality of parenthood, were youngsters who had been to schools, who re-lived, as it were, the spirit of Pavel Korchagin.\textsuperscript{112}

\textbf{Photograph 8. A Statue of Coalminer, Dhanbad}

\textbf{The first Statue of a labourer in Asia}
**Summing up**

This paper, thus, explains the coexistence of circular migration and workers becoming regular, career mineworkers; and the approaches to employee benefits adopted by migrant and settled workers. The thesis of better remuneration and free choice enjoyed by industrial workers underestimates the difficulty of living experienced by employees in industrial centres. It overlooks the preference shown by workers for employee benefits. Similarly, the thesis of employees' preference for maintaining their rural link intact and transferring the urban savings to the village, overlooks the workers' view of employee benefits and industrial struggles over their preference. My finding interpolates to the thesis of constraints and inadequacy or cheap migrant labour, which has hitherto insufficiently revealed the actual preferences of employees vis-a-vis what was on offer for them from employers. My study suggests that the early coalworker had a view regarding children, extended families and productive land and livestock as means of social security. This old view of social security was confronted with the dislocation caused the commodification of labour, thereby proving insufficient and fragile. Consequently, mineworkers from the landless and land-poor sections seized the opportunity opened by the worker welfare measures, and thereby intending to settle down in the mining centre. Workers, generally, developed a notion of civilised, respectable, human life from the 1920s onwards. The self-respect campaign amongst the unprivileged caste groups, the movement of industrial democracy and national reconstruction and the ILO's language of civilised and human life for workers, gave a fillip to the politics of new reproduction preferences. Now, workers sought specific employee benefits, including housing, water supply, schools, health centres, maternity care and childcare, workmen's compensation, recreational facility and provident fund, which they considered necessary for an improved living and advancing life. This shift in workers' preference regarding social security has not received due attention in the existing seminal works on this subject. The social struggle of workers to realise enhanced reproduction supports confronted and modified the pattern of employee benefits which the employer, driven by a modern industrial sensibility, laid down. It formed the context in which about half of the workforce became settled and stable and others as regular, career mineworkers. The correlation of new regime of reproduction arrangement with stabilisation of workers was modest, but it strongly
factored into the making of regular career mineworkers and, generally, development of the colliery town around Jharia.

My study advances the understanding that the tradition of proletarianised men and women migrants, unionisation and employees' aspiration for a respectable, humane and civilised form of life were responsible for the struggles of workers for employee benefits. Furthermore, the approaches of proletarianised ones and semi-proletarianised ones to fringe benefits differed in quantitative aspects rather than qualitative. This fact of the matter is at variance with the dominant view which regards the circular migrants as semi-proletarianised whose approach to the reproduction politics was markedly contrasting to that of the proletariat. Finally, the paper suggests the countermovement for protection and advancement of working life, as it were, was not merely any spontaneous phenomenon, undirected by opinion and actuated by a purely pragmatic spirit (contra Polanyi); instead the profitability consideration of the employers as well as the ethico-politics of working-class public shaped its genesis and progress.\textsuperscript{115}

**Notes and References**

1. The Indian coalfield of Jharia is a shallow sickle-shaped basin – about 22 miles long and 14 miles broad – in the north of Damodar River. It is in the district of Dhanbad (former Manbhum, Eastern India) and is located 170 miles west of Calcutta. From 1895-1906, it developed as the largest coal-producing zone in the Indian subcontinent. As early as 1919-20, coal raisings on this coalfield touched 12 million tons a year and the overall number of mineworkers was about 100,000. If we include the dependants of mineworkers of about 140,000, the colliery population numbered about 800,000 in 1960.\textsuperscript{.}


17 The causes included the availability of cheap male labourers from the mid-1920s, the impact of reformist pressure, mechanisation and ‘protective’ legislation.


20 From the districts of Manbhum, Hazaribagh, Santhal Pargana, Bankura and Burdwan.

21 From the districts of Hazaribagh, Gaya, Monghyr and Bilashpur and Nagpur (Central Province).

22 From Sahabad and Gaya (western region) districts, the United Province (contemporary Uttar Pradesh) and the Punjab. B. Foley, *Report of the Coalfield
The labour contractor, normally, received about 10 percent commission on the coal cut and loaded by his gang of recruits.

The literacy rate among the mining persons was merely six percent in 1921. Only one-third of mining persons were literate in 1971 (Census of Dhanbad District 1971, Vol. X. Pt. C. p. 70.)


35 Evans, ‘Housing’


37 NAI: Curjel Report, in 'Department of Industries,' Labour Branch, File No. 1923: L-920 (5).

38 Annual Reports of the Chief Inspector of Mines for the Years (ARCIM) of 1900 – 1940.


41 NAI: 'Department of Commerce and Industry', Geology and Minerals Branch (G&M) 1917: F/no.20, 3


NAI: 'Department of Industry and Labour', files Nos. (1925: L – 1150 (9), L – 1174 (4); (1924: L – 1162 (1)). The very second congress of AITUC held in Jharia called for agitation on a wide range of issues: the ratification of the ILO conventions; improvement in the wage rates and an equal wage for the women workers; reduction in working hours, provisions for weekly holiday; housing, crèche, education, medical facilities; maternity benefits and leaves for the women workers; the representation of working masses in the legislative assembly; the prohibition on employment of the women in night works and of children below the age of fourteen. The emphasis on the need of removing coal control and a supply of sufficient number of wagons to all Indian colliery proprietors, and a prohibition on the sale of spirits accompanied the aforesaid agenda ('Department of Industries', 1923: L-1028). They included the agenda of nationalisation of the means of production in the session held in the year of 1928, when the AITUC congress was held again in Jharia, in their quest for a genuine social emancipation of humankind. See Bihar State Archive (BSA, Patna): 'Political Special', files 1923/115/1923; 1928: 244, 102 / 1928. NIA: 'Department of Industries', 1923: L – 1028.


NAI: 'Department of Industries and Labour', 1925: L-1150 (9))

NAI: 'Department of Industries and Labour', 1923: L-920 (5). 'Department of Industries', 1922: L-920 (1).

NAI: 'Department of Industries', 1923: L-1028.


Sengupta, *Destitutes*, pp. 91-118.


Maharaj and Iyer, 'Agrarian Movement'. Kumar, 'Will Feminist'.


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70 These were 16 medium-size collieries: the Kachi Balihari, Khas Kirkend, Khas Dharmaband, Murulidih, Bhatdih, and the Jogta (Kalyanji Mavji & Co. Owner and Managing Agency), which had 7000 miners in June 1947. See BSA: 'Labour Department', Labour Branch (File Nos.): (August 1949, Pros no. 267-380, F/No – XL (S/2) 8/48), (Nov 1948. Pros. 485-493, XL (S) 197/47), (Nov 1948, Pros. 388-398, XL (S) 252/47), (December 1948, Pros 104-149, XL (S) 184/47), (December 1948, Pros. 150-266, XL (S) 25/47), (June 1949, XL (S/2) 191/48, Pros. 91-92). (February 1948: XL (S/2)-260/47)


72 BSA: 'Labour Department', 1949: XL (S/2) 8/1948. The miners killed were Karmu Mahto, Jadu Mahto, Mansu Majhi, Jaippur Dt., Dhuma Mahto, and Md. Safi. The miners who receiving serious injuries were Bhim Mochi, Amir Mahto, Chnadu Mahto, Babu Mahto, Tobarak Khan, Md. Ishaque, Beni Hari, Jadu Mahto, Bhole Mahto, Sukri Mahtain, Bhusia Mahtain, Jhari Ghatwalin, Manjua Mehtarani, Gundri Harin, Bistu Kamar, Ragahunath Mahto, Chuto Sao, Rajan Sao, Ganesh Nonia, Nehal Rajwar and Ganga Pandit.


75 It laid down the provision that a colliery employing woman worker should provide maternity leaves and a relief wage of annas 8 per day for four weeks before and four weeks after the confinement day. Such colliery should also maintain crèche service attended by daies (attendant) to the woman worker. The Amendment brought to the Act in 1945 ensured that the belowground woman worker should receive mandatory leaves for ten weeks and a relief wage of annas 12 per day.

76 Ambedkar Papers: Indian Information, 1944

77 This was so despite a recognisable difference in their perspectives. Ambedkar mobilised labour for war support with the hope of establishment of the new order, marked not only by the abolition of privileges of every kind but also an all-pervading sense of human brotherhood, unifying all classes and all nations, with peace on earth and goodwill towards man as its motto. Jagjivan Ram mobilised labour for

81 Ibid.
89 This case presents a qualification to the Chibber's argument of class accommodation, which took place in the aftermath of independence. V. Chibber, 'From Class Compromise to Class Accommodation: Labour's Incorporation into the Indian Political Economy', in Michael Goldfield and Debdas Banerjee (Eds.), Labour, Globalization, and the State, USA: Routledge, 2007, pp. 32-61.

Haan ('Unsettled Settlers'; 'The Badly System'), Parry ('Sociological Marxism) and Sanchez and Strumpell ('Sons of Soil') describe the permanent production worker as the labour elite, whom others call the labour aristocracy. Such term sounds to me a misnomer and the description underestimates the experience of vulnerability shared by the permanent ones, and the relation of exploitation in which they remained a part.


DasGupta, 'Migrants'.


BSA: 'Labour Department,' Labour Branch, September 1970: proceeding no. 54, file no. VI/57-1011/69.


Deshpande Report, p. 98.

'Memorandum to the Indian Coalfields Committee on behalf of the All India Mine Workers' Federation (affiliating to All Mines Mine Workers' Unions under AITUC, and claims membership of around 25000 miners out of the total 3.5 lacks in British India);' 'Oral Evidence of Mr. C. Bhattacharya, representing the All India Mine-Workers' Federation recorded at Calcutta on 6th July, 1946'. K.C. Mahindra, Report of the Indian Coalfields Committee (Mahindra Report), Delhi: Secretariat Press, 1946, Vol. II.

Pavel Korchagin was the central protagonist of Nicolai Istrovasky's novel, How the Steel was Tempered (1936). He emerged as a revolutionary from a similar social background in Ukraine during and after WWI.

Polanyi, The Great Transformation, p. 141. The economic anthropologists have recently shown a renewed interest in three elements of Polanyi's analytical tools. These are (i) disembeddedness of the market economy versus embeddedness of the premodern economy, (ii) the features of commodification of labour, land and money, and (iii) the connection with the wellbeing of humankind of different forms of commodification, on one side, and, on the other, the rule of reciprocity, mutuality, redistribution and householding. See, Haan and Hart (Eds.), Market and Society.
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