INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Occupational health and safety are primarily concerned with the detection, evaluation, prevention and control of environmental health and safety hazards in the work place. These hazards include chemical, physical, biological and ergonomic stresses causing illness or injury to the worker.

The efficiency and hence productivity of a worker is dependent on various factors. The condition of the work place, training of the worker, new technological developments introduced in the mills etc. are all necessary factors on which the efficiency of the worker depends. The efficiency is indirectly related to the organisational structure of the factory.

According to Marx, the efficiency of the worker is dependent on the "industrial discipline", that the capitalist system of manufacture involved. In the process of "disciplining" the labour force, the interests of individual capitalists and the Government are joined together, since the pressure towards discipline arose both from within and from without the factory.

Discipline, in Marx's discussion, had two components. It entailed a "technical subordination" of the workman to

the uniform motion of the instruments of labour," hence the need for training, education and so forth arises. Secondly, it made supervision an integral part of capitalist relations of productions. The supervisor or the foreman was the executors of the "private legislation" of capital, the "factory code in which the capital formulates .......... his autocracy over his work people."

Government interest in the working class conditions in India is of a recent origin. It was only after the end of the First World War that the conditions of Indian workers became an object of knowledge for the Government of India. An important factor contributing to this development was the establishment of the International Labour Office (ILO). A second factor was one internal to the Indian political scene. The conclusion of the War and the subsequent period of nationalist agitation had seen trade unions mushroom all over the country in a large scale, accompanied with a countrywide labour unrest. In 1919, a Government document said, "labour is growing more conscious of its own wants and power, ............ and it is showing signs of a capacity for organisation."

What distinguished this new outlook on labour from the traditional law and order view of the State was a desire to reform the conditions of labour and thus change the nature of the work force. In an impressive range of labour legislation in the '20s and afterwards, the Government of

2. ibid, p - 476.
3. ibid, pp 476 - 479.
India sought to take a direct role in structuring the situation of working classes. The amended Factories Act (1922), the Workmen's Compensation Act (1923), the Trade Unions Act (1926), the Trade Disputes Act (1923), the Maternity Benefits Bill (1929), the Payment of Wages Act (1933) etc. aimed towards the betterment of the condition of the industrial workers. The Government of India considered that due to the "growing complexity of industry with the increasing use of machinery", required a more efficient labour force than those available. It was therefore "advisable that they (the workers) should be protected from hardships arising from accidents, "because this would not only increase" the available supply of labour" but also produce "a corresponding increase in the efficiency of the average workman."

Efficiency, according to this logic, was a function of working class conditions. The Government noted in 1919 that though there was "a keen and increasing demand for factory labour" in India, there was "little prospect of their being able to do so under present conditions." Improving efficiency meant improving these conditions, and they included not only education, housing and social welfare, but also such aspects as the comfort and spare time of the worker. A Government document of 1919 said "the

5. ibid, July, 1922, A 34 - 72.
8. ibid, p A - 23.
efficiency of workers is closely connected with their education, and their standard of comfort, the shortening of hours may not prove an unmixed good, if the workers are not put in a position to make a proper use of their spare time. Since "leisure", "rest" and 'spare time' were some of the key concepts supporting the Government's notion of "efficiency" control over the labourer's working hours emerged as a problem of utmost importance. Other issues of the worker's well-being e.g. indebtedness, assets, wages, food, health, home-life etc. were also discussed from time to time.

In the jute mill, the study of the conditions of work place never became a matter of serious discussion. The machineries remained obsolete, environmental hazards continued, facilities like canteen and drinking water remained scarce, precautionary measures against various health hazards and accidents lacked. Moreover, there was a complete lack of wage standardisation and the nature and quality of supervision were corrupt in general. All these factors created an atmosphere of total anarchy. Due to these factors, there was a lack of knowledge about the workers of the jute industry. The Government of past and present, lacked the political will to investigate the conditions of jute mill workers.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS INSIDE THE MILL

There are various environmental hazards inside the mill. They can be classified under various groups. The physical stresses include excessive temperature, humidity,
noise and vibration. Chemical stresses include jute dust and batching oil which cause various diseases. Ergonomic stresses include unusual body position and unusual body movement. These factors and other lack of facilities inside the mill (e.g. canteen, drinking water, toilet, lack of space etc.) and precautionary measures against accidents create an atmosphere totally adverse to a healthy working condition.

The workers attitude towards physical, chemical and ergonomic stresses.

The workers attitude towards various types of stresses is a new concept in the studies of the working class. The employer and sometimes the worker consider the stress as a part of work and day-to-day life. A typical example of this attitude is found in the report of the Factories Act in Bengal for the year 1893. The "general conditions of the mill operatives" were found "very satisfactory". Their work was explained as "not arduous" and in no way detrimental to them." This very outlook is prevalent even to-day.

An attempt has been made to assess the attitude of individual workers towards various kinds of stress in the work place. The individual worker has been asked to give his opinion about various problems faced in the work place which are causing different kind of physical discomforts (i.e. stresses). The workers generally relate the discomforts and the causes behind them. Most of the workers

9. West Bengal State Archives, General Department, Miscellaneous Branch, August, 18983, A1 -36.
CAUSES OF STRESSES IN THE WORKPLACE

MEGHNA JUTE MILL

BIRLA JUTE MILL

CAUSES OF STRESSES

- DUST
- BATCHING OIL
- NOISE
- VIBRATION
- TEMPERATURE
- HUMIDITY
- UNUSUAL BODY POSITION
- UNUSUAL BODY MOVEMENT

SCALE: 1cm = 10 UNITS
more than 95% of them) complain of various type of stresses. Workers engaged in different mill operations complain of different kinds of stresses.

The total number of workers complaining of a specific stress causing factors has been counted from the primary data. A percentage of this stress has been worked out to the total number of stresses, as given by the workers of an industrial establishment. The percentage of workers in both mills complaining of various types of stresses are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress-causing Factors</th>
<th>Meghna Jute Mill (%)</th>
<th>Birla Jute Mill (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jute Dust</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batching Oil</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibration</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humidity</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual body position</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual body Movement</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Meghna Jute Mill most of the workers complain of unusual body position and high temperature. Unusual body movement, dust and noise are also regarded as the prime causes of various types of stresses. In Birla Jute Mill, the prime causes of irritation are dust, high temperature and noise according to order of importance. Unusual body position and unusual body movement are also ranking high among the stress causing factors.
From the above analysis, we can deduce that though the percentage of workers complaining about a stress-causing factor vary from mill to mill, the causes of various stresses remain the same in both mills. These prime stress-causing factors are high temperature, jute dust, noise, unusual body position and unusual body movement; causing various physical, chemical and ergonomic stresses. Those stresses, when accumulated after some time, cause various diseases.

A special mention should be made about batching oil. All workers working in batching department complain of irritation and diseases caused by batching oil. This phenomena is prevalent in both mills.

Temperature is considered as a basic problem among all types of workers in the mills. Jute dust is a bigger problem in raw jute, preparing and beaming department. Noise and unusual body movement is a problem in departments where a large amount of machineries are involved, i.e. in beaming, spinning, winding and weaving departments. The workers of sack-sewing department often complain about unusual body position.

Actually, the stresses are caused due to a combination of various stress-causing factors. The workers generally suffer from multiple causes of stress. In Meghna Jute Mill 97.8% and in Birla Jute Mill 95.6% of total number of workers complain about multiple causes of stress.
FACILITIES IN THE WORK PLACE

The Factory Act (1948) ensures the worker to have adequate cleanliness in the factory, proper disposal of wastes and effluents, provision of adequate ventilation and control of temperature, provision of exhaust appliances for dust and fumes, provision for artificial humidification, provision against overcrowding, provision for adequate lighting, provision for drinking water, latrines and urinals, and spittoons. The Factory Act 1948) also ensures washing facilities, facilities for storing and drying clothes, facilities for sitting, first-aid, canteen, shelters, rest rooms.

10. The Factory Act (1948), Section 11, p - 342.
11. ibid, Section 12, p. 343.
12. ibid, Section 13, p. 343.
13. ibid, Section 14, p. 344.
14. ibid, Section 14, p. 344.
15. ibid, Section 15, p. 344.
16. ibid, Section 16, p. 345.
17. ibid, Section 17, p. 345.
18. ibid, Section 18, p. 346.
19. ibid, Section 19, p. 346.
20. ibid, Section, 42, p. 359.
21. ibid, Section 43, p. 359.
22. ibid, Section 44, p. 359.
23. ibid, Section 45, p. 360.
24. ibid, Section 46, p. 360.
lunch rooms and creches where women workers are present.

In both Meghna and Birla Jute Mills most of those facilities are not present. Adequate lighting facilities are present in both mills. In Birla Jute Mill there is a canteen. Other essential facilities are not available.

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES AGAINST VARIOUS STRESSES AND ACCIDENTS

In the Jute mills, accident rate is high. The reasons are of various nature. Sometimes the obsolete machineries are blamed. Lack of training of the workers, lack of efficiency, the lack of facilities inside the work place etc. are regarded as reasons behind the various types of accidents.

The technology of jute mill operation is almost a century old. In 1930 Barker investigated the technical side of Calcutta Jute Mills. He found the technology so obsolete that he compared the industry to a gramophone needle, "it runs in a groove and plays a nice tune. If either needle or record gets worn, new ones are demanded. The "groove" in Barker's description referred to the lack of diversification of products in the history of the industry and to the crude and rough nature of what was produced. He considered this as the fundamental factor in the technological stagnation of the industry. According to

26. ibid, Section 48, p. 361.
Barker "Jute being a cheap material producing fabrics for rough usage .................. the machinery and technique in India became standardised upon an elementary mechanical basis. Simplicity of operation without the necessity for textile science, since changes in output were practically non-existent ........ soon led to the mass production of the limited range of Indian jute products becoming almost automatic .............. Machinery in the mills in general, therefore, has had a long working life, perhaps too long.

The industry considered this technology so adequate for its purpose that it placed very little importance on the scientific and technological training of its workers and its superior technical staff. Barker was surprised to discover many large and crucial gaps in the technical knowledge of the Scottish Managers and Assistants, gaps that are usually filled up with an undefined human quality called "experience".

Another reason for high rate of accidents is the work-process in a jute mill. The mechanical processes in a jute mill were continuous with one process feeding another. To co-operate the workings of various machines, time to time stopping the machine is needed. Since the payment of the managerial staff depended on the output, such stoppages were seen as time lost and therefore had to be as brief as

28. ibid, pp. 41 - 42.

possible. Pace also characterised the work in piece-rated departments like weaving or sack-sewing where the worker's earnings depended on how much, and hence, how rapidly, he can produce. Accidents are generally due to obsoleteness and continuous running of the machinery, the laxity of factory rules (e.g. about overcrowding, safety measures against moving parts of machines etc.) and the workers' incomprehension of the principles of the machineries. The work between the machinery gives rise to multitudes of accidents of more or less serious nature, which have for the operative the secondary effect of unfitting him for his work more or less completely. These accidents are generally very loosely classified under "minor" and 'serious' accidents. The most common accident is the squeezing off of a single joint of a finger or the whole finger. Losing half or a whole hand, an arm, etc. in the machinery are also quite common. A great number of maimed and deformed persons are seen in the coolie - lines, most of them are or were employed in a jute mill - this one has lost an arm or a part of one, that one a foot, the third half a leg - it is like visiting an army just returned from a campaign.

Most of the workers in their career have faced accidents at least once. There are workers who have had as many as 200 accidents in his lifetime. The percentages of workers suffering from different numbers of accidents of both mills are given below :-
DIAGRAM 20

ACCIDENT PATTERN IN THE JUTE MILLS

MEGHNA JUTE MILL

BIRLA JUTE MILL

ACCIDENT PATTERN

- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31+
- NIL

SCALE: 1 cm = 10 UNITS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of accidents</th>
<th>Meghna Jute Mill (%)</th>
<th>Birla Jute Mill (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 10</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>68.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 and above</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Accidents</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Meghna Jute Mill 90% and in Birla Jute Mill 71.8% workers suffered from accidents. In Meghna Jute Mill accidents are more frequent and people suffer more often from various accidents. It shows that the working conditions of Birla Jute Mill are better than in Meghna Jute Mill. Only 28.2% workers of Birla Jute Mill never suffered from accidents whereas the workers of Meghna Jute Mill not suffering from any accidents amounts only to 10% of the total workers.

Lack of technical training is another reason behind this high rate of accident. In 1906, the then Chairman of IJMA, furnished the time needed to train in the different occupation in a jute mill.

- Coolie work - One week.
- Preparing & hand-sewing - One week.
- Shifter's work - One week.
- Spinner and Weaver - One week.

This "learning", again was purely experiential. It was pointed out by several witnesses to the Royal Commission of labour that there was no apprentice-ship system in the jute mill.

30. Foley, B - "Report on Labour in Bengal" Calcutta, 1906, Appendix IV.
mills. IJMA said in its evidence that "the bulk of the work in the mill is unskilled, and where training is necessary, as for instance in the spinning department, this is obtained in the course of actual employment, by the efforts of the worker himself. On the preparing side, "a few weeks at any of the machines .......... was long enough to make the worker proficient". Weaving needed "skilled" work, but "generally speaking, weavers become proficient very quickly". Even mechanics, joiners and blacksmiths, had no system of formal training, "they start as boys, and are paid a nominal wage until they become of use". In Meghna Jute Mill 17.2% and in Birla Jute Mill 39.1% workers received some form of informal training. The rest goes without it. In Meghna Jute Mill only 30.7% spinners and 28.3% weavers got any training. In Birla Jute Mill, 9.6% spinners and 58.6% weavers are trained.

There are absolutely no precautionary measures against accidents in the mills. In the Chapter called "Safety" in the Factories Act (1948), fencing of machinery, presence of striking gear and devices for cutting off power, easing of new machinery etc. are recommended. The employment of

32. ibid, p - 280.
33. ibid, p. 298.
34. The Factories Act (1948), Section 21, p - 347.
35. ibid, Section 24, p - 349.
36. ibid, Section 26, p - 350.
young persons on dangerous machines and work on or near machinery in motion are prohibited. There should be protection of workers against excessive weights, excessive or glaring lights, dangerous fumes, dust and chemical and fire. But in the jute mills those precautionary measures are lacking. In both jute mills all the employees complained of this. Due to this problem, the workers are prone to various diseases and accidents. The lack of training and the employment of unskilled labourers at a low wage rate are some of the main reasons behind this high accident-rate. The other reasons are that the machinery is ill-arranged, and are not surrounded by fencing of some kind, which is a serious lapse on the part of the employer. The worker is generally under inducements which outweigh the threatened danger, he must work rapidly to earn his wage and has no time to take care for himself. Many accidents happen, for instance, while the workers are cleaning their machinery in motion. The worker is not allowed time to clean his machinery in motion which is again a serious

37. The Factories Act (1948) Section 23, p - 349.
38. ibid, Section 22, p - 349.
39. ibid, Section 34, p - 354.
40. ibid, Section 35, p - 354.
41. ibid, Section 36, p - 355.
42. ibid, Section 37, p - 356.
43. ibid, Section 38, p - 357.
violation of the Factory Act but it is the normal practice in a jute mill.

**WORKERS' PERCEPTION OF VARIOUS ORGANISATIONAL HAZARDS**

From the very beginning the system of recruitment and training were informal in nature. The worker in a jute mill generally learns machine work by his own effort by watching another worker while working. IJMA commented in 1945 that "no lasting improvement of quality or quantity of output could possibly result from this system, and it is probably true that the operative himself is no better equipped technically to turn out good fabric to-day than was his grandfather 50 years ago".

This phenomena was due to the jute mill owners taking a selective view of working class conditions. With this easily learned nature of jute mill work, individual workers remained highly replaceable as long as the supply of labour was adequate. The task of structuring a labour force was therefore largely a supply proposition to the mills and not a question of skill formation, training or efficiency. An "ample supply of cheap male labour", and not efficiency; was what always seen as an important key to the prosperity of the mills. A factory inspector reported in 1893 that "there are 100% more heads employed in every jute mill in Bengal than is required to work".

44. Labour Office, IJMA - "Circular and notes of the Committees IJMA Apprentice Scheme, 1945-46, Calcutta.

45. West Bengal State Archives, Commerce Department Commerce Branch, November, 1919, All - 25.

The mills obviously found it cheaper to carry with them an amount of excess labour than to invest in the efficient working class. As late as 1929, the jute mill worker was not as efficient as it should be. IJMA explained that this was not because "the work is unduly hard", nor was it caused by the "climate conditions" but "simply because this has been the custom so far as the Calcutta jute mills are concerned".

The supply of workers in jute mills were and still are the prime concern of the Sirdars. Actually the subordinate supervising staff in the jute mills contained two classes. "In the first class there would be more or less educated babus who have never been a mill operative himself". The duties of the babu were to check attendances, to keep attendance registers, to prepare wage books and to generally assist in the supervision and work of the department.

Below the Babus was the Sirdar, who was both a supplier and supervisor of labour and often of the same social origin of the ordinary worker himself.

The nature of Sirdar is explained by the Government of Bengal as the "immediate employer of the worker. "...He gives him his job and it is by his will that the worker retain it .................... The Sirdars are the real masters. They employ them and dismiss them, and, in many cases, they house them and can unhouse them. They


may own or control the shops which supply the men with food. The worker, too, pay him lump or recurring sum to retain his job".

It is easy to see that the "corruption" of the Sirdar and the babus would have necessarily imparted as a perverse character to the mill documents relating to working class conditions; wage books, attendance registers, fine books, shift tokens, medical certificates etc.

The Sirdars' mode of operation had certain crucial precapitalist elements. He usually recruited on the basis of the often overlapping networks of community, village and kin. Sirdari is an example of a precolonial, precapitalist institution being adopted to the needs of industrialisation in a colonial country.

The very structure of the labour market in the jute industry created conditions conducive to the growth of racial and religious conflicts that were subversive of class solidarity. The Sirdari method of recruitment and control helped to emphasize the primordial ties of the worker. The overstocked labour market and the unskilled nature of the worker made the worker highly replaceable. All these factors force the workers to find his religious, linguistic and geographical bonds useful in obtaining and retaining employment.

The workers have reported various sources by which they obtained employment. The ratio of workers obtained employment through various sources of both mills are:

49. ibid, p. 153.
Diagram 21

Distribution pattern of the workers sources of obtaining work in the jute mills

Meghna Jute Mill

Sources of obtaining work in the jute mills:
- Relatives
- Fellow villagers
- Friends
- Thikadar
- Other

Birla Jute Mill
### Sources of Employment

| Sources of Employment | Meghna Jute Mill (% | Birla Jute Mill (%)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villager</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirdar</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table confirms the primordial ties of the villagers as most important sources of obtaining employment in the mills. Most of the workers in Meghna Jute Mill obtained employment through relatives (32.2%) and friends (32.7%). The same is applied to the case of Birla Jute Mill. Here 42.6% of the total workers obtained job through a relative, and 28.2% of them got it through a friend. The mode of employment is highly informal in nature. Where the Sirdar employed the workers (17.7% in Meghna and 17.9% in Birla Jute Mill), that was also on a highly informal basis. The Sirdar in question is often a relative or a villager of the worker. That is the reason behind the employment of workers of a specific region dominating a specific jute mill. It is often found that the Sirdar employs people from his own caste, community or locality. Hence we can conclude that the rules of the supply and demand of the labour market are not necessarily applicable in the case of the jute mill workers.

### WAGE SYSTEM

The wage system of jute mills was always uneven. An official of the Government of Bengal commented in 1929,
"perhaps in no industry in the world, is the wage position more inchoate. The mill groups under different managing agents work under wage systems which have developed many local idiosyncracies during the long and short years of their existence. The wage rates in individual mills are kept strictly secret". In 1945, the senior labour officer of IJMA reported a lack of standardization of wage rates as continuing problem. The lack of standardization of wages remained a problem even in the 1950's. After a prolonged struggle of workers, the tripartite agreement in 1984 ultimately reached the standardization of wage in all jute mills. But, the workers still do not get an uniform wage, as there are "badli" workers who, being casual workers, do not get work everyday and the piece-rate workers get their wages according to their output.

The reasons of this wage position are various. Firstly, Calcutta was the employment market for Dundee technicians and managers. But they stopped coming to India by 1914 - 19 to a great extent. The kind of uproar that Dundee industrialists often caused in the 1890's over labour conditions in Calcutta became a matter of the past in 20th century. Secondly, at that time, the state of

organization of the jute mill worker was too weak to exert any effective pressure on the wage question. Thirdly, the "individualism" of individual (or group of) mills was something that IJMA accepted as the price of its organisational unity, which the industry saw as crucial to its overall prosperity. Fourthly, the concentration of economic power within the industry mitigated the spirit of composition between mills.

A lack of standardization of wage rates, therefore, did not necessarily reflect a competitive situation among the mills regarding their labour conditions. An effective pressure from national or international competitors was also absent. The Bengal Government's views on labour conditions was therefore governed solely by its relationship with capitalists in the jute industry, and in this relationship, the latter always predominated.

**WORKING HOURS**

The adjustment of working hours according to needs was always regarded as an inexpensive way of controlling labour problem. In the 19th century, the supply of labour was adjusted to the IJMA - devised strategy of short-time working, which frequently imposed weekly "idle days" on the mills as a way of reducing output (to match temporary


55. ibid, p - 83.

56. ibid, p - 124.
fluctuations in demand) and wage bills. From 1913 onwards, the mills kept changing "from four to five days a week or from 5 days to 6 days a week and so on at different intervals", sometimes changing "twice or thrice a year". But since the mills offered no incentives for long-term service, a temporary closure of a mill often meant a temporary loss of labour. The problem was an old one. It assumed critical importance in the prosperous years of 1895 - 1926 when individual mills always wanted to conserve labour for days when they might be called upon to expand output. The means devised to meet this end was the multiple-shift system, whereby the workers worked in 3 or 4 shifts during the day or into the night. During 1913 - 26 more than 90% of the jute mills worked on this system. The main advantage of the system was not economy. An "abundance of labour was a necessary concomitant of multiple-shift employment". Since that was the only way it could be ensured, at least on paper, that the workers did not work beyond their legally allowed hours. It was

57. IJMA, Report for the half-year ending 30th June, 1886, Calcutta, 1886, p - 14.


59. ibid, pp. 172.

60. West Bengal State Archives, Commerce Department, Commerce Branch, January 1929, p. 261 - 268.


62. West Bengal State Archives, Commerce Department, Commerce Branch, May 1929, p. 196 - 99.
generally agreed in 1929 that a multiple shift mill carried 25% to 30% more labour than in single-shift mills.

The mills generally have 3 shifts a day. Each shift consists of 8 hours with 1 hour gap in each. The night shift has a recess of half an hour. In the 5-hour shift in the day time there is not even a 5 minutes break.

In the Factory Act, (1948), there are rules prohibiting overlapping shifts and provision for extra-wages for overtime. These regulations are generally violated in the case of casual workers which consist of the bulk of the working force. All workers of both mills complained of long and odd working hours, too much work load in quality and in quantity, wage cut of various forms and lack of recess.

SOCIAL SECURITY

There is a total non-application of social security in the mills. The casual workers are deprived of all fringe benefits like provident fund, bonus, gratuity, job security, compensation against accident etc. Though the Government of India makes it mandatory for all workers to be insured, ESI facilities are not available to both mills due to non-payment of premium by the mill. Due to these features, the jute industry experiences strikes and lock-outs from time to time that affect the workers to a great extent.

63. The Factories Act (1948), Section 58, p. 364.
64. ibid, Section 59, p. 365.
STRIKES

Prolonged strikes are very common in Meghna Jute Mill. The worker face a strike almost every year. Birla Jute Mill has less number of strikes. All the workers faced strikes at least once in their time. The percentage of workers of both mills experiencing different number of strikes are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Strikes</th>
<th>Meghna Jute Mill (%)</th>
<th>Birla Jute Mill (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 10</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 and above</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Meghna Jute Mill, the strikes are more frequent compared to Birla Jute Mill. The bulk of the workers in Birla Jute Mill (49.5%) experienced less number of strikes compared to Meghna Jute Mill. Though the working conditions and wages in both mills are more or less similar, the lack of strikes in Birla Jute Mill is remarkable.

The most important reason behind this is the location of the mill. The geographical seclusion of the mill from the rest of the industrial area leads to the comparative alienness of the workers from the workers of other industries. Since the mill is comparatively new, it does not have a history of struggle, of a turbulent past. The workers of this mill are physically cut-off from the rest of the working population.
Another reason is the comparatively better living conditions provided by the mill. In fact the better living conditions of the coolie-lines, are equally responsible for the lack of strikes in Birla Jute Mill. The better living conditions and sanitation facilities have a great enslaving influence upon the workers. Since the neighbourhood of Birla Jute Mill is not urbanised and consists of agricultural land, there is often a lack of dwelling accommodation for the workers. In this case the coolie-lines yield great benefits, besides the interest upon the capital invested. If the workers strike work, the employer need only give them notice to quit the premises. In that case the worker is not only without food but without a shelter.

Another phenomena in the vicinity of Birla Jute Mill is the shop owned and controlled by the mill owner. The mill owner opens a shop for the convenience of the workers, and to protect them from the high prices and substandard goods of the petty businessmen. The goods are sold to the workers on credit and sometimes wages are paid in requisitions on the shop instead of money. These factors, though apparently harmless, are most crucial weapons in the hands of the mill owner in times of strikes and labour unrest.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Competition is the completest expression of the battle of all against all which rules in modern civil society.

This battle is fought not between the different classes of society only, but also between individual members of these classes. This competition of the workers among themselves is the worst side of the present state of things in its effect upon the worker, the sharpest weapon against the proletariat. The trade unions were started by the workers to nullify this competition.

The surplus population is endangered rather by the competition of the workers among themselves, which forces each separate worker as much each day as his strength can possibly admit. If a manufacturer can employ ten hands nine hours daily, he can employ nine; if each works ten hours, the tenth worker is dismissed. If a manufacturer can force the nine hands to work an extra hour daily for the same wages by threatening to discharge them at a time when the demand for hands is not too much, he discharges the tenth and saves so much wages. The productivity of each worker raised to the highest pitch by the competition of the workers among themselves, the division of labour, the introduction of machinery, the subjugation of the forces of Nature, deprive a multitude of workers of food.