The mill districts emerged after a slow and tortuous development of more than three decades. While mills were built through the entire decades of 1870s and 1880s in the northern part of the city, it was only by the turn of the century that the workers' settlements took a shape.

These settlements came up not through any planned development but haphazardly. Neglected by the authorities and exploited by the private builders, the workers lived in ill-lighted, ill-ventilated dens in largely undrained, undeveloped areas - almost in the midst of a stinking morass. The physical environment of their homes was no better than that of their mills and did not provide them much relief after the hard day's work. In most cases their rooms were overcrowded and many workers had to sleep on the street. To find solace from this hard life of labour the workers then resorted to spirit-drinking. The regular intake of spirit coupled with their hard work in the mills and polluted atmosphere both at home and in the mill weakened their resistance and made them an easy prey to various diseases. In this chapter, we shall try to show the evolution of the housing of the workers and their living conditions.

Evolution of Settlement:

In the Cotton Boom of early 1860s, a lot of people
desirous of finding work came to Bombay. They lived temporarily in whatever place they could find. The boom created temporary employment opportunities and the emigrants were new to the place and were large in number and, finally, the city was not prepared to house them. All these factors created a horrible over-crowding. It was reported that in a nine-feet wide lane "the houses on each side were of two or three floors, and the various lanes were densely peopled, and the floors of verandas were fully occupied, while to eke out accommodation in some of the verandas there were charpaees or cots slung up and screened with old matting to form second tier of sleeping place for labourers that were employed in daytime at the Railway Terminus or elsewhere". ¹

When the boom was over and the workers could not find any alternative employment as companies after companies collapsed, many of them returned to their villages. ² The expansion of economic activities after that, though significant, could not compare with that period. That accounts for the abrupt fall in the city's population from 816,562

¹ Dr Leith's Report in Census, 1864; quoted in Census 1872, p. 1.

² Census, 1872, p. 1.
in 1864 to 644,405 in 1872, that is a decrease of about 21 per cent.³

But again by 1881, the population had shown an increase which pointed towards steady economic growth. It kept increasing except when the plague was at its height between 1897 and 1901. That is why the population in 1901 registered a decline as many people had fled the city. This, however, was only a temporary phenomenon and as the epidemic subsided, many came back.

During this period the mill industries were showing a significant growth. In 1872, the number of the cotton mills in Bombay city was 11; in 1881, it was 32 and by 1911 it had reached 87. Apart from cotton mills, there were dockyards, railways, construction as well as many other services that attracted people to the city. The following table shows the change in the city's population over the years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>644,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>773,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>821,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>776,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>977,822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>979,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1,175,914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Percentage change (1872-1921) | 82.5% |

³ Census, 1872, p. 9.

⁴ Taken from various Census Reports.
As the population increased, the Bombay mainland was found to be inadequate to contain it and there occurred a major shift in the population, over the period, to the northern areas of the city which were still rural in the beginning. This shift occurred mainly due to two factors: Firstly, there was much pressure of population in the mainland; so whenever an opportunity presented itself, the people moved to the less densely inhabited areas. Secondly, there was a rapid development of mill industries and railways in the northern areas. In 1901 out of 96 mills (cotton, silk etc.), 66 were in the sections north of Bellasis Road.\(^5\) By 1925, out of 82 cotton mills 65 were situated in these areas.\(^6\)

So the people wanting to be near their place of work and getting increasingly marginalised in the overpopulated central areas,\(^7\) moved to these sections which were very wide in area and sparsely populated.\(^8\) Even by 1881, many people have moved northwards and it was reported that "the

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\(^5\) Census, 1901. The eight sections which later formed the mill districts were the following: Byculla, Tadwadi, Mazagaon, Parel, Sewri, Sion, Mahim and Worli.

\(^6\) BMGA, 1925.

\(^7\) Even in 1881, Chakla had 726 persons per acre; Umarkhadi, 526, Market, 558; Kumbharwada, 778; Khara Talao, 700.

\(^8\) Annual Report of the Municipal Commissioner of Bombay, (henceforth ARMC), 1885-87: "These 5 sections of Worlee, Mahim, Parel, Sewri and Sion (F and G Wards), covering the northern confines of the Island, having an area of 8,192 acres, a little more than one half of the Island, have only 8 persons to a square acre". p. 270.
population following Industrial pursuits were most numerous in Parell and Byculla".\textsuperscript{9} By 1891, the shift was very noticeable and the Census of 1891 was reporting that "In some of the most densely crowded parts of the Native Town - Umarkhadi, Dhobi Talao, Fanaswadi and Khara Talao - the total female population has decreased while the number of those born in Bombay has increased. This may easily be explained, as the immigrant women are chiefly employed now in the parts of Bombay north of the Bellasis Road; and with the extension of house building there, they have moved nearer their work leaving more room for their Bombay-bred sisters in the more central portions of the island".\textsuperscript{10}

By 1901, if we compare to the Census of 1872, out of 33 sections of the city, 15 sections showed a decline in the population while 18 showed an increase; the city, as whole, registered an increase of 20.42 per cent.\textsuperscript{11} Out of 18 sections showing increase, Byculla, Parell, Sewri, Sion, Mahim and Worli were on the top. The Census Report of 1901 offered the following explanation: "As regards Parel, Worli and Byculla, we should be inclined to ascribe this result mainly to the growth of mills and factories and to the consequent immigration of an industrial population; and ... Sewri, Sion and Mahim, on the other hand, are "sections of refuge" and offer accommodation to the

\textsuperscript{9} Census, 1881, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{10} Quoted in Census, 1901, History, p. 147.
\textsuperscript{11} Census, 1901, Report, p. 17.
fugitive population of the central portions of the island". 12

It is clear from the Appendix-II, which gives the fact of the major shift within the city, that, despite new births, the population of certain sections showed a decline while that of certain other sections registered a phenomenal increase which was many times the percentage increase in the total population of city. While percentage increase in the total population between 1872 and 1921 was 82.5 per cent, the percentage increase in the "mill-districts" were as follows: 13

**Table 2.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Percentage increase (1872-1921)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Byculla</td>
<td>225.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadwadi</td>
<td>295.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazagaon</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parel</td>
<td>332.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewri</td>
<td>508.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sion</td>
<td>357.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahim</td>
<td>229.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worli</td>
<td>1075.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The people who came to live in these areas were mainly the working classes, the cotton mill workers among

12 Ibid.
13 Calculated from various Censuses.
them. In 1872, the number of cotton mill workers enumerated was 5,175, out of which only 266, that is 5.1 per cent of the total, lived in the places which later came to be known as "mill districts". By 1906, this percentage had increased to the phenomenal figure of 82.1 per cent, as is shown by the following table: 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1872</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1906</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It must have further increased in the later years but, unfortunately, we do not have any comparable figures for that. But we know that by the end of this period about 90 per cent of the mill workers lived within 15 minute walk from their mills. 16

14 Census, 1872, p. 156. The corresponding BMOA estimate is 8,816. It is possible that there are many shortcomings in the Census enumeration or the casual mill workers might have registered themselves under General Labour. So, the Census figures are generally lower than the actual number of workers daily employed in the cotton mills. But for the purpose of comparison, all the Census figures are taken.

15 Calculated from various Censuses. Also see App.-III.

We find that the number of cotton mill workers in these sections kept on increasing from insignificance to a substantial presence. While in 1872, they had formed just 0.22 per cent of the total population of these 8 sections, in 1906 this percentage had increased to 26.01. The following table shows it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>1872</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1906</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Byculla</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>12.64</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tedwadi</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>14.97</td>
<td>19.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazagaon</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parel</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>17.38</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewri</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sion</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahim</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>8.94</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worli</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Av.</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>8.02</td>
<td>21.85</td>
<td>26.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the fact that there was a very large labouring population in the city, not much was done to provide them with habitable surroundings. In the late 1860s, many people were horrified to watch "the wretched rows of cadjan huts occupied by human beings, but only raised by a

17 Calculated from the Censuses. See Appendix-III.
few inches above the fetid mud of the flats". 18 Even when the population had decreased in 1872, the Health Officer to the Municipal Commissioner spoke of "the filthy dens in which the labouring classes of the city live are among the chief causes of the very high death-rate." 19 By 1881, the population-shift had started but still no change was noticeable in the "suburban sections which are more or less rural still as a whole; they are Parel, Sewri, Sion and Worlee; and as in these sections there has been a great increase in population since 1872, there has been a corresponding augmentation of the density of this population around inhabited centres - the village clusters". 20

During 1880s, the Government became somewhat interested in the development of these areas. Municipality was engaged in widening the streets and the Fergusson Road from Worli to Parel was built by 1884. 21 But the construction of living quarters were left mainly to the private entrepreneurs. Owing to the profit-motive of these entrepreneurs, a most unsystematic and haphazard development took place. Innumerable buildings were constructed but this did not provide better accommodation to the people.

18 Bombay Builder, September, 1866, quoted in Edwardes, op.cit., p. 293.
19 Quoted in Edwardes, ibid., p. 294.
20 Census, 1881, p. 37.
21 Census, 1901, History, p. 146.
and overcrowding continued. 22

In 1901, the mill-districts had 15,082 houses, in 1911, 22,566 houses and in 1921, 27,227 houses. 23 Out of these, 79.8, 79.3 and 81.2 per cent respectively were the number of buildings with only ground floors. 24 And these latter buildings were mostly "small tiled huts used as dwellings". 25 In G Ward, the Census reported, lived the poor population "whose thatched, or qadjan dwelling huts are more than two thousand in number". It added, "this last factor is in some degree responsible for a greater ground floor population in G Ward than in others .... in Wards G, F, and E the groundfloor population is most numerous". 26

**Housing and Sanitation:**

This feverish building activity, resulted in the construction of every variety or insanitary dwellings.

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22 ARMC, 1886-7: "The density of population has not been relieved by the numerous buildings erected to the north through Byculla and Parel..." p. 269. Census, 1901, History: "Innumerable chals sprang up north of the Bellasia Road .... and as fast as the houses were built there appeared a population to inhabit them". p. 151.

23 See Appendix -IV.

24 Calculated from Censuses. Also, see Appendix-IV.


26 Ibid., p. 67. Census, 1906, supports this: "The sections containing the largest number of houses, whether occupied or unoccupied are: Sion, Mahim and Worli but in all these sections... there is a large number of scattered huts". p. 23.
Burnett-Hurst, in his study on the housing problem of the working classes, divides the buildings in which the poor wage-earners lived in three types. The first were the "zavli" sheds whose main occupants were the Ghati carters but sometimes mill workers might also be residing in them either with their relatives or friends or even independently. These sheds were built of dry leaves from the date or coconut trees. The inhabitants kept the domestic animals with them and the surroundings were extremely insanitary.

The second type of dwellings were built of corrugated iron, empty kerosene tins, woods etc., and these sheds were inhabited mostly by the municipal employees or by tenants evicted from other places by the Improvement Trust. Some of these sheds were built by the Improvement Trust and the rest by private enterprises. They had no ventilation and light inside the rooms. Burnett-Hurst recounts: "Entering the shed and passing down a dark narrow passage — so narrow that two persons could scarcely pass one another — one had to grope one's way to the doorways of the rooms. Upon peering into these, it was impossible to ascertain whether they were occupied or not. Not a ray of light

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27 A.R. Burnett-Hurst, *Labour and Housing in Bombay*, 1925. This study was based on his personal investigation before and after the First World War.

28 Most of the casual workers had no settled living place.

29 Burnett-Hurst, op.cit., p. 20.
penetrated them, and this at noon on a bright, sunny day. It was only on striking a match that the rooms were found to be inhabited".30

To these must be added the small huts, scattered in a large part of the mill areas, made "mostly of clay and roofed with cadjan, a mat made of the palmyra or coconut tree plaited together. Some of these huts are so small that they only admit of a man's sitting upright in them and barely shelter his feet when he lies down.31

But the most important abodes of the mill workers were the chawls built near the mills. By the end of my period most of the mill workers were living in these chawls provided either by the Improvement Trust in collaboration with the millowners or by private enterprises, mostly by the latter.32 There were usually three types of such chawls. First were those houses usually designed for one family, but, due to increased demand for accommodation, these had been converted into tenements by partitioning the rooms, appropriating the porch and corridors, erecting additional floors and occupying every inch of possible space for the purpose of conversion into rooms. Thus "the houses have tall, narrow frontages and excessive depths;
many of the rooms, especially those in the centre and on the ground floor, lack sunshine and air."33

The second type of chawls were those built by private enterprise for profit. These were generally two, three or four-storeyed. In some cases, there was a central corridor separating the two rows of rooms, and in other cases, there were narrow verandas and the rooms were built back-to-back. In the first case, there was insufficient light and in the second, there was lack of air in the rooms.34

The third type of chawls were those constructed by the Improvement Trust. These were better lighted and ventilated, but were very few in number.35

The Government or the millowners did not pay any attention to the problem of housing the workers. The latter kept on living in mud huts, in tin sheds, in any building even on the street. This was the case in the nineteenth century.

On September 19, 1900, the Bombay Improvement Trust (henceforth BIT) wrote to the BMOA stating that "very little has been done by the employers of labour to house their work people".36 It implored them to cooperate with the BIT "in an effort to improve the housing of mill hands in Bombay".37

33 Burnett-Hurst, op. cit., p. 21.
34 Ibid., pp. 23-4.
35 Ibid.
36 BMOA, 1901, p. 60.
37 Ibid., p. 33.
The BMOA, on its part, tried to shrug off the responsibility by saying that "suitable accommodation provided by many millowners in Bombay, at rates of rent within the means of their employees, has not been availed of to the extent they anticipated", and thus they felt reluctant to cooperate in "further efforts of the same kind".

The BMOA's argument was contradicted even by people from within their own ranks. B.D. Petit, in his oral evidence before the IFLC, 1908, said that whenever "a room in his chawl was empty, there were several applicants and it was his experience that if chawls were built, millpeople would live in them". Another mill agent C.N. Wadia, when asked about the condition of housing even during 1916-18, said that "they are extremely bad". Questioned whether the mill workers would reside in the chawls built by millowners, he replied, "I think so. We have a certain amount of experience and they have done so".

Thus the argument given by the BMOA seemed more like a subterfuge for not building houses for their workers. The BIT pursued the matter further by proposing a scheme in which the BIT and the millowners would cooperate. To this the BMOA reciprocated by putting forward the condition

38 Ibid., p. 60.
39 Ibid., p. 34.
40 IFLC, 1908, pp. 135-6.
42 BMOA, 1901, p. 61.
that the building cost per room should not exceed Rs. 350.\textsuperscript{43} This the BIT found impossible "owing to the heavy incidence of the cost of accessories such as passages, verandahs, drainage, water-supply and latrine accommodation".\textsuperscript{44} Then the matter rested there, the BIT also lay low due to its own problems.

In 1908, the IFLC observed that "little has been done by the mills in this direction (of housing their workers) and operatives as a rule huddled together, for the sake of economy, into large, many-storeyed, barrack-like building called chawls, which are provided by private enterprise".\textsuperscript{45}

In 1909, after an interval of six years, the dialogue was resumed between the BIT and the BMOA, the former asking the latter for any suggestions "on this matter, with a view to determining what chawls should be erected next year in pursuance of the scheme..."\textsuperscript{46}

To this, the BMOA put the query "whether the arrangement arrived at in 1903 would be the basis on which the cooperation of Millowners is invited."\textsuperscript{47}

The BIT comforted them by agreeing to the 1903 scheme except for the period of payment should be 28 years instead

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid., pp. 61-2.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 1903, p. 99.
\item \textsuperscript{45} IFLC, vol. I, Report, p. 22.
\item \textsuperscript{46} From BIT to BMOA, 10 August, 1909; in BMOA, 1909, p. 42.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 42.
\end{itemize}
of 37 years. It gave out its scheme as following:

"The proposal to carry out the letting of chawls to the poor through their employers is as follows:

"1. The Trust should erect chawls according to its own plans.

"2. And lease the same to the employers of labour.

"3. On the basis of 4 per cent interest on the actual cost.

"4. Two per cent as sinking fund to repay the loan in 28 years.

"5. A fair amount should be charged on the repairs or repairs might be left to the lessees.

"6. That the employers of labour should not exact more net revenue out of these chawls than what they have to pay to the Trust as interest (exclusive of sinking fund) plus 0.61 per cent as depreciative fund.

"7. That at the end of 28 years or earlier if the amount of the loan is repaid, the property shall belong to the employer of labour.

"8. All the taxes should be paid by the lessees."48

On this, the BMOA showed a general agreement putting forward certain amendments.49 On the whole, 23 mills seemed willing to cooperate with the BIT on this issue.30 But in 1913, we find that "only two mill companies have come forward to avail themselves of the facilities offered by

48 BIT to BMOA, October 4, 1909; in ibid., p. 43.
49 Ibid.
50 BMOA to BIT, February 8, 1910; in ibid., 1910, p. 44.
the Improvement Trust."\^51

By 1914, "The housing problem still seems to hang fire".\^52 And in 1915, the BMO\^\^\^ was expressing its "deep regret that in spite of special facilities given to the mill industry for the erection of labourers' chawls by way of the compulsory acquisition of land and the advance of loans on easy terms, sufficient advantage has not been taken of this opportunity."\^53

By June 1916, under this arrangement, one chawl had been built on Naigam Road. In all, there were plans of building only 8 chawls, many of which were in incipient stage, to house about 2,016 persons.\^54 This obviously was only a very small fraction of the total population of mill workers.

Even by 1929, only twenty two out of seventy-six mills provided "partial housing" for their workers. The total number of workers in these mills was 64,270, out of which only 12,149, that is, 20 per cent could be accommodated in these buildings.\^55

The houses built for the workers by private entrepreneurs as well as the surroundings were extremely unhealthful owing both to the negligence of the authorities and

\^-51 BMO\^\^\^, 1913, p. vii.
\^-52 BMO\^\^\^, 1914, p. v.
\^-53 BMO\^\^\^, 1915, p. ix.
\^-54 ITJ, 1915-16, p. 263.
\^-55 RCL, 1929, p. 22.
the insanitary habits of the lodgers. There were no statutory provisions against the construction of such insanitary buildings. All that the owners of these buildings were interested in was in making easy money.

The situation in some of the private chawls was so bad that one official wrote - "In the drained districts there are dwellings on damp ground; in the undrained districts there are dwellings on sewage". And the mill districts were undrained. Byculla, Mazagaon, Parel, Mahim etc. were completely undrained areas. In fact, the pace of the construction of buildings had been so fast that the municipality proved to be too sluggish and "it has not been practicable to carry out works for the removal of the sewage and rain-water as quickly as the buildings have been constructed". Most of the buildings were erected without connecting them to the sewers even in those areas where it was possible.

In Lalwady (at Parel) the municipal authorities sent summonses to many owners of the buildings "to make connections between buildings and the sewers". The Municipal Authority, 1892-93, p. 384.

Ibid., 1875, p. 127.

Ibid., 1897-9, p. 653. He further complained: "Where but a few year ago there were solitary buildings in swamps there are now towns or densely populated habitations, amidst which there are serious nuisances caused by pools of water and sewage in the rains. In some localities these nuisances cannot be removed through the system of drainage for the reason that the buildings and the nuisances in the midst of them are on ground lower than the sewer". Ibid., 1898-9, p. 709.
Commissioner, however, complained that "The proceedings in the Police Court will take a long time and the nuisances will continue, I am afraid, for another six months. The nuisances around buildings in Lalwady are very loathsome. The sewage which cannot be absorbed by the earth flows down the public road and through a hole in the street wall falls into a mill tank". Such nuisance were very common in these areas. The filth of the Government distillery at Dadar could not be drained and it accumulated and stank; the water flowing from the houses could not be properly chennelled and it flooded the streets and accumulated in the ditches and became a breeding ground for mosquitoes; sometimes the sewage of one mill overflowed into the water tank of another and many workers, who drank it, fell ill; there were open drains in the narrow lanes between two chawls sometimes occupying the entire space and seeping into the foundations of the buildings. On such ground stood the chawls whose rooms were "dark, unwholesome dens, into which the light of day never penetrates, and which must of necessity breed disease and pestilence". There were no proper latrine accommodation in these chawls. The children always defecated in the lanes

59 Ibid., 1894-5, p. 525.
60 Ibid., 1879, p. 295.
61 Ibid., 1892-3, p. 386.
62 Ibid., 1888-9, p. 319.
63 Ibid., 1884-5, p. 224.
separating chawls from each other. These houses were fitted with basket privies. Though the scavengers were provided to clean these privies, they often did not perform their duties and the contents of the privies kept overflowing either on the lanes or into the open drains thereby fouling the atmosphere. Sometimes cesspit also overflowed and choked the drains. Many times the scavengers who were supposed to remove these excreta daily and convey it to the night-soil depots, emptied the baskets into the open drains. These all together created such a foul stench that the windows of the rooms had to be kept closed and passers-by had to hurry on.64

In most of the chawls, no nahani or sink was provided in the rooms and "the approaches to the chawls are therefore as a rule filthy with pools or undrained and stagnant sullage dotting the place and breeding mosquitoes".65

Even in the better-constructed Improvement Trust chawls, the insanitary habits of the workers were responsible for uncleanness. Spitting of pan or betelnut juice on the stairs, depositing the sweepings of the rooms in the

64 Ibid., 1875, p. 127; ibid., 1909-10, the report says that "The number of cess pool carts for the conservancy of F and G Wards is now totally inadequate for the regular emptying of the contents of the cess-pools". p. 36.

corridors and throwing the rubbish into the lanes kept the place always dirty. Moreover, the verandas provided in these buildings were used for bathing purposes and since they could be overlooked from surrounding buildings... the inhabitants usually enclose them with matting or sacking. This made free ventilation further difficult.

Added to all this was the problem of overcrowding. Rents were high and varied from place to place; the average monthly rent was from 3 to 7 rupees. One individual or even the entire family found it hard to pay it on its own. So, the taking in of additional lodgers or subletting was the usual practice.

The mill districts were otherwise not very densely populated. Even though there had been manifold increase in the population of these areas, the total number of per-

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66 The Municipal Commissioner complained - "The practice of throwing refuse is very common amongst the people and warnings prohibiting the objectionable practice given by the distribution of hand-bills and notices in the papers have no effect". ARMC, 1907-08, p. 221.


68 Most of the contemporary observers thought that it was due to the high rents beyond the means of individual lodgers that the overcrowding occurred. The Report on an Investigation into the causes of Malaria in Bombay, 1911, stated that "one of the heaviest items of expenditure in the domestic budget of workers in Bombay is house rent. About 85 per cent of the population live in tenements of only one room and among these a large proportion are forced to share their quarters with others". p. 4.

The Gazetteer, op.cit. also stated that "Some years ago a room of this dimensions could be rented for 3
sons per acre was much less than many other areas of the city. But the haphazard development and the poverty of the people led to a situation of overcrowding.

In 1901, 284,244 people or about 36.6 per cent of the total population of the city were living in rooms each occupied by 6 to 20 or more persons. In 1920, about 36 per cent of the total population was living in rooms each occupied by more than 6 persons. For mill areas these figures were 47.4 per cent in 1901, 36.0 per cent in 1911 and 42.6 per cent in 1921. This clearly shows that although the city itself was quite overcrowded, the mill areas, along with certain other sections, were even more so.

In 1917-18, 97 per cent of the working-class households in Parel were living in single rooms. There were

Cont'd... f.n. 68

or 4 rupees; rents have since risen to Rs. 6 per room and overcrowding has proportionately increased". p.211

69 The number of persons per acre was only 16 in Sion, and Byculla was the highest containing 161 per acre in the mill areas, compared to the 699 per acre in 2nd Nagpada, 737 in Kumbharwada, 489 in Chakla in 1921, it was very low. See Appendix-V.

70 Report on Malaria, op.cit., pp. 4-5.
71 Burnett-Hurst, op.cit., p. 29.
72 Calculated from Censuses. Also see Appendix -VI.
73 Second Nagpada had about 67 persons per house. Kumbharwada, Chakla etc. were the same. ARMC, 1886-7, pp. 273-4.
74 Burnett-Hurst, op.cit., p. 29.
also many cases of "three families occupying a single room and numerous indications of the presence of single adult lodgers in rooms occupied by one or two families". 75 There were many who asserted that "In every room two or three families are huddled together, generally numbering 10 to 15 persons excluding children". 76 According to the Census of 1921, there were at least 135 instances in Bombay in which a single room was occupied by six families or more. The lady doctor appointed by the Government of Bombay to investigate the conditions of women industrial workers wrote about one such room: "In the outside chawls I have several times verified the overcrowding of rooms. In one room, on the second floor of a chawl, measuring some 15'x12', I found six families living. Six separate evens on the floor proved this statement. On enquiry, I ascertained that the actual number of adults and children living in this room was 30. Bamboos hung from the ceiling, over which, at night, clothes and sackings were hung, helped to partition each family allotment. Three out of six of the women who lived in this room were shortly expecting to be delivered. All three said they would have deliveries in Bombay. When I questioned the District Nurse, who accompanied me, as to how she would arrange for privacy in this room, I was shown a small space some 3'x4' which was usual-

75 Indian Industrial Commission, op.cit., p. 155.
76 The Gazetteer, op.cit., p. 211. Also Report on Malaria, op.cit., p. 5.
ly screened for the purpose. The atmosphere at night of that room, filled with smoke from the six ovens, and other impurities, would certainly physically handicap any woman and infant, both before and after delivery. This was one of the many such rooms I saw".77

This was an extreme case. But in the workers' quarters, even when not so crowded, the situation was much the same. The room served for all the purposes. Bathing, cooking, sleeping, dining - everything was done there.78 The whole situation was so disgusting that it forced the Times of India, a pro-establishment paper, to say that "our city has quite another side - a side reeking of poverty and filth, of misery, squalor and disease..."79

Thus the workers lived in the most unhealthy part of the city where, after the setting of the sun, "mephitic exhalations arise from the adjacent swamps and pools",80 where most of the localities were undrained and whatever draining existed was open and often overflowed on the streets, where the human excreta choked the open drains and littered the lanes, where the houses were ill-lighted, ill-ventilated and overcrowded and the constitution of the people was already weakened by their hard work in ill-ventilated, hot mills. This was an ideal ground for diseases. And they came.

77 Quoted in Burnett-Hurst, op.cit., pp. 28-9.
78 ITJ, 1890-1, p. 37.
79 Times of India, 1903, May 1, pp. 4-5.
80 Ibid., September 13, 1905, p. 7.
Diseases and Mortality:

"While there has been a decrease in the deaths from Cholera, there has been an enhanced mortality from Small-pox since 1865. In the four years from 1866 to 1869, 4,982 deaths were registered.... Towards the latter end of 1873 Rinderpest appeared. The disease was first noticed in November, and it existed up to October 1875. Towards the latter end of 1874, measles assumed epidemic proportions and increased up to March 1875 and then began to abate. In February 1875, Foot and Mouth Disease was noticed, and it did not disappear till October." Thus runs the Municipal Commissioner's report for the city of the Bombay in 1875. And those early years were no exceptions. The diseases and deaths continued. There was again "cholera epidemic" in 1883, fever, dysentery in 1886, measles and diseases of respiratory system in 1888, and many similar diseases in the later years until the plague took over in 1896 and between that date and 1914 killed as many as 183,984 people. Alongside this many other diseases also continued and malaria was very frequent.

The death-figures given tell only a part of the story because most of the cases were not registered for

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81 ARMC, 1875, p. 128.
82 See Appendix - VII.
83 In 1911 and 1928, Committees had to be set up to investigate the causes of malaria.
84 See Appendix - VIII.
two main reasons: (a) Many people went back to their home villages to die, and (b) Even when death occurred in the city, many of them were not registered because the afflicted kins and friends felt little obliged for legal niceties.

Thus one witness said before the IFLC and he "did not think that the death statistics of the city would be of any material use, for only about 45 per cent were properly certified". 85

But even these grossly understated figures tell a story which is frightening. The average death-rate per thousand of population for 30 years between 1890 and 1919 was 46.36, 86 and this sometimes reached as high as 96.76 as in 1900, keeping in mind that this was only about half of the deaths that had actually occurred. The death-rate always exceeded the birth-rate substantially. 87

If we compare the average death-rate of the Bombay city for the 30 years (1890 to 1919) with that of the Bombay Presidency we find that the latter was only 35.75 compared to the 46.36 of the former. 88 This shows that although the conditions were sufficiently bad for the Presidency (with famines occurring several times from 1896 to 1901 as well as in 1906-7), 89 those of Bombay city were

85 IFLC, 1908, p. 58, the evidence of Captain Houston.
86 Calculated from the Appendix - VIII.
87 See Appendix - VIII.
88 See Appendix - VIII and IX.
89 Malaria Report, op.cit., p. 10.
much worse. Moreover, while in Presidency the Birth-rates most of the time exceeded the death-rates, in Bombay the opposite was the case. Infant mortality rate was also much higher in the city than in the Presidency as a whole.90

There were times when Bombay became almost a city of death, for example, between 1897 and 1906.91

Technically speaking, there were two broad categories of diseases which afflicted the cotton textile workers. First were the diseases contracted through the hard work in the stuffy and hot atmosphere inside the mills. They were broadly referred to as occupational diseases. The main among these was phthisis.92

The second category of diseases was common to the whole population in the poor and insanitary sections, the

90 See Appendix - VIII and IX.
91 See Appendix -VIII.
92 Phthisis was the most important occupational disease in a cotton mill. ITJ, April, 1902, gives an account of the disease contracted through the inhaling of cotton dust: "The injurious effects of dust from cotton first gives the person a slight catarrh, noticeable by dryness and tickling in the larynx; next coughing and later on hoarseness appears, followed by hard breathing and in turn consumption... A recent investigation amongst cotton mills has shown that in a well ventilated cotton mill out of 100 sicknesses, 75 cases referred to more or less acute cases of consumption. It must be remarked that this instance referred to a healthy location, the mill at the same time providing good tenements for their help, and the food taken being of the best kind". p. 195.

Many of the witnesses before the IFLC said that instances of phthisis were more common among millworkers than in others. Major A. Street, Presidency Surgeon, Bombay, said that "tuberculous glands of the neck are particularly common in young opera-
mill workers among them. These were malaria, fevers, plague, cholera etc. But this technical division is, in many ways, misleading. The hot, suffocating atmosphere in which the mill workers had to work for about 12-15 hours impaired their physique so much that they were susceptible to many other diseases apart from the occupational ones. One observer said: "Stout and sprightly youths become gradually emaciated and lean as they continue working in the mills, and as years roll by, their stamina gives way, and they suffer from general debility and slow fever which sometimes become so unbearable that they have to quit work and go to their native place to recruit their health." 93

Almost all the witnesses before the FC, 1885 agreed that the dock labourers were in a better physical health than the mill workers. 94 Similarly in 1908, there were many who thought that the same class of workers in foundries had a better physique. 95 Another witness said that "there is no doubt that the general healthiness of the Bombay operatives is less than that of the non-factory population." 96 The IFLC found that the average weight of

Cont'd. f.n. 92

tives", IFLC, 1908, p. 52. Dr Turner, Executive Health Officer, Bombay, also admitted that phthisis was more prevalent among mill workers. Ibid., p. 41.

93 K.A. Keluskar, IFLC, p. 86.
94 See FC, 1885.
95 Dr Turner, in IFLC, 1908, p. 41.
96 Major Street, Presidency Surgeon, IFLC, p. 52.
the Jail population, between the age of 20 and 50 years, was 8 to 10 pounds more than the average weight of the mill workers of that age. Even those who did not think that the mill workers were physically worse than others, conceded that "where the heat and dust in the rooms are excessive, factory operatives must suffer from the effects of chills and irritation of respiratory passages".

The devitalizing effects of the factory work were so clear even as early as 1887 that the Health Officer to the Municipal Commissioner wrote that "the young people especially cannot continue working in factories without losing their health and strength .... To judge of the effect of factory life compare the appearance of men and women engaged in hard, outdoor work, such as quarrying, with the appearance of factory labourers. I have been struck with the difference in appearance of the two classes of labourers walking side by side at the end of a day's work - the mill labourers, feeble, weak, and having a pallid look; the quarrymen and women with active, springy gait and of cheerful look after hard work under the sun". He concluded, "At any rate, there is growing up in our population a class which can be distinguished from their own class, from their own race engaged in other work, and from every other class, by a pallid look, which may be called a 'factory

98 Major McDonald, Acting Presidency Surgeon, 2nd District; IFLC, p. 53.
The mortality record on the mill workers is absolutely unreliable. This is evident from the Appendix-X in which we find that the deaths from phthisis alone exceeded the total deaths. There were two main reasons for this misrecording. The first was that many workers went to their homes when ill and they sometimes died there. But this factor was a common one for all the workers with rural links. The second factor was the more important. Most of the mill workers were out of work after they fell ill and before they went to the hospital. So, when asked about, their occupation, they registered themselves under "general labourers". Furthermore, the casual (badli) workers were

100 Ibid.
101 See Appendix-X.
102 Dr Turner said that "a possible explanation of the low mortality among mill-hands was that large numbers might on falling ill return to their country where they spent their remaining days." IFLC, 1908, p. 43.

Dr Chavan, who came from Ratnagiri and had a practice among the workers, said - "The mortality returns would naturally be found to be less in Bombay for directly they become ill they proceed to their villages..." Ibid., p. 123.

Major Street opined that though it was possible to obtain some statistics from the J.J. Hospital, "the word "labourer" would be used to describe all forms of labour mill operatives were probably not specially described". Ibid., p. 53.

Similarly, Captain Gordon Tucker, I.M.S., Bombay thought that "often a man did not come in until he had been ill for three months. That meant that he had been out of work for three months, and when asked for his occupation he would reply "none"." Ibid., p. 46.
almost always registering themselves as "general labourers". But if the qualitative evidences, as given above, were any indications, the death-rate among the mill-workers was the same, if not more, as that of the average death-rate in the city.

Infant Mortality:

Infant mortality was very high in Bombay. The Presidency-rates, which were already quite high, were only one-third of the city's figures. Even in normal times, it was clear that "one out of every two infants born has to die before reaching the age of twelve months". During troubled times, the infant mortality rate per thousand of birth sometimes reached the absurdly high figure of 1063.3. Burnett-Hurst was convinced that "Bombay must have the inglorious distinction of possessing probably the highest infant death-rate in the world".

Most of the infantile deaths occurred among the poor people. Right since the day the children were conceived, the problems started. The pregnant women did not have much to eat and drink. There were no facilities of life in the dirty rooms and surrounding areas. On top of it, they had

103 See Appendix - VIII and IX.
104 Municipal Commissioner, op. cit., 1921, quoted in Burnett-Hurst, op. cit., p. 35.
105 As in 1900. See Appendix-VIII. Probably the registration of birth were less than that of death.
106 Burnett-Hurst, op. cit., p. 35.
to go on working till very late in the pregnancy. This put a very unnatural strain on the mother and thus on the child. The mother also did not get any skilled attendance during the delivery and had to return to her work very shortly after confinement. The infant did not get sufficient nourishment because the mother herself was often underfed and she did not have much time to give careful attention to the child. When she went to her work in the mill, she either left the infant to the care of the elder children or with some neighbour. As there was not much provision for the upkeep of the child - neither clothes, nor sheets nor mattresses, most of the time it lay on the ground covered only with a very thin sari or the like. In such circumstances it was very likely that the child would catch chill or pneumonia. Even if the mother took the infant to the factory, the situation was no better as she could hardly get enough time to attend to it and only three mills provided creches even by the early 1920s. 107 To keep the infants from crying and disturbing, they were often given pills of opium which kept them quiet at home as well as in the mills. 108 The ill-ventilated, and ill-lighted and damp rooms, covered with smoke morning and evening and with so

107 Burnett-Hurst, op.cit., p. 54.

108 The Report of the Lady Doctor Appointed to investigate the conditions of Women Industrial Workers, stated that "Ninety-eight per cent of the infants born to women industrial workers have opium administered to them." Quoted in ibid., p. 38.
many people living in them, were hardly the ideal home for a new born. And when they contracted some diseases, there was no proper medical facilities. Even the milk sup-

109 Most of the infant mortality occurred in rooms each inhabited by one family or more. The following table shows that:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Births</th>
<th>1 room &amp; under</th>
<th>2 rooms</th>
<th>3 rooms</th>
<th>4 rooms</th>
<th>Hospital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Births</td>
<td>14,117</td>
<td>1,988</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>3,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Mortality</td>
<td>11,736</td>
<td>1,123</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Infant Mortality by the Number of Rooms Occupied in 1927

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Rooms</th>
<th>Births</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Infant deaths per 1000 births</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%age</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 room &amp; under</td>
<td>11,615</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>5,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 rooms</td>
<td>1,736</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 rooms</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 rooms</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>7,764</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RCL, 1929, p. 37.
plied to them was contaminated. So, all that was left for them was to die.

The Health Officer to the Municipal Commissioner reached the heart of the matter when he wrote the following:

"The causes of these epidemics lie, I believe, in poverty of the people, and the misery in which they live. The poverty of the great masses of the people in this city is incredible. Obliged to support large families, and compelled directly or indirectly to lay a large proportion of their incomes for marriage and other ceremonies, they live on what I may without exaggeration call a starvation diet. As the natural result of their poverty they crowd together, and in houses where there should be only one family, there are a dozen."

He added, "Looking to the great number of poor people in this city and considering their weakly and puny constitutions, I am convinced that we may expect to have every three, four or five years an outbreak of one or the other of the epidemic diseases: It may not be Cholera, it may not be Small-pox, but some disease will arise and sweep off the most effete of the population".

Drinking:

One witness complained before the IFLC that "taking them as a class, they (the workers) were not so good as 20 years ago. Years ago it was rare to see an operative drunk,

but of recent years they had contracted the vice of drinking".\textsuperscript{112} This was attested by another piece of evidence from the FC, 1875. One mill manager said that the drunkenness was "almost unknown among them".\textsuperscript{113} Even in 1884, when another factory commission held its interviews, none of them talked about drunkenness among workers. But by 1905, we hear of a "great increase of spirit-drinking".\textsuperscript{114} And by 1908, it seemed to have become very common. Many of the witnesses, representing many walks of life, admitted before the IFLC that the workers were greatly in the habit of drinking. One said that "the majority of the men spent one and half annas a day in drink",\textsuperscript{115} while another confirmed that "twenty per cent of their pay was spent in drink."\textsuperscript{116} On the basis of much evidence the IFLC concluded that "The consumption of liquor among factory workers is ... undoubtedly greater than among men of the same rank in life engaged in other occupations."\textsuperscript{117} The findings of the Liquor Committee came to the same point that "the mill hands spend more money in liquor than on

\textsuperscript{112} IFLC, 1908, p. 99.  
\textsuperscript{113} FC, 1875, p. 24.  
\textsuperscript{114} ITJ, 1904-5, p. 366.  
\textsuperscript{115} IFLC, 1908, p. 85.  
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 126.  
\textsuperscript{117} IFLC, 1908, Report, p. 22.
food or clothes".  

Bhima Ramji Nare, a leading member of the Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha went to the extent of saying that the physical deterioration of the workers was not due to long hours of work or bad ventilation in the mills but "mostly due to their habits of drinking" etc. The reason given for this by Nare and Talcherkar was the availability of ready money in the "hands of uneducated and thoughtless persons". On the other hand, Tilak thought that it was basically because of the designs of the Government to extract more revenue by spreading intemperance among the workers. None of these observations indicate that it was adequately appreciated that the roots of intemperance lay in the lives of the workers, the exhausting nature of their work, their dirty and crowded surroundings and, in many cases, their solitary existence without wife or family. So, when they came back from their long and

118 Given in BMOA, 1908, p. vii.  
119 IFLC, 1908, p. 114.  
120 Ibid.  
121 Talcherkar's article in Indu Prakash, September 27, 1905; given in RNP, September, 1905.  
122 Both Nare and Talcherkar, as upstart workers, had severe contempt for any deviations they saw in the workers.  
124 There were, however, many who observed it. Keluskar, the Secretary of the Maratha Aikyeckhoo Sabha, maintained that "the nature of mill work was such that the men were bound to take a stimulant". IFLC, p. 88.
tiring day's work to their stinking, crowded holes where, in many cases, there were no families to give them emotional support, they resorted to drinking. And once it started, it continued and became a habit and, for some others, a means to amass money and wield power and influence. Thus the number of liquor shops had multiplied over the years. One observer said before the IFLC that "there were 14 grog shops within a small area in the mill district at Parel". These shops were owned by influential persons, sometimes the landlords of the chawls. They had connections with the jobbers as well as with some of the petty officials at the mills. They checked any temperance propaganda among the workers by harassing them. And, in any case, the workers themselves were not prepared to renounce whatever enjoyment they could afford by drinking.

The Daily Life of a Cotton Mill Worker:

He had to get up very early in the morning at about

Cont'd., f.n. 124

Similarly, one mill manager thought that "the operatives at the end of the day were worn out and tired and so took something in the nature of a stimulant." p. 99.

125 IFLC, p. 128.
126 ITJ, 1911-12, p. 171.
127 Ibid.
128 The following account pertains only to the male workers. The problems of the female workers were different. They could go to the mills late and come back early, when the work was not too much. They were not fined for this. They even took more inter-
4 or 4-30. After making his ablutions, he cooked his meal if he was alone. If he had a family or was staying with a Khanawali, he took a quick meal and started for the mill. He could not afford to be late because fines would be imposed otherwise. If he arrived at the factory a bit too soon, he lay down on the pavement besides it and took a short rest till the gate opened. Then he had to insert his "chappa" or "ticket of presence into its proper slit in the box kept for the purpose". After this he was allowed in.

By now the machineries had already started moving; the temperature and humidity inside the mill kept increasing partly because a certain temperature and humidity was needed for the purpose of manufacture and partly because so many people were crammed in an ill-ventilated place. If the worker was new to the place the sight of these "vast, dim, cavernous places, with their bewildering vistas of rotating wheels and belts and shaftings," must be filling him with awe. And even if he was an old hand, running to and fro among the ceaselessly moving intricate machineries did demand a kind of attention which would soon ex-

Cont'd.. f.n. 128

vals to take care of their children. Moreover, their work was less strenuous. But, at the same time, they had to face more problems at home. See next section.

129 ITJ, 1890-91, p. 37.
130 TOI, September 13, 1905, p. 7.
haust him. And he did get exhausted and wanted some respite from this alienating work. So he asked permission to go out to answer the call of the nature. Here again a problem came. The tickets of permission to go out were limited in number and if few others had already gone out, he had to wait and prolong his work till his turn came. After this he went out. Now he tried to spend as much time as possible remaining out. He feared the machinery which might any time cripple or kill him; he simply feared its size; he felt very belittled before the enormous mass of it; he disliked his work; he dreaded the stuffy and hot atmosphere inside the building. So he wanted to remain out till the time he would be penalised. Meanwhile his work was being attended to by a substitute doffer boy. He resumed his work and waited for the time when either he could go out again or the jobber allowed him to take his food which he had either brought or someone else had brought for him. So, three or four hours after starting work, at 9 or 10, he, with jobber's permission, sat down to eat. This he usually did "behind his machine". After this he went out to wash his vessels and hands, and soon resumed his work. This work continued till midday interval. By this time he felt so exhausted that "As soon as the speed of machines slacken perceptibly, our workman pushes the strap on to the loose pulley, spreads his apron on the floor, and folding his hands and legs to suit the size

131 ITJ, 1890-91, p. 37.
of the cloth, lies down to sleep". 132

But if he had not brought his meal or it had not been brought, he immediately rushed to his place of residence and finished his food fast and came back to resume his work. This all had to be done in 15-20 minutes, because that was the actual period of the interval.

The time till the midday break was just about half of the time he was supposed to spend in the mill. The other half was still before him and this was even more tiring. Now his interest in the work slackened more perceptibly. His going out became more frequent and, if not allowed, he could even fight for this. As the closing hours drew close, he became more restless, sweating profusely, with "flaccid and weary limbs, eyes dazed with unending roar" and with the "ceaseless monotony" of his task. 133

When the work was over he felt an immense relief. Now his real life started. But he was too tired to enjoy that. If he could afford, he went to the liquor shop, drank with his friends and tried to relax. Otherwise he went straight home, cooked his meal or ate at a Khanawali. After eating, if he still felt like it, he might spend some time singing songs, bhajans etc. in a group or immediately went to sleep in the room, if it was winter or on

132 Ibid., p. 59.
133 TOI, September 13, 1905, p. 7.
the street, if it was summer. The area in which he lived was very crowded and noisy and he "cannot go to bed before 11 p.m." 134

Now he could get only 5 or 6 hours to sleep, after this long day's work, before he embarked upon the next day's work. He and many others like him started in the morning to their work "dragging themselves to work again before the sun is above horizon, their countenances set and hopeless, bodies only half-rested from the previous day's labour, a gait that denotes unutterable lassitude in every machinical movement". 135

In such a daily routine, the workers hardly got any time to listen to the leaders or organisers, to attend meetings and pass resolutions, to make or join organisations, or to take decisions or execute them in the neighbourhood.

The Woman Worker:

The women were chiefly employed in reeling and winding department. Out of these "about 80 per cent ... are employed on hand-reeling which is in no way connected with the machinery worked by motive power". 136 Moreover, these

134 Keluskar, IFLC, 1908, p. 87.
135 TOI, op.cit.
136 FC, 1890, p. 2.
departments were relatively clean and well-ventilated.\textsuperscript{137} Their hours of work were less than those of men. This was attested by the female witnesses before various factory commissions. One woman said before the Factory Commission of 1885 that they "do not work as long as the men".\textsuperscript{138} Another confirmed this - "None of the women work as long as the men".\textsuperscript{139} Similarly, most of the nine women who gave evidence on this point before the Factory Commission of 1890 admitted that they worked less hours than men. The Commission concluded on the basis of these evidences that "the total number of hours of work in their case is usually 9 and never exceeds 10".\textsuperscript{140} So, when the Factory Act of 1891 was passed fixing their hours of work at 11, there were many complaints.\textsuperscript{141} In fact even before that one woman queried: "I never go to the mill at 6 O'clock in the morning, and why should Government order me to do so?"\textsuperscript{142}

But such was not the case with all the women. In many cases, the low-caste women were not employed in the

\textsuperscript{137} TFLC, 1906, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{138} FC, 1885, evidence of Sakoo.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid. Evidence of Akoo.
\textsuperscript{140} FC, 1890, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{141} Din Bandhu, March 2, 1890, Jam-e-Jamshed, February 10, 1890.
\textsuperscript{142} FC, 1885, evidence of Sakoo.
reeling and winding departments and they had to work as long as men. In fact, they faced triple exploitation - because of the mill-work, caste - discrimination and the subordinate position at home.

Whatever time the women could save from the mill-work was more than adjusted at home. There they had to do everything from washing the clothes to cooking the food. They had no entertainment hours as men had in their drinking sessions and singing parties. It was mainly owing to their socially subordinate status that the women did not form a part of the labour movement, at least during the period under study.