CHAPTER V

METHODS OF LABOUR CONTROL
The managing agents, as the entrepreneurs, determined the policies relating to wages, technology and supervisory personnel in the industrial concerns managed by them. But actual 'disciplining' of labour took place at the workplaces and in the industrial neighbourhoods. In this chapter the process of disciplining of labour in the different industries within the regions under consideration will be examined. In their enquiry into the mode of supervision in Indian factories at the end of the 1920s, the Royal Commission on Labour observed:

The jobber, known in different parts of India by different names, such as sardar, mukaddam or maistry, is almost ubiquitous in the Indian factory system and usually combines in one person a formidable series of functions. He is primarily a chargeman. Promoted from the ranks after full experience of the factory, he is responsible for the supervision of labour while at work. In a large factory, there may be a hierarchy of jobbers for this purpose, including women overseers in departments staffed by women. So far as the worker is given technical training, the jobber is expected to provide it. He is not, however, merely responsible for the worker once he has obtained work; the worker has generally to approach him to secure a job, and is nearly always dependent on him for the security of that job as well as for a transfer to a better one.

The Jute Industry:

In his investigation in the Calcutta jute mills in 1905, Foley did not find any 'systematic method' in the recruitment of labour. Though he highly praised the management of jute mills, the managers were found to be lacking, in 'many cases', in establishing close personal relations with labour. It appeared to him that a Manager often had to rely on his Bengali clerks, known as Babus, both in his dealings with labour and in his endeavours to obtain more labour. "If the Manager knew his hands

intimately”, noted Foley, "he could surely employ a number of them to bring him in labour from their homes and the neighbourhood, either sending them up as Sardars or inducing them to bring recruits when they return from leave"³. In spite of his preference for recruiting labour through the sardars selected from the workers, he warned : "I would deprecate the artificial creation of any headman to represent the operatives"⁴.

The paradox of history lies in the fact that by the time Foley carried out his investigation, sardar was very much a part of the hierarchy of management in the Calcutta jute mills. This is evident in a letter in Bengali written by 28 mill hands of the Budge Budge Jute Mill to the President of the Indian Millhands' Union, Aswini Coomar Bandopadhyay, in late December 1906. The workers complained to him about the oppressive acts of the babus (clerks) and sardars who got them in trouble with the management unless constantly placated by bribes⁵. The universality of the sardar system of management in the jute mills was reported by the Indian Industrial Commission in 1918:

The mill workers are in almost all cases recruited by and employed under a class of men known as sardars, usually themselves of similar origin to the labour they supply. Some mill-owners complained to us of this system, which is an obstacle to progressive management, and does not conduce to industrial peace; but they professed their inability to alter matters⁶.

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³ Ibid., p. 10.
⁴ Ibid., p. 14.
The women workers in the jute mills were also supervised by male sardars. In her enquiry in the early 1920s, D.F. Curjel came to know that lack of 'sufficiently educated' women among the workers and 'tiresome' nature of supervision were the reasons why jute mill management did not opt for sardarnis (women sardars). In fact, education had nothing to do with the mode of supervision practised in the mills. In their evidence before the Royal Commission, the Indian Jute Mills Association stated that the head sardars and assistant sardars were selected by the managing staff of the mills from the rank and file of workers 'according to capability, efficiency, service, and the authority which they display[ed] over their fellow workers'. It was actually the authority over fellow workers, rather than education, which guided the managers in the selection of sardars. The other qualifications for selection - 'capability', 'efficiency' and 'service' - emphasized by the Association were vague concepts and had nothing to do with technical education. The fact that the supervising staff, superior or subordinate, did not play any role in providing technical training to the workers was confessed by the Association itself:

If training implies direct instruction from the managing staff, or even from the supervising staff, facilities for the training of jute mill workers are negligible. 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. It frequently occurs, however, that a young workman learns his trade by assisting a relative at his loom or sewing machine, as the case may be, until efficiency is acquired.

9 ibid.
Thus, technological knowledge did not play any role in the exercise of authority, either by the Sardars or the Scottish managers and their assistants, in the Calcutta jute mills. In a recent study based on interviews with the families which supplied labour to the jute mills located in an important mill area in Bengal since the beginning of the industry, it has been found that the expert mistries (machine operators) were the permanent technical cadres in the industry. Since they played an important role in the running of the mills, the Scottish supervisors used to develop friendship with them and give them special facilities. Instances have been found that the European staff in the mills visited the residences of retired mistries to take technical advice in times of mechanical troubles. The managing staff also maintained close relations with the sardars for the day-to-day functioning of the mills. Thus, while the technical function within the mills was performed by the mistries, the supervisory function was entrusted to the sardars.

In the early 1920s, in his visit to the Calcutta Jute Mills, Kelman found the 'body of sirdars' acting 'as a wall of separation between the management and the workers'. The typical way a European manager behaved within the mill was noted by him:

In some mills the relationship between the manager and the little children is a delightfully personal one. Sometimes friendliness accompanies a coercive manner. The same man who gripped a lad under his chin, and threw him aside with a look as of utter amazement that anyone should dare to be in his way, laughed and chaffed with other workers, especially with groups of women, and is famed for his power of managing labour.

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Thus, even a manager who earned fame for his managerial style had nothing to do within the mill other than showing good gestures towards the workers and playing with child labour. The actual supervision of the workers rested with the *sardars*. As a result, a corrupt system of management persisted in the jute industry. The universality of the practice of taking bribes by the *sardars* and *babus* found a mention in the Memorandum of the Bengal Government to the Royal Commission:

> It is well known that in all concerns the sirdar takes a consideration from those under him. Clerks are credited with the same habit\(^\text{12}\).

The corruption practised in the mills did not only take the form of bribe-taking; manipulation of account books was another major source of making money. R.N. Gilchrist, the Labour Intelligence Officer of the Government of Bengal, testified this sort of corruption within the mills in 1932:

> Not only were Factory Inspectors unable to enforce the law; mill managers also were unable to control their labour, and the inevitable result followed. Wage books were 'cooked', particularly by the inclusion of fictitious names. The wages bill was therefore unusually large, but as long as things went quietly and prosperously, little was said. The extent to which fictitious labour was employed has of course not been reduced to statistical exactitude; estimates vary from 7 per cent in strictly run mills, to 25 per cent in slackly run mills\(^\text{13}\).

The fact that even the big managing agents did not intervene in stopping corruptions in their mills is evident in the statements made by two top management cadres of Andrew Yule & Co. to the Royal Commission.

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in 1930. J. Sime, Managing Director of the agency firm, took the existence of 'fictitious labour' in their mills to be an 'accepted fact', though he and his firm knew it well 'that the sardars and others get a share on account of this surplus labour'. The only thing Sime did, on behalf of the agency firm, in respect of this corruption was that he just once told a babu: "You have plenty of hands to keep the mills going, but do not be too greedy". The Manager of the Caledonian Jute Mills managed by Andrew Yule & Co., G. Gorrie, also confirmed that the surplus earned on account of 'fictitious labour' in his mill used to be 'divided amongst the baboos and the sardars'. But he could not give any proper estimate of the existence of surplus labour. In reply to the question - "You have actually 25 per cent more labour than is required to run the show?" - he said: "I think it will be 10 per cent".

The above evidences suggest that the managing agents not only did give indulgence to corruptions in the mills, but the manager appointed by them was often in the dark as to the extent of corruption practised in his mill. Though the European investigators and mill management made the sardars and babus responsible for the corrupt practices within the mills, there is evidence which suggest that the European supervisory staff were not always free from such corruptions. The Kankinarrah Labour Union, after its formation in 1921, found that bribe-taking penetrated into the different layers of the supervising staff in the jute mills:

The exaction of the sirdar from the men working under him or from new recruits varies from one to three months' wages paid in advance...... Some assistant sirdars' jobs are sold by the head sirdar to the highest bidder. The sirdars have to pay very high prices to the superior officers for their jobs.

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K.C. Ray Chaudhury, the President of the Union, told the Royal Commission that 'some of the supervising staff' were 'in collusion with the sardars'. He cited a concrete instance in which 'a sardar had to pay Rs.3,000 to the manager to get his sardarship'.

The threat of physical violence played an important role in the exercise of authority on the part of the sardars. So several of the mill workers interviewed by the Royal Commission denied having paid any bribes for their employment. This fear was very much evident in the statement made by Kalil, a weaver in the Anglo-India Jute Mill Company, to the Commission:

I did not pay anything to the sardar for getting my employment. I have been hearing that sardars take Rs.5 or Rs.10, but so far as I am concerned I did not pay anything.

The durwans (gatekeepers) also played an important role in applying violent methods to enforce discipline within the mills. In June 1928, the women workers of the Ludlow Mill were assaulted by the durwans when they went to meet the manager of the mill at his office during a strike. In the same year, the workers of the Fort Gloster Jute Mills alleged that as they were demanding wages for their fellow workers they were beaten with lathis (wooden sticks) by about 25 durwans of the mills. Thus, the managers of jute mills allowed the rule of violence.

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17 See Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890-1940 (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989), pp. 109-110.
in the mills in order to ensure total subordination of the workers.

The sardars' control over the mill workers often went beyond the workplaces. The all-pervasive role of the sardar in the everyday life of the workers was emphasized in the Memorandum of the Bengal Government to the Royal Commission:

The sirdars are the real masters of the men. 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 operative, too, pays his lump or recurring sum to the sirdar to retain his job. His life, indeed, at every turn is coloured with sirdarism.\(^{21}\)

At the turn of the 19th century, the Government of Bengal advised that the Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA) and the Chamber of Commerce should induce the mills to take up construction of mill quarters. Such a suggestion was offered by the Government in order to ensure better policing of mill workers. After having found that most of the workers in the Calcutta jute mills lived in houses built and owned by the sardars, Foley advised in 1906: ".....it would seem far preferable that the quarters of the operatives should be owned by the mill itself, and not by the mill sardars."\(^{23}\)

In spite of the suggestions offered by the Government officials, the millowners did not take any major step in providing housing to their workers. This was evident in the testimony given by the IJMA to the Director of Public Health, Bengal, on 6th August, 1929:

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23 B. Foley (1906), op. cit., p. 11.
About 30 per cent of the total workers in the jute mills are housed in lines built by the various companies...... The majority of workers, so far as can be ascertained, live in private lines owned mostly by sirdars working in the mills, or by shopkeepers trading in the bazaars ²⁴.

No significant improvement in this respect took place in later years. In a survey of 61 mills made by the IJMA in 1937 it was found that the percentage of workers housed by individual mills varied from 7.9 to 100. A survey of 19 jute mills in the mid-1940s showed that only 39 per cent of the total labour force in these units was housed by the employers ²⁵. The Deshpande Committee noted in this context:

> When there are private bustees round about the mills, the employers do not generally make any housing arrangements for their workers. Some of the mills situated outside Calcutta, however, have provided housing for about 50 per cent of their employees as no private housing was easily available ²⁶.

So we find that no definite housing policy was followed by the jute mills. Only the lack of private accommodation in the mill neighbourhood forced some of the mills to provide quarters to their operatives. Even when a mill provided housing to their operatives, the mill management often had no control over the allotment and management of mill quarters. Such lack of managerial authority over the mill lines was noticed by Kelman in a jute mill in the early 1920s:

> All the houses in that mill were rent-free, but the jamadar, the headman of the durwans (Gate-keepers), charges a levy of one or two rupees for allowing anyone to take possession of a house. The employers found it difficult to prevent this, and say that even if a European were employed to allocate the houses, the jamadars

²⁶ ibid.
would still get round the people and claim their toll.\(^{27}\)

The case noticed by Kelman was not an exception. Even in the mid-1940s the Deshpande Committee noted 'the danger involved in leaving the allocation of housing to be done by clerks or Darwans' in the context of their observation of the prevailing system of allocation of mill quarters, which varied from mill to mill.\(^{28}\) Thus, the lack of managerial supervision within the workplace was often accompanied by indulgence to corruptions in the mill lines owned by the mill company. One major reason as to why the mill management strengthened the power of the **durwans** in the mill neighbourhood was that in moments of labour discontent the manager had to depend heavily on this category of mill staff. As a sequel to a strike in the Ludlow Jute Mill in 1928 some of the workers who lived in the Company's coolie-lines were evicted by the **durwans** and blacklegs.\(^{29}\) In the general strike of 1929 in the jute industry, the mill-authorities were found to evict the strikers from the mill quarters and stop water supply to the mill lines.\(^{30}\) These facts testify that housing was nothing but an instrument of coercion in the hands of the mill authorities. So they did not hesitate to delegate the power of supervision of the mill lines to the **durwans**.

The **durwans** also acted as moneylenders. The Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Bengal, J.M. Mitra, brought this fact to the notice of the Royal Commission:

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27 Kelman (1923), op. cit., p. 159.
29 Amal Das (1986), op. cit., p. 22.
Enquiries have been made from amongst the labourers of several jute mills. It is reported that as many as 75 to 90 per cent of the labourers are in debt. The rate of interest on borrowing is between 72 to 150 per cent. Generally speaking, loans up to the extent of four weeks' wages are given by the Kabuli [moneylenders] and the mill darwan without any additional security but in cases when a large amount of money is taken, personal securities are insisted on.

The Kankinarrah Labour Union found in the early 1920s that often the workers had to pay bribes to the sardars for their employment with the loan procured from the moneylenders. It should be noted here that the sardars and babus also often acted as moneylenders. In the mid-1940s, it was found that the jute mill workers generally borrowed money from 'sirdars, darwans, clerks, kabulis, etc.' Thus, the subordinate supervisory staff of the mills, in addition to their official functions, tied the workers in multiple ways in their everyday life.

The mill authorities did not take any effective step to establish direct communication with labour. Since 1937 the IJMA began to appreciate the idea of appointing Labour Officers. By the mid-1940s, 35 Labour Officers were appointed by most of the larger units in the industry. Such mill Labour Officers were placed in charge of a Labour Bureau for the purpose of recruitment of labour. This system was devised to curtail the power of the Babu and the Sirdar. In spite of the existence of such large number of labour officers in the mills, the Deshpande Committee considered the new system to be 'still in an experimental stage' in the creation of a liaison between the employers.

32 ibid., p. 270.
33 Deshpande Report (1946), op. cit., p. 28.
and the employees. Thus, even after the termination of the Second World War the old tradition of labour control remained dominant in the jute mills of Bengal. No basic change took place in the managerial psychology. In fact, the managers did not have the power to break the age-old domination of the sardars. So they did not take any risk in initiating any change in the mode of labour management. One interesting episode cited by an Indian scholar, Radhakamal Mukherjee, in 1945 is worth quoting in this context:

In one of the jute mills such was the power of the head jobber that a few years back during a trial of strength between him and the management, he caused a successful strike of the entire body of mill operatives, whereupon the management considered it worth while to send him out on a pilgrimage to Mecca by giving him passage money with an additional bonus of Rs.2,000.

The Coal Industry:

The recruitment of labour in the coal industry posed a major problem to colliery management. In the early years of the present century an attempt was made to recruit labour from distant places in order to mitigate the problem of labour supply in the coalfields. Foley noted in 1906:

The usual method......is to send a European up-country, attended with a Babu and sardars, who by means of advances prevails on a large batch of labourers to come down with him.

This Sardar-Babu combination played a dominant role in the

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34 See Ibid., pp. 9, 14.
35 Radhakamal Mukherjee, The Indian Working Class (Hind Kitabs, Bombay, 1945), p. 34.
36 Foley (1906), op. cit., p. 35.
recruitment and supervision of labour under different systems of labour management that came in vogue in the Indian coalfields in later years. In 1920, J.B. Wardlaw, the Agent of the Bengal Coal Company for particular group of collieries in the Raniganj field, informed the Coalfields Committee:

"It is customary for coal companies to acquire villages in the neighbourhood, and thus gain the right of entry to such villages to recruit and induce the inhabitants to work at the company's collieries."

But the possession of Zamindary right in the neighbouring villages was not sufficient to ensure the supply of labour. The Superintendent of Andrew Yule group of collieries (Circle No.1) in the Raniganj field, P.S. Keelan, told the Coalfields Committee that they faced problem in recruiting labour for coal-cutting, even though they possessed Zamindary right in villages off the colliery. Coal-cutting, Keelan said, was 'considered derogatory to a man of fairly good caste'. The actual recruitment of labour was done for them 'by Sirdars and recruiting baboos'. Thus, the lack of contact with village life prevented the colliery management of the European landlord/entrepreneur from establishing direct connection with village labour. No better method was followed by the largest Indian firm of the time in the coal industry, N.C. Sircar & Sons, in their labour management. W.J. Rees of this firm informed the Coalfields Committee:

"We now recruit labour by sending out recruiters. We also pay head sirdars a tonnage on coal cut by the miners they bring in."

38 See ibid., pp. 94-95.
39 ibid., p. 113.
As early as 1920, the Bird & Co. delegated the responsibility of labour management in their collieries in the Jharia field to the raising contractors, who made their own arrangements for recruitment of labour and were paid 'a definite rate per ton of coal despatched'\(^40\).

By the end of the 1920s, the raising contract system emerged as the dominant mode of labour management in the major Indian coalfields. But other systems also persisted. At the end of the 1920s, J.A. Beale, Sub-Divisional Officer of Asansol, found that as many as eight different methods of recruitment of labour were being adopted by the collieries in the Raniganj field. The persons involved in such recruitment of labour were the sardars, recruiting babus, contractors, local Zamindars, company's chaprasis (servants) and unspecified 'recruiters'\(^41\). The workers thus recruited worked either under sirkari (departmental) management or under the management of the contractors. The Chief Inspector of Mines in India, J.H. Lang, found little difference in 'actual recruiting' made in the Indian coalfields, whether it was done directly by the collieries through their recruiting staff or through the raising or labour contractor or a miners' sardar\(^42\). The mode of working of collieries under the sirkari system, noted by him, was as follows:

In this case [the sirkari system] the colliery company maintains its own staff of recruiters. Some recruiters remain in the colliery to look after resident labour, and others are sent out into distant villages. Each recruiter supervises a number of villages. The headman of a village from which labour is drawn is paid a monthly salary and a small commission on the output obtained by his men so that he will influence the villagers to work at that particular colliery and attend work regularly\(^43\).

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\(^40\) See written evidence of G.C. Leach, Chief Mining Engineer of Messrs. Bird & Co. (Jharia) in ibid., p. 99.
\(^43\) Ibid.
In this way village headmen were promoted to the status of a miners' sardar by the colliery companies. Thus, a pre-industrial authority relationship was grafted upon the industrial management of collieries. The contractors also followed a similar pattern of labour management. This fact did not miss the attention of a delegation of the British Trades Union Congress who visited India in 1927-28:

......in one [coal] mine we visited......we found working the head of a particular village community with a squad of upwards of twenty men and women, who looked upon him in the mine, as they did in the village, as their natural leader and depended upon him entirely for their living, he taking the whole of the pay from the contractor for the work done by the group.\textsuperscript{44}

The Indian Mining Association informed the Royal Commission as to how the raising contractors collected labour from the villages:

The procedure is to send out recruiting agents who are either contractors' munshis or sirdars of gangs with money to the villages. Feasts are given and advantage is taken of the gathering to collect persons who are willing to work in the mines. Bukshies [tips] of Rs.1-8 to Rs.2 are given to these persons, and sometimes advances over and above this sum. The labour is thus collected.\textsuperscript{45}

Since the colliery management did not have any direct contact with the workers, the sardars and babus dictated the terms of labour management in the coalfields both under the sirkari and the contract systems. While the sardars supervised the cutting of coal, the munshis kept record of the coal cut and loaded into tubs by the miners. The fact that no training was given by the coal companies to the miners was testified to by Wardlaw, the representative of the biggest coal company in India, Bengal Coal Company, in 1920:

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\textsuperscript{44} A.A. Purcell and J. Hallsworth, Report on Labour Conditions in India (London, 1928), p. 25.
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There is no regularised system of training in operation in the coalfields. In the case of the miner, the untrained man is usually put to work with one trained in cutting coal. The underground pit sirdar is commonly a man who commands labour, and by his ability has risen from the miner class.\textsuperscript{46}

The 'ability' of the sardar emphasized by Wardlaw was nothing but his power to command labour. Ugan, a sardar of the Serampur Colliery, Giridih, told the Royal Commission in 1930: "I collected about 10 men and so I became a sardar."\textsuperscript{47}

Corruption and violence were organic elements in colliery management. Some of the workers interviewed by the Royal Commission felt scared to speak about their grievances. Gauri Shankar, a coal loader of the Dhemo Main Colliery in the Raniganj field told the Commission: "We were told by the contractor that the Sahibs were coming...... A baboo whose name is Ram Lal, is one of those who prevented us from speaking to you."\textsuperscript{48} Sillumian, a miner of the Serampur Colliery, said with scare: "Out of the tubs that we fill one or two disappear. I do not know what happens to them. Whether it is that the munshi does not enter them or what happens to them I cannot say...... After you have gone I do not know what is going to happen to me."\textsuperscript{49} Mauji Dhobi, another miner of the same colliery, exposed the corruption of the munshi: "Ugan Chamar [sardar] did not go to work yesterday. The munshi writes the name and these tubs were entered in Ugan Chamar's name."\textsuperscript{50} At the risk of physical torture, the same miner also exposed the practice of bribe-taking within the colliery:

\textsuperscript{46} Report of the Coalfields Committee (1920), op. cit., p. 124.
\textsuperscript{47} R.C.L.I., Vol. IV, Pt. 2, p. 365.
\textsuperscript{48} ibid., p. 106.
\textsuperscript{49} ibid., pp. 340-41.
\textsuperscript{50} ibid., p. 341.
One of the things I have got to say is this, that the sardar takes ₹1-8-0 a week from the whole gang. If we do not give this ₹1-8-0 to the sardar he will stop us from working. Mr. Oran, the overman, also takes a bribe from us. I shall be victimized for saying this. He takes ₹2 from the gang of coal cutters. If we do not pay the ₹2 he stops us from working. I shall leave this place after you have gone because I am sure to be victimized after this. They will beat me.  

This fact tells us how bribe-taking penetrated the different layers of colliery management. The interesting fact is that the manager of the same Serampur Colliery, W.T. Stanton, denied the practice of bribe-taking in his colliery. He told the Royal Commission: "If we receive any complaints that people are taking bribes in any way we investigate the case". He also assured the Commission that no such complaint was received by the management recently. The managerial inaction to stop bribery was also noticed in the Jharia field in the late 1930s. In 1938, in about twenty collieries of Jharia, the managers themselves admitted the possibility of bribery and other corruptions in their respective collieries, but expressed their inability to detect the cases. The managers shut their eyes to the corruptions practised in their respective collieries because of the fact that they themselves were often involved in larger corruptions. A European scholar, D.H. Buchannan, noted this fact in the mid-1930s:

It is said by persons of experience and wide acquaintance in the mining regions that this practice [bribe-taking] extends to the managing agency firms; that certain mine managers actually pay to the agency firms handsome salaries for the privilege of being managers and consequently the holders of the bags into which a share of all the collections finally come. Such men may even become partners in the managing agency firms.

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51 Ibid., pp. 342-43.
52 Ibid., p. 343.
The colliery workers suffered repression in the hands of the sardars and babus in the absence of managerial authority. But the higher supervisory staff were no less repressive in their behaviour with labour. This fact was emphasized by Siba Kali Bose of the Indian Colliery Employees' Association in his evidence to the Royal Commission. "Filthy language and dirty abuses" were very much a part of the vocabulary of the superior staff. 'Corporal punishment' was resorted to 'without rhyme or reason'. "If the officer wants to raffle his old car or gramophone", Bose noted, "the subordinates must buy the tickets or court the displeasure and consequent repression in the hands of his officer".55

In the late 1930s, the Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee (BLEC) found bribe-taking to be 'a serious evil prevalent in the coalfields'. The Committee noted the multiple ways in which the chaprasis, sardars, munshis and overmen in the collieries exacted money from the workers. The shopkeepers in the neighbourhood of the collieries, who were often 'friends or relations' of the colliery staff, were also found to be a part of the system of corruption.56 It should be noted here that an investigation conducted in the Tata (TISCO) collieries in 1936 by the order of the Special Director of the Steel Company, Ardeshir Dalal, unearthed multiple instances of corruption practised by the colliery staff.57

The widespread corruptions which prevailed in the Indian coalfields were a logical outcome of the management policy pursued by the colliery owners. Rather than trying to eliminate corruption, they opted for violent methods to ensure subordination of labour. While looking back to the pre-nationalization legacy of the coal industry in India, one scholar, S.M. Kumaramangalam, noted:

The owners of the collieries maintained what were known as 'Musclemen' (Lathials) who were used by the management whenever a 'necessity' arose......58.

The conditions of living of colliery workers were deplorable. The houses provided by the coal companies for the workers were locally known as *dhowrahs*. As early as 1919, Treharne Rees, after visiting the Raniganj and Jharia coalfields, recommended that steps should be taken to provide better living accommodation to induce the miners to live in the colliery settlements59. The Asansol and Jharia Mines Boards of Health were supposed to set and enforce the standards of housing in the two coalfields. But little was done in practice. A survey of eight collieries in the Raniganj field made by Dr. G.L. Batra, Assistant Director of Public Health, Bengal, in 1929 revealed that 'the worst' condition of housing prevailed in Deshagarh colliery belonging to the Equitable Coal Co., one of the big coal companies in India60. A detailed survey of the housing conditions of the miners in the Asensol Mining Settlement was undertaken in 1937. The startling fact which came to light was that hardly 41 per cent of the houses in the Raniganj field

59 See the Report of the Coalfields Committee (1920), op. cit., p. 40.
conformed to the minimum standard set by the Asansol Mines Board of Health. The conditions of housing in the Jharia field were also despicable. In 1930, not even 50 per cent of the houses in the field conformed to the standard set by the Jharia Mines Board of Health.

The Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee (BLEC) noted in the late 1930s that the occupation of non-standard houses in the Jharia field was permitted by the Board 'in its discretion'. The Committee also found faults with the standards of housing prescribed by the Board 'over fifteen years ago'. The sanitary arrangements in the coalfield were found to be 'utterly unsatisfactory'.

So we find that the two Mines Boards of Health did not exercise their power to force the coal companies to provide housing of the minimum standard to their workers. The colliery management had absolute power as to the allocation of houses. This arbitrary power resulted in corruptions. Even the Indian Mining Association confessed to the Royal Commission that occasionally 'gangs of people, not miners' took 'possession of colliery dhowrahs'. The Association was silent as to the social composition of the 'gangs'. But B. Mitra of the Indian Colliery Employees' Association informed the Commission: "A miners' settlement in collieries is generally a refuge for absconders and old criminals".

The indulgence given to 'criminals' to reside in colliery housing was quite congruent with the general policy of colliery management. The

64 Ibid., p. 190.
Government officials were often in the dark as to the conditions of living of the workers. The Chief Inspector of Mines in India reported to the Royal Commission:

Housing for all the resident labour in a mine is generally supplied by the company, but in some cases the labour travel to their work from their own village. In such cases they have their own houses. No houses are supplied by Government or private landlords. But an on-the-spot enquiry in the Indian coalfields in the late 1920s negated the observation made by the Government official. It was found that in the Giridih and, to a smaller extent, in the Jharia coalfields, 'a large part of the labour force' belonged to the villages near the mines, who preferred to walk eight or ten miles, and sometimes even longer distances, to the collieries, and returned to their villages after two or three days. These labourers were found to avoid the quarters provided by their employers in order to escape the conditions imposed by the mine owners. The same enquiry also revealed that the colliery workers preferred to live in the private bastis, because they were 'free from all interference from the employers'.

Thus, the workers tried to work out their own strategy of escaping the coercions of colliery management. But they were helpless in the face of multiple coercions. Most of the workers were indebted to moneylenders. In one colliery of Jharia, out of 254 labourers 200 were found to be in debt in the late 1930s.

65 Ibid., p. 223.
67 B.R. Seth (1940), op. cit., p. 251.
The power of the colliery staff over the workers extended beyond the workplaces. Most of them often acted as moneylenders. The Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee analysed the sources of borrowing of 463 families of colliery workers in debt. The *chaprasis, sardars*, contractors and colliery *babus*, all were found in the list of moneylenders. The shopkeepers were found to be the most important source of credit in the collieries. The usual rate of interest charged by the above groups of moneylenders varied between 37½ per cent and 75 per cent. Among the moneylenders, the *Kabulis* charged the highest rate of interest, 150 per cent. The moneylenders did not hesitate to adopt violent means to exact money from their debtors. One such violent episode took place before the eyes of the officials of the Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee:

We encountered about a hundred yards away from the Pay Office of a Colliery a violent-minded Kabuli being entreated by a ragged Bilaspuri miner to postpone his claims for a week, while his sorrowful wife stood timidly aside...... It is not known for how many weeks or months this payment will continue. It is little wonder that the workers usually lack ambition or normal interest in living.

Cotton Textile Industry (*Bombay*):

The *sardars* had their counterparts in the cotton mills of Western India, who were known as jobbers/mukadams. The recruitment and employment of Bombay mill hands through the jobbers was found to be a universal system by the Indian Industrial Commission in 1918. The corrupt practices of the jobbers did not miss the attention of the

69 ibid., p. 145.
European investigators in the Bombay mill industry. In the mid-1920s, Burnett-Hurst noted the process through which a newly arrived person in the city of Bombay used to get employment in a cotton mill:

Sometimes he readily secures a temporary job in a mill through the services of a relation, friend or jobber acquaintance. More often, he has to wait a length of time and does not obtain a post without first bribing a jobber, 'mukadam', timekeeper or clerk.

The women workers in the Bombay mills were supervised by a class of women known as naikins. In his enquiry, Burnett-Hurst found:

The majority of the 'naikins' or forewomen in the winding and reeling departments receive 'dastoori' (commission), usually 4 annas per month, from each worker under their control.

No effective attempt was made by the Bombay millowners to eliminate the jobber system of mill management. After taking charge of the E.D. Sassoon group of mills, F. Stones, the European Superintendent, took a policy of eliminating jobbers from the mills. By the end of the 1920s, he succeeded in dismissing only 15 to 20 jobbers out of 'more than 1,000' jobbers who worked in those mills. The fact that a corrupt system of mill management prevailed in the Bombay mills in the late 1920s was corroborated by S.M. Rutnagur, the official historian of the industry, in 1927:

The earnings of the jobber and the Naikin (female supervisor) may be three or four times in excess of the pay of the individual male and female workers and yet the latter have to submit more or

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72 ibid., p. 53.
less to the extortions of the former for fear of dismissal or fines. Thus the new arrival from up-country has by no means an easy entry in the mill as a paid hand. He has of course to learn to work and act as a budli or substitute or a mere helper to a friend or relation in the department. In the first place he will have to pay the jobber on admission and then the Time-keeper or Muster Clerk who keeps him in suspense till he pays him for his 'trouble' in entering his name on the budli or substitute register. 

The Bombay Millowners' Association confessed to the Tariff Board (1927) that the jobber system furnished 'openings for corruption'. But, at the same time, they considered this system to be the 'only possible system in Bombay conditions'. After the failure of the general textile strike of 1929, a large number of jobbers belonging to the Ratnagiri district, the main labour catchment area, were dismissed in the Bombay mills. But they were soon replaced by other set of jobbers. At the end of the 1920s, the Government of Bombay informed the Royal Commission that the powers of the jobbers were 'still as great as formerly' and that the method of recruitment was 'still substantially the same as when the tariff board submitted its report'. The Government did not fail to emphasize the fact that the jobbers and naikins used to 'levy contributions from the workers'.

Nothing significant took place in the 1930s in the Bombay industry so far as the jobber system of management was concerned. In early 1930, Arno S. Pearse visited a number of cotton mills in India. She saw in her own eyes the power the jobber held in a Bombay mill:

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76 Kunj Patel, Rural Labour in Industrial Bombay (Bombay, 1963), p. 5.
As in all mills in Bombay, the operatives are in charge of a 'jobber', a kind of foreman who engages them and to whom they must pay some small fraction of their wage. When the jobber leaves the mill, he takes generally his set of operatives with him. In the spinning [department] a set of 20 operatives is under a jobber, in the weaving 23.

The jobbers did not possess any special qualification. The Bombay Textile Labour Union told the Royal Commission that the 'educational or technical qualifications' of the jobbers were 'just as good or just as bad as those of the workers'. The fact that even the service experience was not a crucial factor in the selection of jobbers and head jobbers was emphasized by the Labour Union:

Jobbers are sometimes made head-jobbers, but even here instances are not lacking of the head-jobbers being brought in from outside over the heads of the jobbers...... There may be instances of the workmen being raised to the position of head-jobbers and jobbers. But on the whole the union feels that there is no method as such in the matter of recruitment; much depends upon the management and the managers.

The only factor that the mill management took into consideration in the selection of jobbers was the authority that they could exercise over the workers. This authority was of a coercive nature and gave birth to corruptions. Both the European and Indian supervisory staff in the mills gave indulgence to such coercions and corruptions practised by the jobbers. Their lack of contact with the workers' culture made them dependent on the jobbers for the disciplining of labour. The pioneer historian of the Bombay textile industry, Rutnagur, recorded in 1927 a vivid description of the coercive discipline enforced by the jobbers in

80 ibid., p. 307.
the mills before the eyes of the managers. His narrative was as follows:

The Lancashire managers and their Parsi assistants found the jobbers useful in exacting work from the millhands who would put up meekly with the threats and abuses of the jobber who was familiar with their vagaries and skulking habits. They would also submit to corporal punishment which the jobbers had to resort to with the more troublesome of the workpeople who did not mind being useful to him by massaging his body and limbs in a corner of the factory and giving him other relief when he was indisposed.81

The increasing Indianisation of managerial staff in the Bombay mills did not bridge the gap between the management and the workers. The Bombay Millowners' Association started an experiment, following the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour, with the idea of appointing a special labour officer in the mill, who would be responsible to the General Manager for all labour questions. The idea was not translated into practice in the industry when the Tariff Board (1932) submitted its report82. After the passing of the Bombay Trade Disputes Conciliation Act (1934), a labour officer was appointed by the Government of Bombay to look after workers' grievances in late 1934. At the instance of the Government, the Bombay Millowners' Association also appointed its own labour officer to represent and advise the millowners in conciliation proceedings.83 By 1940, Labour Officers were appointed in 26 mills in Bombay with the idea of supervising recruitment of labour and establishing direct communication with them.84 But the introduction

81 Rutnagur (1927), op. cit., p. 326.
82 Report of the Indian Tariff Board (Regrading the Grant of Protection to the Cotton Textile Industry), Calcutta, 1932, p.69.
of Labour Officers in the mill industry of Bombay had nothing to do with the curtailment of jobbers' authority over the workers. The Textile Labour Inquiry Committee noted in 1940:

Since the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission, the Millowners' Association, Bombay, claims to have restricted the influence of the jobber by transferring from him to the manager and departmental heads the powers of engaging and dismissing men and of inflicting fines and granting leave. But the action taken in this behalf does not seem to have been effective and the jobber still continues to be the main instrument of labour management.

Even as late as the early 1960s, the grievances of workers regarding ill treatment of jobbers and supervisors 'figured prominently' in a survey of mill workers from the Ratnagiri district of Bombay. One worker remarked: "We are treated like dogs. We cannot express our difficulties and do not have a say in any matter'.

The gatekeepers played a vital role in the Bombay mills for the policing of labour. After the mammoth textile strike of late 1928, the Bombay Millowners' Association made the mill operatives liable to be searched by the gateman while leaving the mill premises. Each mill had in its Watch and Ward department its organized force for coercion. The Superintendent of the Watch and Ward department at the Sassoon mills was 'a well known boxer' called Milton Kubes.

The jobbers' control over the workers extended beyond the mill premises. They lent money on their own account, acted as agents for

85 ibid., p. 345.
86 Kunj Patel (1963), op. cit., p. 55.
87 quoted in ibid.
professional money lenders and collaborated with banias who provided workers grain on credit. An official enquiry at the end of the 1920s revealed that often the jobbers guaranteed loans and that the loans guaranteed by a jobber could be obtained at discounted rates of interest. Frequently they acted as rent collectors, sub-lesseors and, occasionally, even as landlords. They sometimes ran liquor shops and gymnasiums in the mill neighbourhood.

Several workers also established themselves as neighbourhood leaders by running gymnasiums or participating in rent collection. They were locally known as dadas. Sometimes the mill management used dadas in breaking strikes. Some dadas, like Keshav Borkar, dominated a large area in the neighbourhood of the mills. In the general strike of 7th November 1938 it was found that several mills of the Sassoon group continued to work. The volunteers of the Communist-led Red Flag Union, who led the strike, could not enter the area in which the mills were located because of the fact that Keshav Borkar, 'the most significant dada in Bombay between the wars', ruled that area. It should be noted here that the leaders of the Red Flag Union went to a Sassoon mill for intervening in a dispute in December 1928 and were attacked by Borkar and his gang when they left the mill. In retaliation, more than 3,000 workers attacked Borkar's house. Though the culprit escaped unhurt, his house was ransacked and his gymnasium was wrecked.

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92 Ibid., pp. 615-16, 628.
93 Ibid., pp. 643-44.
The above episode tells us how the mill management often provoked violence in the mill neighbourhood. In his enquiry in the Bombay mills, Burnett-Hurst found that some of the naikins used to 'keep' dadas and others made 'use of their power'. Thus, the power at the workplace was combined with that in the neighbourhood in enforcing a coercive discipline on the workers.

The workers had to suffer also in the hands of professional moneylenders. In the Bombay city money was usually borrowed by the workers either from a Marwari or from a Pathan. The rate of interest charged by the Pathan moneylenders was higher and they used coercive methods in collecting their debts. In the riot which took place in Bombay in February 1929, several violent attacks were made by the millhands on the Pathans in the city. The riot started with the spreading of the rumour that Pathans were kidnapping children. On 4th February, a crowd of millhands attacked the house of a Pathan in which 3 Pathans received serious injuries and one of them died in hospital. The properties of the Pathans, including the account books, were burnt. According to the Police Report, the safe belonging to one of the Pathans, a money-lender, was broken open and an amount of Rs.675 was removed therefrom. This episode of violence signifies the accumulated anger of the millhands against the Pathan moneylenders. It should be noted in this context that even the Gujarati Shroffs in Bombay hated the Pathan moneylenders and accused them of taking high interest and using

94 Burnett-Hurst (1925), op. cit., p. 53.
95 Pearse (1930), op. cit., p. 93.
97 ibid., p. 7.
violent methods of collection.  

The millowners in Bombay were not concerned about the housing of their operatives. In 1919, the Bombay Millowners' Association decided against a proposal for general double shift working of the mills to avoid the problem of providing housing accommodation to the would-be operatives in Bombay. In fact, the millowners passed the responsibility of workers' housing to the Government bodies. But the performance of those bodies was not satisfactory. The Bombay City Improvement Trust was created in 1898 and one of its main policies was the demolition of slum areas in the city and construction of chawls for the 'working classes'. By 1920, the Trust 'had provided 21,387 new tenements as against 24,428 tenements demolished'. The evicted people did not always avail themselves of the alternative accommodation, if any, provided by the Trust, but preferred to live near their former residence. So the workpeople in Bombay had to pay the price of the development programme of the Trust.

A special department of the Government, the Development Directorate, was formed in November 1920. This body took a leading role in the construction of chawls for workers in Bombay after its formation. But the old tradition of demolition continued in later years. During the decade 1921-31 the number of chawls increased by 90 per cent, while the number of huts decreased by 40 per cent. This decade

100 See Burnett-Hurst (1925), op. cit., pp. 31-32.
101 ibid., p. 33.
showed an increase of under 5 per cent in 'working class' housing in Bombay, all of which was in chawl buildings. This increase was in no way commensurate with the increase in population. In fact, the construction of new chawls did not significantly affect the housing figures for the 'working class' wards over time because of the demolition of old tenements. According to the 1931 census, the two wards in Bombay city most severely affected by overcrowding were E and F, both largely tenanted by mill workers.102

Most of the tenements occupied by the Bombay mill workers belonged to the private landlords. According to a survey of Working-Class Family Budgets in Bombay in 1932-33, fifty-four per cent of the tenements occupied by the workers were privately owned; eighteen per cent were owned by the Bombay Improvement Trust; sixteen per cent by the Development Department; and only four per cent each by the municipality and the millowners.103 The workers were reluctant to occupy the chawls constructed by the Bombay Development Department, especially those in Worli. There were valid reasons for this apathy. In the February riot of 1929, the Government of Bombay converted three Worli chawls containing 240 rooms into a temporary prison. And 'the majority' of the prisoners were mill workers.104 This bitter experience was not erased from the workers' memory in later years. The other reasons for non-occupation, emphasized by K. Wagh, Senior Lady Inspector, Labour Office (Bombay), in her testimony to the Royal Commission, were that the Worli chawls were

103 ibid., p. PE-49.
far away from the mill localities and that persons like Pathans lived in those chawls. Thus, the Government-owned chawls played a coercive role in the everyday life of the workers. So they tried to avoid living in such chawls. Before the Second World War, it was difficult to find tenancy for the Bombay Development Department (BDD) chawls, particularly the Worli chawls. Till 1932, more than 50 per cent of the tenements constructed by the Department remained vacant. Only after the War, the BDD chawls became overcrowded.

Out of 76 mills in Bombay which furnished information to the Government, only 28 mills provided partial housing to their operatives at the end of the 1920s. It is significant that seven out of these mills provided accommodation only for their gatekeepers and watchmen. The number thus accommodated was found to be 147. The rooms provided were given free of rent. The rest of the mills provided accommodation to only about 20 per cent of their workers. The situation remained more or less the same in later years. At the end of the 1930s, the Textile Labour Inquiry Committee (TLIC) found that only 21 mills in Bombay provided housing to their workers. The TLIC also noted that the housing accommodation, wherever provided, included 'rent-free quarters' to some of the 'menial staff'. The available evidence suggests that the 'menial staff' who enforced coercive discipline on behalf of the mill management got preferential treatment in the allocation of scanty housing in the mill neighbourhood.

106 Kunj Patel (1963), op. cit., p. 73.
109 ibid.
The immediate boss of the workers in the Ahmedabad mills was known as the jobber/mukadam. In the early 1920s, Kelman found in a mill in Ahmedabad that a mucadamin (woman jobber) 'held sway' over Muslim women in a particular department. She joined this mill as a 'coolie', and at a time of labour trouble told the manager: "Make me a mucadamin, and I will bring you forty women". The mill management acted accordingly and she continued to bring workers. This was an exceptional case. In general, the women workers were supervised by mucadams.

Before 1923, there was a labour shortage in Ahmedabad. At that time the jobbers used to offer some inducements to the labourers to work under them. These inducements usually took the form of 'giving tea or some cold drink'. The expenses thus incurred for recruiting and maintaining labour were paid by the mills. The jobbers often also advanced small sums of money to the labourers as an inducement. The situation changed completely by the end of the 1920s. The Government of Bombay informed the Royal Commission about the hold of the jobber over the workers in Ahmedabad mills in the following words:

The supply of labour is plentiful and so labourers have to hunt for jobs. They go to the jobbers' houses or present themselves at the mill gates early in the morning, inquiring whether there are vacancies. The jobbers and mukadams are notoriously corrupt and do not hesitate to extort bribes. Something has to be paid at the time of entering service and on the first and every subsequent pay day in order to keep the jobber in good humour.

110 See Kelman (1923), op. cit., p. 110.
113 ibid., p. 10.
Ambalal Sarabhai, the leading millowner in Ahmedabad, confessed to the Royal Commission that the workers in Ahmedabad mills had to 'purchase' the 'goodwill' of the jobbers by payments in money or kind. The fact that the workers received a 'bad treatment' from the jobbers was also emphasized by him. This 'bad treatment' often took the form of physical violence. In 1924, thirteen such cases of physical maltreatment were reported by the Textile Labour Association. In the course of his work among the Ahmedabad millhands, Gandhi also came to know about 'beatings and illtreatment by jobbers' by 1925.

Munshi Manzar Ali and Sheikh Abdul Wahid, the two Muslim weavers in Ahmedabad, complained to the Royal Commission:

At the time of our engagement we have to pay bribes to the head jobbers and the line jobbers. We have also to pay Rs.4 or 5 to them on every pay day, and in some cases we provide them with liquor.

Though the managing agents' offices were located within the mill premises, they shut their eyes to the grievances of the workers. In fact, bribery was practised within the mills with the tacit support of the mill agents. "If we complain [about bribery] to the mill agents, the mill agents do not listen to these complaints", told the Muslim weavers to the Royal Commission.

118 Ibid., p. 164.
The representative of the Ahmedabad Millowners' Association claimed in the Memorandum submitted to the Royal Commission that the 'quality of work', 'experience' and the 'satisfaction given by the candidate to his superiors' were taken into consideration by the mills in their promotion policies. In fact, the selection of jobbers had nothing to do with any technical training and depended on the arbitrary choice of the mill management. R.G. Kautekar of the Textile Brotherhood (Ahmedabad) informed the Royal Commission: "Jobber is in no way better than a buffer between officers and labour so far as the labour is concerned. His value as a mechanic is nil......". This view was more or less shared by Ambalal Sarabhai, who found that a 'fitter' was better equipped than a jobber in making 'minor repairs and alterations in the machines'. The arbitrary mode of selection of jobbers was also emphasized by him:

Persons appointed as jobbers are promoted from the ranks in the same department. No special training is given to fit the worker to be a jobber. He learns by experience...... He becomes a jobber if he has friends and relatives in important positions in the mills and is also a favourite of the head of the department; the chances of his becoming a jobber entirely on his own merit are very few.

So we find that giving 'satisfaction' to the 'superiors' was the main quality which the workers had to cultivate for being promoted to the post of a jobber. This 'satisfaction' took different forms. The Muslim weavers alleged to the Royal Commission that in order to reduce

120 ibid., p. 270.
121 ibid., pp. 277-78.
122 ibid., p. 277.
the rate of wages some millowners in Ahmedabad recruited new jobbers on the undertaking that they would get men to work in the mills at the 'new reduced rate'. As soon as they got these new jobbers, 'they dismiss[ed] the old hands and the old jobbers even without any excuse' unless the old workers agreed to work under the reduced rate. The higher mill officials were not always free from corruptions. In reply to the question, "Why did they not make you a jobber?", one weaver told the Commission: "I can get a jobber's post only if I offer some bribe or give a drink or shampoo [at] the feet of the superiors". The Majoor Sandesh reported in an issue in 1927 that the assistant spinning master in an Ahmedabad mill was dismissed for taking bribe regularly from jobbers and workers under him.

No attempt was made by the Ahmedabad millowners to get rid of the jobber system of mill management. Only Ambalal Sarabhai once made an abortive attempt in one of his mills 'to do without jobbers'. But he had to give up that 'novel' idea because of lack of support on the part of the manager and the departmental heads. So the system persisted in Ahmedabad without any change. At the end of the 1930s, the Textile Labour Association, Ahmedabad, stated that the 'jobbers as a class' did not 'possess adequate calibre, status, education and competence for the authority and influence which they exercise[d]' over the workers.

123 Ibid., p. 275.
The jobbers' 'authority and influence' in the mills of Ahmedabad often transcended the premises of the mills. These outside-the-mill powers took the following forms:

Generally he used to lend money to the worker at exorbitant rates of interest and sometimes he also helped him in finding out residential accommodation in overcrowded slums.  

In Ahmedabad, the workers usually borrowed money from local moneylenders, known as sowcars. In the first half of the 1930s, an enquiry into the Working Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad revealed that about 69 per cent of the families surveyed were indebted. Though around the same time 75 per cent of the 'working class' families in Bombay were found to be indebted, the average debt was much higher in Ahmedabad. The rate of interest on loans in Ahmedabad varied from 12 to 150 per cent. Some mills in Ahmedabad gave very small advances, not exceeding Rs.5 or 6, to their workers. But the rates of interest charged on these loans were the same at which the workers sometimes procured loans through the jobber from local moneylenders. The additional functions performed by the Ahmedabad jobbers as moneylenders and agents of sowcars and private landlords strengthened their power over the workers.

The housing conditions for workers in Ahmedabad were dismal. The Government did not play any role in providing housing to the millhands. The millowners provided housing for only a very small fraction of their

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128 Majmundar (1973), op. cit., p. 144.
129 Pearse (1930), op. cit., p. 93.
130 See the Report on an Enquiry into Working Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad (Bombay, 1937), pp. 50, 52.
workers. The Government of Bombay reported to the Royal Commission that 35 mills in Ahmedabad provided partial housing to their operatives. The number of workers in those mills was 34,714 and the number housed by the employers was 5,605 which constituted only 16 per cent of the total number employed. Often outsiders were allowed to reside in the mill chawls. In October 1926, the Ahmedabad Millowners' Association denied the allegation made against the millowners in Ahmedabad that the mill chawls were being rented out to Pathans and Banias. The Association claimed that 'in almost all cases' these chawls were occupied by the mill operatives. But Ambalal Sarabhai confessed to the Royal Commission that outsiders were allowed to live in the mill tenements provided by his Calico Mills in two different locations:

There is a great deal of overcrowding in these tenements. A worker in addition to his own family, will take in to live with him his relations and their families, not working necessarily in the Calico Mills. Six or seven persons including children in one room is a matter of common occurrence...... Rooms in Chamanpura are not rented to non-workers in the Calico Mills. In Saranagar, it is done on rare occasions. Sub-letting is done to a small extent, but the mills discourage it and at present it is much reduced.

The above picture is related to the housing conditions of mill workers who got the housing facility provided by the most 'modern' mill management in Ahmedabad. The dismal conditions of 'working-class' housing in the city of Ahmedabad were revealed in an on-the-spot enquiry made in the late 1920s. The investigator, Raj Bahadur Gutpa, criticized the millowners by saying:

135 See Raj Bahadur Gupta (1930), op. cit., p. 73.
It is a pity that the Ahmedabad millowners, in spite of huge accumulated riches, have done practically nothing for those who made all those riches possible\textsuperscript{136}.

The fact that the millowners took little initiative in providing housing to their workers was corroborated in the Working Class Family Budget Survey made in Ahmedabad during 1933-35. It was found that nearly 79 per cent of the 'working class' tenements in Ahmedabad belonged to private landlords; about 11 per cent were owned by the workers themselves, while approximately nine per cent of the tenements had been provided by the millowners or other employers of labour. The 'prevailing practice' found in the Ahmedabad mills was to provide 'mill sepoys' or 'jamadars' (Gate-keepers) with rent-free tenements\textsuperscript{137}. This fact signifies that ensuring coercive discipline within the mills was an organic part of the housing policies pursued by the Ahmedabad millowners.

Since 1932, a 'tremendous addition to the population' in the city of Ahmedabad took place because of large-scale migrations. But the millowners remained more or less inactive in solving the ensuing housing problem. Out of the 16 mills surveyed in Ahmedabad in the mid-1940s, only six were found to provide housing accommodation for only about four per cent of their workers. The tenements so provided were of a sub-standard type\textsuperscript{138}. By this time, due to lack of housing facilities in the

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p. 74.
\textsuperscript{137} Report on an Enquiry Into Working Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad (1937), op. cit., pp. 39, 42.
city, the power of the private landlords over the workers increased a lot. The Textile Labour Association stated to the Deshpande Committee that it had received a number of complaints of landlords demanding higher rents from existing tenants and of harassing them in numerous ways in the case of refusal\(^{139}\). It seems obvious that the power of the jobbers, who sometimes acted as agents of the landlords, increased in the face of severe housing problem in Ahmedabad in the 1930s.

\(^{139}\) ibid., p. 27.