8.1 INTRODUCTION

The present chapter focuses on case studies of some of the truck drivers. It gives a qualitative presentation of the life of truck drivers. Some of the drivers have revealed sensitive information about their personal life; hence, their names have been changed in certain case studies.

8.2 CASE STUDIES

8.2.1 Shri. Shahaji P. Bhosale is 41 years old. In 1991, he purchased a second-hand truck at the instance of his friends, for which he raised Rs.40,000 by selling ancestral agricultural land and took a loan of Rs.75,000 from Bharati Auto Finance. He used to employ the truck for carrying building materials like sand, grit, stone, Murum, etc. The first year passed smoothly. Thereafter, the vehicle being old one, it had to be garaged repeatedly for repairs. At such times, he had to borrow money from outside. As a result, there was continuous imbalance between the income from the truck and the household expenses. The expenses began mounting and he began borrowing from private money-lenders. Finally, the expenditure accumulated so much that the vehicle which he had purchased for Rs.1,25,000 had to be sold for Rs.42,000 to settle the pending dues. He then became an autorickshaw driver and worked for 7-8 years. He now works as a casual labourer wherever work is available. Because of the loss in truck business, at the age of 27 years, he had slide back by ten years and could never regain himself financially.

8.2.2 Shri. Abhiman Pandurang Mali is 45 years old. In 1984, he had gone to Saudi Arabia as a labourer. Since he knew driving, his employers there made him work as a truck driver. In 1989, He returned from Saudi Arabia, and in 1990, purchased his own truck. For the next five years, he used the truck for carrying general provisions. Then he sold off the old truck and brought a new one, which also he used for carrying the same cargo. He used to drive the truck himself. The truck also did not have a loan on it, but there were some petty loans on him. Then the truck met with accidents twice, incurring expenses of Rs.70,000. It became rather difficult to recover the accident expenses and run the household. Meanwhile, the cargo vehicles population in Solapur City was increasing and it became difficult to secure assured monthly income. Finally, in 2002, he sold off the truck, settled the petty loans and again started working as an agricultural labourer. Presently, he is running a tea-stall opposite Ganesh Petrol Pump. He is in this miserable situation because of his adventure with truck business.
8.2.3 Shri. Raghunath Mahadeo Shahapurkar

is 42 years old. He hails from an agrarian family and he also had a milk vending business. He used to collect milk from his native village Kondi daily and come to Solapur for delivering it to customers. One of his customers was a truck owner and he was induced to buy a truck for himself. Some of his friends taught him truck driving. Then, he purchased a second-hand truck by raising a loan from the bank. He used this truck for carrying sand and repaid the bank loan from the daily profits.

He then changed over to carrying fodder. On 25th May, 1992, he was carrying fodder from Karmala to Maan. While passing beneath high-tension overhead electrical lines, the fodder load touched the wires, there was sparking and the whole load caught fire. The passers-by stopped the truck, but within a shortwhile, it turned into a burnt wreck. He received a compensation of Rs.90,000 from the insurance company. With this money, he purchased yet another second-hand truck, which he used for carrying sand, sugarcane and foodgrains.

At that time, his brothers got separated. He sold off the truck to marry off his sisters and settle the petty loans. He began working as a truck driver with Shri. Siddheshwar Wale. He did this job for nine years, but being unaffordable, he was looking for a better paying job. Some of his friends told him about the recruitment of bus drivers in the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation. He applied for it and now since 2000, he has been working as a bus driver.

8.2.4 Shri. Mahadeo Balu Neel is 48 years old. He hails from an agrarian family. Some of his friends were in truck transport business and, as and when he found time, he used to roam with them in their trucks. In 1992, he himself felt the desire of owning a truck. He sold off two acres of his family land and also obtained a loan from a finance company to buy a truck. He employed a driver for the truck, which he used for carrying building materials as well as sugarcane. However, there was absolutely no profit from this venture; in fact, family funds had to be spent on diesel, tyres and the driver’s salary. Since he was almost entirely dependent on others to run his business, many people took disadvantage of it. His truck business went entirely into loss and in 1996, he decided to finally get out of it. He sold off the truck, repaid the loan of Rs.1,10,000 on it and out of the remaining Rs.30,000, purchased milch buffaloes, and restarted his family business of milk production.

8.2.5 Shri. J. M. Ghatge (Name Changed) is 34 years old. He is Hindu Maratha by caste and belongs to village Jambale in Mohol taluka of Solapur district. Himself and his wife are educated upto 7th vernacular standard. They own a two acre farm, which is run by his wife. He has three school-going sons. He owns a 2-room tin-roof house, but it lacks electricity and toilet. His father was a truck driver and since the age of 12, he worked as a cleaner with him and then became a truck driver. After 3 years, he switched over to driving a tractor for the next 10 years, but again reverted to truck driving. Once, near Nagaj Phata on Kolhapur road, his truck’s steering rod broke down and loosing control over the truck, he hit another vehicle. His truck sustained damage of Rs.40,000
and he sustained eye injuries. He had no personal insurance then. His membership of All India Driver Cleaner Unity Association proved useful in obtaining his withheld wages from the owners after he met with this accident. He always helps the accident victims on road. At another time, near Mohol town, he broke open the door of a Mercedez car to pull out Hon’ble Minister Patangrao Kadam’s son, Abhijit, from his accident vehicle, but he was beyond help. After becoming a truck driver, he got into the habit of listening to old and new Marathi and Hindi songs. He also picked up the habit of tobacco chewing to keep myself awake during night driving. Occassionally, he plays cards. Earlier, he used to visit prostitutes but after knowing about AIDS, he has stopped it. Due to rising road accidents, his family wants him to give up driving. He also gets bored of driving the truck throughout the day. He had even purchased a tractor from his savings but soon sold it. Presently, he has saved around Rs.20,000/-.

8.2.6 Shri. U. U. R. Pandit (Name Changed) is 41 years old. He is a Hindu (Pandit) from Rajasthan and Marwadi is his mother tongue. Although his family back home owns a 15 acre farmland, he has shifted to Solapur in search of employment. His wife is illiterate but his son and daughter are taking education. He owns a 3-room Kuchcha house, but it lacks electricity and toilet. He has been working as a truck driver for last 23 years. He began working as truck cleaner at the age of 16 and then for the next 13 years, he served as a truck driver in Rajasthan. For the last one year, he has settled in Solapur, but continues to visit his native home every three months. Once, near Surat, he had to spend days together on road because of a tyre burst. At another time, near Navapur, the RTO detained his vehicle for two days. While on road, he takes his food from hotel or eatery. He always helps the accident victims on road. Once, near Surat in Gujarat, a vehicle had hit a Police Jeep from behind and had ran away. Since the Jeep was standing right in the middle of the road, the passers-by thought that it was standing there for checking and did not offer to help. Noticing a police vehicle, he slowed down and realized that it was a case of accident. He stopped his truck and took the policemen inside the Jeep to the hospital at Mandovi. After it, he thought of disappearing from the scene, because once in Bhatinda in Punjab, he had helped accident victims, but then had to spend nearly Rs.6000/- on conveyance for deposing before the courts. The doctors in Mandovi ordered me not to leave until the policemen had regained their senses. He spent a miserable night in the hospital’s porch. Next day, on waking up, the policemen enquired into the whole matter and made him a gift of Rs.2,000/-. Today, even after six years, he is in touch with that police officer and makes it a point to meet him whenever his truck is in his area. He had picked up the habit of tobacco-chewing since his apprentice days. While driving, he suffers much from dust and smoke. Being away from home for most of the time, he often visits prostitutes. He wants his son to become a policeman. Presently, he is satisfied in his occupation. He cannot save much money, because he sends all the spare money to his native home in Rajathan.

8.2.7 Shri. Krishna Ganpatrao Shinde is 60 years old. He is a truck owner from Velapur village in Malshiras taluka of Solapur district. He is a Hindu (Chambhar). He is
fluent in Marathi, Hindi and Kannada languages and has a working knowledge of Urdu, Tamil, Telugu and English. His father was a traditional cobbler. He has studied up to 6th standard, but his wife is illiterate. He has two sons, one is working in a sugar factory and the other in a private factory. He has two daughters also, one has completed her BAMS and is working with Solapur Municipal Corporation and the other takes private tuitions. All of them are married and live separately from him. He owns a 2-room tenement, but has to use public toilet. After beginning as a cleaner for 3 years in 1966, he is in driving occupation for the last 38 years, out of which he has spent 33½ years as a driver with the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation. After retirement in 2005, he purchased his own truck. He drives for about 400 kms. daily. He usually takes home-cooked tiffin with him and only exceptionally, takes meals in an eatery. For night halts, he prefers the proximity of a police station. He always stops for helping the road accident vehicles. He likes to visit temples and participate in religious functions in the village. He prefers to rest in his spare time. For the last 12 to 15 years, during night driving, he chews on tobacco to keep himself wakeful. He listens to and sings along old and new songs while driving. He is satisfied in his occupation. He has sufficiently educated his children and has married them off. He has invested his retirement funds in a credit cooperative. He feels that the Toll Nakas on the road should be closed down. He also feels that authorities should take stern action against traffic violators to reduce road accidents.

8.2.8 Shri. Musa Wazir Shaikh is 65 years old. He is a truck owner, originally hailing from Barshi town in Solapur district. He is a Muslim. His wife looks after his rather big household of 11 members including two sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. The elder son is a truck driver and the younger son is a truck cleaner. Both are educated up to 5th and 8th standard, respectively. He owns a Kachcha 2-room house, which does not have a toilet nor drinking water. He is in the driving occupation for last 40 or so years. When he started working as a truck driver, he used to get a salary of Rs. 60 per month. After nearly 32 years’ service with four different employers, he purchased his own truck. It is never involved in an accident. He likes to get involved in religious activities and offer Namaz whenever he finds spare time. Because of monetary stringency, he had to cut short the education of his sons and bring them into this occupation. He too intends to carry on in it until his last breath, although because of failing body strength, he does not like it sometimes. He had set up a truck owners’ union in 1974, but it could not survive. As on date, he has loans of Rs. 1.40 lakhs on his head.

8.2.9 Shri. Mahadeo Ramchandra Naiknavare is an employed truck driver, hailing from Dhanore-Velapur village in Malshiras taluka of Solapur district. He is a Hindu (Matang). He is 31 years old. He owns a 3½ acre farmland, which is looked after by his illiterate father and 4th standard educated wife. Sometimes, she also works as an agricultural labourer. He has two daughters and a son. He owns a 2-room Kachcha house, which has a drinking water facility but no electricity. So, we use kerosene lanterns in the night.
He had gone to Mumbai in search of employment, where he worked as a truck cleaner for three years. After becoming a driver, he continued to work there on a salary of Rs.1,500 per month. After marriage, he returned to his native village. For the last ten years, he is working as a driver with Shivaraj Construction, Akluj, on a salary of Rs.1,900 per month.

In 2004, because of an engine failure, he had to spend two days on the road. For night halt, he prefers to park his vehicle near a Dhaba. So far, he is not involved in an accident. In his spare time, he helps his children with their studies or goes to the farm. Every Thursday, he makes it a point to visit Bhayyanath Maharaj, a habit which he had developed since he was in the 4th standard. He likes listening to Kirtanas and Bhajanas. In 1993, he underwent appendictomy. He is satisfied in his present job, but feels fed up when hurt by other people. All his salary is spent on running the household and nothing remains for saving.

8.2.10 Shri. Rajaram Marryappa Chougule

I am 45 years old. He originally hails from village Bordi in Jath taluka of Sangli district and is presently residing in Solapur City. He is from Vadar community. Stone-breaking is the traditional occupation of this community. From the age of 18, he began loading sand and clay on trucks. His wife is educated upto 7th standard, but still loads sand and clay on trucks. He has one son and three daughters. All the daughters have been married off. His son left school from 5th standard because of dislike of education. He lives in a 1-room Kachcha house, which has drinking water and electricity but no toilet. So far, he has worked with six employers. When he began working as a truck driver, he used to get a salary of Rs.700 per month, which has now gradually risen to Rs.5000 per month. Till today, he is not involved in any vehicle accident. He spends his spare time with the family. He has a habit of chewing tobacco for last 30 years. While working in Mumbai, his employer used to present a liquor bottle for the extra work done. Since then, he got habituated to drinking. He used to smoke cigarettes earlier, but now no more. Out of salary, nothing remains for saving. He has incurred a debt of Rs.15,000 for the marriages of his daughters. He feels that the government should start pension and insurance schemes for truck drivers.

8.2.11 Shri. Dattatraya Shreerang Mali

is 38 years old. He is a truck owner-cum-driver, belonging to Dhamani (Bk.) village in Mohol taluka of Solapur district. He is Hindu (Mali) by caste. He is M.Com. and has purchased his own vehicle. His family’s original occupation is farming and they own a 4-acre farm. His elderly parents still work on the farm. His wife has passed 12th standard and they have a son and a daughter. They own a 2-room Kachcha house, which does not have a toilet. After completing his M.Com., he wished to work in a bank, but that did not come true. Hence, he worked as a cashier in a finance company for three years. In 1990, he purchased his own vehicle. Usually, he drives for around 250 kms. everyday. While on the way, he has his food in Dhabas. He always helps road accident victims. In his spare time, he either relaxes or watches
television. Every Sunday, he visits Ambabai’s temple in his native village. He likes reading books. In case of sickness, he keeps the vehicle idle. He wants to make his children graduate. He is satisfied with his present occupation, but when the vehicle fails enroute, it becomes quite boring. Usually, there is a business of about Rs.18,000 every month. Until now, he has married off his sister, educated his children and has saved about Rs.10,000 for them. The Government should provide free-of-cost sleeping, bathing and vehicle parking facilities alongside the highway. He also hopes to be spared from road robberies.

8.2.12 Shri. S.V. Mithari (Name Changed) is 28 years old. He is an employed driver, hailing from village Nilegaon in Tuljapur taluka of Solapur district, but has now migrated to Solapur City for employment. He has studied up to 12th standard. He is a Hindu (Maratha). His father is illiterate and looks after the family farm; his mother has studied up to 7th standard and works as a helper in an Anganwadi. His wife is illiterate. He has a son and a daughter. They live in 1-room rented house by paying a rent of Rs.250 per month. The house does not have a toilet and for drinking water, they use the nearby borewell. He started working as a cleaner at the age of 18 and became a driver after four years. Then, for four years, he worked with the same employer where he had started his apprenticeship as a cleaner. Presently, he works only in the local area and drives a gas cylinders carrying truck for about 250 kms. daily. Once, the RTO at Aland (Karnataka) had detained his vehicle for four days. He has taken a salary advance of Rs.10,000 from his employer. He is not involved in an accident yet. He listens to old and new Hindi songs while driving. He visits Hanuman temple every Saturday. For last 10 years, he has the habits of chewing tobacco, smoking cigarettes and taking liquor in the company of friends. Being away on duty, he could not vote in the last Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha elections. Prior to marriage, he used to visit prostitutes. He knows about AIDS and takes precautions against it. He want his children to be highly educated. Because he spends a lot of time outside the home, his family wants him to be at home everyday. He has taken insurance cover for himself and his family. He feels that truck drivers should get medical allowance, insurance cover and better treatment.

8.2.13 Shri. Rameshwar Machchhindra Gaikwad is 30 years old. He is from Topale village in Pandharpur taluka of Solapur district. He has passed his 10th standard. He is a Hindu (Maratha). His family owns a 2-acre farm in their village that is looked after by his parents. His wife has studied up to 10th standard and looks after the home. They own a 2-room house, which does not have a toilet. He is working in this field for last 9 years. He began working as a cleaner at the age of 18 and became a driver after two years. For last nine years, he is with the same employer. For meals enroute, he carries home-cooked tiffin. He was involved in one accident at Jaysingpur in Kolhapur district, in which a bicycle rider was killed under the rear left side wheels. He stops for helping the road accident victims. After becoming a driver, he developed the habit of listening to Hindi and Marathi songs and sing along. He also takes liquor along with friends. He has the habit of reading newspapers. His family does not want him to continue in this job, because
of the fear of anything untoward happening at any time. He also feels giving it up when
the vehicle stalls enroute. He participates in social activities. In his native village, he
have set up Mahadeorao Gaikwad Mitra Mandal and he is its president for the last two
years. He is also involved in social activities like match-making, arranging medical facilities
for the needy and occasionally, providing monetary help. He could not save anything for
the future, because most of his earnings are spent on running the household.

8.2.14 Shri. Mallikarjun Siddhappa Madiwal is 50 years old. He originally hails from
Sindagi in Bijapur district of Karnataka State but has migrated to Solapur City in search
of employment. His father was a traditional washerman. He is a Hindu (Parit). He has
studied upto 2nd standard. He has two wives, three daughters and two sons. One daughter
is married, one son works as a truck cleaner and the remaining children are taking
education. He has been in this occupation for the last 29 years. Prior to it, he was working
as a labourer, loading and unloading trucks. He learned driving at the age of 16 years.
Earlier, his salary was merely Rs.200 per month; now, after 18 years, he gets a salary of
Rs.2000 and a daily allowance of Rs.100. Till now, he has suffered only one head-on
collision accident, in which one person died, he suffered fracture on his foot and the
vehicle sustained a loss of Rs.60,000. He does some religious activities whenever he
finds time. For him, there is no alternative to this occupation. He cannot say how long he
would continue in this occupation. All his earnings are spent on his two households and
nothing remains for saving.

8.2.15 Shri. Bhimashankar Siddhappa Chivadshetti is 56 years old. He is an employed
driver. His father was in Police Department. He has studied upto 10th standard. He is a
Hindu (Lingayat). His wife is illiterate. He has two sons, one daughter, one daughter-in-
law and three grandchildren. He owns a 4-room RCC home with all facilities. He has
been in this occupation for the last 20 years. Initially, for a few years, he worked in
Police Department. Then, he purchased a tempo but sold it off within one year because
of recurring losses. Today, for last 16 years, he is with a single employer. Both his sons
also are truck drivers. Till date, he has not sustained any accident. His family has religious
atmosphere at home. But whenever there is some mental disturbance at home, he feels
bored while driving. Because of his senior age, family members insist on his giving up
this job. But he continues with it as remaining idle at home is really boring.

8.2.16 Shri. Nagnath Maruti Kore is 36 years old. He is an employed driver, hailing
from Mangoli village in South Solapur taluka. He is a Hindu (Lingaya). His father used
to work as an agricultural labourer. He is educated upto 3rd standard but his wife is
illiterate. His two young children are taking education. They live in their own 2-room
Pucca house, it does not have electricity and toilet. During night time, they use kerosene
lamps. He began working as a cleaner at the age of 22 years, then as a truck driver for
six years. Then he purchased a truck but because of losses, sold it off and again began
working as an employed driver. He is afraid of helping the road accident victims, because
once near Loni, he had helped some victims and later on, had to suffer at the hands of
police. He usually visits Dargahs and Hanuman temples enroute. For the last 20 years,
he has the habits of chewing tobacco and smoking. Earlier, he used to drink also, but have stopped since last 6 years. He used to visit prostitutes when he was working as a cleaner. Presently, he is suffering from piles. His family does not want him to continue in this work, because he never reaches home on time. Till now, he has not saved anything for the future.

8.2.17 Shri. Ramdas Dagadu Waghchour is 38 years old. He is an employed driver. His family owns a 2-acre farmland and his father used to look after it. He is a Hindu (Maratha). He has studied upto 12th standard and his wife is educated upto 7th standard. They have a son and a daughter and both are taking education. He owns a 1-room Kaccha house, but it lacks electricity and toilet. They fetch drinking water from a public tap. He began working as a cleaner at the age of 19 and worked for eight years in the ST corporation. Because of his mother’s illness, he remained absent continuously for three months and was suspended from the job. For the last two years, he has been driving a truck, averaging about 250 kms. per day. His employer treats him well; does not force extra work on him, nor deducts wages when he remains absent. When away from home, he takes his meals on a Dhaba. Till now, he has not got involved in an accident. He usually stops to help the accident victims. He goes back to home after 4-5 days and spends his spare time with the family. He visits the local deity’s temple whenever he is in his native village. He chews tobacco for keeping himself awake during night-driving. He is suffering from piles because of continuous driving. He desires that his son becomes a government employee on completing his education. His family does not like his driving job because of the fear of road accidents. He is satisfied in this occupation, but feels bored after a long journey. He has taken out an insurance policy of Rs.1 lakh for the future economic security. The government should provide for minimum wages, insurance scheme, least-cost facility for sleeping, bathing and vehicle parking along the highways and also security from highway robberies.

8.2.18 Shri. Yeshawant Babu Chavan is 32 years old. He is an employed driver, hailing from Honnur village in Mangalvedha taluka of Solapur district. He is a Hindu (Ramoshi). His father used to work as an agricultural labourer. Today, they own a 7-acre unirrigated farm land in their village. Both his parents are surviving. His wife has expired. He has two children. The son is studying in 8th standard, but the daughter is not yet of school-going age. He owns a 1-room Kachcha house, which does not have electricity, drinking water nor toilet. Beginning at the age of 18, he worked as a cleaner for seven years. After becoming a driver, he worked at Andheri in Mumbai. But after his wife’s demise, he left the job in Mumbai and came back to Mangalvedha. Sometimes, he goes on 8-days long trips, driving his vehicle nearly 300 kms. everyday. When he has to spend the day in the nearby area, he carries home-cooked tiffin with him. Till now, he has not suffered any vehicle accident. He always stops to help the accident victims. He spends his spare time with the family. But he regrets his lack of time to imbibe good values in his children, pay attention to the domestic chores, remain present during festivals, marriages, and pilgrimages. While enroute, he visits Saibaba and Khandoba temples, if he finds sufficient
time. He desires his son to join Police Department. He is satisfied with his present job. The 7-acre farmland purchased from the proceeds of his wages is the only saving for the future. The government should provide for minimum wages, insurance scheme, least-cost facility for sleeping, bathing and vehicle parking along the highways and also security from highway robberies.

8.2.19 Shri. Krishna Dattatraya Shinde is 35 years old. He is an employed driver, hailing from Shejring village in Madha taluka of Solapur district. He is a Hindu (Maratha). He originally belongs to an agrarian family. His father had studied up to 8th standard. He has studied up to 10th standard. They own a 10-acre irrigated land. Both his parents and wife work on it. They live in their own 4-room RCC construction house, but it lacks drinking water facility. He has one son and two daughters. None of them are of school-going age. He started working as a cleaner at the age of 13 and apprenticed for 4-5 years. After becoming a driver, he met with an accident at Pune, in which there was a head-on collision between a tempo and his truck. He suffered fractures in his right leg at 3-4 places. Since the truck was insured, he received all the due compensation. After this accident, he rested for 2-3 years and then slowly began working again. In his spare time, he goes to temples or works on their farm. He is addicted to tobacco and Gutkha for last eight years. Earlier, he used to drink in the company of friends, but has now stopped it. He wishes his son to become a doctor. After his accident, he took out an insurance policy of Rs.50,000. The government should provide medical facilities along the highways and also provide security against highway robberies.

8.2.20 Shri. Balu Manohar Bansode is 53 years old. He is an employed driver, originally hailing from Kari village in Osmanabad district, but now migrated to Solapur City for employment. He is a Hindu (Mahar). His father was a farmer. His wife is illiterate. He has one daughter and three sons. The daughter left education in 12th standard and one son is unemployed after completing his B.A. The remaining two are continuing their education. They own a 2-room house, which lacks toilet. For drinking water, they rely on the nearby public borewell. He began working as a cleaner at the age of 14 and then apprenticed for the next six years. Now, he is working as a driver for the last 25 years. He changed his earlier two employers in a short period, but now for the last 20 years, he is working for the same employer. Once Mangalvedha town was flooded and he had to spend two days stuck on the road. At another time, while overtaking a bullock cart, an on-coming tempo collided with his truck and six people in the tempo died on the spot. He most often helps the accident victims. He spends his spare time relaxing at home, paying attention to the household chores, attending festivals. He is habituated only to chewing a Paan while driving. He knows about AIDS but he is not interested in commercial sex. He can continue to work for another eight years. He is satisfied with working for the present employer.

8.2.21 Shri. Bhojraj Sarjerao Suravase is 42 years old. He is an owner-cum-driver, residing at Karmala in Solapur district. He has studied up to 7th standard. He lives with his elderly parents, who work on their 10-acre irrigated farmland. He is a Hindu (Maratha).
His wife is educated up to 9th standard. They have four daughters and one son, all of them are taking education. They live in their own 2-room house. He worked for three years as a cleaner, then became a driver and then an owner-cum-driver. He is in this occupation for the last 21 years, the first 11 years as an employed driver. In 1995, he bought his own truck. He has never met with an accident. He spends his spare time with his family, helping the children in their studies. For the last 15 years, he is the Sarpanch of Bhose village. He has a liking for Bhajanas and Kirtanas since childhood. Whenever he finds time, he participates in local religious, cultural, recreational activities and sports. Continuous driving has bestowed on him a spine injury. He wants his son to become an engineer and he will educate one of his daughters up to D.Pharm. Road transport has become an unaffordable business now because of the rising prices of spare parts and fuels. He is a director on Vijay Pratap Transport Company, which has purchased two trucks of its own.

8.2.22 Shri Shankar Vithoba Darekar is 42 years old. He is an employed driver, belonging to Mangalvedha taluka. He is a Hindu (Maratha). He has a 2-acre farm, which was looked after by his father. It is now being looked after by his wife, who has passed 8th standard. He has two sons and two daughters. Because of financial stringency, he withdrew one son from the school and has taken him on as a cleaner. They live in a 1-room Kachcha house, which has no electricity nor a toilet. They use kerosene lamps in the night. He is in this occupation for the last 25 years. He began working as a cleaner at the age of 20 years and became a driver after five years. For eight years, he worked in Mumbai, but then returned home. Out of their 4-acre land, he sold off two acres to marry off his daughters. His workplace is about 52 kms. away from his home. Once at Indore, due to the vehicle breakdown, he had to spend four days on the road. While enroute, he takes food from Dhabas and for night halts, he prefers petrol pumps. So far, he has not met with any accident. He spends his spare time on their farm. Because of one of his old colleagues, he developed the habit of visiting temples. For keeping awake during night-driving, he chews tobacco and smokes cigarettes. For last 20 years, he also drinks occasionally. One of his sons is taking education. By the grace of luck, he intends to educate him further. He may continue to work for 10 more years. He has made no provisions for the future.

(While narrating his past life, this driver was sobbing for half an hour. His second marriage to care for the little children, selling off the farmland for the daughters’ marriages, withdrawing the son from school and taking him on as a cleaner, were the dire circumstances that he had been forced to go through).

8.2.23 Shri Bharat Ranganath Ghate is 55 years old. He is an employed driver, belonging to Barshi town in Solapur district. He is a Hindu (Maratha). He has studied up to 3rd standard and his wife has studied up to 2nd standard. His three daughters have been married off, while one son is still taking education. His old mother also stays with them. They are a family of total 10 people. They own a 1-room tin-sheet roof house. They do not own any farm land. He apprenticed as a cleaner for seven years, before
becoming a driver. He is in this occupation for 36 years. He has driven almost all types
of goods carrier vehicles. So far, he has served under four employers. While enroute, he
prefers to take food from Dhabas. He has so far met with three accidents. The first
accident was at Parali in 1983. The vehicle’s brakes failed and it suffered a damage of
about Rs.1 lakh. His left hand had come out of joint. The employer bore all the expenses.
The second accident was at Mumbai, where also the employer bore all the expenses. The
third accident was at Dhoki because of tyre burst. The vehicle had become totally useless.
He received a compensation of Rs.80,000. He suffered head and rib cage injuries. For
last 30 years, he chews tobacco to keep himself wakeful during night driving. Until two
years back, he also used to drink alcohol. He wants to educate his son as much as possible.
He had established a truck drivers’ union at Barshi, but it was closed down later on.
From his earnings, he has married off three daughters. All his salary goes up in meeting
the household expenses.

8.2.24 Shri. Vitthal Dattatraya Admane is 58 years old. He is an employed driver
residing at Pandharpur in Solapur district. He is a Hindu (Maratha). He is educated upto
6th standard. His father used to run a tea-stall. He does not own any farm land. His wife
is educated upto 9th standard. Both his sons also left school in 9th standard. One of
them operates an autorickshaw, the other one is idle. They live in a slum in municipal
area and use public toilet. He became a truck driver because of circumstances. He began
working as a truck cleaner at the age of 14 years and sometime later, became a driver.
Two to three times, he had to live along roadside because of the vehicle failure. In 2003,
his vehicle had stalled near Miraj and its starter was not functioning. Hence, while trying
to operate the starter directly from beneath the vehicle, the truck went over his leg and
the shifting of the kneecap disabled him. Since then, he works only as a casual driver.
Presently, since 2003, he is working on the Employment Guarantee Scheme. Since last
25 years, he has the habits of chewing tobacco and eating Paan. His family members try
to discourage him from driving the truck, but there is no alternative, because all his
earnings are spent on meeting household expenses.

8.3 Observations

The case studies bring out that the respondent truck drivers have chosen this particular
occupation because of their social circumstances. Because of their low level of education,
poverty and failure in other spheres, they had started working as an attendant (cleaner)
on a truck at the age of 14 to 16. They have obtained a truck driver’s licence on the
completion of 20 years of age, according to rules. It was also found that all these
respondent-truck drivers had married quite early, which is a result of the joint family
system prevalent even today. Less income and more expenditure is the picture prevalent
in almost every truck driver’s family. Hence, there is no alternative to agricultural labour
work, if the family is headed by parents and there is a wife back home.

It is also observed that the failure as an independent truck owner ultimately leads
to him again to work as an employed truck driver.
Definite working hours have not been stipulated under the Act for the truck drivers. An employed truck driver is unsure whether he would be able to resume his work after remaining absent for attending private affairs or for illness. His dwellings mostly comprise not more than two rooms and lacking in toilet facilities; electricity in the home is also found only rarely. Some of them own agricultural land, but it is mostly unirrigated.

Many truck drivers were found to have changed their employers twice or thrice in ten years period because of low wages or problems with the employer. While working as a truck driver, especially on long routes, the date and timing of returning home are uncertain. Unlike truck drivers from other States, especially the North Indian drivers, Maharashtrian truck drivers have not developed the mentality of cooking their own food while enroute, but prefer to take their food from a Dhaba, which results in their being affected with intestinal ulcers and piles.

Majority of truck drivers were found to be aware of the exigencies of a vehicular accident and it is in their nature to help the accident victims. But when they themselves get injured in an accident, they have no other option but to continue as a truck driver after recovery. Every truck driver’s accident experience is different, but the common thing is that no one is aware of life insurance cover or mediclaim insurance policies.

In their daily life, these truck drivers prefer to take rest in the home; some of them being religious, also visit temples in the town/village. Many of them are aggrieved that being away from home for longer periods, they are unable to develop their children with good Samskaras and pay attention to their education.

For reducing the monotony of driving, many trucks are fitted with cassette players and many truck drivers sing along with old and new songs. During night driving spells, almost all the drivers take resort to tobacco chewing to keep themselves wakeful. Alcohol consumption was found to be an age-related phenomenon among these truck drivers and the younger age drivers were found to have been attracted to it.

Also, because of younger age, being unmarried and lacking in full knowledge of AIDS, a handful of truck drivers were found to have been attracted towards commercial sex workers, but this inclination decreases with the advancing age. Considered against their familial background, very few truck drivers’ children were found to have taken higher education. Also, in the absence of any other alternative, some truck drivers were found to have inducted their sons in the truck drivers occupation. Many of them are not fully satisfied in this occupation but continue with it because of no other choice.

These truck drivers generally are not interested in uniting themselves in an umbrella organization. But they desire the provisions for insurance, provident fund, minimum wage security, assured pension money, medical allowance, rightful leave, as well as bathing, sleeping and truck parking facilities along the highways and protection from highway robberies.
These truck drivers really are the unorganized workers in the road transport business. They should be organized and be provided with the workers’ rights. It is also necessary to improve their economic situation so as to develop their intellectual capacity and secure their future. The Union Government of India has already given a green signal to a Bill providing social security to 37 crore unorganized sector workers. The truck drivers should be included as a distinct category in this Bill, then only their social and economic status would lift up.