LABOUR SUPPLY IN THE COAL MINING INDUSTRY

The coal mining industry was a highly labour intensive industry during colonial period. All the processes like cutting, hauling and loading were mostly done manually. Since its inception in 1774 in ‘Pachete and Birbhum’ to its expansion in Raniganj coal mining area, the labour was supplied by the adjoining villages who were known as “Bauris”.¹ There are references to the fact that during the earlier stages of coal mining in India, few miners were brought from England but they died very soon due to fever and vacancies thus created were replaced by local labour working under European supervision.² The Bauris belonged to a low caste of mixed Hindu origin and, proved successful coal cutters. They were appreciated both for underground and surface work. Later certain other castes such as the Dhangars and Koras, who specialized in digging earth to uncover the coal seams and in raising coal from the quarries, but avoided to drive a gallery into a pit or to cut coal underground.³ They were acquired from the villages possessed by the collieries, either as zamindars (patnidars), or acquired on lease. But the expansion of the mining industry especially with the coming of the railways in

Raniganj coalfield by 1855, the character of labour supply in the coal industry underwent a change. The next stream of coal cutter came from the Santhals, pure aboriginal tribe from Santhal Pargana who were lured by offer of free land for cultivation. They were joined by their women folk.4

The Geological Survey of India, conducting the first scientific exploration of the Raniganj field noted in 1860 that: ‘the workmen are mostly agricultural peasants, some by being! Hindoos or Mussulman... but the majority of them belong to the quasi-aboriginal groups, Bhauris, Sonthals and others who form a large proportion of the inhabitants of the district’.5 They furnished the under-ground labourforce, the supply of whom was naturally one of the most important items connected with the working of any colliery.

The mining company started by Rupert Jones and latter taken over by Messr Alexander and Company was by 1831 producing 14000 to 15000 of coal annually. By 1839 the coal production in British India was 36000 tons and by 1846 it had reached the figure of 91000 tons.6 According to J. Homfray, the coal transported to Calcutta from Raniganj coalfield amounted to 5917000

4 Ibid.
maund in 1839 and by 1846 this reached the figure of 25,00,000 tons.⁷ According to the mineral statistics of the mines in Raniganj Coalfield, the coal produced in 1858 was 5917000 maunds and it rose to 8559097 maunds by 1860. Similarly the mines in Rajmahal produced 21900 maunds in 1858 and by 1860 it touched the figure of 1222860 maunds. The production of mines in Kurhurbari rose from 4000 maunds to 275256 maunds between 1858 to 1860. In Palamau district it was 30900 maunds in 1860. The total number of collieries worked during (1858-1860) the period for which the returns were filled in Raniganj was 49; in Kurhurbari there were 2 coal companies while in Palamau only Bengal Coal Company was working.⁸ From 1815 to 1860, or a period of nearly half a century, the output of India had reached the annual total of about 370,000 tons.⁹

The extension of the branch line from Raniganj to Barakar in 1865 also increased the mobility of the labourforce and more labourers started coming from far off places to work in the coal mine such as Santhals from Santhal Pargana. By 1872 there were six big coal companies in the Raniganj coal field: Bengal, Raniganj, Equitable, Burrakur, Beerbhoom and the Apcar coal Company along with about 44 small and native-owned companies out of which

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⁷ J.Homfray, ‘A Description of the Coalfield of the Damuda Valley and the Adjacent Countries of Bherbhoom and Pooroolleah as Applicable to Present Date,1842,’ *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* Vol. XI, Cf. William Blanford, p.6
more than half turned out less than 10,000 tons per annum. With the continuous expansion of railways from 300 miles in 1857 to 6000 miles in 1877 to 20,000 miles by 1897 the industry began to draw upon a wider population for its work force. The labour was drawn predominantly from semi-tribal and low-caste neighbouring peoples. No fewer than 50 different jatis were listed by the East Indian Railway Company as working in Giridih collieries in 1894 which included a number of Brahmins, Bania, Dhobis, Chamars and Muslims. The number of labourers employed by different mines became available with the publication of *Annual Report of the ChiefInspector of Mines*. The question of different systems of labour recruitment prevalent in coal mines is worth consideration.

Every colliery had its own mechanism and system for recruitment. For purpose of studying the labour recruitment in coalmines, it could be broadly divided into three categories: [a] Zamindari system [b] Contractor System and [c] Sarkari System

[a] **Zamindari system:** This was the oldest prevalent system of recruitment in the mining industry. In this system, the coal company acquired the zamindari rights over the coal mining areas and thus acquired surface and mineral rights over the land of a fixed dimension. By acquiring the zamindari right,
companies used to compel the labourers living in their zamindaris to work under them in their collieries. All of the major coal concerns maintained their own zamindari departments (which usually kept their accounts quite separate from the purely mining part of the enterprise), whose primary function was the supervision of provision of a regular supply of mining personnel. The 1914 _the Investors’ India Year Book_ explained why the Bengal Coal Company’s lease of 83,000 acres included over 30,000 of non-coal bearing land. The Bengal miner was primarily an agriculturist and the large area of non-coal bearing land was acquired by the Company in order to secure their labourers and consequently reduce the problem of obtaining labour and it was a marked a feature of the Bengal collieries. In 1926 the zamindari manager—always a European—had occasion to reprimand one of his circle officers for failing to ensure that certain pits (Dishergarh colliery Nos. 9 and 10 mines) had their necessary contingent labourers because: “You must bear in mind that the Zamindari exists primarily for the upkeep of the collieries, and so you must give every possible assistance to the colliery manager regarding labour supplies.” When the zamindari was surrendered to the Government of West Bengal in 1953 over half a million separate tenancy agreements (covering 400 square miles) had to be wound up.

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14 C. P. Simmons, p. 464.
15 Ibid. p.465.
16 Ibid.
The Bengal Coal Company had the lease of 27 villages only in Bankura district to obtain labour from them. Interestingly, the companies also bought the land around the collieries and distributed the land among miners for settling in the proximity of the collieries and for cultivation either free of charge or on nominal rents on the condition that if they failed to carry out work for fixed number of days in the mines they would be evicted from the land. The example of the East India Railway Collieries, where the workers were provided with cultivable land and used charges 9 annas a bigha and 230 days of work was compulsory and thus helped them to settle around the colliery. This method was resorted to especially in the case of recruitment of the Santhals who were settled-miners in the Raniganj coal-field. In addition to this, according to the Indian Colliery Employee’s Association, Jharia, some of the colliery owners also had acquired zamindari rights to compel the labourers living in their zamindari to work under them in their private collieries. A few proprietors in Jharia such as the East Indian Coal Company and the Raneegunj Coal Association procured villages beyond the natural perimeter of the coalfield to circumvent the lack of space for settling labour but this was an exception rather than rule in Jharia. Though this system was introduced at Raniganj and even

17 Foley and Fremantle Report, Appendix, August 26, their visit to Bengal Coal Company, Egara colliery.
18 Ibid., Appendix, September 3rd, their visit to East Indian Railway Collieries.
20 Royal Commission on Labour in India (henceforth R.C.L.), Vol. IV, part1, p.182.
21 C.P.Simons, p. 467.
practiced at Jharia to a lesser extent due to paucity of cultivable land but it was the Giridih coalfield, (Hazaribagh district) which could secure larger settled labour force. Here between 60 and 70 per cent of the labourers were Nokarani tenants.\(^{22}\) Most of the settled labourers held the company's lands, and got transformed into permanent residents. The *Trehane Rees report, 1919*, advocated that miners should be provided with suitable plot of land for cultivation near their houses.\(^{23}\) This system was also known as 'Nokrani system'. The Royal Commission of Labour in India had pointed out that by their time the system was not widely used due to scarcity of free holds to help in settlement of coal miners around the colliery.

Another variant role of the *zamindar* in the colli mine was that of a labour contractor. They proved important category of labour recruiters. The Royal Commission of Labour in India refers to this system. In 1917, Ram Chandracharia Goswami, a petty *Zamindar* in Raniganj undertook to supply 200 miners from the five *mouzas* under his control and in return, he received a *salami* of Rs. 500 plus a commission of three rupees two annas for every hundred tubs of coal that his men produced.\(^{24}\) The practice though vague by 1930 was still in vogue e.g. in 1936 when A. Laik, a local *zamindar* of

\(^{22}\) Ibid.


\(^{24}\) *R.C.L.* Vol. IV Pt 2, p 470.
Dishergarh, agreed to supply 100 Santhal malkatas for Rs 1000 and a commission.\textsuperscript{25}

Thus the labourers could not be completely transformed into full fledged category of proletariat. They could not become or reproduce constant wage workers as wage worker.\textsuperscript{26}

[b] **Contractor System:** The coal industry was run by various types of contractors such as raising contractor, labour contractor, contractor for cutting coal from particular place from the underground mine, contract for loading coal from the face into the wagon. By one of the estimates given by Indian Mining Association to the Royal Commission, more than 70\% of the coal raised in Jharia mine of the Association was done by the contractor system.\textsuperscript{27}

Raising contractor was one of the predominant forms of labour contractors in the coal mines. Explaining their function, P.B.Dandekar, one of the raising contractors in Jealgora Colliery, observed: ‘I recruit labour and I am responsible for cutting, raising and dispatching of coal. I receive payment from the company at so much per for raised and I pay the labour myself.’\textsuperscript{28} Thus the raising contractor performed complex work. They maintained whole


\textsuperscript{27} *RCL*, Vol. IV, part II, p.9.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 171.
paraphernalia for its smooth functioning. They had labour recruiter, the munshi for the wage payment, their managers and sometimes even their supervising staff. At Dhemo Main colliery, Sohan Singh, Contractor’s manager estimated the cost of recruiting to be around 4 to 6 annas per ton. And he explained the recruitment of Bilaspuri labour. The *chaprasis* who were assigned the job of collecting them, kept them for three or four days and bring all recruits by train, the fare and expenditure were borne by the Contractor’s manager.\(^{29}\)

The raising contractors exercised considerable power. This becomes evident from the statement of Dandekar in which he was reported to have stated that he was partner of a firm of contractors which had contracts in the Goplichack West Colliery and East Colliery.\(^{30}\)

These raising contractors made up for the bulk of contract in coal mining industry and it also had other sub-contractors under them like the labour contractor, the gang leader and the loading contractor.

The labour contractor was a common link between raising contractors and Sarkari system. The recruiters visited villages generally his native place and the labour bought by him formed his gang. He had to pay bakshish, khoraki and travelling expenses and for this purpose the labour contractor frequently received advances either from the contractor or from the company. He obtained remuneration for his services in the form of salary and

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Ibid.
commission for the work done by his recruiters like in Loyabad Colliery, Bhowra Colliery.\textsuperscript{31}

But the cost of recruitment provided by the Govt. of Bihar and Orissa for two large collieries situated in Jharia and Mohuda varied from 7.82 paisas per ton in 1927 to 10 paisas at the second half of 1928. But it may be qualified that the recruiting cost varied from place to place and mine to mine.\textsuperscript{32}

In the list of petty contractors there was also Miners' Sardar. He was generally the headman of the village, or man of influence in his own village, or was appointed by his gang.\textsuperscript{33} The gang usually consisted of 10 to 50 men. The Sardar was the one who took instructions from his immediate superior about the place of work and other working instructions for the day. He took the oil from the stores and was also the paymaster of the gang from which he deducted his commission or paid at the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 anna per tab of coal raised by his gang and the gang gets paid separately by the company.\textsuperscript{34} In certain cases even the immediate supervisors were on the payroll of raising contractors.

The Bihar Labour Enquiry Commission 1940 refers to the Royal Commission on Labour, 1931, while referring to inherent difficulties in such a system; the later had observed: "Both in law and in fact the manager is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} R.C.L. Vol IV part I, p.9.
\item \textsuperscript{32} R.C.L. Vol. IV, part II, p. 226.
\item \textsuperscript{33} R.C.L. Vol IV, part I, p.221.
\item \textsuperscript{34} R.C.L, 1931, Vol. IV, part I, p.227.
\end{itemize}
responsible for the safety of the workmen: he determines where coal shall be worked and his decisions have the closest effect on the security of the miner. But even the safety men are not the manager's subordinates, being selected and paid by the contractor. The law holds the manager responsible for compliance with its provisions in respect of hours of work, holidays, the employment of women, etc. As a rule he has also responsibility for housing and other matters (e.g., water-supply) affecting the welfare of the worker outside the mine. Yet he has ordinarily no responsibility for the selection of the workers, the distribution of their work, the payment of their wages or even the numbers employed."

The contract systems of working the mines had some inherent clauses which supported exploitation. The contract was generally concerned with supplying certain fixed quantity of coal whereas the workers were paid per tub. Consequently there was a general tendency to force the workers to overload their tub, any underweight tub was summarily cancelled so that the contractor can earn more profit. One such example of exploitation could be cited from Tata iron and Steel Company, TISCO, colliery where the Sardar in conjunction with the other officials in the pay of contractor ranging from munshi down to the shot firers at the face were involved. A tangled web of obligations, favouritism, and bakhshish payment were reported in 1936 after a special investigation into corruption had been ordered by Sir Ardeishir Dalal.

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the special Director of the steel company. Unless the munshi was bribed, they would not provide sufficient mine cars to the gangs, would miscount tubs and credit them to others and commonly reject tub loads on the pretext that they were either over or below the correct weight.\(^{36}\)

The contactors faced with competition to win the contract went to the extent of accepting meager rates for working the coal which in turn affected wages and welfare services to be provided to the workers. As a result, the management was forced to introduce a clause in their contract to safeguard wages of workers.\(^{37}\)

The contractors used to advance money as a tool for controlling labourforce. It is reported that workers used to spend their earnings before the money was earned and became anxious to get more money in advance which further strengthened their bondage.\(^{38}\) In view of the above corrupt practices prevalent in the contactor system the Bihar Labour Commission just as the Royal Commission recomended abolition of the system.\(^{39}\) During 1940s there was a tremendous decline in the number of such contractors. In 1944 only 60 raising contractors were reportedly employed by 49 collieries in Jharia\(^{40}\) and

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\(^{36}\) C.P.Simmons, p 478.


\(^{40}\) Mahindra Committee Report, 1945, p.161.
similar was the case of Raniganj due to direct recruitment through Gorkhpur Labour Organisation.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{Sarkari System:} This was a mode of recruitment in which the management employed their own staff of recruiters. In some cases the company maintained salaried \textit{Jamadars} and \textit{Chaprasis} who supervised a number of villages and it bore the whole expense of transporting labourers to the working sites and in return they earned the \textit{Sardari} remuneration. The workers were also given the \textit{khoraki} during their travel and some companies also gave \textit{khoraki} worth 4 anna for the first day.\textsuperscript{42} The whole labour force of the company was under the control of the manager and the company was the paymaster of its labour. Some of the companies made direct contact with the headmen of the villages.\textsuperscript{43} They were paid a monthly salary and a small commission on the output obtained by his men so that he could induce the villagers to work at a particular colliery and thus regular attendance was ensured.\textsuperscript{44} This system was generally followed at mines owned by Indias and small European mines.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} Gorakhpur labour Organisation(G.L.O) will be discussed in the next section.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Foley and Fremantle report, appendix, August 26.
\item \textsuperscript{43} R.C.L. Vol. IV, part I, p.221.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
In Seebpur and Katras collieries in Jharia the colliery manager stated that it costed around Rs.30 to bring the upcountry labour family to the mine whose women did not work in the mine.45

The companies that worked the mine under the *Sarkari* system wanted Act XIII of 1859 to be extended to the coalmines to obtain an agreement of one year with workers so that their labour imported from the upcountry were not poached upon by other collieries and their cost of importing labour was not wasted.46

The companies following *Sarkari* system were in full control of the management. This resulted in following an unscrupulous method of extraction of coal. So far the preference of the workers was concerned, they preferred the departmental or the *Sarkari* method. According to Bihar Labour Commission report the workers under the *Sarkari* system were better paid and better carved.47

The Indian Mining Association, in 1931, estimated that in Jharia coalfield the total coal raised by contract system was around 70 percent and under *Sarkari* system it was around 30 percent.48 But in Raniganj field the proportion of coal raised under contract system as against *Sarkari* system had

45 Foley and Fremantle report, appendix, Oct. 27, Jharia Collieries.
46 Ibid., August 30, Jharia Club.
47 BLEC, vol. 1, para 390.
registered a decline by 40 and 60 percent respectively. The purchase of Zamindari right by the companies could be one reason behind the decline. But in Jharia the cultivable land was not available in abundance which could be granted to the miner as an adherent to gain permanent labour force.

One of the frequently asked questions during the Royal Commission of Labour in India session was concerned with the necessity to recommend the last method of requirement. P.S. Keelan, Field Representative of the Indian Mining Association, of the Raniganj coalfield estate hoped that he would work without a contractor as it gave more command over the colliery. And it also saved them from the blackmailing tactics of the contractors who generally walked out from the mine in case of quarrel with the management. This used to create sudden artificial scarcity of labour for sometime. The cost factor was not very large to tilt the balance in favour of a particular mode of working of the mines.

K.K. Baksi, manager of Kirkend Colliery, had argued in favour of the contract system (raising contractor) as it gave him more time to supervise the work. The contractor looked after the miners and the raising while he was free to look after the safety and other things. He stated that the difference between

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49 Ibid.
50 R.C.L. Vol. IV, part II, p. 216.
the two modes of coal production was just 2 annas per ton and hence was in favour of the contract system.\textsuperscript{51}

In those mines where the supervisory staffs were also the contracting, staff which happened in some mines, a strange problem was witnessed. The Mine Manager, who had the full responsibility of safety and working of the mine, had no control on workers and their immediate supervisors made every effort to evade every norm to gain easy coals. The payment were directly related to the raising capacity.

Recruitment under the contractor system was strongly criticised by the Bihar Labour Enquiry Commission and it ordered for it earliest discontinuation and where its service was indispensable, its registration was recommended. They were asked to record payments including travelling allowances and advance which could be checked by competent authority to ensure a check on their attempt to exploit the labour further.\textsuperscript{52}

To overcome the perennial shortage of labour and to maintain continuous supply many suggestions were made. Siba Kali Bose of Indian Colliery Employees Association had suggested establishment of a Central Public Employment Agency, with headquarters at Jharia and branches in

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p.134.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{52} Bihar Labour Enquiry Commission, 1940, vol 1, para 76.}
different coalfield centres for the purpose of recruitment of labour, and thus minimise the cost and centralise the recruitment network.\textsuperscript{53}

A. L. Ojha, M.L.C. and Rai Bahadur D. D. Thacker, representatives of the Indian Mining Federation went to extent of suggesting that Santhal Parganas and the whole of the Chota Nagpur should be reserved as an exclusive area of recruitment for the coal industry.\textsuperscript{54}

During the period of Second World War when the demand for coalsoared, there was a decline in production due mainly to paramount shortage of labour. In view of the problem, the government planned to systematize recruitment of unskilled labour. Therefore the \textit{Gorakhpuri} Labour Organisation (GLO) in 1942 was established. Labour Department of the Central Government administered the GLO through the Government of Uttar Pradesh. All expenditure on the organisation was borne by the Government of India and recovered from the employers The Government of U.P. maintained a Liaison Officer with the Organisation who assessed the employers' demand for labour.\textsuperscript{55}

In a brief report in 1943 on the mining conditions in the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum and Bankura sent by the Commissioner of the Burdwan division to the Secretary to the Bengal government, Department of Commerce,

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{R.C.L.} Vol. IV, part II, p. 252.
\item A.B. Ghosh, p.132.
\end{enumerate}
Labour and Industries, had pointed out that labour scarcity in coal mines was caused by switch over of workers to military and construction works of airfields, railway extensions, etc\textsuperscript{56}. For the greater part of 1943, the labour supply position remained difficult mainly owing to the labourers’ preference for profitable military jobs.\textsuperscript{57} The labour supply deteriorated drastically and by the closing months of the year (1943) it became so critical that the Government of India had to permit women workers to be re-employed underground in the coalfields of Bihar and Bengal and Central Provinces provided that in underground working was not less than six feet in height.\textsuperscript{58} Besides, the government had to take several steps to meet the emergency situation. It tried to eliminate competition forced by coal mining industry against other industries and undertakings including that of construction. The labour department of the central government in June 1944 issued specific orders forbidding the recruitment of labour from the districts of Bankura, Birbhum and Burdwan in Bengal and Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Gava, Monghyr, Santhal Parganas and Manbhum in Bihar which were "considered main sources of colliery labour. And this condition was inserted in all government contracts.\textsuperscript{59}

The Directorate of Skilled Labour Supply was set up by the Government in 1944 to supply unskilled labour for work in the coalfield when there was a


\textsuperscript{57} B.P.Guha, p.39.

\textsuperscript{58} A.B.Ghosh, Coal Industry in India, 1977, New Delhi, 1977, p.132

\textsuperscript{59} Bishwa Mohan, p.232.
grave shortage of labour and increased production was essential for war purpose. Gorakhpur labour was introduced into the Bengal coalfields at the beginning of 1944 and was entirely unskilled, necessitating careful supervision during training period which consumed considerable time.\(^{60}\)

By September 1944, 12,000 labourers were supplied to the coalfields of Bihar, Bengal and the Central Provinces and by the first week of October 1945, their number rose to 30,000 *Gorakhpuris* in coalfields of Bengal and Bihar and they loaded 1,012 wagons, produced 22,462 tons of coal from quarries and 5,725 tons from underground workings.\(^{61}\) Soon their number began to decline gradually and fell to 15,000 by July 1946. Roughly at the end of January 1946 the railway collieries, the collieries owned by public companies and those owned by individuals employed 7%, 83% and 10% of the total number of the *Gorakhpuri* labour engaged in different coalfields of India. Once the period of crisis was over and shortage of labour had eased, the Ministry of Labour had declared its intention to close down the Directorate of Skilled Labour Supply on the 28\(^{th}\) February 1947.\(^{62}\) So the Indian Mining Association, the Indian Mining Federation and the Indian Colliery Owners Association jointly set up the Coalfield Recruitment Organisation with the primary object of taking over the Gorakhpur labour force in the coalfields.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.,

\(^{61}\) *A.R.C.I.M.* 1945, p.30.

\(^{62}\) Bishwa Mohan Prasad, p. 234.
When the Directorate was abolished, some 6,400 Gorakhpur labour was transferred to the new organization.

**Women Labour in the Coal Mines:**

The *Bauris* who were the first to offer themselves for work in the coal-fields, in the first quarter of the last century, came with their women who specialised in the colliery surface work. The *Dhangars* and the *Koras* who followed also brought their family members mothers, wives, daughters and sisters to work in the coal-fields to supplement the family income. Similarly, the labourers belonging to other castes, who were tempted to leave their homes to work in the coal-fields, were accompanied by their women whom they regarded as valuable assets. Thus every increase in the number of male workers led to the multiplication of women workers. This gave birth to a system which has been characterized as the “family gang system” of the Jharia coal miners which took care of the strategies of the family and household reproduction in the period 1890-1940.\(^\text{63}\) In the early stages of the industry the *Bauri* women were employed to turn the wooden gin raising coal from pits by means of iron chain to the surface. This method was used in 1869 for Martin Fryar of the Geological Survey reports: ‘Each gin has four horizontal arms, and to each arm about eight women were appointed so that each gin is driven by

thirty two women. They are paid two and a quarter annas per day and they can raise about forty tons of coal from a depth of a hundred feet in the course of a day. Other type of surface work done by women included removing coal and refuse from the pithead and stacking coal. With the mechanisation of the mine, the gins were replaced by electric haulage or by steam winding engines. So the nature of work also changed, and they were shifted to screening of coal and loading it into railway wagons, pushing tubs of coal to the railway siding and picking shale out of the coal loaded. Some were employed to remove boiler ash or to push unloaded coal on the surface. The manufacturing of soft coke by primitive method had also created new avenues such as forming heaps of coal or sprinkle water on them.

In open mines and quarries, a number of women were also employed, carrying the coal or stone up the inclines on the sides of the open workings. Some of this carrying involved a strain and a twisting of the body to adjust to the weight which could be injurious to the women. The Commission were told in interviews that the average weights carried were 50 to 60 lbs. Even 13 years old girls carried these weights as no difference was made between the younger and the older women.

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64 C.P. Simons, pp. 461-462.
65 B.R. Seth, p.131.
67 Ibid.
Women also constituted an important part of the underground mine worker force. The *Santhali* women were the first group who not only worked on surface, but also followed their men folk underground to load coals cut by them. Similarly a good majority of women belonging to the low castes recruited from Bihar, Bengal and Central province also followed the tradition.\(^68\)

The women were employed as loaders, some were used for bailing out water from the mines, for removing coals from the galleries and to push tubs on bucket from the coalface to the bottom of the shaft.\(^69\)

**Table 2.1: Caste Composition of Female Work force**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Caste</th>
<th>Women per 100 Men of their own caste</th>
<th>High Caste</th>
<th>Women per 100 Men of their own Caste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doms</td>
<td>110.0</td>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santhals</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>Rajputs</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhuiyas</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>Goalas</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurmis</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>Koiris</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuniyas</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauris</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: B.R.Seth, p. 129)

As it can be distinctly seen from the table women from low caste were more prominent underground worker accompanying their husband, father, brother or other male relatives. Interestingly high caste women folk was also present in underground work in a substantial manner. Among the women of

\(^68\) B.R.Seth, pp. 128-129.

\(^69\) Ibid., p.130.
high caste working in the mine were either widow with no financial support or were socially undesirable or their husband or parent were not earning enough to maintain the family or were invalid.\textsuperscript{70} Even in 1924, according to the special investigation of the Chief Inspector of Mines, out of seven thousand women who came under his personal enquiry in the Jharia and Ranigunj coalfields, about 49\% were working with their husbands, 30\% with their relatives and about 20\% unattached.\textsuperscript{71}

In the Annual Report of Inspector of Mine of 1896 the number of coalmines in the Burdwan district was 83, Hazaribagh had 8, Manbhum 100 and Santhal Pargana had 4 so Bengal in total had 195 mines in 1895 (returns were received of 87 only). The total number of labourers working in Bankura, Chotanagpur, Hazaribagh and Manbhum mines were 324,395 workers. 97,776 worked below ground and out of this figure 52,804 were females and total on the surface were 226,619 out of this female constituted 141,637.\textsuperscript{72}

There was always a clause for intervention of local government for the prohibition of women in the underground working in mines. When the Indian Mining Bill, 1901, was been drafted the section 10 stated that subject to the control of the local government or of such authority as the local government might appoint on its behalf any Inspector of mines may by order in writing and

\begin{flushleft}
70 Ibid., p.129.
71 Ibid., p.153.
\end{flushleft}
for reason stated theirin prohibit the employment of women and children or both in any mine or part there of or any particular kind of labour above ground or below ground when such employment was, in his opinion dangerous for, or unsuited to women or children as the case might be. But this was always opposed by the owners. The Indian Mining Association and Bengal Chamber of Commerce strongly opposed the interference of the Government with condition of labour which according to them would ‘only promote discontent between employer and employed and augment difficulties of getting sufficient labour. ..... at present at any rate there is not necessity for interfering with employment of women below ground, .....any interference with this would have most serious effect on the mining industry’.  

Similarly after the passing of Indian Mining Act of 1923, which though did not prohibit the women workers working underground, but it left a question of complete withdrawal should begin within the specified period would be taken by the local government. The members of Indian Mining Federation called upon B.N. Mitra, K.C.I.E, Member for Industries and Labour on 24 July, 1925. They argued in front of him that “the labour of women is intrinsically different from that of a man.... Her labour is complementary and not additional to the labour of the man. In such circumstances......how the women labour can

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73 *Industries and Labour*, (G & M), File No., 18, 1925.
be withdrawn from mines except without an entire breakdown of the industry." 74

But all their pleas fell on deaf ear of the government which notified that from July 1, 1929 employment of women below ground was to be eliminated by stages over a period of next ten years. But by a notification dated 11 June, 1936 the date of 1 July, 1939 was advanced to 1 July, 1937 which was then fixed for 1 October, 1937. 75 The depression of 1930s proved an stimulus for the replacement of women workers from underground working.

The women workers were much sought after because they were paid low wages. Their traditional works in mine were abhorred by men so it would be very tough to induce them in such a large number so as to replace the women workers from underground mines. 76 The other option was mechanization of the mine which would require huge investment of capital which they did not invest. But the decrease of wages to the starvation level during the period of Great Depression provided a perfect platform for the prohibition of women in underground working (see section on wages, Chapter 3) and forced the male worker to slowly overcome this inhibition. The mining regulations of 1929 had reduced their earnings all the more by providing for the elimination of women from underground works. The employers have gone a step further. They began gradually replacing women by men even on the

74 Ibid.
75 B.R. Seth, p. 144.
76 Ibid., p. 142.
surface where they were permitted by law to work, and employ too many labourers for the contract work which is more or less fixed and thus reduced the labour earnings without lowering the rates of wages, a device which helped them to escape public attacks or the menace of labour strikes. It resulted in keeping many families semi-starved, in lowering the standard of living of others, and in demoralising the rest.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 138-144.}

**Table-2.2: Decade wise Ratio of Male and Female Workforce**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Increase in number of Male loaders compared to previous years</th>
<th>Decrease in number of female loaders compared to previous years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>3013</td>
<td>6528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>3593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1455</td>
<td>1655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1675</td>
<td>2040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-33</td>
<td>8587</td>
<td>15719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-33</td>
<td>5569</td>
<td>9191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-33</td>
<td>4375</td>
<td>5598</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: B.R. Seth, p142.)

The table shows the noticeable decline of female employment in mines from 15719 in 1928-33 to 9191 in 1929-33 bracket and it further declined to 5598 in 1930-33 time bracket.

This was the period when the women suffered the maximum. They had to suffer horrible individual and social indignities as well at the hands of the *sardars*, contractors and companies’ officials. Their modesty and chastity were the presents which these contractors sometimes offered to the managers or
agents to maintain their contract. Contractors supplied them as prostitutes to
the companies’ officials to get better facilities of work and improvement of
their output. A sardar enjoyed a predominant position. He could get any
number of men under his sardari, He could dismiss anybody. He exploited
his strong position to employ every day a new woman to become the victim of
his lust. Miner’s wives generally became an easy prey to them. They are
tempted to such immoral practices partly because they were able to earn some­
thing and partly because they would be keeping their husbands in the good
books of the sardars. In short, bribery in the shape of money which was widely
prevalent in the days of high profits and scarcity of labour had been replaced
‘by the surrender of the virtue of sophisticated country girls in those days of
low profits and excessive labour supply’.

The first comprehensive data on areas of the supply of labour and the
other possible labour catchment area for the coal mine workers can be best
studied with help of Labour Commission Report of 1896 Foley and Fremantels
Report on Labour in Bengal and United Provinces of 1906 as they dealt
extensively with shortage of labour and labour supplying districts to coal mines
to address the problem of shortage of labour with reference to caste that was
operating in the coal mine during the period of their surveys. The Royal

78 Ibid., p.137.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 B.R.Seth, p. 137.
Commission on Labour in India, 1931 and others also provide some interesting information about the same.

The Labour Commission Report, 1896 had catalogued the caste of workers and their places of origin as follows:83

**Table-2.3**: Caste wise Distribution of labourforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Koris</td>
<td>Unao, Pertabghar, Rai Bareli, Fattehpur, Allahabad, Jaunpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattris and Thakur</td>
<td>Unao, Pertabghar, Rai Bareli, Bunda, Jaunpur. (These do not cut coal).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasis</td>
<td>Unao, Pertabghar, Rai Bareli, Mirzapur, Fattehpur, Allahabad, Jaunpur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhuyas</td>
<td>Gaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodhs</td>
<td>Unao, Rai Bareli, Fattehpur, Allahabad, Lucknow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahirs</td>
<td>Unao, Pertabghar, Fattehpur, Rai Bareli, Allahabad, Mirzapur, Benares, Jaunpur, Jabalpur, Rewah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadaryas</td>
<td>Unao, Fattehpur, Rai Bareli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamars</td>
<td>Unao, Pertabghar, Fattehpur, Rai Bareli, Allahabad, Banda, Fyzabad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kacchis</td>
<td>Unao, Fattehpur, Rai Bareli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurmis</td>
<td>Unao, Pertabghar, Rai Bareli, Allahabad, Chanda, Fattehpur, Fyzabad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunbhis</td>
<td>Unao, Fattehpur, Pertabghar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunnars</td>
<td>Unao, Rai Bareli, Azamghur, Benares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahars</td>
<td>Rai Bareli, Mirzapur, Raipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arraks</td>
<td>Fattehpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelwars</td>
<td>Jaunpur, Mirzapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahtis</td>
<td>Fattehpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halwais</td>
<td>Rai Bareli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammadans (not particularised)</td>
<td>Unao, Rai Bareli, Allahabad, Jaunpur, Rewah, , Fattehpur, Mirzapur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banias</td>
<td>Allahabad, Umballa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lobars</td>
<td>Pannah, Rewah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>Rai Bareli, Cawnpur, Benares, Mirzapur, Rewah, Allahabad, Pertabghar, Jaunpur, Fyzabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhobis</td>
<td>Rai Bareli, Allahabad, Pannah, Rewah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalahas</td>
<td>Unao, Mirzapur, Monghyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telis</td>
<td>Unao, Mirzapur, Monghyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nais</td>
<td>Ballia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajputts</td>
<td>Ballia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhars</td>
<td>Jaunpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khetris</td>
<td>Jabalpur, Fatehpur, Allahabad, Sultanpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayasths</td>
<td>Rewah, Unao, Allahabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhuyas</td>
<td>Allahabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kols</td>
<td>Mundla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koeris</td>
<td>Agra, Arrah, Ghazipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonds</td>
<td>Rewah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mochis</td>
<td>Unao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallahs</td>
<td>Fattehpur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tambolis</td>
<td>Fyzabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunias</td>
<td>Benares (a batch of 150 at present mainly on surface)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dosadhs</td>
<td>Monghyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheiks</td>
<td>Ghazipur (only work on surface)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathans</td>
<td>Fyzabad (do tramming work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barais</td>
<td>Ballia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohars</td>
<td>Ballia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musohars</td>
<td>Gaya.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: Labour Commission Report, 1896, pp.11-12)

The largest number of worker originated from the following castes:

*Pasis, Lodhs, Kurmis, Ahirs, Koeris Chamars* and *Muhammadans*. And they came mostly from Unao, Rai Bareli, Partapghar, Fatehpur, Allahabad and Banaras districts.\(^\text{84}\)

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\(^\text{84}\) Ibid., An interesting study has been made by Shireen Moosvi, ‘De-Industrialization, Population Change and Migration in Nineteenth Century India’, *The Indian Historical*
Beside these new recruitment areas outside the states from upcountry, some districts and certain castes within the state were also mentioned in Foley’s report as a possible recruitment area for the coalmines by looking at the population density per square mile, the crops, and nature of the crops and also the caste composition of various districts:

‘Monghyr: In the west and south of the districts, in thana of Sikhpura and Sekundra and Chakai recruitment can be encouraged as the land was poor, there were large number of landless laborers and people are generally very poor the caste which can go to the coal mines seems to be Musahars, Dushad and Nuniyas beside others’.  

‘Santhal Pargana: In this districts Jamatara, Dumka and Pakur sub division labour could be obtained for the coal mines as these were pre-dominantly Santhal region. Beside Santhals, Mahilis and Bhuiya and Dusadhs also suitable for coalmines. It was necessary to pay small advance before the Santhal would leave their place’.  

‘Hazaribagh: The population is spare but the land is too poor to support the population so emigration is not to be discouraged. Semi-aboriginal and

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Review, Vol. XVI, No. 1-2, (July 1989-January 1990), pp. 149-162. She could convincingly establish the relationship between migration and rise of population in tea plantation, jutes mills, textile mills. She has briefly touched on migration of labour to coal mines. Her brief observation about contribution to coal mines concerns Assam’s five coal mines.

85 Foley’s Report, 1907, para.90
86 Ibid., para.95
aboriginal forms of half of the population. Some of them go to the Jherria coal fields especially from the East of the districts. But this numbers is too small and much more labour can be expected from this area. The *Bhuiyas* with the population of 99,000 would be the other suitable caste. 87

*Ranchi:* In spite of the scarcity of the population the pressure on the land is great and need to be supplements there earning by working outside. Labour seems an eminently suitable for collieries if only the people can be induced to the coal cutting the chief aborigines of the districts are the *Oraons* but only few of them are found in Jherria mines. *Munda* can be the other caste which can be induced to the coalmines the Catholic and the Lutherans priest of the districts were ready to influence their pupils to go to the the collieries. The country between Ranchi and Lohardaga would be ideal for the coalmine workers which could be next extended to Gumla sub division from where *Bhuiy* as and other low Hindu caste can be induced to cut coal. 88

*Bankura:* In this district except the eastern part the rest of the district the land is poorer. The most numerous castes found are *Bauris* in the thana of Gangajalhati, Bankura, and Katra. These can be recruited for the coalmines at present only Bauris from Gangajalhati migrate to Raniganj coalmines. 89

*Gaya:* the proportion of the landless labour is high Grierson in his “Notes on the District of Gaya” in 1893 argues that 45% of the people suffer from

87 Ibid., para. 96
88 Ibid., para.97
89 Ibid., para. 102
poverty and important source of income of the family was the earning of the members in Calcutta and elsewhere. Fryar found the Bhuiyas from Gaya in Jharia coalfield and also the Nuniyas from Gaya in Palamau. But the percentage of labour is very low in coalmine but expects that once the line from Katras to Gaya get completed the coalmine would be most natural to afford employment to the surplus population.⁹⁰

The Census of 1914 recorded that the Santhals and Bauris still accounted for over 50 per cent of the labour force, the remainder consisting mainly of Bhuiyas, Muchis, Koras, Kamars, Meahs, Rajwars, Dosadhs, Kols, Bagdis, Telis, and Ghatwals.⁹¹ The local labourers such as Bauri and Santhal, were first to join mining work and continued to constitute the largest group. Though the share of flow of labour from United Provinces and other distance states increased but still the local people constituted the greatest bulk. This becomes explicit if checking the birthplace of labour in the whole of Jharia coalfields from the Census Report of 1921.⁹²

The Enquiry Commission of 1931 gives the following as birthplace of labour. In Gopalichak and Central Kirkend collieries labour originated mainly from Santhal Pargana, Hazaribagh and Patna district. But during monsoon seasons they had to recruit labour from Central and United Provinces as the size of the labour from above mentioned districts witnessed drastic reduction.⁹³

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⁹⁰ Ibid., para. 89
⁹¹ Nirban Basu, p.64.
⁹² Royal Commission on Labour in India. Vol IV Part 1, p.5. (Hereafter RCL)
⁹³ Ibid., p 5
Table- 2.4: Birth place of Labour of various Coalfields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collieries</th>
<th>Total employed</th>
<th>Manbhum and Bankura</th>
<th>Hazaribagh</th>
<th>Santhal Parganas</th>
<th>Gaya</th>
<th>Monghyr</th>
<th>Other Bihar and Orissa districts</th>
<th>Bengal districts</th>
<th>Central Provinces districts</th>
<th>United Provinces</th>
<th>Other Provinces</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhowra</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure Jharia</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkend</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3580</td>
<td>1427</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage to total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>39.86</td>
<td>9.60</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>24.24</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bhuggutdih Colliery reported that 25 percent of its labour was local and remaining 75 percent was drawn from the Santhal Parganas, Hazaribagh and Monghyr districts.  

Loyabad Colliery employed labour either from local areas or from Santhal Parganas, Gaya or Hazaribagh districts with a few workers coming from United Province district.

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94 Ibid., p. 5.
95 Ibid, p. 5.
East India Coal Company Ltd. recruited its labour from Arrah, Gaya, Hazaribagh, Monghyr, Manbhum, Santhal Pargana, Bilaspur, and Raipur in Central Province and from Bareilly in United Provinces.\(^6\)

Describing about the source of labour a Committee states that about 80% of the labour was obtained from within the districts of the province of which the more important are Hazaribagh, Manbhum, Gaya and Monghyr.\(^7\) The rest are mainly drawn from districts of Raipur, Bilaspur, and Durg in Central Provinces, the districts of Allahabad, Partapgarh, Mirzapur, Rai Barielly, Jaunpur, Lucknow, Unao, Kanpur, and Gorakhpur in the United Province, Ganjam in Orissa, Rewa in Central India Lahore and Amritsar in Punjab, Burdawan and Bankura in Bengal\(^8\)

In spite of the growing heterogeneous composition, a distinct pattern of occupational specialisation remained among the working population of the mine. The Bhuiyas, Ahirs, Rajwars preferred tramming\(^9\) and loading whilst the Beldars and Nuniyahs had a predilection for earth cutting.\(^10\) The Kamars and Meahs were known as good engine operatives. Most of the Sardari/supervisory functions were performed by men who had been recruited from the ranks of the workers themselves and therefore did not form a separate

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\(^6\) Ibid, p. 5.
\(^7\) BLEC, Vol. I, para 385.
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^10\) Ibid, p. 35.
caste or regional entity. The clerical staff, i.e. overseers, managers etc, were generally recruited from the educated middle class, mostly Bengalis.

The common language the workers employed in coal mining industry to conversed with each other was probably Urdu.\textsuperscript{101} James Grundy in his Annual Report observed that every worker could understand some Urdu and they received their order from their supervisors in the same language and this was further testified by Frank Agabeg who said Hindustani was the \textit{lingua franca} of coal mine worker.\textsuperscript{102}

After the study of the labour catchment areas and the various castes working in the coalmine (the reports were generally caste based) let us see the fluctuation in the supply of labour with the corresponding cycle of trade. The period from mid 1890s till the 1920 it was a period of rapid expansion of the coal mining industry of the country.

During this period there was an enormous expansion of the coal production, with opening up of new coal mines, big leap in the capital invested by the managing agent, and corresponding increase in the labour force employed in the coal mining industry. According to the Annual Inspector of Mines of 1896 Report, there were 44 mines in Manbhum, Hazaribagh and Chotanagpur district producing about 850,734 tons of coal and were employing

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{101} James Grundy, \textit{Report on Inspection of Mine in India for the year ending the 30th June 1896}, Calcutta, p.13.
\item \textsuperscript{102} Ibid., Agabeg, p. 31.
\end{itemize}
27,310 workers, out of which 10,649 were women workers. The number of coal mines in Manbhum, Hazaribagh, Giridih, Sonthal Pargana, Rajmahal, Palamau, Daltonganj was 239 and the number of workers employed were in these mines were 64,313, out of which 23,112 were females. The total output of coal was 10,526,468 tons as compared to 9,112,348 tons in 1906 an increase of 15.51% and 9,993,348 tons or 94.93% of the total coal raised in British India exceeding the output of the preceding year by 1,375,528 tons. The principal increase came from Jharia coalfields where the output had gone up by over a million a year. The coal trade was in very flourishing state. Every section of the community and the indignant shareholder complained through newspapers that their dividends were not more than 50%. The number of coal mines in Manbhum, Hazaribagh, Giridih, Sonthal Pargana, Rajmahal, Palamau, Daltonganj were 298 in 1909 employing 76,914 workers producing 8,002,951 ton of coal. The rise would have been more but for the outbreak of cholera in the coalfield which led to cessation of work for two months and according to the estimate of the Chief Inspector the loss in output was of around one million tons which when calculated with the prevailing prices amounted to around fifty lakhs of rupees.

104 A.R.C.I.M. 1908, p.
105 Ibid.,1909,p.9.
106 Ibid., p43
107 Ibid., p.43
108 Ibid. p.8
The coalmines in Bihar experienced shortage of labour during latter part of the year due to good harvest in 1916 and abnormal monsoon in 1917 which bought heavy rain and which lasted beyond the usual period.\textsuperscript{109} But even then we see an increase in the total number of coalmines in Bihar to 444 and this was producing 11,931,141 tons of coal by employing 105,910 workers out of which 40,600 were female. The reason behind this growth was firstly owing to opening of the Jharia coalfields and its connection by the two railways (East Indian Railway and the Bengal Nagpur Railway) and the opening of coal market. The total coal traffic carried by East Indian Railway was 6,142,264 tons for the year of 1905 earning 202,44,250 rupees.\textsuperscript{110} The second impetus was provided by the world war. This was the period when all the better coals were requisitioned by government for military purposes at fixed prices and the coal had the benefit of priority as regard to transport. The result was that the demand for non requisitioned coal exceeded the available supply and the prices for such coals ranged far above the prices of requisitioned coal and this was abnormally high if their inferior quality is taken into consideration.\textsuperscript{111} So there was a tremendous increase in coal production, whom the raising of the Jharia coalfield alone was 11 million tons by 1918. Between 1914 and 1919 the rise in aggregate output of coal was 37% and the percentage of Bihar being 41\%.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, 1918, p.

\textsuperscript{110} G.Huddleston, \textit{History of the east Indian Railway}, Calcutta, 1906, p.166.

\textsuperscript{111} A.B.Ghosh, \textit{Coal Industry in India}, p. 62

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, pp. 62-63.
The next phase from 1920 to 1936 was a period of decline to slight recovery during 1926-1929. The output fell by nearly three million tons in 1920 compared to previous year’s production. With the coming of the depression many uneconomical mines that opened up during the boom period had to close. By the end of 1921 the period of industrial boom came to an end. The coal mine by 1924 had entered the period of prolonged depression which continued till 1937, as is evident from the table below:

**Table-2.5: Production figure of coal in 1927-28**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coalfield</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>% increase or decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jharia</td>
<td>10,665,479</td>
<td>10,583,487</td>
<td>+.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>2,026,791</td>
<td>1,790,594</td>
<td>+13.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>804,118</td>
<td>855,253</td>
<td>-5.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: ACIMR, 1929, p. 28)

**Table-2.6: Production figure of coal in 1929-30**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coalfield</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1929</th>
<th>% increase or decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jharia</td>
<td>10,753,858</td>
<td>10,785,745</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>2,160,249</td>
<td>2,118,703</td>
<td>+1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>613,533</td>
<td>771,165</td>
<td>-20.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: A.R.C.I.M, 1931, p.36)

113 This was the period of slaughter mining when superior grades coal are extracted, so that it find easy market and quench the thirst of managing agencies for their profit. A sheer waste of natural resource.


The annual output of coal from Jharia mines in 1920 stood at 9,294,040 it showed a marginal increase in 1923 when 10,346,015 tons coals were produced, and by 1935 it had dropped to 9,245,298 tons. The workforce in coal mines was 190,342 in 1920 it rose marginally to 200,913 in 1923. By 1930 this declined to 184,370 and this stood at 194,704. This phase was worst for the working class in the coal mine. The closing of smaller mines due to uneconomical working and lack of demand led to loss of employment to large number of workers in the mines. But the worst was the enforcement of the Mining Regulations of 1929 for gradual exclusion of women from underground work. This together with the commencement of agricultural depression and the intensification of coal depression and the consequent fall of both raisings and dispatches brought about a further reduction of 44% in the case of underground workers. This heavy decline in the employment of women resulted in a big drop in their daily earnings as the figures given in Chapter III of the present thesis would show. Agricultural depression did not permit workers to return to their native places, but forced them to compete among themselves for the diminished employment yet available. Thus, their earnings were practically reduced to a starvation level. (this would be discussed in Chapter III) The loading of coal which was considered womens' work now gave some respite to the male workers and this was more than compensated by the retrenched male workers.

116 C.P. Simons, p.483.
The Second World War saw increased construction activities undertaken by military and the high wages provided by them led to shift of workers toward those sites. From 1942 the coal production was being affected due to shortage. The above reason was compounded by shortage of foodstuffs in the mining region. This was the period of high demand for coal for war industries and so the production was not able to keep pace with the growing demand as reflected in the output. It was only due to the reemployment of women labour and Gorakhpuri labour and various inducements like, ration distribution, increase in wage rates, that the supply of labour was increased to raise the production to feed the war industry as shown in production of coal and labour force in the coal mines below.

Table- 2.7: Coal Production in some selected coalfields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Coalfields</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>% increase or decrease as compared to previous year</th>
<th>Total production in Bihar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Jharia</td>
<td>12,133,186</td>
<td>+3.24</td>
<td>16,589,9996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>1,899,385</td>
<td>-5.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>445,031</td>
<td>+25.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karanpura</td>
<td>486,065</td>
<td>-12.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Jharia</td>
<td>11,662,569</td>
<td>+8.77</td>
<td>15,912,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>2,166,541</td>
<td>+40.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>644,936</td>
<td>+14.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karanpura</td>
<td>736,908</td>
<td>+54.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Jharia</td>
<td>11,788,631</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>17,317,990.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>2,602,998</td>
<td>-6.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>501,735</td>
<td>+7.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karanpura</td>
<td>976,695</td>
<td>+2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: A.R.C.I.M of respected years)

117 Discussed in this chapter earlier.
### Table-2.8: Labour Employed in Some Selected Coalfields.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Coalfields</th>
<th>Underground</th>
<th>Openworking</th>
<th>Surface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jharia</td>
<td>56,734</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>2,839</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>7524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>4,521</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karanpura</td>
<td>1043</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
<td>71,814</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Jharia</td>
<td>58974</td>
<td>11394</td>
<td>23278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>13739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>3837</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>3002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karanpura</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>2742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
<td>72748</td>
<td>13423</td>
<td>46802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Jharia</td>
<td>59079</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>23395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>1278</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16,857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>4647</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karanpura</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>5417</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
<td>72,800</td>
<td>50728</td>
<td>19622</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: A.R.C.I.M of respected years)

With the termination of War the labour supply became less scarce and the "screening" order for recruitment of mining labour in certain area was lifted. The ban on employment of women in underground working was reintroduced but the introduction of Gorakhpuri labour and mechanical methods of working at some of the larger quarries greatly enhanced coal production (as there was acute shortage of mining machinery, plant and stores during the War period.")
So during the period of the study we can see that the industry failed to evolve a labour force completely dependent on mining for their livelihood. Labour in the cropping season and the reaping season still had a fluctuating effect on supply of labour to the mining industry.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{118} The usual exodus of labour from the coalfield in the months of June and July was absent due to late arrival of monsoon and so the productions during these months were abnormally high, \textit{A.R.C.I.M.}, 1948, p.4.