CHAPTER VI

THE RUBBER ECONOMY:
PLANTATION AND INDUSTRY WORKERS
OF KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

Having discussed plantation and industry owners and managers’ characteristics, we now turn to the study of plantation and industrial workers in respect of rubber and rubber industry of the district of Kanyakumari. The description and analysis here relate to data gathered from 125 workers of different descriptions and skills, using a separate schedule of questions (Appendix 6.1). The discussion is as exhaustive as possible from the available data and analysis. The plantation and industrial workers are examined in detail, analysed statistically and interpreted. The discussion is also in two parts: the first part describes the existing situation of the rubber and rubber industry workers and the second part describes the relationships between important variables, which can be considered as factors facilitating or influencing workers’ development and welfare.

Plantation Labour in Kanyakumari

India holds the fourth place in rubber production. With the passing of time, rubber cultivation has increased due to pressing demand for rubber: 544,534 hectares in 1997-98 as against 384,000 in 93-94. Total area under rubber cultivation has increased from 515,547 hectares in 1994–95 to 553,041 in 1998–99. It indicates an overall increase.
Rubber production has stood at 497,056 tonnes in 1998 and has an increase from 471,815 tonnes in 1994–95 to 605,045 in 1998–99. Rubber plantation industry is labour intensive (Haridasan and Nair, 1980: 3).1

As it is true of almost all underdeveloped countries, in India too, labour constitutes by and large one of the major factors of production which is plentiful in supply. Labour is recognised as a separate factor of production. The word ‘labour’ is used in various senses. Marshall defines labour as ‘any exertion of mind or body for purposes other than the pleasure derived directly from work’ (Marshall, 1961: 54).2 According to P. Sarchenko (1987: 27), labour is ‘man’s purposeful activity aimed at producing material and spiritual wealth’.3 Ugo Pagano (1988: 70) defines labour as ‘the necessary toil and trouble that is required for the production of goods’. As Reynolds, Masters and Mosers (1987: 105) have put it, ‘labour is human effort exerted in production’. Generally speaking, any work, whether manual or mental, which is undertaken for a monetary consideration is known as labour in economics. Labour comprises of all persons who work for a living by selling their services directly to the employers. Labour signifies the whole working class as opposed to employers.

The terms Labourers, Workers, Workmen, Workforce, Labour force and Personnel are used interchangeably in the discussion on labour problems.

The definition of workers is based on the concept of income as used in Census 1951. According to 1951 census, workers refer to earners and earning dependents. Income receivers and their dependents, who depend on
agricultural income and agricultural rent as the only means of livelihood, were excluded from the category of workers. An earner is one whose earning is sufficient at least for his or her own maintenance while an earning dependent is one who earns money or money equivalent, which is not sufficient for his or her own maintenance.

The ‘income’ concept was replaced by ‘work’ concept in Census 1961⁶. To be treated as a worker in the 1961 census, all that was necessary was to be engaged in some economic activity, however marginal or secondary one’s participation was. Even if a person puts in an hour’s work a day during reference week, he or she was regarded as a worker.

As per the explanation given in Census 1971⁷, ‘a worker is a person whose main activity is participation in any economically productive work by his or her physical or mental activity. Work involves not only actual work but effective supervision and direction of the work as well’.

As per Census 1981⁸, the workers could be classified into two categories. They are: main workers and marginal workers. The definition of the term ‘worker’ in Census 1981 broadly coincides with the definition of the term as adopted in the Census 1961. Those workers who have worked for more than 183 days during the last year are termed as main workers and those who have worked for less than 183 days during the same period are considered as marginal workers (Khanka, 1988).

Today, labour includes workers who work for others for a given payment in cash or kind. Therefore, highly trained or skilled technicians, supervisors, clerical and salaried staff are as much a part of labour as the
unskilled or semi-skilled manual workers (Bhagoliwal, 1982: 3). The definitions of labour make clear the concept of labour: it is multi-faceted and profound that it constitutes a veritable avenue of research for both innovative and explorative thinkers. Further, the ramifications of labourers and the problems associated with them are also so enormous that it is almost impossible for any researcher to choose a research problem, which covers the entire gamut of labour. Hence for the sake of convenience and simplicity this study is confined to the plantation labourers of Kanyakumari district. The study would offer an introduction to any reader of the thesis the nature of rubber plantations in Kanyakumari district and the problems and prospects of the labourers/workers therein.

Labour is the most important and universal factor in production process (Thomas, 1984). It is an unavoidable factor that plays an important part in determining the level of production.

Rubber plantations can generate massive employment opportunities (Brockway, 1970). But as they are situated in far-off places with a damp climate and unhealthy surroundings (Saxena, 1986), recruitment of workers to rubber plantations was in fact a difficult task. Hence, intermediaries are appointed by the planters to recruit workers from distant places. Under these circumstances, it becomes necessary to know the motivating factors of migration of rubber plantation workers and their recruitment. The rubber plantations do not require highly skilled workers, and the workers also do not need a long and expensive period of training (Selvaratnam, 1988). Therefore, they are paid less than what is paid to the workers employed in other sectors. It will be quite interesting, under these
Rubber sheets are being smoked for drying

Trees felled by the heavy winds
conditions, to study the wages and wage differentials of the rubber plantation workers and their economic conditions.

The Nature of Work in Rubber Plantations

The work in rubber plantation is seasonal in nature. They are not given work throughout the year. They cannot perform any work during ‘rainy’ and ‘leaf fall’ periods, either (Tyagi, 1986)\(^{14}\). But unlike the other agricultural workers, the rubber plantation workers have organized themselves into trade unions (Monappa, 1988)\(^{15}\). They are intended to protect and promote their interests.

Review of Related Studies

The studies undertaken by the International Labour Organization (ILO)\(^{16}\) on plantation labour are only surveys of labour conditions. The studies of the International Labour Organisation, namely, Basic Problems of Plantation Labour (1950), conditions of Employment of Plantation Workers (1957), Extension of Social Security to Plantation Workers (1958) and Plantation Workers (1966) have dealt with the living and working conditions of the plantation workers in Asian and African countries. Similarly, the publications of the Government of India prior to independence, such as, the Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India (1931)\(^{17}\), Report on an Enquiry into conditions of labour in plantations in India (1946)\(^{18}\) and the Report of the Labour Investigation Committee (1946)\(^{19}\) have dealt in detail with the living and working conditions of the plantation workers, together with the wage rates that prevailed during the period of survey of the reports.
The Post-Independence Publications of the Labour Bureau of the Government of India such as Plantation Workers in South India (1948)\textsuperscript{20}, Report of the Plantation Enquiry Commission (1958)\textsuperscript{21} have also reported on the conditions of employment and living standards of workers in the plantations. The Report of the Study Group on Plantations appointed by the National Commission on Labour (1969)\textsuperscript{22} studies the socio-economic conditions of the plantation workers. The three Occupation Wage Surveys\textsuperscript{23} conducted by the Government of India during 1958-59, 1963-65 and 1974-75 have only reported the wage rates that prevailed during the periods when the surveys were conducted.

Two Studies have been made on women workers in plantations. The Government of India conducted one study and the other one was carried out by the International Labour Organisation. They are Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers in Plantations (1980)\textsuperscript{24} and Conditions of Work of Women and Young Workers on Plantations (1984)\textsuperscript{25}. Apart from government agencies, social scientists have also done research on the workers of plantations of which mention may be made of the following: Bhowmik (1984)\textsuperscript{26}, Prasanneshari (1984)\textsuperscript{27}, Basanti (1984)\textsuperscript{28}, Perumal (1985)\textsuperscript{29}, Ray (1986)\textsuperscript{30}, and Sincar (1986)\textsuperscript{31}.

**Characteristics of the Rubber Plantation and Industry Workers**

Among the workers in government rubber plantations 74.17 percent are men and 25.83 percent are women. But in case of private rubber plantation 80.83 per cent of workers are men and women workers constitute only 19.17 per cent. The married workers in government and private rubber plantation constitute 87.50 per cent and 95 per cent, respectively.
The rubber plantation workers belong to the three prominent religions of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. In spite of this apparent diversity based on religion, they stand united to fight for their rights. An earlier survey conducted among 240 rubber plantation workers working in government and private rubber plantations revealed that there are 86 Hindu workers in government rubber plantations and 86 Hindu workers in private rubber plantations. But the Christian workers are found to be only 35 in government rubber plantations and 33 in private rubber plantations. In comparison, Muslim workers are but a few in either government or private plantations. There are just about 5 in government plantations and only one in private plantations. All these lend credence to the conclusion that the rubber plantation workers in Kanyakumari district remain a monumental example for religious and communal harmony.

On studying the rubber plantation workers more closely it is possible to find out that they could be further classified into skilled and unskilled labourers and casual and permanent labourers. The skilled workers constitute 52.50 per cent and 47.50 per cent, respectively in government rubber plantations. What is unique about the rubber plantation workers is that they are highly migratory in nature. Hence, they are studied under the categories of local workers, workers belonging to the native districts, workers from other districts of Tamil Nadu and workers belonging to other states. Migration of the rubber plantation workers is mostly due to economic factors, geographical, physical and political factors as well.

The rubber plantation workers in Kanyakumari district are faced with the two major problems. There are excesses in their indebtedness and there
is addiction to intoxicants in their midst as well. These two problems have considerably restrained the growth of the material prosperity of the rubber plantation workers in Kanyakumari district.

**Wages.** Wages are the reward for labour. The workers, the employers and the government give them a place of very great significance. According to a respondent, *‘To a worker, wages represent income; to the businessman, they represent costs and to the government they represent potential taxes’* (Backman, 1959: 1)\(^{32}\). Wages are the source as well as the key to the solution of most of the labour problems. To a worker, wages are important not only because they constitute a major portion of his income, and thus determine to a large extent his standard of living but also because they determine his status and position in the society (Pant, 1973)\(^{33}\). Wages must be sufficiently high to enable the workers to maintain a reasonable standard of living (ILO, 1956)\(^{34}\). Increased wages can bring about a substantial increase in labour productivity. Further, wages also act as an incentive. Industrial disputes in India arise mostly due to wage problems (Single, 1989)\(^{35}\).

The rubber plantation workers in Kanyakumari district are paid along with their wages the dearness allowance, bonus, and an extra payment for over time. The wages are paid on the basis of the time period spent at the work place. This is called the time wage system. Under this system the unit of time may be an hour, a day or a month. There is yet another system of wage payment as piece rate wage system. According to this system wages are paid in proportion to the quantum of latex produced. The rubber plantation workers are faced with a problem of ‘rest period’ referring to a period during which leaf fall occurs. It starts from the last week of February
and continues until the last week of March. No wage is paid for the workers during the rest period.

The interest of the rubber plantation workers is protected by the trade unions. In Kanyakumari district, the rubber plantation workers belong to the trade unions such as The Indian National Trade Union Congress, The Communist Trade Unions, The DMK Trade Union and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, and The Bharathiya Janata Party Trade Unions. They are the Kanyakumari District Planters Association. Tamil Nadu Planters Associations and the United Planters Association. As the trade union are very active and powerful they have been able to get their members frequent hikes in their daily wages.

**Methods of Wage Fixation.** Several methods are employed in India to fix the workers' wages. Different bodies such as the Pay Commission, Wage Boards, Industrial Tribunals and Labour Courts, High Courts and Supreme Court are engaged in performing the task of wage fixation. Wages are also fixed through collective bargaining and job evaluation. The Wage Board fixes the wage structure for the rubber plantation workers.

**Wage Boards** are set up for fixing wages for several industries. The first Wage Board was set up in 1957 for the cotton textile industry. The Wage Boards are tripartite in nature. They will scientifically formulate a wage structure. A Wage Board is tripartite in nature. It is a non-statutory body that consists of representatives of the employers and the workers. An independent chairman heads it. The government in consultation with the industry concerned appoints the representatives of the employers. Similarly, the government appoints representatives of the workers. The government
usually nominates the chairman. The total number of members varies from 7 to 9. The first Wage Board for plantations was set up in 1960 for tea plantations and followed by coffee and rubber plantations in 1961.

**Wage Components of Workers in Rubber Plantations.** The major components of a worker’s wage are given below:

1. Basic wage;
2. Dearness Allowances (DA);
3. Over Time (OT) Payment;
4. Bonus; and
5. Fringe Benefits.

**Basic Pay.** It is a stable wage paid over a period of time. It could be as a monthly, weekly or daily basis. The basic pay is the normal rate for a given level of work. In rubber plantations the basic pay is paid on a daily basis.

**Dearness Allowance** is an additional payment made by the employer to his workers for the purpose of neutralising the increased cost of living (Sarma, 1988)\(^{36}\). In rubber plantations, the dearness allowance is linked with the cost of living in the Nagercoil Town.

**Over Time Payment** is an extra payment made to a worker who is asked to work over time. The rates are normally 1.5 times the normal wage (Monappa, 1988)\(^{15}\) and, on holidays, it is twice the normal wage. In rubber plantations of Kanyakumari district, no over time is allowed in government plantations. But workers in private plantations are given over time on
holidays for which they are paid twice the normal wage. In our investigation, it has been found that all except the watchmen are given over time.

**Bonus** is something given in addition to what is ordinarily received or money given in addition to an agreed compensation. Till the inception of the Government Rubber Plantations Corporation in Kanyakumari district on 1st October 1984, the workers were receiving only ex-gratia payment. Now, the workers in Government Rubber Plantations are paid 8.33 per cent of their annual total wages as bonus. The workers in private rubber plantations are paid 20 per cent bonus.

**Fringe Benefits** are also called indirect benefits. They are supplementary compensation made in addition to wages to stimulate the interest of the workers and to make the job more attractive and conductive. The fringe benefits are intended to boost the real earnings and provide a sort of economic security to the workers (Monappa and Saiyadain, 1987). Benefit covered by this category are:

a. Stationary;  
b. Non-Stationary; and  
c. Others.

**Stationary Fringe Benefits** include Employee Provident Fund Scheme, Gratuity or Pension Schemes and Employees State Insurance Scheme (ESI). **Non-Stationary Benefits** are payment towards employees' provident fund scheme not covered by stationary requirements as also gratuity and pension fund. Further, they also cover medical facilities, canteens, uniforms and recreational facilities.
Wage Payment Systems. There are two basic methods of wage payment. One is based on the time period spent at the work place. Another system is incentive payment where the payment is based on the results of the workers’ efforts, or output turned out. Under the time wage system, a unit of time may be an hour, a day or a month. Under the piece wage system, wages are paid on the basis of the work turned out by the worker. It is applicable to simple normal work, where there is a possibility to measure the production in definite units. As far as workers in rubber plantations are concerned, they are paid both piece rate and time rate of wages. Tappers are paid piece rate wages and other categories of workers, namely, field worker, factory worker and watchmen are paid time rate wages.

Under piece rate wage system, each tapper has to show an output of 6.4 kg of latex and 1.6 kg of scrap per day. The wage for this task is Rs. 27.78 per day in both government as well as private rubber plantations. For every additional kg of latex, an additional remuneration of 90 paise is paid. For every reduction of one kg of latex and scrap from the standard output, 80 paise will be deducted from the worker’s daily wages.

It is important to note that the workers of the same category do not get equal wages in private rubber plantations. The casual workers are paid less than the permanent workers. But no such discrimination is shown in government rubber plantations.

Method of Payment in Rubber Plantations. The workers are given part payment of their wages. Workers, irrespective of their categories, will be paid Rs. 15 each, every day. The balance amount gets accumulated and
paid at the end of every month. According to the respondents of our field survey, 45.6 per cent of them are on daily wages; 47.2 per cent are paid on a weekly basis and 52.8 per cent of them are paid on a monthly basis.

**Wage Cut.** In our analysis, an attempt has been made to measure the extent of which the workers suffer from wage cut. Wage cut is defined as the loss or reduction in wage rates. It is the difference between daily wage rates and daily average wage earnings. Daily average wage earning can be obtained by dividing annual total wage earnings by 365 days. Total annual wage earnings is the sum total of total wage income plus annual bonus minus social security contribution. Wage cut rate is defined as the rate of wage cut from daily wages.

**Factors Determining Daily Average Wage Earnings of the Workers.** The factors that determine the daily average wage earnings are:

a. Days of employment,
b. Bonus, and
c. Social Security contribution.

**Days of Employment.** As the rubber plantations are, to a certain extent, seasonal in character, the workers are not provided with work throughout the year. They remain idle during some periods such as rainy days, national holidays, weekly holidays and rest period.

**Rainy Days.** As no work can be performed during rainy days, the workers remain unemployed during these days. It was found that workers in the government rubber plantations, on an average, are affected by 41 rainy
days as against 45 rainy days in private rubber plantations. But, the workers in both the government as well as private rubber plantations are paid a compensation of Rs. 8 each during rainy days.

**Weekly Holidays.** A worker is entitled to avail himself a day of rest in every week of seven days. Sunday is declared a weekend holiday in rubber plantations. But, an adult worker is allowed to work over time on holidays. No work is given to the workers in the government plantations but they are given over time on holidays.

**Rest Period.** Rest period refers to a period during which 'leaf fall' occurs, which continues for at least one month in a year. Rest period generally starts from the last week of March. As tapping cannot be done during the period of leaf fall, the workers will not be given work. But the workers are allowed to surrender the earned leave (normally each worker gets 1 day out of every 11 days of the working month) and get the wages for the earned leave by surrendering the earned leave. As the factors such as rest period, rainy days and weekly holidays do not affect the watchmen, they are given work throughout the year.

According to the First Agricultural Labour Enquiry (1950-51)\(^{38}\), the agricultural workers, on an average, were employed for 218 days in a year. The Second Labour Enquiry (1956-57)\(^{39}\) found that, in 1956-57, agricultural workers were employed for 222 days in a year. According to the Rural Labour Enquiry, a male agricultural labourer could, on an average, get work for 272 days in 1964-65. It further pointed out that the workers in the government and private rubber plantations could get employment for 265 and 262 days, respectively. It indicates that the rubber plantation workers in
16 Transport of rubber sheets by jeep

17 Weighing the rubber sheets at the dealers depot
general are in no way better than the agricultural workers as far as employment is concerned. But at the same time, it is not to be forgotten that the workers in rubber plantations get some monetary benefit during non-working days. But the workers in the agricultural sector do not get any such monetary benefit. So, as far as monetary benefit is concerned, the rubber plantation workers are in a better position than their counterparts in the agricultural sector.

Bonus is one of the determinants of the average wage earnings of the workers. Daily average bonus per worker is calculated at Rs.1.72 and Rs.4.11 in the government and private plantations, respectively. The difference in the bonus earned can be attributed to the bonus rates prevailing in the government and private rubber plantations in Kanyakumari district. The watchmen who received more bonus both in government has constituted a privileged class as they get a higher bonus rate than the other categories of workers. This is due to large number of days of employment given to the watchmen. Nevertheless, the field workers employed in all rubber plantations surveyed are paid less in comparison with their counterparts employed in the same plantation.

Social Security Contributions made towards provident fund and family pension also determine the daily average wage earnings of the workers. The rates of contribution made towards provident fund and family pension are 8 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively. However, there is a lot of difference in the contributions made by various categories of workers towards social security schemes. What is evident is that, in the rubber
plantations in Kanyakumari district, all government plantation workers contributed towards social security funds.

It is clear that the plantation workers in Kanyakumari district are under a wage system, which is systematised from time to time through legislations. Further, as more of them are covered by the schemes of provident fund and social security, they are much better than their counterparts engaged in the cultivation of all other kinds of cash and food crops in Kanyakumari district.

Age and Sex of the Plantation Workers. Physical condition of the workers is a basic requirement for manual work. There is also a correlation between age and the physical conditions of the workers. A young man can work better than an old man. It is generally believed that married workers are endowed with a relatively high sense of responsibility.

As they happen to be the breadwinners of their respective families, they do not get themselves involved in activities that affect their income. Nine of the 125 workers interviewed are female workers while 116 are male workers. Young workers of less than 25 years constitute 6.4 per cent, 25-45 years constitute 67.2 per cent, 45-60 years 25.6 per cent and more than 60 years just about 0.8 per cent (Table 6.1). The mean age of the workers is about 41 years with a standard deviation of 9.54. There is relatively small variation among the ages of respondents is seen from its coefficient of variation at 0.234.
Table 6.1: Age Distribution of Plantation / Industry Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Classes</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 25 yrs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interviews 2000.

Family Size of the Plantation Workers. The worker’s job satisfaction, status in the society, their earnings and all other related matters are directly influenced by their family size. Greater the number of dependents, the greater will be the seriousness of the workers towards their job. Hence, there is a direct relationship between the worker’s eagerness to acquire better skills and to earn more and the size of their respective families. A worker, who is employed in a private rubber plantation, maintains a family of 12 members. The mean size of family members of the government and the private rubber plantation workers are calculated to be 5 and 4, respectively. On an average, there are 2 male and 2 female members to a household.

Ninety-six of the worker households have only one single adult male each, 17 of them 2 each, 5 of them 3 each and 4 of them 3 each. Eighty-eight of the families have only one single woman each, 18 of them 2 each, 16 of them 3 each and 2 of them 4 each (Table 6.2). Thirty-nine households have
no young males, 55 of them only one young male each, 23 of them 2 each, 7 of them 3 each and only 1 of them 4 adult males. On the other hand, 48 of the worker households do not have young females, 52 of them only one single young female, 18 of them 2 each, 4 of them 3 each and 3 of them 4 each. In all, one family has a maximum of 6 male members and 1, 6 female members. Households with no males and no females are 7 and 8, respectively. A majority of 44.8 per cent households and 41.6 per cent households have shown 2 males and 2 females each. Just about a fifth of the households have 3 males and 3 females each.

Table 6.2: Sex Composition of the Workers’ Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number Family</th>
<th>Total Male</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Total Female</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interviews 2000.

Very small proportions of workers’ households (10.4 per cent and 12.8 per cent) have reported more than 4 males and 4 females each. Only 14 of the 125 workers households are joint households and as such 111 of them nuclear households.

Religion of the Rubber Plantation Workers. Sixty-nine per cent of the workers investigated is of Hindus, 28.33 per cent are Christians and 2.50
This clearly reflects the predominance of Hindus in the district population.

**Educational Status of Plantation Workers.** Education is an important factor yielding a tremendous influence on the human capital of a country. In fact, there is a direct relationship between education and the efficiency of the workers. The higher the education, the greater will be the cognitive skill. Further, education infuses the workers with a spirit of confidence. Modern industries depend to a great extent on education. Any attempt to build up with an illiterate body of workers would be an exercise in futility. After independence, the Government of India has given the top most priority to schemes of education among workers.

Of the workers interviewed, 7.2 per cent are illiterates. As much as 31.4 per cent of the workers have attained education of 1-5 years, 53.6 per cent 6-10 years, 5.0 per cent 11-12 years and only one (0.8 per cent) has had college education (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3: Educational Attainment of the Plantation Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interviews 2000.

What is important to observe here is that percentage of workers with high school education is more in the case of private rubber plantation
workers. But in government rubber plantations it is the percentage of illiterates who constitute sizeable percentage among the plantation workers. The mean years of education is 6.4 whereas its standard deviation is 3.25 and variation is moderate (cv = 0.505).

**Skilled and Unskilled Workers.** In our study, tappers are classified as skilled workers. Field workers, factory workers and watchmen are brought under the category of unskilled workers. According to the survey, 11.2 per cent of the workers are field workers, 27.2 per cent of them factory workers, and 2.4 per cent of them are watchmen. They are all unskilled. Of the workers, 59.2 per cent of them are tappers, and therefore are skilled (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4: Types of Plantation Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Workers</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tappers</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Workers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory Workers</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watchmen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interviews 2000.

**Migration of the Workers.** Migration is a form of geographical mobility (spatial) between one geographic unit and another, generally involving a change in residence from the place of origin to the place of destination. Such migration is called permanent migration. Size of population in a place at a point of time is a net result of births over deaths and migration. Migrants are defined as ‘persons who are enumerated in a place that is different from the place where they are born’ and non-migrants are defined as ‘persons who were enumerated in the place where they were
born'. Migration may take place from rural areas to urban areas, urban areas to rural areas, rural areas to rural areas and urban areas to urban areas.

The sample study conducted among the plantation workers reveals that nearly 92 per cent of them are immigrants. A majority of the workers (about 65 per cent) have migrated to the rubber estates from different parts of Kanyakumari district.

**Factors Influencing Migration.** Migration of workers from one place to another is caused by many factors such as physical, economic, social, political, environmental, and geographical. The following are the five important factors influencing migration:

1. Economic factors:
   a. Push factors;
   b. Pull factors; and
   c. General economic conditions;
2. Social and cultural factors;
3. Demographic factors;
4. Geographical and physical factors; and
5. Political factors.

**Recruitment of Workers in Rubber Plantations.** The term 'recruitment' is defined in different ways by different people. For one, recruitment is the process of generating a pool of qualified applicants for organisational jobs. For another, recruitment means announcing job opportunities to the public in such a way that a good number of suitable people will apply for them. Recruitment is the first step in the employment
of workers in any organisation. It is a prerequisite for selection. Proper selection depends upon proper recruitment. The efficiency of the workers depends upon the efficiency of the process of selection and the success of a firm in turn depends upon the efficiency of its employees.

For tapping the rubber trees, they generally preferred experienced tappers from private estates. They also recruited a large number of field workers, and there were some experienced tappers among them as well. They are known as relief workers. Whenever a tapper is not reporting to duty, the relief tapper does the tapping. As a result, the rubber plantation is not affected even when some tappers are absent.

In this study, the following are identified as the sources for the entry of workers:

a. Through trade unions;
b. Friends and relatives among the workers;
c. Through officers;
d. Direct approach by workers;
e. Experience of workers;
f. Employment exchange; and
g. Through politicians.

Candidates who come to know about a vacancy through some sources approach the intermediaries directly and get the job. This approach to get jobs is also in practice in rubber plantations owned by private individuals.
Of the 125 workers surveyed, only 23 were recruited through the employment exchange and they are employed in government rubber plantations. Services of employment exchange are not generally utilised by the private planters in the district.

**Experience of the Workers.** Experience is one of the important factors influencing the efficiency of the workers. Workers with experience can do better than the inexperienced workers in any field. Out of a total of 125 workers surveyed, only 51 (40.8 per cent) workers had previous experience before joining the present job whereas the rest had no experience whatever. The government plantation gives priority to experience in the process of recruitment of workers to the estates.

Out of the 51 respondents who expressed that they had previous experience, 49.02 per cent were in the government rubber plantations and 21.6 per cent were in private rubber plantations had previous job experience in their respective lines. In other words, these workers have changed their employment but not their line of activity.

An attempt is made to know the total length of the service of the workers in the present plantations. Nearly 56 per cent of the total respondents have gained experience during their ages between 21 and 30 years. Five per cent have more than 30 years of experience. Mean years of experience of the workers in government and private estates are calculated at 21 and 22, respectively.

**Workplace of Plantation Workers.** Table 6.5 presents the workers’ places of work. The workers of private plantations account for 34.4 per cent;
and government plantations 30.4 per cent; private factory 28.8 per cent; and government factory 6.4 per cent.

Table 6.5: Workplace of Plantation Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private estate</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government estate</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private factory</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government factory</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interviews 2000.

Of the workers, 96.0 per cent are permanent workers while only 4.0 per cent are temporary. The practice in the plantations and factories is not to have temporary employees, except on certain occasions. Trade unions insist that the workers be made permanent once they are on probation of some years. There are private plantations where workers were temporary for long time before they were actually made permanent. In some cases, there were some disputes, which were resolved after prolonged battle between the unions and the management. However, this is exceptional in recent times, as most employees are permanent with 1 or 2 years of probation.

**Health Status of the Workers.** The rubber plantation workers are generally in good health except that they often complain of back pain and chest pain. Back pain is commonly found in the case of almost all the workers in the age group of 41-50 years, whereas workers of younger ages rarely experience back pain. This may be due to their physical strength. As far as the chest pain is concerned, only workers who are in the field for more than 20 years are suffering from such pain. However, what is very important
Latex dripped down while collecting is being weighed at the dealer’s depot
to observe here is that rubber plantations in Kanyakumari district are generally free from any dangerous and contagious diseases.

1. What is obvious from the above discussion is that workers in rubber plantations are more stable than their counterparts in large-scale industries.

2. The labour turnover problem is mild in rubber plantations; and

3. Workers in rubber plantations do not have adequate alternative job opportunities.

When asked to give some information about the workplace, the plantation workers have provided some pertinent information: the workplace is mountainous; it is about 2 hours from residence or it is at some distance; the management gives proper wages; and it is a good company. Some workers (7.2 per cent) have indicated that their factory has no medical/health facilities to attend to the workers or the members of their households.

**Working Hours.** The workers are engaged in 5 to 9 hours of work per day. A majority of 64 per cent is employed for 8 hours a day, while 16.8 per cent are employed for 7 hours a day; 12.8 per cent engaged in work for 6 hours a day; 4.0 per cent for 5 hours a day; and 2.4 per cent for 9 hours a day. The average hours of work per day is 7.93, with a standard deviation of 6.12 and high variation among the workers (cv = 0.779). Obviously, the wages would depend upon the hours of work put in per day by the workers (Table 6.6). The workers report a salary of Rs. 25 to Rs. 90 per day.
Table 6.6: Daily Working Hours for Plantation Workers in Kanyakumari

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Hours</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 hours</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interviews 2000.

Trade Unions and Benefits. More than half the workers (50.4 per cent) in the plantations here are members of the trade unions operative in the area. There are more than 7 trade unions and five of them affiliated to political parties. There is therefore a lot of political consciousness among the workers. About 47 per cent of the workers are affiliated to political parties (AIADMK, BJP, CPM, Congress, DMK, Janata Dal, TMC) based trade unions but only 9.6 per cent of them accept that there is any political interference in day-to-day activities of the trade unions. Otherwise, the unions act independently and in the larger interest of the workers. Benefits accruing to the workers because of their membership in trade unions are varied. Increases in wages are reported by 45.6 per cent of the workers. Improvements in working conditions including salaries are reported by 20 per cent. Increases in bonus are reported by 42.4 per cent of the workers. Good working conditions are reported by 10.4 per cent of the workers.

About 61 per cent reports that the workers’ family members are also employed along with them. Only 4.8 per cent of them report however of their relatives’ membership in trade unions.
Participation in Strikes. Workers have participated in strikes sponsored by the trade unions or otherwise: 38.4 per cent of the workers report such participation. Besides agitation, other activities took various forms, notably public meetings (44 per cent), picketing (26.4 per cent), fast (30.4 per cent) and processions (42.4 per cent). All agitation and protests are in pursuance of seeking better working conditions and wages. As much as 46.4 per cent of the workers have participated in agitation demanding higher wages. Bonus has been the cause of agitation for 47.2 per cent of the workers. Increase in facilities has been the cause of strike by 12.8 per cent of the workers and workers' demands have been the causes for strike by 26.4 per cent of the workers.

Workers on Leave and Leave with Salary. There are regulations on casual leave (CL), which is 12 days in a year. There are of course other kinds of leave of absence from work, which could be categorised as earned leave (this is often surrendered to get reimbursement of salary for the number of days surrendered), medical leave (regulation has it that a worker could avail this for 18 months in all his years in service), and special leave of absence (this is often granted in special circumstances by a competent authority). From the interviews, it is found that the workers have availed 1 day to as many 73 days as on leave of absence.

About 67 per cent of them availed only one day of leave of absence, which is obviously on casual leave. Eleven of the workers have reported leave of absence on 2 days each; 7 of them 4 days each; 2 of them 5 days each; and 9 of them 9 days each. All these leave of absences fall within the limits of casual leave. Six of the workers have reported leave of absence on
52 days and quite a few others varying number of days. The latter is obviously casual leave together with earned or medical leave.

Eighty-two (65.6 per cent) of the workers have reported having taken 9 days of earned leave each in the last year and 9 of them only 2 days of earned leave each in the last year. Seventeen of them (13.6 per cent) have suggested that they often take such leave of absence from work for a variety of reasons. Nearly a fourth of them (24.8 per cent) have accepted to having taken leave of absence without actually informing the management of the plantation or factory. Also 88.8 per cent of them have reported that they take leave of absence while sick.

**Sick Leave.** Nearly 30 per cent of the workers have taken sick leave for as many days as less than or equal to 5 each in the last year. The largest proportion reporting sick leave of 6 to 10 days in the last year is 32 per cent; 14.4 per cent of them report between 11 and 15 days last year; and 13.6 per cent of them 16 and 20 days last year. There are workers who have taken leave of absence on account of sickness for more than 20 days and they constitute 9.6 per cent of the workforce.

**Problems of Rubber Plantation Workers.** The plantation workers in Kanyakumari district are riddled with the problems, which are social and economic in nature. An attempt is made in the chapter to portray one or two common place and very serious economic problems, which have proved themselves to be cantankerous to the growth of plantation workers.

**Indebtedness of the Workers.** A very noticeable feature of the economic condition of the workers in rubber plantations is the existence of
indebtedness: ‘Indian worker is born in debt, continues to live in debt, and dies in debt’. Indebtedness is one of the major causes of low standard of living of the Indian workers.

The causes of indebtedness are classified under three heads, namely, social, economic and personal. Under social causes, he has included expenditure incurred on ornaments, payment of dowry, feast at the time of marriage and festivals. Inadequate wages of workers is the major economic cause. Workers’ personal habits such as use of alcohol, gambling, frequent or occasional visits to prostitutes and cinemas and consumption of beverages are important personal causes for indebtedness.

Indebtedness has many evil effects. It makes the workers irresponsible and makes them spendthrift. It also demoralises them. It creates tension and leads to absenteeism among workers. Altogether indebtedness, subtly but insidiously, affects physical, mental and moral health of the employees. It also lowers their productive efficiency.

It should be remembered that the information regarding indebtedness is not entirely reliable on account of workers’ lack of knowledge about the extent of the debt. They might also have hesitated to disclose their exact economic position to the investigators. About 82 per cent of the workers are in debt, and those in government rubber plantations (42 per cent) are in greater debts than those in the private employment. The amount of borrowing varies from worker to worker. It is from Rs 5,000 to as much as Rs 25,000. This may create an impression that the data furnished by the respondents is wrong. But it has been found in the enquiry that the data
furnished by the workers are true as they have borrowed for meeting the marriage expenses.

There are various purposes for which workers have borrowed. A majority of the workers (44.90 per cent) has borrowed for the purpose of meeting expenditures on consumption. The next important purpose of borrowing is for marriage expenses (17.35 per cent).

The chief source of borrowing for the workers is the moneylender (48.98 per cent). As workers could get loans easily from moneylenders just by paying a higher rate of interest, they utilised often the services of the moneylenders. Moneylenders in turn have exploited the weaknesses of the workers and made them borrow more money on higher interests.

The rate of interest charged by the moneylenders on loans varies from 36 per cent to 120 per cent per annum, depending upon the purpose of borrowal, the type of security offered and the duration of loan. Banks generally charge 11-18 per cent interest, depending upon the specific nature of the loan. The rate of interest charged by the moneylenders varies also from person to person. The interest will be deducted from the loan amount at the time of borrowing and the workers must repay the entire loan within a stipulated period.

An attempt has been made to study the relationship between the indebtedness and other variables such as age, sex, skills, marital status, size of family, employment status, education, and wage income of the workers. Age is one of the factors influencing the workers to borrow. The percentage of workers in indebtedness is higher (87.50) in the age group of 41-50 years.
Sex is also considered to be an important factor determining indebtedness of the workers. About 92.5 per cent of the male workers are in debt and about 44 per cent of the female workers are also in debt. It shows that the female workers are more conscious of the evil effects of indebtedness and male workers do not worry much about being indebted for they have to meet certain obligations / responsibilities which are their own.

While 87 per cent of the skilled workers are in debt, 75 per cent of unskilled workers are also in debt; and 86.8 per cent of the married workers have borrowed for various purposes. Borrowing habit is rare (28.6 per cent) among the unmarried workers. Generally, the married have more commitments than the unmarried. So, they are forced to borrow for various reasons.

Workers will not be forced to borrow if they could manage their household expenditure within their household income. Debt is the net result of excess expenditure over income. In our analysis, irrespective of the range of household income, 82 per cent of the workers have borrowed for some reason or other. 80 per cent of the workers whose household income is below Rs. 6,000 have borrowed as against 44 per cent of the workers, whose household income varies between Rs. 16,001 and Rs. 18,000.

One may doubt as to how it is possible for persons who do suffer from indebtedness to restrain themselves from remitting and saving something out of their income. But to our surprise 20 per cent of the workers surveyed have the habit of savings. One of the reasons for excessive growth of indebtedness
of all the plantation workers is that they incur very heavy expenditures on intoxicating paans and cigarettes.

Though it is universally accepted and scientifically proved that the habits of using intoxicant, paans and cigarettes are injurious to health, the workers in general do not refrain themselves from using these items. In our study, a major portion of the total expenditure on non-food items is expended on these items only. Thus it is obvious that the plantation workers are faced with the problem of addiction to intoxicants and indebtedness. No wonder then that they live in poverty; die in poverty; and bequeath poverty.

**Savings and Life Insurance.** Although it is customary for all workers to save a part of their wages or income and also write a life insurance policy, not many of the workers adhere this practice. Small savings is accounted for by 16 per cent of the workers; other savings by 19.2 per cent of them; and 55.2 per cent of them have written life insurance policies for protecting their lives and also their families in case of their deaths or accidents.

**Housing of the Workers.** While 67.2 per cent of the workers own their houses, 20.8 per cent of them live in rented housing and others live in factory or plantation housing. Being in the remote and forested areas, the rent is quite reasonable and is within affordable limits. Plantation housing, which is small in number and provided to workers of certain years of service, is cheaper than the rented housing.

**Income and Expenditures.** Table 6.7 presents the household income by categories of income. A little more than a third of the workers (34.4 per cent) have a household income of less than Rs. 1,000 per month; 16 per cent
of them between Rs. 1,001 and Rs. 1,500; about a third of them (31.2 per cent) between Rs. 1,501 and Rs. 2,000; and 17.6 per cent of them have shown a household income of Rs. 2,001 and Rs. 2,500. A miniscule 0.8 per cent have a monthly income of Rs. 2,501 to Rs. 3,000. Thus, most of them have a small household income, an average of Rs. 1,477 per month among them. Standard deviation for household income is 742 while coefficient of variation showing smaller variations among the workers’ households is 0.503.

Table 6.7: Household Income of the Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Category (Rs)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;=1,000</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001-1,500</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,501-2,000</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,001-2,500</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,501-3,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interviews 2000.

Food Expenditures. For the workers, food forms the most important expenditure. A little more than a fourth of the households (26.4 per cent) spend less than Rs. 300 per month; 15.2 per cent between Rs. 300 and Rs. 900; 19.2 per cent between Rs. 900 and Rs. 1,100; 31.2 per cent between Rs. 1,100 and Rs. 1,300; and 8 per cent more than Rs. 1,300 per month.

So it is evident that a majority of 58.4 per cent spend more than Rs. 900 per month on food items. Considering the monthly household income of about Rs. 1,500 on an average, the average of Rs. 900 on food is 60 per cent of the household income (Table 6.8).
Table 6.8: Expenditure on Food by the Workers' Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure in Rs/Mth</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 300</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-900</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900-1100</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100-1300</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1300</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interviews 2000.

Standard deviation is 1125.96 while the coefficient variation showing large variations among the workers households in monthly food expenditures is 1.25.

Clothing Expenditures. On an average, the households spend Rs. 145 on clothes, although the range is anywhere between Rs. 100 and Rs. 3,000. The standard deviation is 478 and the variation is 3.298, meaning large variations among the households of the plantation workers. Purchase of clothes incurs very high expenditures only on occasions such as festivals and marriages. Otherwise, there is the normal need for clothes and it is quite cheap. It is learnt that 85.6 per cent of the workers’ households spend as little as Rs. 100, which means substandard clothing for all of the household members. On the other hand, 9.6 per cent of the households spend between Rs. 101 and Rs. 300; 1.6 per cent between Rs. 301 and Rs. 1,000; and 3.2 per cent more than Rs. 1,000. It must be pointed out again that only on rare occasions, the workers could have the luxury of buying clothes for more than Rs. 1,000, if ever.
Expenditures on Education. Education in public schools are almost free. The only expenditure is on books and notebooks. Under the noon meal scheme for school children, the children of the workers are provided with food for the noon as well. The average expenditure on education therefore is small, at Rs. 98. The standard deviation however is 401, and there is a very large variation among the workers in terms of their educational expenditures. Eighty-eight per cent of the workers' households incur less than Rs. 100; 8.0 per cent between Rs. 101 and Rs. 300; 2.4 per cent between Rs. 301 and Rs. 500; and 1.6 per cent more than Rs. 500.

Expenditures on Health. Health care expenditure is a vital part of the household expenditures. Workers are covered by health insurance under the Employment Services Insurance (ESI). Nearly 89 per cent of the households yet incur less than Rs. 100 on health or medical expenses; 7.2 per cent of them incur between Rs. 101 and Rs. 300; 2.4 per cent between Rs. 301 and Rs. 500; and 1.6 per cent of them more than Rs. 500. Only rarely very high expenses are incurred in medical / health care, especially when there are persons with continuous medical conditions. The workers do not report the presence of such people in their households. The average expenditure on health is Rs. 67, with a standard deviation of 108 and a coefficient variation of 1.62. The maximum reported expenditure on health by one of the workers is Rs. 600.

Rent, Fuel and Electricity Expenditures. Only 14 workers among the 125 report money being spent on rent of house lived in. The mean rent paid is Rs. 114, while standard deviation is high at 44 and coefficient of variation at 3.59. About 9 per cent of the workers living in rented housing
pay rent of less than Rs. 100; 1.6 per cent between Rs. 100 and Rs. 200; and 0.8 per cent more than Rs. 200. Fuel is another expenditure of the workers’ households which only 36 of the 125 workers interviewed pay. Fuel is either wood or kerosene, but mostly wood. Women and children of the household substitute fuel by collecting dry wood and twigs from the forests around. Therefore, the expenditure on fuel is small: 12.8 per cent of the workers’ households spend less than Rs. 50, while 12 per cent spend between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100; and 4 per cent more than Rs. 100. There is a large variation among the workers’ households is borne by the coefficient of variation at 2.32. The standard deviation is 54. While the average expenditure on fuel is Rs. 80, the maximum spent by one household is Rs. 450. The households which spend Rs. 100 (5.6 per cent) and Rs. 150 (3.2 per cent) are not in a position to collect fuelwood from the forests for want of women and children who could do that in their households.

Electricity is another expenditure reported by 105 workers’ households. About 12 per cent of the households spend as little as or less than Rs. 25; 47.2 per cent of the households spend between Rs. 25 and Rs. 50; 12 per cent each between Rs. 50 and Rs. 75 and between Rs. 75 and Rs. 100; and 0.8 per cent more than Rs. 100. The average expenditure on electricity is Rs. 43, with a standard deviation of 31 and coefficient variation of 0.709.

**Expenditures on Transport.** Travel is performed every day by the workers to their workplaces and also by the household members for a variety of purposes. More than half the workers and their households (54.4 per cent) do not travel to work or any places of importance regularly. They may travel
occasionally to some places about. Nineteen per cent of the workers' households spend about or less than Rs. 25 on transport while 12.8 per cent between Rs. 25 and Rs. 50; 4.0 per cent between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100; and 9.6 per cent more than Rs. 100. For some of the factory workers, however, transport is subsidised and they do not incur any expenses on their own travel while they may do so on their wards. On an average, the households spend Rs. 44 and the standard deviation is 146. There is also a large variation among them, as coefficient of variation is 3.32.

A majority of 70.4 per cent of the workers own their own bicycles while only 8.0 per cent other vehicles for travel.

**Expenditures on Festivals and Social Occasions.** These are a heavy drain on the workers' income needs no emphasis, as there are several festivals every year and social occasions such as marriages and other ceremonies in relatives' and friends' homes. It is customary that the households gift away money and materials on social occasions and subscribe to community funds on festivals. Only 11.2 per cent of the workers' households report having spent money on festivals: 7.2 per cent less than or equal to Rs. 100; 1.6 per cent between Rs. 100 and Rs. 200; and 2.4 per cent more than Rs. 200. The average expenditure on festivals is Rs. 175 with a standard deviation of 91 and coefficient variation of 4.64.

Slightly less than half the workers' households (49.6 per cent) have reported expenses on family functions, ranging from Rs. 10 to Rs. 1,000. Of the 125 households interviewed, 46.4 per cent spend less than Rs. 100; and 1.6 per cent each between Rs. 100 and Rs. 200 and more than Rs. 200. Only one household each reports an expenditure of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000.
respectively. This expenditure may be because of gifts given away on the occasions to a near relative. The average expenditure on family functions is Rs. 74 with a standard deviation of 101 and coefficient variation of 3.15.

There are expenditures on other social functions as well, which could be of varying descriptions. Just 20 of the workers' households report expenses on other social functions: 6.4 per cent less than or equal to Rs. 25; 5.6 per cent between Rs. 25 and Rs. 50; 2.4 per cent between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100; and 1.6 per cent more than Rs. 100. Other social occasions demand an average expenditure of Rs. 57, with a standard deviation of 27 and coefficient variation of 2.95.

Other Expenditures. This includes all and sundry expenses including other food items. The average expenditure is Rs. 178, with a standard deviation of 149. The variations among the workers' households are large as can be vouched by the coefficient of variation: 0.838. A majority of the workers' households spend less than Rs. 200 on other items, while 28.8 per cent spend between Rs. 201 and Rs. 300; 10.4 per cent between Rs. 301 and Rs. 400 and 2.4 per cent between Rs. 401 and Rs. 500.

Tours are indicated to by 5.6 per cent of the workers as being one of the other expenditures. But 4.0 per cent of them spend a paltry sum of Rs. 25 and only a rare tourist among the workers spend as much as Rs. 2,840.

Cigarettes, alcoholic drinks and drugs are in use by a fifth of the workers: 10.4 per cent of them spend Rs. 100 per month on an average, 5.6 per cent Rs. 50 per month on an average, and rare addicts spend as much as
Rs. 1,562 per month. The highest reported by a respondent is Rs. 2,670 per month.

Cinema is another of the workers’ addiction, which costs anywhere from Rs. 10 per month to about Rs. 100 per month per worker. Only 29.6 per cent of the workers report expenditures on cinema. Rarely if ever the workers spend beyond their means on cinema, but addiction to cinema is more common among the workers, for it is probably their only pastime.

Only 2.4 per cent of the workers possess telephones, whereas 64.8 per cent radio and 20.8 per cent television.

Savings and Indebtedness. Two-thirds of the workers have shown that they are in the habit of saving a part of their income. Savings can be as little as Re. 1 and as much as Rs. 100 per month. Nearly a third (32.8 per cent) of the workers has shown savings of Rs. 10 or less per month; 12.8 per cent between Rs. 11 and Rs. 20 per month; 4.8 per cent between Rs. 21 and Rs. 30 per month and less than 1.0 per cent a sum more than Rs. 30 per month.

There are debts reported by the workers and the range is between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 150,000. While nearly a fifth of them report little or no debts, 1.6 per cent has less than Rs. 1,000 as debts. The workers have shown varying levels of indebtedness, with 7.4 per cent between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 3,000; 11.2 per cent between Rs. 3,000 and Rs. 5,000; 2.4 per cent between Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 9,000; and 20.8 per cent between Rs. 9,000 and Rs. 11,000. A very small proportion (1.6 per cent) of them report an indebtedness of between Rs. 11,000 and Rs. 13,000. More than a third (36
per cent) report having an indebtedness of more than Rs. 15,000. Among the workers, 4 per cent have shown very high levels of indebtedness, with more than Rs. 32,000 to as much as Rs. 150,000.

Sources of money received as debts are the individuals in 53.6 per cent of the cases; and banks in 46.4 per cent of the cases. More than a fifth of them (21.6 per cent) have shown their indebtedness as being very severe, while 66.4 per cent of them perceive it to be not very serious.

Problems Faced by the Rubber Plantation and Industry Workers. The workers have reported several problems and their perceived difficulty in resolving them. They have listed as many as 26 different problems, some of them are: children’s education, their illness (3.2 per cent), wives’ various illnesses (5.6 per cent), sisters’ weddings (3.2 per cent), husbands’ desertion (2.4 per cent), house loans (1.6 per cent), low salary, wages and incomes (8.8 per cent) and homelessness (4.0 per cent). Indebtedness is also seen as a major problem alongside the fall in rubber prices (4.0 per cent). All of these could be resolved appropriately and the workers are aware of the nature of the solutions and the pitfalls one would have to avoid if one has to be intelligent to overcome the problems. Low incomes, wages and salaries have to be necessarily tackled by increased wages and salaries for the workers. Falling rubber prices could be saved by a fixed system of pricing. Increase in wages, increase in access to health and medical care, and increase in cost effectiveness are some of the solutions suggested by the workers.

Income and Intra-Household Allocation

One of the several factors influencing the (human) welfare of the workers in the plantations and industry is their income. It is on this very
factor that their intra-household allocations are dependent. Allocations to basic minimum needs and other health needs as medicine and social needs such as education, transport, festivals and family functions, tours and cinema are also dependent on income.

It is clear that income and all allocations are positively and statistically in a significant way related. Among the allocations, that which are made in fuel ($t = 2.058$ at 0.042 level), electricity ($t = 2.970$ at 0.004 level) and other items of expenditure ($t = 6.323$ at 0.0001 level) are the most significant. Overall, income and 14 consumer variables such as food, clothing, medicine, education, rent, fuel, electricity, transport, festival, family functions, other functions, tours, cinema and entertainment are so well correlated with a multiple $R$ at 0.725 and coefficient of determination is 0.526 (variance explained therefore is 52.6 per cent). The $F$ ratio significant at 0.0001 level is 8.073, indicating the mean of the allocation variables is a variable. The Durbin-Watson $D$ statistic showing differences among the workers population is 1.545, which is indicative of large scale differences among the workers.

In order that the factors influencing the social welfare of the workers' population may be identified, a stepwise multiple regression was carried out with income and 15 variables being intricately related. The regression in Step 0 yielded a multiple $R$ of 0.725 with a coefficient determination of 0.526 where minimum tolerance for entry into model is 0.01. The stepwise model has removed ten terms in as many steps and yielded at the tenth step a multiple $R$ of 0.711 with a coefficient determination of 50.5 per cent. The multiple Rs and the R-squares are shown below against each step and the
term removed from analysis. The terms removed are those with the least influence on social welfare although they are the variables one would assume as being very important determinants of intra-household allocation behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Term Removed</th>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>R-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Festival</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>0.526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>0.526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>0.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>0.724</td>
<td>0.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>0.724</td>
<td>0.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>0.721</td>
<td>0.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other Functions</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td>0.515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Drugs, drinks, narcotics</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>0.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tours</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>0.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>0.711</td>
<td>0.505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subset model therefore includes only the following variables:

1. Other items of expenditures (basic minimum related);
2. Education;
3. Fuel;
4. Electricity; and
5. Family Functions.

All the five variables are significant economically and they have significant student t-test values as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms in the Subset Model</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>p (2 Tail)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7.878</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.461</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>2.905</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Electricity  
3.474  0.001

Family Functions  
2.151  0.033

The F-ratio for the subset model fit is 24.312 significant at 0.0001 level, meaning the intra-household allocation of income is primarily on the five variables above.

Other items of expenditure are the most important of the influences (t = 7.878 at 0.0001 level) followed by education, which the working population value most among their children (t = 3.461 at 0.001), which their fellow workers subscribe to in large number. The other variables which influence social well-being of the workers are fuel (t = 2.905 at 0.004 level), electricity (t = 3.474 at 0.001 level) and family functions (t = 2.151 at 0.033 level).
Footnotes


