

WORKERS' ATTITUDE AND COMMITMENT TO WORK

Most of the workers of FSTPP were found to have been suffering from the 'fever of dissatisfaction'. As it appears that they joined this organization just to earn their livelihood. Many of them were found ready to leave the organization if they got other jobs like school teacher, clerk, or equivalent in any other organization. According to them, the job over here is boring, laborious, monotonous and uncomfortable. Such attitude was conspicuous among both technical and non-technical workers. An executive, Ph.D. holder from Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, told the present investigator that there was no scope here to utilise the knowledge that he acquired through higher education. As he assessed, his works could be done even by a matriculate.

Another executive of managerial rank, expressed the view that there was no justification for setting up that power station at Farakka by destroying so much cultivable land. According to him, the nation could earn more through agricultural production of these land than by production of power. Incidentally, he was an active supporter of a leftist political party. The present investigator was, however, reported by different persons, including government officials (local B.D.O.) that was an agriculturally low productive area. It is to be mentioned here that the power station was set up in that area by the active patronization of the then central minister A.B.A. Gani Khan Chaudhury, a well respected man from Malda district.

Most of the employees of Farakka Super Thermal Power Project have migrated from villages to a highly sophisticated and modern technology-based power station. A number of workers/employees are there who are first generation service-holders. Their father/brothers are still engaged in agricultural farming. To out their livelihood they joined the power project. Since they have joined the project only to earn their livelihood, most of the employees perform their duty by passing their time within the compound of the power station. There appears a hardly any motivation among the workers of this power station to demonstrate efficiency of the project. It is to be mentioned here that the Public Relations Officer (an executive) of this power station left this organization to join another organization when the field-work of the present author was in progress. Few respondents told that since they got no other job, they are in this project. According to several of them, the jobs of the power station are not attractive, challenging or enjoyable.

One can reasonably presence that such mentality is not conducive to promote work-culture in the project. The negative impact of this mentality on the production seems rather too<sup>o</sup> apparent.

The employees who came from rural areas, almost all of them belong to the non-executive category. They are not much educated and are generally from the agricultural background.

Being somewhat educated, they are rather hesitate to go to the field for farming. They are interested in the job that belong to the white collar category. The moment they qualify for this kind of job, they try heart and soul to stay there and became eager to transform their life style from the rural to the urban pattern. There are instances where they were found hesitant to mix with the rural people of their own neighbourhood.

Although the vast majority of Indian workers come from rural background and by and large prefer to return back to their traditional neighbourhood, they too show preference for industrial jobs along with resentment about city life. They look upon their industrial jobs in the city as a steady and permanent source of income and economic security, but find to maintain ties with respective villages for fulfilment of social and cultural requirements.

As already indicated, the workers of Farakka Super Thermal Power Project are rather apathetic toward direct participation in Union/Association activities. They stay away from direct conflict of the Union/Association vs. management. Few of them, of course, are very aggressive but they are rather exceptions. One respondent of the rural area, whose house is in a village of West Dinajpur District, told the present investigator, "we should be satisfied with our salary and other benefits as we get more than many in such organization". He was a commerce graduate

and a typist in a State Government office before joining this organization.

The mental make up of the technical employees are to some extent different from the non-technical employees. The non-technical employees viz. employees of Personnel & Administration Department, Finance & Accounts Department in general were passing their time primarily as 'clock watchers' who were ever eager to get back home. Of course, a small fraction of them was an exception. Otherwise it would have been impossible to run the plant at all. Even that small fraction do not find their job very attractive. It may be noted that most of the active Union/Association workers are from the Personnel & Administration Department.

The technical employees in comparison, appear somewhat dedicated to their jobs. Although in certain cases they too have shown their dissatisfaction since they were not getting their proper atmosphere of work still their commitment is beyond question. A Senior Engineer told the present author, "The work in this power station is highly politically motivated. Due to this, there prevails an unhealthy atmosphere leading to some troubles at work".

Since there is a close interconnection of the Departments regarding work, if one Department or few employees behave irresponsible, others can't do their work properly either.

The technical employees are closely associated with the production. They often demonstrate responsible behaviour. In certain cases, this dedication is duly appreciated by the management.

Job satisfaction is the most important criteria for the employees of an industry and even for any institution. The Hawthorne experiments were taken to provide evidence of the need to think in terms of 'social man'. Awareness of the nature of man's 'needs' has led to discussion of 'self-actualising man' or 'complex man' rather than 'social man' (Schein : 1965). It has been suggested that needs can be classified in a hierarchy ranging from simple needs for survival, safety, and security to self-actualisation which may involve both good 'hygiene' (removing factors like poor working conditions which lead to dissatisfaction) and providing motivating factors (e.g. recognition and achievement which fulfil the needs for esteem and self-actualisation) (Maslow, 1954; Herzberg et al, 1969; see also Wall and Stephenson, 1970).

Taking a lead from given situation, it is proposed to examine at least some of the issues raised by the authorities in the present dissertation. At the time of fieldwork the present author observed a number of workers in the Farakka Super Thermal Power Project who were dissatisfied in their works. They were dissatisfied due to 'unhealthy (political) atmosphere', 'dictatorship of the management' and nature of works, etc.

Even among the best qualified people employed by FSTPP some elements of dissatisfaction are conspicuous. A number of scholars (from the Indian Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Management etc.) are engaged in this power station, NTPC is deploying highly qualified professionals and technical experts to their organisations/plants. But according to them (scholars), except in a few cases, most of the workers are inefficient and irresponsible. This becomes a constant source of frustration and irritation for them.

Another respondent told, "If I would get any scope of lecturership in any college, I shall leave this service". It is to be mentioned here that the salary and other benefits are more here than what could be in the Colleges.

Due to such dissatisfaction, a kind of lack of rhythm of works is conspicuous in this power station. But, from the managements' point of view, the works of the power station are highly technical and sophisticated. For this, they prefer highly qualified technical experts who should find their job challenging and interesting.

As mentioned earlier (Chapter 4), there is a Plant Level Committee and three Shop Level Committees in this power station. These Committees have been formed to ensure proper work arrangement. The members of these Committees were not so qualified as experts

in their respective field. They were picked up on political considerations. The highly qualified technical experts feel alienated because of this. When the workers face any problem, these members fail to resolve those primarily because of lack of appropriate knowledge in that subject. A number of employees of FSTPP were sufficiently uninhibited in exposing their dissatisfaction.

Sometimes, absenteeism and labour indiscipline are also considered as indicators of lack of commitment. Sharma (1970) used thirty independent variables and tried to see their relationship with absenteeism, the dependent variable. He stated

".... out of these thirty variables only the rural-urban background and union involvement were found to be significantly related with absenteeism. However, in both cases, the direction of relationship was contrary to popular beliefs. That is to say, the rural workers were found to be more regular than their urban counterparts and those who were interested in the union and who were active union participations were more regular than those who did not have any union involvement".

The present author observed that the employees who had rural background were interested in adjusting themselves to the system of the power plant. But due to their inadequate background they failed to do that in some cases. They are more interested in

doing their duties than in union work or other ticks which are going on around the industrial system. It was further observed that they were thinking more about production of their agricultural land which are there in their native places. Due to this some of them are taking leave during the harvesting time.

He also observed that most of the employees who had rural background have considered that service provides a chance to uplift themselves from the rural life-style to the urban life-style and better economic standard. Because of this, most of them had no inclination to leave the organization. Besides this, another important factor was there, that was, the better salary and better benefits than what they are in many other organisations. In the case of people with urban background, the fact was just opposite. Many of them were interested to leave this organisation even if they could get a little less benefit in other organizations. The reason behind needs to be carefully examined.

The employees who were involved in union activities had less interest to leave the organization than the others. Due to such involvement, they are more or less totally identified with this establishment and find it rewarding to be over here.

Discipline is the most important criteria for appreciating commitment to work. But due to unhealthy political atmosphere or due to the undue interference of muscle power, we observe that

there is a lack of discipline in the industrial sector, especially in West Bengal. It should be mentioned here that many of the private organizations had shifted their factories from West Bengal to other places due to such unhealthy political atmosphere (there are other causes also viz. shortage of power, etc.). The lack of discipline among the workers is another important reason. There are plenty of instances where the workers even disobeyed their superiors. There were also instances when the upper class employees (Supervisors, Executives) also violated the code of discipline. At FSTPP some Supervisors and Executives were found to come late to the plant and leave early. Instead of attending to their jobs, they were found roaming about here and there in the plant. They were also disinterested in attending the cultural programmes of the plant.

Reasons for the indiscipline can be enumerated as below:

- (1) The Supervisors who look into the discipline of the workers, were themselves not that disciplined.
- (2) Informal cliques based on pseudo-kinship relations were formed in the factory. The boss was considered as the pseudo-elder brother and therefore, were looked upon to protect the interests of the subordinates (the pseudo younger brothers).
- (3) The management was not found to be committed to the purpose of making the enterprise efficient and disciplined.

Despite these, there is a low rate of absenteeism. The main causes behind this can be understood as follows:

- (i) Salary is better than many other organizations,
- (ii) Quarter facilities are relatively better here,
- (iii) Free transport facilities are available here,
- (iv) Enough job securities are here.
- (v) House-building loan/vehicle loan facilities are available here.
- (vi) Good promotion facilities are expected here.
- (vii) Children's education facilities are adequate here.
- (viii) Good recreation and employee's welfare facilities are available here.

The influence of technology as a constraint, or even a determinant, of social relations and behaviour in industry has been explored by researchers who have been labelled as using a 'technological implications' approach. Concern for the social consequences of the material means of production has, of course, a long and important history in social science (Marx and Engels, 1958; Durkheim, 1933); the use of a 'technological implications' approach, however, involved making detailed distinctions between types of production system within modern industry' (Brown, 1981 : 92).

Considering the above statements, we may say that the Farakka Super Thermal Power Plant is a highly sophisticated technology-based industry. The production of this industry depends upon the condition of the machine, quality of the raw materials (coal), and sincerity of the employees. The present investigator was informed that the coal used here are of low quality (of less calorific value). Lack of sincerity of the employees (in some cases) was also a reality due to some unavoidable circumstances (which have been discussed earlier). As a result the production of this power plant is not that satisfactory. As a result, the employees are not getting production incentive bonus here.

Attitude to work must be looked into as a consequence of totality of the workers experience inside as well as outside the factory (Beynon and Blackburn : 1972). In FSTPP it has been observed that there are at least some experienced employees whose ranks are also fairly high but the technical works deployed under them are neither very qualified nor much experienced. Due to this though the later are under the supervision of a number of experienced employees, demonstration of commitment of technical workers is not that conspicuous.

It should be mentioned here that the social relations and behaviour (and of course production) cannot depend upon the nature of workers' orientations to work any more than it can on the type of technology.

It has been observed that a number of employees of this power station were indisciplined. This was due to highly political motivation of the employees. Most of the employees were the members of some union or association. It is a fact that most of the trade unions are enthusiasts of some political parties of West Bengal as well as of India. The activity of the unions of FSTPP could not be upto the expectation primarily due to this fact.