

Chapter II

Industrialization in India: The Development of the Indian Railways till 1974

In this chapter we discuss the establishment and growth of the railway industry and the emergence of the industrial working class in colonial India from the mid of the 19th century till independence. The chapter also discusses the growth and development of the Railway industry in the post independent period till 1974. In this chapter we focus on the nature of the railway workers in India since independent up to 1974. This chapter is divided into three sections. In section I we look at the construction of the railway industry during the colonial era and the emergence of the industrial working class with the establishment of the railway industry. The second section deals with the development of the railway industry in the post independent period till 1974. In the third section the nature of the railway working class since independence up to 1974 has been looked at.

I

Establishment and Development of the Railway Industry and the Emergence of the Railway Working Class

Industrialisation in India started with the advent of the railway industry from the 1850s. This section of the chapter looks at the reasons behind the establishment of the railway industry in India in the colonial era. It has dealt with the emergence of the industrial working class in India and the nature of the railway workers in the colonial period from the mid 19th century till independence. According to historians, the entire period of British economic domination over India can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase started from 1757, i.e., after the Battle of Plassy the East India Company monopolised the Indian market till the early 1850s. The second phase began from 1858 after the Sepoy Mutiny. This period saw the culmination of highest rate of exploitation (exploitation by industrial capital) and

finally the period of 1914-47 had noticed the end of colonial exploitation by the British and the beginning of neo-colonial exploitation of the Indians by advanced exploitations in general (Bagchi, 1982; p. 79).

The first phase did not notice any industrial development in the country because the East India Company was mainly a trader. By the late 1830s, the British enterprise and capital had already expanded to the sugar manufacture, rice and flour mills, plantation industries like, indigo and tea, shipyards, mining, foreign trade and even they invested in the banking and insurance sectors (Bhagwati & Desai, 1970; p.20). The growth however was very slow. Lord Dalhousie, a technological moderniser introduced the railways as a tool of social, cultural, political and religious change during the colonial domination of the country. Therefore, the process of railway construction in the mid 19th century had opened up the path for the development of modern industries. Railroads for India were first initiated in the mid 1830s. In this connection I. J. Kerr had mentioned that fifteen years of promotion and debate had reached the key decision in favour of the Great Peninsula Railway (GIPR) and the East India Railway (EIR) that were made in March 1849, hence finally rail board building in British imperial possession began in 1850 (Kerr, 2012; p.17). Surprisingly the surplus of British capital had to be merged and integrated with the world economy for its own growth. In the context of invention and utilisation of steam-power in industrial production of railways and shipping, British industrial capital was remained unaware regarding the value of the commodities it produced (Bailey and McGuire, 2007; p.105). During the period of 1920s and 1930s British industrial capital was in search of new investment opportunities to increase its profit margins. However, British capitalists initially were not willing to invest in the Indian railway constructions. But two companies i.e., GIPR and EIR agreed to build railway lines with a five percent guaranteed return on their investment, assurance of which was given by the Government of India. The total investment in establishing the railway industry was initiated from the Britain but the risk was completely carried on by the Indians who liquidated their pockets to pay the taxes. It ultimately paid the five percent guarantee to the railway companies which were associated with the establishment of the railways in the early period of the colonial rule and it was also used as a rate of profit for the guaranteed companies which confirmed their earnings throughout the nineteenth century. Within a few years, it became exorbitantly expensive for

the country, which caused a significant burden and drain of the government revenues but still it continued the process for several years.

Capital expenditure on Indian Railways, 1849-50 to 1877-78 (Pound)

Year	Guaranteed Railways	Government Railways	Total
1849-50	75,893	-	75,893
1850-51	99,263	-	99,263
1850-52	351,323	-	351,323
1852-53	427,560	-	427,560
1853-54	670,649	-	670,649
1854-55	1,730,156	-	1,730,156
1855-56	3,366,411	-	3,366,411
1856-57	3,515,109	-	3,515,109
1857-58	3,423,068	-	3,423,068
1858-59	5,492,108	-	5,492,108
1859-60	7,171,464	-	7,171,464
1860-61	7,578,715	-	7,578,715
1861-62	6,602,212	-	6,602,212
1862-63	5,863,000	-	5,863,000
1863-64	4,755,653	-	4,755,653
1864-65	4,122,240	-	4,122,240
1865-66	5,636,866	-	5,636,866
1866-67	7,297,763	-	7,297,763
1867-68	7,120,081	794	7,120,875
1868-69	3,867,927	552,398	4,420,325
1869-70	4,742,851	190,890	4,933,741
1870-71	3,776,270	449,372	4,225,642

1871-72	2,496,728	644,620	3,141,348
1872-73	477,245	1,413,579	1,890,894
1873-74	693,053	2,354,025	3,047,078
1874-75	1,087,911	3,014,180	4,102,091
1875-76	953,806	3,165,184	4,115,990
1876-77	715,468	2,865,861	3,581,329
1877-78	1,312,250	3,984,968	5,297,218
Total	95,420,043	18,635,871	11,4055,984

Source: Report from the Select Committee on East India (Public Works), vol. IX, 312, 1878-79, v See: (Bailey & McGuire, 2007; p.131).

The cost of the railway establishment had started reducing from mid 1880s. Kerr informed that on the basis of management criteria, railways in India were divided into ten categories : (1) State owned lines worked by private companies; (2) State owned and State worked lines; (3) Lines owned and worked by private companies guaranteed under old contracts; (4) Lines owned and worked by private companies under new contracts; (5) District Board Lines (short, local lines within a district and paid for by local cesses); (6) Assisted Companies' Lines (Government Assistance of various sorts but no guarantee); (7) Princely State Lines worked by private companies but owned by the Princely States; (8) Princely State Lines worked by State Railway Agency i.e., as part of the state system owned by the Princely States; (9) Lines owned and worked by Princely States; (10) Lines in foreign territory (e.g. in French or Portuguese India) (Kerr, 1997; p.20).

Finally on 16th April 1953, the railroad was inaugurated officially from Bombay to Thane and the Railways exposed the people of rural India and traditional societies to the world. Innumerable advantages emanated from the establishment of railways in the country. Commercial, social, political, administrative and ecological benefits were associated with the building of the railways which provided the path to modern India. But Gandhi always held that railroad contributed to the British domination over India. Railways however increased immensely the trade between India and Britain, raw materials especially cotton

were transported more easily to Britain and manufactured British goods that were sold in the Indian markets were transported. Innumerable opportunities would emanate to the British administration which was composed of a very few of colonial administrators and soldiers spread over the subcontinent. In order to establish the railroads in India British required to bring its military strength to move upon any given point of time for as many days as it needed several months now (Kerr, 2012; p. 18). Thus, Lord Dalhousie was ultimately successful in approving the famous 'Railway Minute' 1853 by the authority in England.

On the other hand railways had minimised the transport cost and also became reliable. Commodity movement became much easier with the spread of railway track throughout the country especially in the remote places and the port towns. As per John Hurd's opinion when the civil war occurred in America, the international value of cotton triggered the export of Indian cotton in spite of the risk of damage and the high cost of transport (Hurd, 2001; p. 148). Thus, due to the decrease of transport cost agricultural markets in India were connected with the international market and Indian agriculture was transformed into a commercial market, prices affected not by the local fluctuations. Railway routes facilitated the export of the textile and agricultural productions. It immensely impacted on the movement of the rice and grains in the country as well. Commercialisation was associated with many more changes in the rural life of India, such as increase in land value, rent, sales of land, flow of income etc. Apart from these railways were successfully carrying finished goods into local markets. In doing so it radically changed the very concept of spacial and temporal co-ordinates which effectively reconstructed the earlier ideas of space and time and in this process, it amalgamated the country to an exceptional degree.

Railways moreover, helped to connect the remotest villages and places with the port towns i.e., with the outer world. It united the people. They could travel distant places quickly in search of jobs. But it was successful at the same time in destroying the Indian traditional cottage industries, handicrafts and handlooms by introducing cheaper rates of products of British machine made industries. Agricultural economy had turned into industrial economy.

Railway Systems in India 1914-18

1.	Total mileage of railway open for traffic	34,656
2.	Total mileage of state lines worked by company	18,680
3.	Total mileage of state lines worked by State	7,231; 25,911
4.	Total mileage of state lines worked by the State and Companies	3,396 (total state owned)

Small private companies held the rest (Gadgil, 1971; p. 130).

Railways brought enormous changes in the agricultural areas. It provided the scope of trading of agricultural products from one corner to another with minimum possibilities of spoilage. Now the farmers began their productions commercially. On the other hand, due to the Industrial Revolution in England during the 18th century a large number of industries and factories were established in Britain and the finished goods of these machine based factories and industries did not get the required market. The English industrialists were needed to dispose the products of newly expanding industries and had to ensure uninterrupted flow of raw materials for these industries from India and other parts of the world (Desai, 1976; p. 127). In spite of all these, the basic structure of the Indian economy remained the same, ironically based by the guaranteed return on the investment in the Indian railways, the entire financial capital came from Britain, not only that all other ancillary equipments, even the skilled workers of railways were imported from Britain.

Indian railways were the best markets for the British made items and all other machinery, sleeper, fishplates etc. also were borrowed from outside. Railway constructions in India brought a good fortune for the British ship owners simultaneously because from England all the manufactured materials e.g., large amount of iron and steel were required in the early stage for rail road, bridges, inclines, tunnel etc. which were transported. The Government of India took little initiations to develop the ancillary industry in the country. No expansions of heavy industries like coal, steel etc. took place in India. Moreover, the transport rates on small indigenous industries especially those situated in the distant places

from the ports posed impediments towards the growth of these sectors. In spite of all, railways played a major role towards making modern India. Railway did, however, commit dramatically to intrude in the stability and balance in north Indian agriculture production by opening up new avenues and prospects of marketing facilities hence exposed the economy to outside economic premises in the country and outside India (Derbyshire, 2001; p. 177). Railways always contributed towards expansion of more strong military administration, improving the law and order situation, enhancing the commerce and interregional transaction, encouraging rural agricultural enlargement.

The construction and establishment of railways had a great and colossal influence on the life of the Indian people and prepared the way to capitalist development of the country. At the same time it widened the drain of expenditure in terms of some fallacious reasons e.g. pioneering nature of works, lack of skilled labour, ignorance of local conditions, lack of experience, choice of broad gauge, high but unnecessary double tracking etc. In this background the historians argued that the main factor responsible for the high cost of railway building was the system of excessive guarantees which left no interest to the companies to reduce the cost of construction or operations. Surprisingly it was noticed that during the closing decades railways were constructed at a fast pace with the difficulties of great famines and epidemic of plague. While 17,308 miles of railways were constructed from 1850 to 1891, nearly 10, 746 miles of railways were constructed during more shorter period of time, i.e. only within thirteen years, from 1892 to 1905 (Chandra, 2006; p.82). It is true that railways played a major role in controlling the great famines and eradicating poverty. But to fight against famine it was more necessary and would be effective if the irrigation system of the country would be developed and upgraded rather to invest more on railways. Therefore, the interests of the Indian people were sacrificed in order to serve the British traders and investors. Above all, extreme drainage of economy decreased all the benefits that were brought by the railways. It gave huge job opportunities to the Englishmen for whom all the higher positions were reserved and the Indians were engaged mainly with the unskilled constructional works. No doubt, railways provided huge opportunities of industrial employment in colonial India and workshops contributed enormously towards this end. Indian railways in the early years proved to be the example of mismanagement and many errors. The European officials kept on misusing their authorities, dishonest activities,

continuous misdeeds etc. Financial irregularities became very common phenomenon during the early days of construction works. But peculiarly no steps and measures were taken against those activities and there was no legal system of prevention to reduce various types of disputes, abuses and irregular disbursements. Therefore malfunctions and corruptions in the early period of railway building had increased the interference of the government in the ownership and management of the Railway industry. It led to the employment of more strong and competent techno-bureaucrats in the later years.

Railways had a long term impact on the socio-cultural life of the late 19th century. Indian industrialisation and urbanisation were supplementary to each other. Therefore, a new class had emerged and many changes were noticed, different aspects of agricultural people were also effected e.g. redistribution of population, higher income etc. were some of the major changes which the railway industry introduced in the country. It also turned the agricultural farmer into an industrial worker. It brought mobility in Indian population. Improved transport system began to revolutionise the economic and social life specially the system of untouchability was abolished, railways provided the scope of intermingling of people from various parts of the country, irrespective of their caste, creed, religions, race, linguistic differences etc.

From the above discussion it has become clear that the British colonial rulers had successfully destroyed the traditional economy of the colony and did not even supplement it with the equipments of modern capitalist economy. So, it can be said that the growth of capitalist economy proceeded towards a different path with strange conflicts, obstructions and immeasurable sufferings for the Indian people (Sen, 1977; p.21). This development of capitalist economy gave birth to the Indian industrial working class in the mid 19th century. Establishment of railway industry in the 1850s in India provided the process of generating a labour force throughout the country. Interestingly, the romantic tales of pioneering heroism and exciting fulfilment had also a darker side characterised by incapacity, serious, errors, miscalculations and ignorance of the Indian and Indian conditions. Kerr said that it was also identified with prejudice at the less thoughtful end of the spectrum to intentional and blatant speculations, peculation, mismanagement and malfeasance at the other end (Kerr, 2006; p. 189).

Labour was the most deprived and unfortunate class in almost all the industrial countries in its inception and India was also not an exception. But Indian working class had a quite different historical background. In western countries the industrial workers were drawn mainly from cities. But in India most of the industrial workers belonged to their traditional village societies and in search of good living and in order to face themselves from the bondage of debt, these village dwellers were compelled to join the British industries. During the harvesting season they all returned back to their homelands. Another interesting feature was that only the poor landless agricultural labourer and marginalised peasants has participated in the industrial activities purely on temporary basis. Thus, these agricultural labourers could not become complete industrial workers and could not even get rid of casteism, racialism, superstition and harmful religious beliefs of middle ages. As a result of which it took more than three decades for the Indian workers to emerge and consolidate themselves as a separate class and establish their own distinct position and identity in the social and economic system.

Thousands of men, women and children were employed in the building of railways. Railway construction works required a good number of workers who were divided into various categories such as age, gender, culture, language, religion, skilled, unskilled etc. The railway workers had to work in the worksites where rail roads, bridges, tunnels, incline were constructed. The wages were too meagre hence the entire family had to work together for the survival.

The early history of modern India consisted of many black holes. Building the Indian's Railroad system was of immense importance, it paved the way to the making of not only modern India but modern South Asia as well and these holes had fabricated the historical understanding of the railways of India. Therefore, the labour history of India's railway past represented the biggest black holes. Perhaps railway workers had good deal with the constructions of industrial working class of the country. Railway workshops also engaged a good number of workers but the types of work were different. I. J Kerr had calculated that in the year 1961-62 in India 125 workshops employed 1,77,208 people (an increase from the 103 workshops with 1,12,000 employees in 1951) [Kerr, 2006; p. 243].

Workshop employment other than at Lahore, North Western Railway, 1925

Location and type of shop	Numbers employed
Sukkur Locomotive and Carriage	1854
Karachi Wagon	788
Jhelum Bridge	698
Dhilwon, Creosoting Sleeper Depot.	199
Kalka, Locomotive and Carriage	146
Sukkur, Bridge	119
Quetta Locomotive Shed Workshop	78
Karachi, Gas Factory	76

**Source: Royal Commission on Labour, Railways: Written Evidence, vol. 8, pt. 1, 6.
Kerr, 2006; p. 244.**

Railway workers were bound to be mobile. They had to move from one work site to another. There were a vast variations observed amongst the railway workers. Firstly, the difference was found between the men with that of the women and children on the basis of physical strength. Secondly, there were different types of unskilled works e.g. those who were engaged in digging of earth and rock, called excavators and those who carried these earth, rock and brick to the worksites were known as labourers. Coolies used to carry heavy burden in the construction sites of bridge and tunnel and excavators were mainly the children and women. Thirdly, another type of distinction was noticed between those who were effectively efficient at earth work and those who were less effective. The former were more experts in earth works or had more physical strength to finish more rock and earth works per day than the other. These skilled workers were termed as floating groups and these workers were viewed as more reliable as they came from distant places. Thus they did not have the tendency of going back to their villages for agricultural occupations. The existing artisan class carpenters, blacksmiths, masons etc. were engaged in railway constructions works in the various parts of the country. These skilled and trained workers were much needed for bridge and tunnel buildings. Interestingly, it can be said in the

background of the railway establishment during the colonial era a change in social structure was observed in the traditional Indian society. Railway industry consisted of the labourers from different places, different language groups, practicing different social customs, eating different food but staying together, unifying themselves to resist the European supervisors, thus serious changes had been noticed in the social landscapes. But these skilled labourers comprised only 20-25 percent of total railway construction workers.

Many difficulties and hardships had to be overcome, many lessons, some involving considerable human or financial cost had to be learned, triumphs more or less and individual loss occurred often. In the early days when large bridges were constructed out of which some got demolished as a result several construction workers were killed due to these accidents. Apart from this, as and when the epidemic diseases broke out in the work sites the entire assembled work force passed away. Young labouring children infant of their parents died due to the accidents. Not only them the engineers, contractors, colonial officials, skilled workers also passed away during this phase. In large number of worksites, sudden breakouts of epidemic diseases like cholera, kala jar, typhoid, small pox etc. killed huge number of workers. Among all these diseases malaria was the most deadly one. The reason behind the spread was mainly due to the unhealthy living conditions of the workers in the construction sites, a large number of masses stayed together without a proper sanitary system and in an atmosphere where there was no room for fresh air to breathe. During the hot summer days there was no water to drink and their endeavour to reservoir to meet the water crisis was frequently destroyed by strong winds, rains or storms. They lived particularly “nasty, short and brutish life.” The environment at the railway worksites was really dangerous as the living conditions were so explosive that it was associated with repeated outbreaks of cholera, malaria and pneumonia. All these diseases killed many railway construction workers and many other who came into contact with them. Life at railway worksite was depressive, deadly, harsh and primitive for the people who had been suffering from poverty and malnutrition. The people who suffered a lot and sacrificed their lives in making modern India, still remained in dark and stories of immense misery were left untold. Construction of Bhore Ghat inclines was the most toughest amongst the all, it took almost eight years of continuous effort which faced a lot of obstacles, huge loss of lives were associated with it. Weather and other threats like accidents etc. also existed. The workers did not have any

limitation on working hour, sometimes; they worked for twenty hours long at a stretch. In the later decades of 19th century the system of shifting duties was introduced in the worksites and the electrification system made it possible to continue the work without any break. Toiling men worked like devils. They had to work under glaring sun, flood waters, rains, chilling winters, sand, flames, noise etc. As the construction works had been continued to develop, the workforces became more easily managed and provided better sanitation, housing and medical facilities. The early days of the railway establishment were really strenuous, fatiguing and adverse for the life of the Indian workers. Throughout the early period of railway construction works the engineering community was mainly from England. The racial consideration played a major role in this regard. Ian Derbyshire had rightly coined that the growths in the size, stability and experience of this India-based expatriate community was accompanied from later 1880s by gradual change in outlook involving the emergence of a technologically syncretise indeed quasi-national Indian approach to civil and railway construction engineering (Derbyshire, 2001; p. 276).

The system of payment in the railway industry was quite amazing. Exploitation and deprivation were common and widespread. John Hurd observed that when productions were becoming more labour intensive, productivity of labour had invariably increased therefore, the combination of the change in management practices and labour's learning by doing must overcome the growing troubles in the industrial productions and technology must improve the negative effects on the number of workers (Hurd, 2007; p.339). But unfortunately, wages remained always low for those who worked hard. Therefore, the earth work done by an unskilled worker was Rs. 2-8 per one thousand cubic feet. The wages of masons and other skilled workers were little higher. The following table indicates the real picture of the wage system in the industries including the railways.

Real Wages (1890-95 = 100)*

Class of Labour	Average of Year			Year	
	1895+0	1900+0	1905+0	1910	1912
	1899	1904	1909		
*Rural					
Agricultural Labour	103	120	123	134	138
Village Artisans	105	122	124	135	138
Urban					
Skilled Labourer	104	119	120	132	134
Unskilled Labourer	106	122	126	135	145
Domestic Servants	100	111	108	117	116
Cities					
Skilled Labourer	105	118	120	131	130
Unskilled Labourer	104	117	120	131	132
Domestic Servants	102	113	111	118	115
Industries					
Jute	105	113	105	109	106
Cotton	101	106	100	106	106
Tea	101	96	90	98	95
Mining	105	129	128	148	137
Railways	97	99	97	108	101

Enquiry into the Rise of Prices in India by K.L. Dutta, M.A.I., pp. 169-170; (Buchanan, 1966; p. 357)

Industrialisation had not brought about much change in the economic life of the colonial people. Over the period, the British entrepreneur had developed the cheapest and most reliable method of carrying on the construction works, might be dangerous because it involved the direct supervision of the private railway companies and after 1870s, by the state itself. Payment structure was different between the Indian and the Europeans. Indians were

less paid for the same work than the Europeans or the Anglo Indians. According to historians Indian employees got slower promotion and less amenities including housing and medical relief and allowances for children's' educations (Menon & Mahajan, 2006; p.158). The whole process of employee recruitment including higher and mid-level officers, locomotive drivers, station masters, guards etc. was done by the British personnel.

Railroad Workforce on December 31, 1890 by Category and Percentage

General Administration		Traffic and Telegraph	Engineering	Locomotive and Carriage Shops	Total
European	373	1,514	491	2,229	4,607
Anglo European	485	2,121	505	2,562	5,673
Indian	13,785	53,101	119,017	66,507	252,413
Total	14,646	56,736	120,013	71,298	262,693

Source: Parliamentary Papers, 1890 to 91, pp. 130-31, (Kerr, 2012; p. 88).

By 1905 more than 25000 route mile were built and operated by different organisation much as private companies, state owned or managed by princely states. Railway workshops also employed a good number of workers and people started moving across the length and breath of the subcontinent. Interestingly, a bulk of railway workers were semi-proletariat because construction work was not the only way to their livelihood, they took it as temporary jobs and were more involved in village economy. But in early period there was an enormous crisis of labour faced by the contractors. These workers understood and realised their demands and effectiveness. In the early 1860s, several incidents of workers' resistances took place in different railway worksites, e.g. coolies in Trichinopoly district of Madrass or the workers of the Eastern Bengal Railway were able to convince their employers to sufficiently rise the rates of the earth work. Railway

construction workers proved to be of the most militant nature. Most important of all was the eruption in Bhore Ghat in 1859 where the working and living condition were always very harsh, unhealthy and dangerous as well. Above all the rate of payment was low and many times the payments were made late and less than what they were promised, therefore, they became furious and the coolies attacked the Europeans, the main reason of resentment was wage. Violence and lawlessness existed in almost all the construction worksites. Europeans supervisors were usually in habit of abusing the native workers physically. Not only the native railway workers but also Indian passengers travelling by trains were extremely ill-treated and humiliated by the Europeans even by the lower level European rail employees. Workers resistance and protests came in this regard as they faced the suppression and exploitations. Strikes and other modes of violent resistance were very common in the pre-independent era throughout the country. A few trains were bombed or otherwise disrupted. Railroad workers took up the nationalist cause with enthusiasm and labour grievances were intermingled with patriotic feeling and as a result of which a series of strikes by railroad workers had occurred in the railway industry. In the early twentieth century the nationalist movement also provided the necessary impetus to the railway workers movement. All India Railwaymen's Federation, the trade unions for the railway workers had the objective to support the freedom struggle of the country. In 1927, 2500 workers went on strike at Kharagpur supported by the workers at Liluah and led by the communists. A report stated that the six months strike was bloody but united, the twenties saw widespread strike not so the thirties (Menon and Mahajan, 2006; p. 161).

Fate of Strikes, 1921-46

Demand wise	Compromised arrived	Enquiry promised	Position explained to the satisfaction of workers	Strikers yielded
23	14	6	15	14

Source: Menon & Mahajan, 2006; p.161.

Railroad was the device of change towards social, cultural, moral, religious and political conditions of the millions and conceived it as a vehicle of modern India. Mark Tully regretted that though, the days of the Raj were now long gone, but the colonial legacy still survived. The Indian railways were considered as symbols of authority, so whenever there were strikes or disturbances in the country the railways became always the first and the soft target of the protestor's (Tully, 2006; p. 240).

II

Development of the Railway Industry in Post Independent India till 1974

In the previous section we have seen the process of the establishment of the railway industry during the British rule till 1947. In this section we have tried to analyse the initiatives taken by the Government of India for the development of the railway industry immediately after independence in the background of the overall development of the industrial sectors in the country. This section is an examination of the nature and growth of the Indian Railways till the period of 1974 under the Five Years Plans.

Before going on to discuss the days in the post colonial period in India, we must focus our attention on the years preceding independence i.e., up to 1947. The years from 1905 to 1947 were the years of difficulties, turbulent and confrontation in colonial India – indeed in the entire world. The aggressive and obliterated incidents of World War I and II, had significant impact on the Indian mass. In the thirties the railways faced severe world-wide economic depression and in India their earnings were insufficient to provide the guaranteed returns which became liabilities to the general revenues. Maintenance works were poor; renewals and replacements were also limited. And when it started recovering from the purge of economic depression, Second World War broke out in 1939. Second World War mainly had impacted on the process of industrialisation in India, it almost halted the growth in almost all the sectors specially the growth of railway industry. As under colonial rule, India automatically got involved in the World War II. The resources and

productive forces of India were supplied to the British War efforts. Thousands of Indians became soldiers and were sent to the countries of Middle East and Europe. During the war years Indian economy suffered a sharp decline in respect of industrial development and its structural growth. British colonial policy for Indian industries actually led to the stagnation of the entire process of economic development.

The period immediately after independence was very crucial for the Indian economy, as it was a period of transition in all respects, transition from two hundred years of colonial bondage to independent and sovereign country i.e., political transition, transition from agrarian economy to industrial economy, transition from rural agrarian society to urban industrial society, social transition though the process had already been started during the British rule. In the month of February, 1947 the decision of transfer of power was declared and ultimately the process ended up with a line of division in South-East Asia which partitioned the Indian subcontinent into two sovereign countries i.e., India and Pakistan. The nationalists won the battle into an immense tragedy, massive violence among the Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs who killed each other throughout the country which affected mostly the railway industry. After independence the Government of India had stressed on the development of heavy and key industries for developing the infrastructure of the country. The progress of economy in one country was very much dependent on the provision of adequate and well developed transport facilities (Mullick, 1954; p.1189). Industrialisation in India was needed not only for the growth of income of the people and simultaneously for the government but for enhancing the scope for modernisation of the agricultural sector.

It was an instrument of eradicating the imbalances from the field of social and regional sectors and to create employment opportunity for the vast Indian population. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India desired to follow the line of socialistic pattern of economic development which must be encompassed with the 'Planning', the overall planning of agriculture and industrial sectors. Nehru was of the opinion that as an underdeveloped country, without strategic plan and modernising approach India could not develop and growth could not be achieved. When India achieved its independence, the low level of capitalist development of the country was reflected in its existing industrial structure.

India in the year 1950, decided to launch Five Year Plans for its compound growth and whose benefits must reach to every sections of the society. Indian planners including Nehru were of the opinion that the state had to play a major role in controlling the economic process of the country for rapid all round transformation of the country which had been suffering from extreme colonial exploitation and drainage of economy. Therefore, the public sector occupied a dominant role in the process of planned economic development of the country in the early years of the plan process. During the period 1950 to 1974 there were four Five Year Plans completed and in the year 1974 April the Fifth Five Year Plan had started. In these entire periods of National Planning importance and emphasis had been given on the growth and expansion of heavy industries. The principle objective of planned development of India in the context of Socialist pattern of society was:

- a) A considerable increase in national income so as to raise the level of living in the country;
- b) Rapid industrialization with broad emphasis on the development of basic and heavy industries;
- c) A large expansion of employment opportunities; and
- d) Reduction of inequalities in income and wealth and a more even distribution of economic power (Patel, 1980; p. 43).

In this background the major problem arose with transport facilities. The existing pattern of India's transport system must bring substantial changes for the successful implementation of the first Five Year Plan. Industrial growth required some basic infrastructure facilities like transport, communication, power, projects designs and techniques skilled technical and managerial personnel and political stability in the sense that external factors should not obstruct or interrupt industrial progress (Kabra, 1974; p.107). Main difficulty of the railway transportation was the problem of rehabilitation. Kerr had rightly pointed out that partition provided a significant limit to the integrative consequences of transportation and communication technologies; the railroad of colonial India facilitated the interconnections that slowly knit the economy and polity of the country. The railroad did help to unite India and Indians (Kerr, 2012; p. 141). A large portion of railroad was divided and got incorporated in Pakistan. The worst affected of all the railways was the North

Western Railway, which was the largest among all the railways during colonial rule but after independence it had only one sixth of the total e.g., from 6,887 miles remained only 18.55 miles and the same happened with Bengal Assam Railways which had 3666 miles but partition left only 1942 miles in India.

In the first phase of war, the Indian railways, despite the shortage, had to release wagons, locomotives and track material for the Middle East. Over eight percent of metre gauge locomotives, fifteen percent of metre gauge wagons, four thousand miles of track and four million sleepers were released for use of the overseas and in India on military projects. Twenty six branch lines were dismantled. Railway workshops were also diverted for producing items required for war. Then due to partition, loss of Karachi port again caused the diversion of traffic to Bombay which created too much of burden here. Tracks were also in bad conditions.

Rolling Stock Requirement for Renewals 1951-56

Locomotive	Coaching Vehicles	Goods Wagons
Number on line on Class I 8,209 Railways on March 31, 1952	19,193	199,094
Estimated Average Annual 190 Renewals	650	5,000
Number requiring 1,050 replacement on March 31, 1952 being over 40 years of economic life in the case of locomotives and wagons and 30 years in the case of coaching vehicles	5,514	21,418
Stock over aged and 1,604 replaced but retained in service on 31 March, 1951	1,381	25,838
Number expected to 1,042 become over age between March 31, 1951 and March 31, 1956	3,021	26,115

Source: Report of First Five Year Plan by Planning Commission of India, 1956; p. 2.

Surprisingly there were increasing demands for railroad transportation specially the passenger traffic, e.g. the passengers traffic had increased from 17,780 millions in 1938-39 to 39,720 millions in 1950-51 and freight carriage from 21,786 to 26,581 million tons. The

rehabilitation programme of the railways had thus to take into account the two separate problems of deteriorated assets and the needs of the increased traffic. In this situation the Government of India had allotted three crores each year for the entire plan period for improving the passenger amenities. The volume of goods traffic was massively increasing every year which on the other hand reflected the progress of industries and development of different projects of the country. For rehabilitations and maintenance programme railways as public utility sector was allocated an average expenditure of not less than 80 crores per year or 400 crores in aggregate. But 320 crores had to be raised by the railways from its own resources. According to the Report of the Planning Commission, the First Five Year Plan had devoted to rehabilitation and modernization of rolling stock and fixed assets. Provide better amenities for the travelling public and better housing and welfare for the staff, improve capacity and slum of the railways and daily loading. Against the original allotment of Rs. 400 crores including Rs, 150 crores on account of current depreciation, the total depreciation and the total expenditure on the railway programme in the five years of the Plan was expected to be the order of Rs. 432 crores.

Details of the estimated outlay under different heads during First Five Year Plan are set out below:

Rehabilitation and Additions	Allocation envisaged in the Plan (Rs. In Crores)	Total Outlay (Rs. In Crores)
Rolling stock, plant and machinery	207.96	253.44
Track and bridges	70.47	64.41
Other structural and engineering works including Integral Coach Factory, Chittaranjan Locomotive Works and Ganga Bridge Project, Collieries and Ports	45.90	49.96
Restoration of dismantled lines, new lines 34,18 and electrification	34.18	33.20
Passenger amenities	15.00	13.29
Staff quarters and staff welfare works	24.09	20.52
Miscellaneous items	2.40	2.75*
Total	400.00	432.07

*The reduction is on account of the items in stores balances and credit taken for released materials and other recoveries.

Source: Report of Second Five Year Plan, Planning Commission of India, 1961; p. 3.

In spite of all these, the progress was not at all satisfactory, it had not achieved all its targets e.g., out of 727 locomotives it produced only 510, progress in doubling tracks, restoration of dismantled lines, construction of new lines, marshalling yards, remodelling of stations, workshops, employees' quarters etc. all were very slow or not achieved the desired goal (Mullick, 1954; p.1200).

Programmes of Expenditure on the Railways Plan
(in Crores of Rupees)

Categories of Expenditure	Total Provision for Five Years	1951-52	1952-53	1953-54	Total
Rolling Stock and Machinery	207.96	36.36	33.23	42.19	109.78 (52.8)*
Track	64.87	9.72	13.46	9.56	32.74 (50.0)
Bridges	5.60	1.00	0.50	0.45	1.95 (34.8)
Other Structural and Engineering Works	43.41	6.68	7.24	9.25	23.17 (52.4)
Collieries and Ports	2.49	0.16	0.10	0.16	0.42 (16.9)
Labour Welfare, Staff quarters and other Welfare works	24.09	3.74	3.14	4.61	11.49 (47.7)
Restoration of dismantled lines	56.60	0.50	3.71	4.18	8.39 (44.3)
New lines including electrification of track and major bridges	28.52	6.76	-	-	6.76
Passenger amenities	15.00	2.45	2.34	2.59	7.88 (49.2)
Miscellaneous items	2.40	5.49	-3.54	-3.73	-1.78
Total	400.00	70.86	60.18	69.26	200.30 (50.00)

*Figures within brackets indicate percentages of the total provision under each head.

Source: Reba Mullick, 1954; p.1189.

The Second Five Year Plan was launched on 1st April, 1956 covering the period upto 31 March, 1961. It mainly emphasised on the development of heavy and basic large-scale industries. For accelerating economic growth, rapid industrialisation was must and this was focussed. India during Second Plan period decided to undertake an industrialisation programme which must strengthen the capital base, enhance productive capacity and efficiency and accelerate the flow of new investment (Ghosh, 1981; p.101). Surprisingly, it

did not provide any new assurance and allocation for the transport industry. Unless and until the transportation system of any country was developed, nothing could produce any benefit. Ghosh raised some important questions: a) volume of transport needed to implement the production targets of the plan; and b) capital investment necessary for this purpose (Ghosh, 1956; p. 797). Rehabilitation was the principal task for the rapid development of the communication and transport industry under the Second Five Year Plan. It emphasised on the development of the well-knit railway system throughout the country. The entire modes of transport systems of the country including road and water ways had to be combined with the major industries like coal, steel etc. Second Plan apprehended to enable proper and effective co-operation among all means of transport services. By this time Indian Railways represented a total of Rs.974 crores of investment and became the largest national undertaking. During the Second Plan Indian Railways had taken up many new initiatives to improve its infra-structure facilities and thus, diesel and electric motive power, improved wagons and coaches, signalling systems etc. were introduced. Indian Railways was expected to ensure safe and secure railway operations along with securing economy and efficiency. At the same time it aimed at reaching increased the capacity of rolling stock. In the light of the production targets of the Second Plan, the additional goods traffic requiring to be handled has been assessed as follows:

Additional Originating Traffic
(million Tons)

Coal	20.0
Steel and raw materials	18.0 (increase in pig iron and for steel plants steel production equals 5 million tons)
Cement	5.0*
Total for specific increases	43.0
Increase in miscellaneous traffic at the rate of 5 percent per annum i.e., 25 percent during the Plan	17.8

*The target for increase in productions of cement has since been revised upwards. In deciding the location of new factories the impact on rail transport in each case will have to be examined. It may be possible to direct some of the additional production to movement of coastal shipping or by road.

Source: Report of Second Five Year Plan, Planning Commission of India, 1961;
p. 4.

Railways were expected to increase in carrying traffic from 115 million tons to 120 million tons and total traffic handled might be 180 million tons. It allotted 900 crores with 225 crores as depreciation costs for railway development. Suitable adjustments had been made in the programme for augmenting the capacity of the railways to handle increased traffic so as to economise capital investment to the extent possible. The following statement provided by the Second Plan was the estimated distribution of total amount of Rs. 1125 crores over the years.

		Provision (Rs. In Crores)
1.	Rolling Stock	380
2.	Workshops, Plant and Machinery	65
3.	Track Renewals	100
4.	Bridge Works	33
	New Bridges	18
	Ganga Bridge	09
	New Bridges	06
5.	Line Capacity Works including Expansion of Good Sheds	186
6.	Signalling and Safety Works	25
7.	Electrifications	80
8.	New Constructions	66
9.	Staff Welfare and Staff Quarters	50
10.	Stores Departments	07
11.	Training Schools	03
12.	Railway Users' Amenities	15
13.	Other Projects including Vizagapatnair Port	115
14.	Railways' Share in Road Transport Undertakings	10
15.	Stores Suspense	50
16.	Extra for Imported Steel*	40
Total		1,125

*To be obtained by the Railways from outside the Equalisation Pool.

Source: Report of Second Five Year Plan, Planning Commission of India, 1961;

p. 6.

Second Five Year Plan also emphasised on the welfare of their employees, housing and other amenities, medical facilities etc. were also highlighted. Nevertheless Indian Railways had not achieved the wartime efficiency in its operations or productions. In this economic situation and financial background Railways had taken some decisions to

reorganise its administrative system. It integrated the princely states in the year 1948-49 and started the process of regrouping in order to improve its operations and pave out any kind of disturbance, it also had brought major changes in the overall management, financial integrity, maintenance work.

In 1967, the Government of India appointed the Administrative Reforms Commission to investigate the different areas and activities of the Government. G. S Khosla had pointed out that the Commission highlighted that the Railways owned by the nation or its largest public sector industry should be permitted to function on sound business principles within the framework of the policy laid down by the Parliament (Khosla, 2001; p. 229). Railways were regrouped under six zones of administrations e.g., Southern Railway, Northern Railway, South Eastern Railway, Eastern Railway, North Eastern Frontier Railway, Central Railway. According to the Third Five Year Plan the Railway Development Programme had been formulated as the basis of the originating traffic reaching a figure of about 245 million tons in 1965-66 i.e., in the last year of the Plan. The estimated traffic of general goods and iron ore by railways showed some improvements. Suburban passenger traffic also increased by three percent per annum. Total estimated cost Rs. 1325 crores was decided as following Railway Development Programme in the Third Plan.

Sl. No.	Programme	Estimated Cost (Rs. In Crore)
1.	Rolling Stock	510
2.	Workshops, Machinery and Plant	62
3.	Track Renewal	170
4.	New Lines	147
5.	Electrification	70
6.	Signalling and Safety Works	25
7.	Traffic Facilities (Lines Capacity Works)	183
8.	Bridge Works	25
9.	Other Electrical Works	8
10.	Other Structural Works	15
11.	Staff Quarters and Staff Welfare	50
12.	Users' Amenities	15
13.	Road Services	10
14.	Stores Suspense	35
Total		1,325

Source: Report of Third Five Years Plan, Planning Commission of India, 1966; p. 3.

The Third Five Years Plan had targeted to achieve increased productivity and to connect the basic industries like coal, cement, iron and steel etc. It also aspired to reach its estimated traffic movements including goods and the passengers. During the Third Plan period import and export business were enhanced, thus the speedy transportation of the commodities like cotton, textile, jute, salt, paper, sugar etc. were needed. Consequently a proper and compact railway transport system must be required. Therefore, the developmental programmes in the different segments of the railway industry were incorporated e.g. increase the number of workshops, improved line capacity, electrification, upgradation of signalling system, construction of lines, bridge works, employees' welfare and for meeting all these objectives 50 crores were allocated. In spite of all these initiatives significant growth in performance was not noticed in the industrial sector including the

railways and surprisingly not even in agriculture. Critics of India's political economy observed that the relative stagnancy was accompanied by rapid increase in prices across the various sectors of the Indian economy, with 1961-62 as the base, the all commodity wholesale price index moved from 94.3 in 1951-52 to 122.3 in 1964-65 while between 1964-65 to 1974-75 it increased from mere 2.55 percent per annum to 8.87 percent per annum (Kerr, 1997; p. 2134). According to the Planners, transport had a crucial role in economic development. Fourth Five Years Plan envisaged for modernisation of equipments, increased in freight and passenger traffic, improve the efficiency of the entire system and reduce the cost. It also emphasised on the conversion work of the lines, i.e., from the metre gauge to broad gauge. The following table showed the increasing trend in freight traffic from 1960-61 to 1968-69.

**Growth of Freight Traffic on the Railways since 1960-61
(Million Tonnes)**

Sl. No.	Item	1960-61	1965-66	1968-69
(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1.	Steel and raw materials	14.3	23.7	25.1
2.	Coal	50.4	66.7	68.6
3.	Iron ore for export	2.6	5.2	8.0
4.	Cement	6.5	8.6	9.4
5.	Petroleum products	4.7	7.5	7.9
6.	Food grains	12.7	14.5	15.9
7.	Fertilizers	1.4	2.5	5.0
8.	Other general goods	46.6	53.6	48.7
9.	Railway materials	17.0	20.7	15.4
10.	Total	156.2	203.0	204.0

Source: Report of Fourth Five Years Plan, Planning Commission of India, 1974; p. 6).

The Fourth Five Years Plan had incorporated two broad trends in the growth of passenger traffic in the past. First, the increase of non-suburban passenger traffic in terms of passenger kilometres has been greater than in terms of passengers originating showing an increase in the lead of traffic. Secondly, the increase in suburban traffic has been much faster than in non-suburban traffic (Report of the Fourth Five Years Plan, Planning Commission of India, 1974; p. 6). Fourth Five Years Plan provided an increase of twenty percent in passenger vehicle because during the Third Five Years Plan it only achieved seventeen percent. Four Five Years Plan allotted 1000 crores of rupees for Railway Development Programme and 50 crores of rupees were allocated for metropolitan transport. The main components of the outlay are:

Outlay for Railways

(Rs. In Crores)

Sl. No.	Item	Plan Outlay	From depreciation reserve fund	Total
0	1	2	3	4
1.	Rolling Stock	397	223	620
2.	Workshops	28	2	30
3.	Machinery and Plant	7	8	15
4.	Track renewal	-	200	200
5.	Track renewal	8	20	28
6.	Bridge works	275	40	315
7.	Signalling and safety	27	13	40
8.	Electrification	81	1	82
9.	Other electrical works	4	8	12
10.	New lines	83	-	83
11.	Staff welfare	13	2	15
12.	Staff quarters	27	3	30
13.	Users' amenities	20	-	20
14.	Other specified works	5	5	10

(Rs. In Crores)

Sl. No.	Item	Plan Outlay	From depreciation reserve fund	Total
15.	Road services	10	-	10
16.	Inventories	15	-	15
17.	Total	1000	525	1525
18.	Metropolitan transport	50	-	50
19.	Grand Total	1050	525	1575

Source: Report of Fourth Five Years Plan, Planning Commission, 1974; pp.7-8.

Additions and Replacements in Rolling Stock Programme

Sl. No.	Item	Rolling Stock on line at the end of 1968-69	Programme for the Fourth Plan Additions Replacements Total		
			(3)	(4)	(5)
1.	Locomotives	11555	652	607	1259
2.	Steam	10046	-	161	161
3.	Diesel	996	369	389	758
4.	Electric	513	283	57	340
5.	Wagons (in terms of 4 wheelers), Coaching Stock	484985	76192	25340	101532
6.	Coaches	327	3250	31	6418
7.	Rain cars	29	50	68	50
8.	Electric multiple units	1562	596	172	768

Source: Report of Fourth Five Years Plan, Planning Commission, 1974; p.8.

The production of wagons, diesel automotive, shunter was raised. It gave thrust on electric locomotive production i.e., it highlighted on the manufacturing of equipments and economic operations of Indian Railways, doubling of tracks as much as possible and within

1973-74 capacity of railway productions must be steer up. But in practice, the picture of the industrial growth including railways was somewhat hazy. Industrial sector had not reflected the desired growth, not even achieved the claimed progress. There was a vast difference between the sectoral targets and actual rates of growth. Ironically the performance of public sector undertakings was satisfactory; at least it did not show any declining trend.

Growth rates in Industry and Agriculture

	1st Plan	2nd Plan	3rd Plan	Annual Plans	4th Plan	5th Plan
Agriculture Production	4.1	4.0	1.4	6.2	2.9	4.2
Industrial Production	7.3	6.6	9.0	2.0	4.7	5.9
Per Capita Consumption	1.7	0.8	0.1	2.0	0.4	2.3

Source: Alok Ghosh, 1981; p.111.

Most important concern of the Indian economy during this period was the prevailing atmosphere which was in agricultural sector almost gloomy and the performance of industries was quite unhopeful during the first few years of Planning. But it was a consequence of some other reasons, e.g. typical behaviour of monsoon, different types of labour unrests, basic investment policy and types of investments in public sector had been stepped up in paper but perhaps the actual expenditure was much below than the corresponding provisions (Bhave, 1970; p. 2015). During the years 1972-73, Indian economy had suffered by different constraints; the price index also had shown a general declining trend.

Selected Economic Indicators

Sl. No.		1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73
		(percentage change over previous years)				
1.	National Income at constant price	0.7	7.3	4.6	1.5 to 2.0+	1.5 to 2.0+
2.	Agriculture production	-1.5	6.7	7.3	-1.7	-
3.	Food grains production	-1.1	5.8	9.0	-3.5	-
4.	Industrial productions	6.9	6.6	2.5	4.5	7.0++
5.	Electricity generated	14.1	14.3	8.6	8.8	10.5++
6.	Wholesale prices	-1.1	3.7	5.5	4.0	8.8***
7.	Money supply	8.1	10.8	11.1	12.9	12.3@
8.	Imports	-4.9	-17.1	3.3	10.9	-7.8*
9.	Exports	13.3	4.1	8.6	4.7**	23.1*
10	Freight carried by Railway	5.3	2.5	-0.7	4.6	5.9*

+ Estimated

*April-November, 1972 compared to April-November, 1972

**Includes exports to Bangladesh worth Rs. 38 crores

++ April-August, 1972 compared to April-August, 1971

@ 12th January, 1973 compared to January 14, 1972

***April-December, 1972 compared to April-December, 1971

(Source: Economic Survey of India, Government of India Press; 1972-73; p. 2).

The only hope was observed in the increase of employment in the organized industrial sector. Due to rise in world prices of primary commodities, India's export growth was satisfactory during these periods. Alok Ghosh analysed that with the wholesale price

index going up nearly 23 percent during 1973-74 – the last year of Fourth Five Year Plan, the economic situation further deteriorated and the poorer sections together with fixed income groups experience unprecedented hardships (Ghosh, 1981; p. 107).

Surprisingly the Fifth Five Years Plan which was launched in April, 1974 had given much importance to the public sectors, it allotted Rs. 39,303 crores against Rs. 15, 902 crores in the Fourth Five Years Plan. Fifth Plan for the first time presented somewhat mature decision to handle the problem of poverty due to massive under-employment. Thus, it had also impacted the public sector undertakings including the Railways.

III

The Railway Working Class Since independence till 1974

This section of the chapter examines the nature and development of the industrial working class of India especially, the railway workforce from 1947 till 1974. It discusses the policy making process of the newly independent country. Emphasis had been given on the labour policy of the country in order to bring rapid economic development during the different Plans i.e., from First Five Years to Fourth Five Years Plan. The Indian Railways had become the largest and oldest Public Sector Industries in India and the biggest employer of industrial workers. Since the beginning of the 20th century the workers perceived that there was a need for collectiveness to improve their wage and working conditions. Interestingly railway workers from the very beginning were militant by nature even during the colonial rule. During the freedom movement these workers were the main recruits to the movement and they also expected the nationalist leaders to support their struggle. Railway industry employed various types of workers who belonged to many occupational segments, such as coolie labour to clerks, drivers, guards, skilled craftsmen, sophisticated engineers, high level managers etc. Ironically the few handfuls of management staff directed the work of tens of thousands of the Indians. Various types of workers had various types of problems and resentments. We however discuss the labour policy and labour condition in the background of the Five Year Plans.

Freedom from two hundred years of colonial bondage roused immense hopes, desires and aspirations among all the sections of people in India. The new era of independent administration by the Indians ushered in new political and economic changes. In 1947 the transfer of power had altered the political scenario in India. The development of modern industries in the second half of the nineteenth century had led to the emergence of a totally new class of the Indian society. This class had suffered from years of deprivations and exploitations. During the colonial rule the workers fought with the imperialists and capitalist powers and after independence the struggle continued. Independence ushered in new political power held by the capitalist and the landlord classes of India, whose economic interests and therefore political interests ran directly counter to those of the working class, it was now a rule of capital and rule of the exploiting minority against exploited majority (Sen, 1997; p. 379). Indian Railways had faced lots of troubles due to the violence and upheavals of the partition transition from colonial to post colonial India. The long awaited demand of Indianisation of the railway employees created a huge vacuum in the Indian Railways after independence. Many upper and middle management staff were from Britain who left their jobs. Apart from staffing problems it had been already suffering from war year crisis, another issue was that a major portion of railway tracks ended up in Pakistan. The problems were vigorous and severe but must be solved quickly and efficiently. But the concept of modern India was associated with the engines of change. Railroads had reshaped and precipitated several variations in the social, cultural and economic life of the Indians in the post independent era. The railway authorities always acknowledged the requirements of the mass of the people as insisted and comprehended by governments, politicians and people of the country. But the wheels of the nation proceeded according to the policies and plans formulated by the British rulers. Government could not set any goal for the progress of the industry, rather it followed the same principles and procedures as existed from 1850s onwards. The Railway Board executed all of its policies and controlled its financial activities through its budget under the Railway Ministry.

Independence was yielded with inflationary crisis and tremendous price rise. For strengthening the capitalist base of the country and rapid economic development, the policy makers entered into the era of planning and progress First Five Year Plan entrusted that economic stability of any country was essentially dependent on the factors related to the

labourers. The workers were the principle instrument towards the achievement of the goals set by the Planning Commission. First Plan provided the provisions to fulfil the basic needs of the workers i.e., food, clothing and shelter. It aimed at removing social and economic constraints towards attaining the educational opportunities, social securities and other amenities, improved health services and remain efficient. It also spoke of the role of the workers' association or trade unions in successful implementations of the plan in every industrial sector. It focussed on the harmonious industrial relations regarding the effective functioning of the P.S.U.s. P.S.U.s gave importance on greater efficiency of working with no private gain or profit. Basically the profits were contributed to the wealth of the nation. First Plan conceived the workers as responsible for the industrial productions on the one hand and better work and greater efficiency for the country on the other. It held that wages in P.S.U.s should not be less favourable than the prevailing in the neighbouring private enterprises; the benefits of all labour laws which are applicable to the workers must be available. Workers must get favourable working conditions and welfare amenities. They must try to maintain peace and did not interrupt the smooth functioning of the industries. First Plan had accepted the fact that the workers of the country were not satisfied with the structure of wages. But the Indian Planners were of the opinion that any upward movement of the wages would hamper the economic stability of the country and the claims of the labourers should be dealt with liberally which might help them to attain living wage standard. In spite of these policies favouring the workers demands, planning's were designed and served in the interests of the capitalist class of the country. First Plan was not able to satisfy the minimum basic needs of the workers and toiling masses of the country. Statistics showed that in the perspective of the rise of price of basic commodities, real wages were fluctuating, never showed any consistency. Labour historians had admitted that the living and working conditions of the factories and the workers were not at all even reasonably moderate.

The Second Five Year Plan was launched in 1956 in the milieu of the emerging importance of the labourers for the steady growth of the country's economic system. It tried to safeguard the worker's financial and social security and abolish the years long neglect and ignorance about the workers' rights. It agreed to bridge the gap between the real earnings of the workers and their wages. Second Plan accepted that suitable alterations of the First Five Years Plan must be made and recognised the necessity of monetary incentives

and other facilities for the workers. I recognised that the P.S.Us must become aware of the interests of labour but indiscipline behaviour of the labour, haulage of production etc. should not impede country's industrial progress and labour policy must furnish this end. According to the Second Five Years Plan, for successful implementation of the Plan increased association of labour with management is necessary. Such measures help in –

- a) Promoting increased productivity for the general benefit of the enterprise, the employees and the community;
- b) Giving employees a better understanding of their role in the working of industry and of the process of productions; and
- c) Satisfying the worker's urge for self-expression thus leading to industrial peace, better relations and increased co-operation (Second Five Years Plan Report, Planning Commission of India, 1961; p.4).

It also envisaged a fare wage policy which aimed at raising the real wage requirements. One surprising feature had been noticed in this regard. It incorporated some disciplinary policies for the workers e.g., the socialistic pattern of society ensured the worker's demand to improve his economic and social conditions but at the same time the workers should also play a responsible and efficient role to achieve the desired goal of the country. It made provisions for penalising illegal strikes, go slow, lockouts etc. and held that increased productivity only led to increased wages. This attitude of the Government towards P.S.Us ultimately paved the way to strong resistance by the workers against the management.

The Third Five Years Plan was no exception. It declared that labour policy in India must be associated with the specific needs of the situation to the industries and working class must accommodate the requirements of planned economy. To deal with the above unrests in various industries the government assumed power to interfere and argued for:

- 1) Inter union rivalry as unfortunate for the development of the industries and unhealthy for its workers;
- 2) Focussed on the resolving any dispute or differences between the workers and the employees;

- 3) Minimum wage guarantee for the economically weaker section and providing protection to them;
- 4) Facilitate welfare of the workers.

The improvement of working conditions can result in greater productive efficiency on the part of the workers (Third Five Year Plan Report, Planning Commission of India, 1961; p. 6). However, these three Planning's were designed to monitor the pace of capitalism within the structure of 'mixed' economy which ultimately strengthened the hands of the capitalists. The working class in the post colonial period too had suffered from several complications and also exploited in other manner. Consequently they resorted to violent means to express their grievances. The following table had shown the picture of industrial disputes in India for twelve years from 1951-62.

Year	No. of Stoppages	No. of Workers involved	Working days lost
1951	1,071	691,321	3,818,928
1952	963	809,242	3,336,961
1953	772	466,607	3,382,608
1954	840	477,138	3,372,630
1955	11,666	527,767	5,697,848
1956	1,203	715,130	6,992,040
1957	1,630	889,371	6,429,319
1958	1,524	928,560	7,797,585
1959	1,531	693,616	5,633,148
1960	1,538	986,268	6,536,517
1961	1,357	511,860	4,918,755
1962	1,491	705,059	6,120,576

(Source: Sen, 1997; p. 385)

An official review had succinctly put up the trends of wage of factory labour during the first two plans according to which, “Though the average annual money wages per worker show a rise in even prior to the beginning of First Five Year Plan, the real wages of the factory workers reached the pre-war level only in 1953, when the increase in money wages more than compensated for the rise of the cost of living...During the Second Plan period though the money wages level of the factory workers continued to raise...the real wage level showed a fall...It was only in 1961 that the 1956 level of real wages per factory workers was restored” (Sen, 1997; p. 384). The First Central Pay Commission was appointed before independence and it recommended in May 1947. The cost of living index considered by it was 1939=100 and fixed it on the question of dearness allowance believing that price hike had touched the peak in 1947. Government employees were very much unhappy with all its recommendations. Recommendation of the Second Pay Commission made them furious and violent as it completely neglected the principle of minimum need based wage system. The rate of price rise and inflationary spiral could not be managed if the recommendations were implemented exactly as they were determined by the Commission.

Real Earnings

Year	All India CPI Numbers	Index Number of Money Earnings (Factory Workers)	Index Number of Real Earnings (Factory Workers)
1961	100	100	100
1962	103	106	103
1963	106	109	103
1964	121	114	94
1965	132	128	97
1966	146	139	95
1967	166	151	91
1968	171	160	94
1969	169	171	101
1970	178	175	98
1971	183	185	101
1972	194	199	103
1973	228	216	95
1974	304	207	68
1975	321	205	64

(Source: Pocket Book of Labour Statistics, 1977-78)

The needs of the workers must be met in order to eliminate their discontentment and to improve their productivity and efficiency, the employer must consider the following factors:

- (1) Workers' economic requirements must be fulfilled;
- (2) His need for security remained satisfied;
- (3) Working conditions were healthy;
- (4) His social prerequisites should be accomplished.

In this context of acute inflationary crisis the workers had to manage their livelihood during the period of the 1950s to 1970s.

However, Indian Railways was the most effective organisation and whose networks directly influenced the life of many Indians and indirectly everyone. It was a huge organisation employing fourteen lakh permanent and more than two and half lakh casual workers in the year 1972-74. Each and every sector of economy in India had directly and indirectly depended on the Indian Railways. But the railway workforce continued to be exceptionally complex and segmented by diverse types of ranks and positions. More than eight lakh employees consisting of porters, gang men, cleaners, points men , sweepers, watermen, workshop employees, workers employed in loco sheds, train examiners, depots-ferries labour employed in lines etc. were generally known and called as the working class of the Indian Railways. It was said that one in every four hundred Indians was a railway employee and one family in every hundred was supported by the railways (Rao, 1974; p.182). Indian Railways (I.R.) had several characteristics which had separated railway industry from other P.S.U.s.

Class wise Distribution of Railway Employees (QOS)

	1957	1971
Class I	26 (0.3)	37 (0.3)
Class II	8 (0.1)	39 (0.3)
Class III	3,544 (35.5)	5,914 (42.2)
Class IV	6,395 (64.1)	7,997 (57.2)
Total	9,973 (100)	13,986 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.

Source: Government of India, Ministry of Finance, Report of the Third Central Pay Commission, 1973, p. 11.

(See: Narshima Reddi, 1979; p.1651)

The basic dilemma confronting their employees is the dual positions of the Government of India as the sovereign power and guardian of public interest on the one hand and as an employer on the other (Reddy, 1979; p.1652).

Department-wise Employment in Indian Railways as on March 31, 1973

Departments	All the Nine Zone Railways	Production Units			Total
		CLW	DLW	ICF	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Administrations	36,284 (2.6)	454	379	429	37,546 (2.7)
Accounts	29,563 (2.2)	499	261	321	30,644 (2.2)
Civil Engineering	2,93,342 (21.4)	498	639	414	2,95,313 (20/9)
Signal and Tele Communication	49,837 (3.6)	44	--	-	49,881 (3.5)
Transport	1,90,088 (13.5)	-	-	-	1,90,088 (13.5)
Commercial	1,10,320 (8.0)	-	-	-	1,10,320 (.8)
Mechanical Engineering	4,29,243 (31.3)	9,074	3,314	9,453	4,51,084 (31.9)
Stores	36,581 (2.7)	806	715	516	38,618 (2.7)
Electrical	92,969 (6.8)	923	622	1,143	95,657 (6.8)
Medical	49,111 (3.6)	604	84	-	49,799 (3.5)
Railway Protection Force	54,826 (4.0)	507	236	469	56,038 (4.0)
Railway Board and other Office	-	-	-	-	8,029
Total	13,72,164 (100)	13,809	6,270	12,745	14,13,017 (100)

Note: CLW: Chittaranjan Locomotive Works , DLW: Diesel Locomotive Works, Varanasi
ICF : Integral Coach Factory, Madras. Figures in parentheses represent percentages. Data on department-wise distribution of employment in the Railway Board and other offices are not available.

Source: Ministry of Railways, Supplement to the Indian Railways, Report and Accounts 1972-73, Statistical Statement, Delhi, 1974.

As an industry, railways and other public sectors enjoy the matters like living and working conditions, payments, industrial and social securities, health and education facilities but all the provisions of Acts like Payment of Wages Act 1839, Factories Act 1948, Trade Union Act 1926 or Industrial Disputes Act 1947 were not applicable to the railway workers. Some Acts which were specifically applicable for the railway employees sometimes contradictory to some parts of Indian Railways Act 1890 or Indian Railway Establishment Code. Some peculiar features had evolved in the Indian Railways over the years. Few disciplinary rules, regulations and measures which were applicable to the Central Government employees were equally applicable to the railway workers. But certain distinct characteristics had predominantly prevailed in the railway industry e.g. wage fixation, right to revolt like strikes, lockouts or mass sick etc. right to trade union activities, measures to settle the industrial disputes etc. Narashima Reddy had mentioned that the organisations of railway employees had been repeatedly demanding though in vein, that railwaymen be treated as industrial employees and their employment conditions be governed by the Statutes that were applicable to other industrial employees (Reddy, 1979; p. 1652).

In the year 1969 the Fourth Five Years Plan was launched and it gave emphasis on the development of transport especially the railway system. According to the Fourth Five Years Plan the main schemes under railways were expected to generate a large volume of employment related to the conversion of metre gauge into broad gauge, doubling of tracks, expansion of suburban traffic, construction of bridges, laying of new lines, building of quarters for staff and provision of mass transit facilities in the metropolitan cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi (Reports of the Fourth Five Years Plan, 1974; p.7). The Planners expected to increase employment opportunities in the transport sector and I.R. comprised of most reliable and significant transport system of the country. Indian Railway is the world leader in the provision of passenger service. It was reported that Indian Railways had a large number of passenger coaches and innumerable seating capacity. Moreover, during the Fourth Five Years Plan, the transport industries including railways must utilise its full potentialities regarding the employment. It also expected to grow first and must improve the economic and social status of the workers. Another important aspect which was noticed in this period was the increase of women employees in almost all the sectors. But the critics were of the opinion that the entire period of Planning (from the 1952 to 1974) had suffered

from numerous problems and poverty was one of them. It was due to the under utilisation of labour force hence it could not escalate production and generate profit. Another problem that was evident in the transportation industry especially in the railways, was the issue of the casual labourers. The transportation industry mainly the railways had employed quite a large number of casual labourers. These casual workers were not provided any job under the direct pay roll of the government. It indicated that the estimated objectives and purposes of the Plan period were not be achieved.

The term ‘wages’ as defined in the Payment of Wages Acts, 1936 included all remunerations capable of being expressed in terms of money which would be payable on fulfilment of the terms of the contract of employment but did not include the following:

- a) Value of any house accommodation, supply of light, water etc.;
- b) Contribution by the employers to any Pension Fund or Provident Fund;
- c) Travelling allowances or value of any travelling concessions;
- d) Any sum paid to defray special expenses; and
- e) Any quantity payable on discharge, unless payable under any law, contract or instrument which does not provide for the time within which payment is to be made.

Source: Indian Labour Year Book, 1972; p. 39.

The following table showed the earnings including pay, allowances, passengers, provident contributions, gratuities, pensionary benefits and grain shop concessions.

Class of Staff	Total Number of Staff		Per Capita Annual Earnings in Rupees	
	1970-71*	1971-72	1970-71	1971-72
Class III	583,187	592,234	4,718.90	50,933.31
Class IV	782,930	790,794	2,211.56	2,338.28
Total	1,366,117	1,383,028	3281.93	3,492.34

Source: Report of the Railway Board of Indian Railways for 1971-72 Revised*).

(See: The Indian Labour Year Book, 1972; p. 40).

The Central Government's Employees who were taking out the salary on authorised scales were entitled to at prescribed rate of dearness allowances as recommended by the Second and Third Pay Commission's Reports.

Rate of Dearness Allowance (D.A.) paid to Central Government Employees

Pay Ranges (Rs.)	Rate of D.A. (w.e.f. 1.9.1968) (Rs.)	Part of D.A. merged with basic pay (w.e.f. 1.12. 1968) (Rs.)
1	2	3
Below 110	71	47
110 and above but below 150	98	70
150 and above but below 210	122	90
210 and above but below 400	146	110
400 and above but below 450	160	120
450 and above but below 499	164	120
499 and above but below 543	Amount by which pay fails short of Rs. 663	

NB: There is no change in the existing rates of dearness allowance payable to employees in Higher pay ranges.

(Source: The Indian Labour Year Book, 1972; p. 44).

The annual earnings of staff employed in Government Railways as published in the Annual Report of the Railway Board, were given in the following table. It included pay allowances, passages, provident fund benefits and grain shop concessions. It showed that the annual earning had increased by 1.137 (28.2 percent) from 1973-74 to 1974-75. It was the consequence of the implementation of the recommendations of Third Pay Commission.

Annual Earnings per Employees in Government Railways

	1973-74	1974-75
Total number of Staff ('000)	1,432	1,441
Total Cost (crores of Rs.)	570.7	739.4
Per Capita cost (in Rs.)	4,034	5,171

Source: Report of the Railway Board of Indian Railways 1974-75.

(See: Indian Labour Year Book, 1974; p.37).

It was interesting to note that Indian railwaymen were paid much lower wages as compared to other industrial sectors. Railway management was not able to pay a moderately reasonable remuneration to its employees, not even able to generate the revenues properly. The rate of remuneration that an employee was entitled to receive, not only satisfied the physical and basic necessities of the employee, but also fulfilled the psychological needs, and also recognized his social status. Remuneration had impacted on the distribution of savings, consumptions and employment factors as well. Generally a large number of factors influence the wage and salary levels in an origination significant among them are:

- (1) remuneration in comparable industries;
- (2) firm's ability to pay
- (3) productivity; and
- (4) unions pressure and strategies.

Minimum Monthly Wages in Comparable Public Sector Industries

Sl. No.	Industry/Sector	Minimum Monthly Wages (in Rs.)		
		Basic	D.A.	Total
1.	Central Government (including Indian Railways)	196.00	112.60	308.60
2.	Life Insurance Corporation	125.00	285.00	410.00
3.	General Insurance Corporation	125.00	285.00	410.00
4.	Nationalized Banks	116.00	260.48	380.48
5.	Coal	286.00*	131.30	417.30
6.	Iron and Steel (Hindustan Steel Limited)	300.00	129.60	429.60

* This includes Rs. 26.00 attendance bonus.

Note: Minimum wages in Industries/Sectors in serial numbers 5 and 6 relate to October 1977 and the rest to January, 1978.

(Source: Report of the Study Group on Wages, Incomes and Prices, May 1978, Government of India, New Delhi, pp.104-105).

(See: Rao & Rao, 1982; p.355).

We must take into account one of the most important factors i.e., ability to pay which actually determined the workers' wage level. It ultimately impacted on the efficiency and productivity of the workers. Ability to pay on the other hand depended on the total staff cost to working expenses. It was also related with the increase of given profit and in interim relief an increase in passenger and goods traffic indicated its improvement in ability to pay. Rao and Rao had observed that the percentage of net revenue receipts to capital at charge disclosed the financial capabilities of the railways which showed increased revenue collection from 5.75 in 1950-51 to 6.72 in 1963-64 at a rate higher than that of capital at change (Rao & Rao, 1982; p. 357).

Percentages of Total Staff cost to Working Expenses, Gross Traffic Receipts and Net Revenue Receipts

Year	Percentage of total staff cost to working expenses	Percentage of total staff cost to gross traffic receipts	Percentage of net revenue receipts to capital at charge	Staff cost per rupee of new revenue receipts (in rupees)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1950-51	54.38	43.52	5.75	2.41
1955-56	58.51	47.76	5.19	3.00
1960-61	56.17	45.44	5.77	2.38
1961-62	54.15	43.42	5.92	2.19
1962-63	53.51	41.89	6.50	1.93
1963-64	52.00	40.07	6.72	1.75
1964-65	50.86	41.77	4.85	2.34
1965-66	51.83	42.30	5.03	2.30
1966-67	51.78	44.10	4.02	2.97
1967-68	51.84	44.87	3.69	3.34
1968-69	52.01	43.74	4.60	2.38
1969-70	52.19	44.19	4.59	2.87
1970-71	53.34	45.67	4.35	3.18
1971-72	53.37	45.14	4.80	2.93
1972-73	51.90	44.56	4.41	3.15
1973-74	52.71	50.14	1.42	10.30
1974-75	55.16	52.29	1.79	10.50

Source: Annual Reports by the Railway Board, Vol. II up to 1971-72 and Indian Railways

Annual and Statistical Statements for the remaining years

See: Rao & Rao, 1982; p. 358.

Another important aspect must be studied here; the cost of living had determined the actual economic status and financial condition of the workers. And dearness allowances (D.A.) was the instrument which tried to cope up with the increased cost of living and basic wage earning and salary structure of the employees. Interim Relief utilised this instrument to maintain the purchasing power of the employees. The index number of many wages and labour productivity during the years from 1960-61 to 1975-76 in Indian Railways are shown in the following table:

Index Number of Money Wages, Real Wages and Labour Productivity

Year	Money Wages	Cost of Living	Real Wages	Labour Productivity
1	2	3	4	5
1960-61	100	100	100	100
1961-62	103.94	110.71	93.89	103.43
1962-63	109.36	119.38	91.61	108.62
1963-64	112.54	129.84	86.68	109.73
1964-65	117.36	134.31	87.38	107.33
1965-66	129.61	136.23	95.14	112.69
1966-67	141.14	157.81	89.44	113.56
1967-68	153.44	165.72	92.59	116.89
1968-69	166.39	175.47	94.83	121.93
1969-70	175.28	176.46	99.33	129.98
1970-71	189.76	182.33	104.08	125.27
1971-72	201.30	188.33	106.96	130.14
1972-73	207.71	202.92	102.36	132.83
1973-74	227.13	236.90	95.88	122.30
1974-75	291.29	310.75	93.74	126.16
1975-76	344.91	306.83	112.41	141.03

Source: Annual Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, Vo. II up to 1972-73; Indian Railway Year Book

It was seen that the money wage increased by 297.65 percent during 1960-61 to 1979-80 but cost of living had raised up to 360.75 percent from 1960-61 up to 1974-75. Therefore, one could easily judge the situation where the railway workers belonged and Interim Relief were never been able to balance between them. However, if one compared the scale of payments of the employees in manufacturing industries in the countries like U.K., U.S.A. and Japan with that of the railway employees, the latter were for more better in position. But in India the picture was exactly the reverse.

Comparative study of Average Wages in Railways with other manufacturing Industries in U.S.A, U.K. and Japan

Year	U.S.A. (Average hourly earnings (in dollars))		U.K. (Average weekly earnings (in Sterling/Pounds))		Japan (Average monthly earnings in years)	
	Principal Railways	All manufacturing industries	Railways (main)	All manufacturing industries	National Railways	All manufacturing industries
1970	3.89	3.36	29.31	28.91	95.385	71.447
1971	4.36	3.57	31.65	31.37	111.894	81.010
1972	4.89	3.81	36.15	36.20	129.689	93.627
1973	5.40	4.08	39.49	41.52	159.612	116.271
1974	5.68	4.41	53.11	49.12	197.572	146.464
1975	6.05	4.81	65.64	59.74	240.761	163.729

Source: I.L.O. Year Book of Labour Statistics, 1978, Geneva, p.35.

See: Rao & Rao, 1982; p. 357.

Indian Railways were highly hierarchical. After independence the racial contradictions of the British rule were gone but the conflicts between labour and their employers had prevailed as earlier period. The permanent employees of the railways get the facilities of quarters, education and health facilities, subsidised canteen, travelling pass, holiday homes etc. still the relationship between the railway management and the workforce was not harmonious in post-colonial era. The pay scale of the railway was not uniform at that point of time, 12.9 lakh employees were employed on railway operations and maintenance; 43 lakh workshops and artisans and lakhs were running staff. As we know that Central Pay Commission standardised the scale of pay of the railway workers considering the length of work, working hours and the qualifications of the workers. But this system immensely dissatisfied the workers. A section of the railway workers known as loco-running staff mainly the drivers, shunters, fire men etc. became highly annoyed with this. In the colonial period they were treated as the most 'elite' people of the railways but Indianisation of the service diminished not only their status but also their salary. During the colonial period these workers were labelled as the intensive staff of the railway who had a limited working hour. Transfer of power and Indianisation of service, authority declared them as a 'continuous' staff, i.e., there should not be any limitations on their working hour. They had to work for long fifteen to sixteen hours per day. Working conditions sometimes threw formidable challenges to the railway workers specially the continuous loco running staff. At that point of time mostly the trains were run by steam power which was really tough to manage because the workers had to work for long hours and the loco staff specially the drivers, foremen, shunters, engine cleaners etc. had to stay in the heat and smoke. The living conditions of the railway workers were also very much unsatisfactory and accommodation was always not available for all. M.A Rao had shown that the railway workers were provided with quarters, in the bigger stations quarters were built on programme basis, to meet the shortage the total number of staff quarters had been increased, thus it was 5,34,192 on 31st March 1973, accommodating only 38.1 percent of the total number of employees (Rao, 1974; p. 188). But these were only provided to the Class II and III categories of employees. The Class IV staff lived in the dirty slums called as 'coolie line' which were full of noise, heat and bad smell. They did not have proper system of sanitation and clearance. Rooms were so small with insufficient ventilation. Though the Third Five

Years Plan allotted separate money for the improvement of the quality and quantity of the railway workers. Any industry cannot have efficiency and effectiveness in industrial production unless and until the basic human requirements got fulfilled. The railway group D or Class IV workers lived in rudimentary and unhealthy conditions. The gang men lives in the 'gang huts' near the stations or crossing areas consisted of only one small room and more smaller kitchen and unhygienic bathroom.

The railway management secured medical and health facilities to its workers at lower rate but these health centres of hospitals were not well equipped the modern tools and machineries and not adequate also. All these factors affected the physical and mental conditions of the workers. The railway workers had to tolerate the wrong transfers, demotion, dismissal etc. which damaged the confidence and mental strength of the workers and generated insecurity of employment and life among them. The railway administration was not at all aware of these facts which mainly created trouble for the grass root i.e. Class IV workers. And all these incidents triggered off various major and minor labour unrests in different parts of the country. Primarily these unrests were sporadic not much organised nor even unites.

Another issue that was proliferating in the railway front was the position of the casual workers. Indian Railway engaged almost two lakhs casual workers in the 1973-1974 but they were inadequately paid and were frequently terminated from their jobs. A casual workers serving continuously at least 120 days was granted the temporary status with minimum advantages of wages, leave, health facilities etc. But the railway authority always discontinued their services on the 199th day so that the workers would not get temporary status. Casual workers were mostly employed for construction works which were really hazardous and dangerous at the same time. The workers had to stay in remote places where the construction works were going on. The regular construction workers were not allowed any type of allowances, not even provided any place to stay near the worksites. But the regular and casual workers had to work under similar climate and condition. The construction casual employees, throughout the 1970s were paid so less amount of remuneration, only Rs.3.50 a day, though all of them faced the same conditions while on duty. Construction casual workers did not get any medical facilities, accidental or injury benefits, if accidents occurred while working in the worksites. They were not allowed to

take leave for more than twenty consecutive days, even though there was a genuine reason of sickness or otherwise. More than twenty days absence from worksite or duty led to break in service. The worst sufferers were the women workers. They did not get leave for more than twenty days even on the maternity ground and most of the times they faced break in service.

Interestingly there were only two recognised labour unions that existed in the railway front, i.e., National Federation of Indian Railwaymen and All India Railwaymen's Federation. The former was controlled and administered by the Congress and the latter by the Socialists. Surprisingly both the trade unions were not capable to voice the worker's grievances or channelized them properly. Indian Trade union movement since its inception had witnessed several splits which ultimately strengthened the hands of the authority and weakened the process of solidarity and consolidation of the workers as a class. As per M.A Rao's opinion railway workers had to work all the hours of day and night ignoring the harsh climatic conditions which made it possible to run more than eleven thousand trains run everyday throughout the country from one place to another, it included certain amount of risks not only to the life and property of its users but to the men behind the wheels. These risks became significant when the Railway Staff were overworked, unduly tired, insufficiently nourished or clothed, inadequately housed, improperly trained or smarting under a sense of grievances (Rao, 1974; p.182).