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**Manjit Singh: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF UNORGANISED INDUSTRY**  
Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, pp 234

Dr. Manjit Singh in his book has tried to trace the development of hosiery industry in Ludhiana in particular, and in India in general, in its two aspects, viz., capital growth and labour-process/employment relations, with a view to clarify certain concepts. He has utilised the Marxian and Leninist conception of labour-process to give a framework to his analysis, viz., 1) cooperation – a form of production that involves greater number of labourers working together at the same time and at one place to produce the same sort of commodity under the mastership of one capitalist; 2) 'manufacture' – a higher form of production that existed before industrial revolution in Britain when the workers were employed by the capitalist in his workshop not as producers of complete commodity, but the parts of detailed labour, i.e., division of labour leading to the loss of worker's control on the labour-process enjoyed by him during the earlier stage. This stage of labour process essentially refers to men as the tools of production and not to any machines and equipment; and 3) 'factory' – machines and tools characterising this form of production which Marx termed as 'machinofacture', that emerged with the industrial revolution. The author uses the term 'manufacture' in its Marxian sense rather refusing to take note of the changes in its meaning and context. Perhaps because hosiery production in Punjab is still to a large extent compares with the putting-out system and the production process is entirely manual.

The author also traces the growth of industrial capital since the supremacy of East India Company in India with special reference to small scale industries in different parts of India. He also discusses the developments in trade union movement and examines whether working-class consciousness among the unorganised worker is generated, while identifying the factors preventing the growth of working-class consciousness and trade union movement in the unorganised sector.

In the second part of the book, the author analyses the growth of hosiery industry in India and in Ludhiana which according to him grew mainly during the 20th century, but flourished during the inter-war period. His analysis brings out the stages of industrial growth and development comparable to that which Britain witnessed before and after industrial revolution, domestic production or the putting-out system to factory system. His conclusion is that the system of production in hosiery industry in Ludhiana during the mid 1950s was rather complex – the existence of 'manufacturers' (domestic production system) and the factory system of production and the sub-contracting system to meet the requirement of export with limited cost of production. He also concludes that it is this complex nature of industrial growth that has prevented the development of trade unionism and trade union movement in this industry.

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An important finding of Dr. Singh's study is that the hosiery industry in Ludhiana has developed mainly because of the supplies to Defence and its export orientation, primarily to Russia. The encouragement from Russians has not only helped the development of the industry, but has led to the sub-contracting system since the Russians have limited their business to a few select manufacturers. Despite assured export market, the production is still manual due to the availability of cheap labour. At the same time, there is also a growth of hosiery machinery manufacturing industry in Ludhiana itself. The exporters have not only introduced the machinery in their factories, but have also encouraged the middlemen and the workers to own certain simple machines in order to meet the production targets and export demands, in the process encouraging the coming into existence of the middlemen known as "fabricators". This system has benefited the exporters to a large extent.

The workforce in this industry comprises the migrants as well as the local people and also women and children. But more than half of the workforce is engaged in a single process, namely, knitting. A very important aspect of labour in this industry is that more than 85 per cent of the labourers are not considered as 'workers' either by the exporters or by the contractors because of the existence of putting-out system of production. And at least a small percentage of workforce consists of the members of the families of the fabricators. Thus, the position of the workforce in hosiery industry is quite heterogeneous. By and large, the workers employed in hosiery industry are not only casual and adhoc, but are also physically more scattered, without job security. The wages paid in the industry are predominantly piece-rates. The workers are not organised into trade unions though several trade unions function in the organised sector in Ludhiana itself. Thus, these workers are subjected to "super-exploitation", both by the exporters and fabricators.

Though the analysis of the subject is quite good, the title of the book is not correct. The author has erred in using the term 'unorganised industry' in the title of the book. There is no unorganised industry, but we have unorganised labour in small scale industries. Similarly, this is not a study of labour process *per se*. However, the book is a good addition to the existing literature on unorganised labour and small scale industries.

**B.R. PATIL**  
*Associate Professor*  
*OB/PM/ IR Area*  
*IIM-B*