
FUNCTION AND MANAGEMENT OF TRADE UNIONS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Trade Unionism had made its headway owing to growth of industrialization and capitalism. The Indian trade union movement is now over fifty years old. It has passed through several stages in its career. Periods of frustration and bitter struggle have alternated with occasions of recognition, consolidation, and achievements. This research article mainly focuses on the roles and objectives of Trade Union in India. Researchers have included present working conditions, identifying the needs of Trade Unions, social responsibilities, working methodology of Trade Unions, significance of Trade Unions and role of Trade Unions in collective bargaining because Trade Unions had made a great impact on social, political and economic life. The objective for which formation of trade union takes place in the recognition of law is to spread industrial peace with aim to provide social, economical justice to people at large but this function can only be performed if the members of the trade unions are provided with civil liberty and democratic rights by the society they live in. at the end of research article Researchers have mentioned the problems being faced by Trade Unions in India and suggestions for the success of Trade Unions.

KEYWORDS: *Trade Unionism, society*

INTRODUCTION

With the changed social, political and educational environment in terms of awareness of right, trade unions are considered a major component of industrial relations system. Workers union plays an crucial role to protect the interest of its members. Therefore, this paper focuses on the need of labour unions, significance and role of union, and welfare activities in sugar industries in the study region. Trade unions are those organisations of employees/workers who work for the maintenance and enhancement of their economic status by insisting on a rise in money wages and improvement in working conditions and benefits. Besides this economic objective, there are other dimensions of trade unions which have gained importance in the context of the changing sociopolitical environment. The workers is not only a factor of production but an individual whose total life situation is a matter of concern for the trade unions. Gandhiji viewed trade unions as moral institutions aiming at making the workers better individuals and responsible citizens. Trade unions are considered to be institutions experimenting with industrial democracy which would strengthen democracy. Traditionally, trade unions have been resistance organisations defending the interests of workers and see to it that they are not exploited. They have also been viewed as instruments of change in the socio-political system so that workers may have their own government and prevent their exploitation

PROBLEMS OF TRADE UNIONS IN INDIA

The position of trade unions in India is not very sound but provides gloomy picture. This is because of the fact that the Indian trade unions of today suffer from many problems. A brief account of these problems and constraints are given below:

(A) Uneven Growth: Trade union activities are concentrated in large scale industry sector and there too in regard to manual labour only and mainly in bigger industrial centers, for example, textile workers in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Indore, Kanpur and Plantation labour in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Hardly any trade union activity exists in small scale enterprises, domestic and agricultural labour. The degree of unionisation varies from industry to industry. It is 39% in transport and communication,

manufacturing industries and electricity and gas. In coal, it is 61% tobacco manufacture 70% and cotton textile 56%. Thus unionism has touched only a portion of the working class in India.

(B) Low Membership: The number of trade unions in India has increased considerably. But this has been followed by the declining membership per union. The average number of members per union was about 3,500 in 1927-28. It reduced to about 1,400 in 1946-47 and again to as low as a figure of 675 in 1985-86 and 659 in 2000-01. During 1964-65, 70% of the unions submitting returns belonged to the group having a membership below 300. More than 75 percent of the trade unions submitting returns in 2000-01 have less than 500 members. The average membership of all trade unions including both submitting returns and those not submitting returns is likely to be much below this figure. This indicates the emergence of small sized unions in large numbers. This is due to the reason that any seven workers may form a union under the Trade Union Act, 1926 and get it registered. Moreover, the rivalry among the leaders of trade unions has resulted in multiplicity of unions, thereby reducing the average size of membership per union.

(C) Outside Leadership: Another remarkable feature of trade unionism in India has been domination by outside leadership down to the present day. Most of the trade unions in India have professional political leadership. The leadership is not rooted in the working class. The leadership of professional political is interested in exploiting workers for their political purposes. The interest of the working class is not protected by the political leaders. The political leadership is actually harmful to the cause of working class. Strikes are prolonged by political leaders for personal prestige. Very often, negotiations with employers fail due to such political leadership. The interest and welfare of the workers are very often ignored. Thus, outside leadership of politicians is a major weakness of trade unions in India.

(D) Multiplicity of Unions: Another problem of trade unions in India is that of multiplicity of unions. There exist many trade unions in the same establishment. There are at times as many as twenty unions in the same plant. The existence of this phenomenon can be attributed partly to the labour laws. The Trade Unions Act, 1926 permits any association of seven workers to be registered as a union, and confers upon it certain rights. That is, such a union is allowed by law to raise disputes, go to conciliation file suits, and even bargain with employers. Such a law naturally encourages small sections of workers to form separate unions. Any seven persons can get together to form a union. Many a time, it is contended that multiplicity of unions is because of outside leaders, but more pertinent point is that they are able to work because law permits and gives sanctity to the small unions.

(E) Inter Union Rivalry: On account of multiple unions there occurs a problem of union rivalry. Unions try to play down each other in a bid to gain greater influence among workers. In the process they do more harm than good to the cause of unionism as a whole. Employers are given an opportunity to play unions against each other. They can refuse to bargain on the contention that there is not true representative union. Besides this, the workers' own solidarity is lost. Employers are able to take advantage of infighting between workers groups. Solution to this problem can be found in secret ballot vote. After some stipulated time period say two years or so, the workers should go to polls to elect their representative union for that duration. This would do away with both multiplicity of unions and union rivalry.

(F) Absence of Paid Office Bearers: Majority of unions do not have whole time paid office bearers. Many union activities work on honorary basis. They devote only limited time and energy to trade union activities. The domination of political leaders is also due to the absence of full time union workers. The union office bearers are also not trained properly. They lack the knowledge of basic principles and practices of trade unionism.

(G) Weak Financial Position: The financial position of the trade unions is very weak because their average yearly income is very low and inadequate. The subscription rates are very low. Subscription rates vary from union to union. Under conditions of multiplicity of unions, unions interested in increasing their membership

figures keep the subscription rate unduly low. As a result, the funds with the unions are inadequate and they cannot undertake welfare programmes for their members. In such a situation, the subscription rates must be raised. It is argued that the financial condition of Indian workers is not too good to afford the increased rates. This however, is only myth. Over the years the average income of the workers has been on an increase. It is wrong to plead that they cannot afford higher subscription rates.

Another important reason for the weak financial position of unions is that large amounts of subscription dues remain unpaid by the workers. The name of constant defaulters continues to appear on the registers of most of unions. They are neither expelled nor cease to be member's ipso facto according to the union rules. Rules for expulsion of defaulting members and seldom invoked. Besides this, unions do not have proper staff and organisation to collect subscription. Workers are approached on or near the pay day, they will pay their subscriptions readily. A solution to this problem of collection of subscription on regular basis can be found in the check off system. Under this system the subscription is deducted from pay at the time making wage payment by the employer. The amount later on handed over to the union of which the worker a member.

(H) Lack of Interest: In order to make the trade union movement succeed the members of trade unions should take keen interest their affairs. They should understand what unionism all about and what demands it makes on individual members. They must feel the need to give the movement necessary support for a common cause. In India, a large number of workers have not joined any union. About 2/3rd of the workers have to truck with any union. Moreover, all the members of the trade unions do not show interest in their affairs. The attendance at the general meetings of the unions is very low. Under such circumstances, trade unionism cannot be expected to make much progress. This problem can be removed by educating workers of their rights and duties and developing in them a sense of responsibility.

(I) Limited Stress on Welfare: Many unions in India undertake only limited welfare activities. They feel that their major activity is to fight with the employer for more wages and allowances. Other activities like opening a co-operative bank or store, provision of educational and medical facilities, provision of welfare facilities, etc. are not undertaken by many unions. As a result, workers are not attracted towards unions.

CONCLUSION

Unfair labour practice and practice of not involving employees in any kind of decision making resulted in formation of trade union in India and its recognition by court of law, The notion of social justice and industrial peace can only be achieved by the mutual cooperation of employers and employee and that is why trade unions play their major roles in achieving the industrial peace and serving overall justice to employee. There are various contexts in which employee should be exempted from the arbitrary decisions of employers like wages, bonus, working hour , holidays, this exemption can only be achieved by virtue of negotiation named as collective bargaining where interest of both parties are given priorities in any kind of dispute, origin of trade union clarifies the struggle behind the formation of trade unions in India, further the continuous division in the trade union at national level led to the less implementation of objective they frame before formation , one of the cause can also be traced in the form of legislation in this regard , now a days there are only two essentials which have be satisfied in order to establish a trade union that is substantial number of workers and matter of dispute have substantial nexus with workers but the representation is not the only task which is to be done , for the purpose of negotiation and complete management the skill of bargaining is required which commonly lacks in the common workers of the industry as they lacks in education and awareness . There are other sufferings which prevails with the working of trade union like lack of financial resources and leadership which prohibits the proper allocation of resources and involvement in policy making despite of such limitations the need of more efficient labour union is required so as to protect the interest of sweat labours, In case of any arbitrary action from the employers which hires them.

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