

Trade Union Movement in India:A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT: A labor union or trade union is a kind of voluntary organization formed by workers through collective action. Such type of organization have bonded together to achieve common goal in key areas like wages, duty hours, and working condition forming a cartel of labors. It also plays an important role to promote employee to improve their working condition, service and protecting their interest and maintaining industrial relations. The trade union, through its leadership, bargains with the employer on behalf of union members and negotiates labor contracts with employers. As long as history of human society several differences between workers group and employers group have been lasting in the form of strike, feral, lock out, pen down etc. against exploitation. It is an important component of democratic system and operates on principles of democracy such as popular participation, involvement in decision making process, leadership accountability to members, union elections, etc. The employees may join the unions as of their belief that it is a profitable technique to secure adequate safeguard from various types of hazards and income insecurity such as accident, injury, illness, unemployment, etc. In India, Trade union movement is not a new concept and it was firstly organized only after the First World War. After the First World War, immediately several trade unions were formed in important industrial Centres of India, such as Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, etc. The trade unions have remarkable achievement in fulfilling of the necessities of laborers in Indian Industries after liberalization of 1991. Today a large no. of trade unions are working in the different parts of the country but they have developed very slowly. Nowadays trade unions have become an indispensable part of the modern corporate world.

KEYWORDS: World, Trade Union, India, Organization, Management, Worker and Employer etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

The History of the Trade-Union Movement everywhere is a History of Blood, Tears and Toils.

- Harry A. Millis & Royal E. Montgomery

A trade union is nothing but a well-organized group of working class employees for protecting, sustain, and enhanced the group members' interests and benefits on the basis of unity of strength. Its main objective is to protect & protest its members from exploitation, enhance and advance the interests and benefits of them. Trade union is an important social institution and performs significant social and economic and political functions. It achieved recognition from employers, the state and the society after many a bloody battles. It has constructed a body of rights for the working class using different methods of action such as direct action, political and legal methods. They are the most proper organizations for balancing and improving the relations between the employer and the employees. More broadly trade union is an organization of workers who have come together to achieve common goals such as protecting the integrity of their trade, achieving higher pay, increasing the number of employees an employer hires and healthier working environments. The most common purpose of these associations or unions is maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment.

Generally, union statement and shared negotiating have been the solutions to the progress of a stable working populace in advanced countries, it is probable intended for workers to increase a fairer share of the prosperity that they generate. They are additionally ready to enhance working conditions and help specialists pick up employer stability. Changes in the political, social and educational with respect to consciousness of rights. For example, the right to organize, the right

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to bargain, and the right to clear terms and conditions of employment. Accordingly, with the setting up of minimum wages norms for compulsory work hours, arrangements for well-being and security, and general upgrades in working conditions, unionization has turned out to be instrumental in enhancing the personal satisfaction of laborers.

Each trade unions have their specific philosophies, ethics, principles, aims & concepts and objectives to achieve (with the support and active backing of their members), which are included in their constitution, and each has its own philosophy, tactic, plan & policies, strategy & tactic to reach and achieve the above cited objectives and goals. Trade unions are as long as a bridge for both employers and employees, because an individual employee cannot bargain with management for wages, terms & conditions of employment, and cannot look after his interests as a positive, active, and well-organized manner. On other hand, employers also found it suitable, helpful, and useful to deal with a group of spokespersons or delegates and settled all issues relates to employees excellently, with a minor time of interval. Hence, as an entire trade union is an efficient instrument of defence compared to misuse and run a forum for collecting the forces of the working class. They are designed to eliminate the exploitation of the working class through WPM (Workers Participation in Management).

Trade unions have gained recognition as legitimate social and political organizations all over the world. They have become an integral part of the contemporary business and industry. However, the beginning was not rosy when both employers and government viewed any combine of laborers with scorn.

The desire for self-expression is an elementary human being initiative for most people. Hence workers need to share their emotions, thoughts and sentiments with administration. An exchange union gives such a gathering where the sentiments, thoughts, and conclusions of the laborers could be talked about. It can likewise transmit the sentiments, thoughts, suppositions and protests of the laborers to the management. The aggregate voice of the workers is heard by the management and given due thought while taking approach choices by the management.

II. TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN INDIA

The enlargement of trade unionism in India has had an unpredictable history. The arrival of the trade unionism in India could be traced to the early days of industrialization, start in the 1850s with the formation of the Cotton and Jute mills in Bombay and Calcutta. The first trade union, Bombay Mill Hands Association was established in 1890 with the instant purpose of shake up for a modification of the first Indian Factories Act of 1881.

The birth of the trade union movement in India as recognized now may be traced back to the first quarter of the 20th century, even though the certain form of trade union organizations came into being after the establishment of factories in India in the 1880s. On or after the beginning, workers were recruited from a special class of men called "Jobbers". The jobbers were authorized to keep self-restraint, in the factory and give basic training necessary by the workers.

In 1875, a few social reformers under the guidance of SorabjeeShapurjeeBengalee began a protest in Bombay to draw the notice of the Government to the appalling conditions of workers in factories, particularly those of women and children and to appeal to the authorities, to familiarize legislature for the improvement of their working environments. Narayan MeghjiLokhanday, a factory worker is said to be the founder of the organized labour movement in India. He organized an agitation and called for a conference of workers in Bombay to make representations.

Labour leader Narayan MeghajiLokkande led a labour movement and started "Bombay Mill Hands Association" and get ahead a weekly holiday system for Bombay Mill Owners Association. The first union to be started in India was the Bombay Mill Hand Association established in 1890.

After 1890 several other organizations were started in the country, such as the Amalgamated Society of Railways Servants of India started in 1897, the Printers Union Calcutta in 1905, the Bombay Postal Union in 1907, the Kamagar Hit Varddak Sabah in 1909 and The Social Service League in 1910. Most of these associations could not serve the purpose of trade union and perished before the First World War.

The Trade Union Movement in India became more organized and formed varieties of unions e.g. Indian Collie or Employees Association, Indian Seamen's' Union, Railway Men's Union, Port Trust Employees Union etc. in 1918. The Madras Labour Union has been accepted as the first genuine, properly organized „trade union in India“ formed under the leadership of B.P. Wadia in 1918.

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Trade union movement has been considered as the product of industrial development since the First World War 1914-18 in India, as there was a serious unrest among industrial workers. Several trade union were formed in various parts of the country. In the beginning, 'strike committees' in the sense that they were formed mainly for organizing strikers to get their demands fulfilled so, as soon as their demands were met, they were wound up.

Industrial unrest nurtured up as a result of serious economic problems formed by the First World War. The increasing cost of living encouraged the workers to demand higher wages for which they started uniting themselves. As a result the social, economic and political conditions of the country and the establishment of International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1919 further prompted the growth of trade union movement in India. In 1919 Madras Labour Union was formed which is considered as the first organized trade union in India. All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in 1920 to give Indian representation at the League of Nations, ILO and also for coordination of actions of various trade unions. The Central Labour Board, Bombay and the Bengal Trade Union Federation was started in 1922. The All India Railwaymen's Federation was formed in the same year and this was monitored by the creation of both Provincial and Central federations of unions of postal and telegraph employees. In 1928, All India Trade Union Federation (AITUF) was formed.

The passing of the trade union act by the Govt. in 1926 significantly encouraged the growth of trade union movement in India. This act providing for the registration of trade unions, and gave legal status to the registered trade unions and protection from civil and criminal protection to the members of the registered trade unions. Indian trade unions Act, 1926 summarizes all moralities relating to registration of trade union to decision of trade interrelated differences. This act sets rules for both the workers and the industrialists. The act deals with the registration of trade unions, their rights, their accountabilities and responsibilities as well as make sure that their funds are used properly. It provides legal and corporate status to the registered trade unions. It also obtains to defend them from civil or criminal prosecution so that they could carry on their legitimate activities for the benefit of the working class. The act is pertinent not only to the union of workers but also to the association of employers. It covers to whole of India. Also, certain acts namely, the Societies Registration Act, 1860; the Co-operative Societies Act, 1912; and the Companies Act, 1956 shall not affect to any registered trade union, and that the registration of any such trade union under any such act shall be invalid. The situation was not favorable to the growth of trade union movements in India in 1930. The prosecution of the communists complicated in Meerut conspiracy case and the failure of Bombay Textile strike of 1929 retarded the trade union movement.

The Eighteenth Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress lead by Suresh Chandra Banerjee, President of the Congress was held at Bombay on 28th and 29th September 1940. The session instituted a milestone in the history of the Indian trade union movement is that it perceived the restoration of complete unity in the Indian trade union from the inclusion of the National Trades Union Federation in the All-India Trade Union Congress. In 1942, a Tripartite Labour Conference was convened to provide the common platform for discussion between employees and employers. Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was started in 1947 to stabilize the industrial arguments in democratic and non-violent methods.

Second World War brought in its wake several problems. While one section in the AITUC was in favour of all out support to the war effort, the other was opposed to it. In November 1941, the former group started their own central organization called the Indian Federation of Labour (IFL). Jamnadas Mehta and M.N. Roy became its President and General Secretary respectively. A further split took place in June 1947.

The repercussion of independence was not good for unions. The expectations of workers to secure better facilities and wages from the national government were not gathered. There was large scale turbulence and strikes and lockouts increased. The emergence of independent India in 1947 the partition of the country affected the trade union movement, particularly in Bengal and Punjab. By 1949, four central trade union organizations were functioning in India:

1. The All India Trade Union Congress
2. The Indian National Trade Union Congress,
3. The Hindu MazdoorSangh, and
4. The United Trade Union Congress

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Labour violence increased since the 1960s. The protest movement was frequently shaped by political factors. The definitive appearance of the politics of strikes was the incidence of the Railway Strike in 1974 and the state responded by grand the Internal Emergency in 1975. Emergency in 1975 led to the postponement of trade union constitutional rights and an unforeseen fall in the trade union movement, and these actions once more picked up momentum after the end of the emergency. Trade unions exercise pressure on the Govt. for revising the Industrial Dispute Act and got success in 1976. The first phase of fractional economic reforms was started in 1984, the Indian Govt. announced a new Industrial Policy based on the receiving of the principles of LPG (Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization) measured basic to Indian Economy & Industrial progress. The insertion of this new policy has been on rising domestic as well as international competition through the far-reaching application of market instrument and smoothing counterfeiting of dynamic relationship foreign investors and technology sources.

The next phase of economic reforms introduced in 1991, with the liberalization of Indian Economy for intact India with world-wide economic tendencies. In this innovative and changed era of globalization, trade unions (both in public and private sectors) have known the importance of market forces & competition and play a necessary active supportive role in the management in order to improve quality, productivity and competitiveness. This changed scenario, employees mainly focused on their career, packages, and professional growths shown dislike to trade unions.

The trade unions in India are now busy in protest against the attacks on their fundamental rights, right to collective bargaining, right to strike, closures/ layoffs of industrial units, Voluntary Retirement Scheme, and massive retrenchment, wage freeze, withdrawal or reduction of social security measures for workers as the side effect of globalization, and the jeopardizing growth of redundancy.

The following is a list of national-level CTUOs as recognised by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India. The list is for the reference year 2002 whose verification was completed in 2008. (In alphabetical order.)

01. All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)
02. BharatiyaMazdoorSangh (BMS)
03. Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)
04. Hind MazdoorKisanPanchayat (HMKP)
05. Hind MazdoorSabha (HMS)
06. Indian Federation of Free Trade Unions (IFFTU)
07. Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)
08. National Front of Indian Trade Unions (NFITU)
09. National Labor Organization (NLO)
10. Trade Unions Co-ordination Centre (TUCC)
11. United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) and
12. United Trade Union Congress - Lenin Sarani (UTUC - LS)

III. PROBLEMS OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN INDIA

1. Small Size of Unions

Excepting a small number of unions working at a regional or national level most of the unions are categorized by small size. An important reason for the appearance of small unions in India can be attributed to the provisions of Indian trade union Act 1926, provides for the establishment of a union with a small number of seven members. So whenever workers in any factory or mine are organized, a new union can come into the creature. Competition among the central organizations and the local union leaders further outcomes in the breakdown of unions. If there is intra- union competition, the union members may get divided leading to small sized unions. A small size can lead to many problems for the unions. Due to the scarcity of funds unions find it problematic to involve the services of specialists to counsel and help union members in the time of need. Disjointed unions find it difficult to get united for co-operative negotiating. According to the veteran trade union leader V.V. Giri, "the trade union movement in India is plagued by the predominance of small sized unions". The figure of small sized unions has been growing at a fast rate in India. In India, there are more than 45 thousand registered trade unions and about three-fourth of the unions have a membership of less

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than 500. This has damaged the base of the movement and therefore these unions are not in a situation to run co-operative negotiating talks properly.

2. Financial Weakness/Poor Finance

The primary source of finances for the unions is the membership subscription. The union's items of expenditure include salaries to office staff, allowances to office bearers, annual meeting/convention expenses, rents, printing, stationery and postage etc. The low rate of the membership fee is the main reason for the unsound financial position of unions. Owing to the multiplicity of unions each union vies for enhancing its membership so they usually keep their subscription rate very low. Workers also often feel that unions are not doing enough for them so they don't deserve a higher fee. It has also been observed that union members prefer making ad-hoc payments if a dispute arises than making a regular payment. This shows the lack of workers' commitment to the unions.

3. Limited Membership

Trade unions were established in limited areas in India. They were concentrated only in industrial areas, that too in the urban areas and in the organized sectors. They were unknown in rural and undeveloped areas. Trade unions in India are confined to urban areas and their total membership forms a small percentage of the total workers. Even in the organized sector, where trade unions are strong, a good number of workers do not join any union. A Government survey disclosed that there are 82% of the units where numbers of workers are below 500 but only 18% of the total workers were the members of the trade union.

4. Outside Leadership:

Union-management relations are largely impelled by the nature of union leadership. Regrettably in India, the greater part of unions are succeeded by professional politicians and lawyers who have no experience of physical work and no association with the consistent union. It is not leadership by the workers, but leadership by intellectuals. They have no practical knowledge of industry troubled and of the problems the workers face. They could not pay personal attention to the union work. Further charitable nature of their work weakens their sense of responsibility. But experience suggests that the performance of the union would be the best if leadership comes from the workers itself as an alternative to outside leadership. Workers.

5. Political Affiliation/ Politicization

The growth of trade unionism in India has been inseparably combined with freedom struggle, giving it a political base. Primarily it helped the trade union movement to record a speedy growth as well as gain substantial effect with the incumbent government. In the long run, it has become an expletive for undoing the very objective of trade unionism the unity among the working class. The difficulties are dependence on outside leadership who are not loyal to the organization, exploitation of trade unions and workers' strength by political parties to meet their political objectives, diversity of trade unions because of the existence of multiple political parties. Any spilled in the parental political party automatically spilled the corresponding trade unionism. For example, split of the communist party of India into CPM and CPI led to the split of union members' owed allegiance to the two factions leading to the appearance of two trade unions. In the same way, inter-union rivalry and disunity resulting from politicization trim down the bargaining power of the unions.

6. Inter-Union Rivalry

Unions try to play down each other in order to gain greater influence among workers. Inter-union rivalry often results from factors like domination of unions by outside leaders, the desire of various political parties to make their bases among workers, the self-interest of the employers to divide and rule the workers, factional politics of local union leaders, and the weak legal framework regulating trade unions. The existence of inter-union rivalry in the organization weakens the strength of collective bargaining and slows down the growth of trade union movement in the country. Unions may obstruct the normal functioning of other unions so that they can prove them to be inefficient. Employers

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take advantage of infighting. Inter-union rivalry weakens the power of collective bargaining and reduces the effectiveness of workers in securing their legitimate rights. Trade union the rivalry is acute and pervades the entire industrial scene in India. Rival unions sometimes go to the extent of even obstructing the normal conduct of trade Union activities on different pleas.

7. Multiplicity of Unions

Several trade unions are the major expletive of Indian trade union movement. One of the most important reasons for the emergence of multiple trade unions is that most of the trade unions in India are linked to political parties. There is more than one union in most of the industries in India because of various political parties' dominance over workers. The existence of rival unions with conflicting ideology is greatly responsible for the unhealthy growth of trade union movement. So the membership of each union remains very meagre to influence the employer or the Government in safeguarding their interest. The multiplicity of union leads inter-union rivalries and weakens the collective bargaining power. Thus, the existence of multiple trade unions in any organization or plant poses a serious threat to the unity and strength of workers.

8. Uneven Growth of Unionism

Trade unions are focussed in the large scale industry sector and in big industrial centres. There is very little trade union activity in the small sector, agricultural labor, and domestic sector. Trade unionism has touched only a portion of the working class in India. An important reason for the uneven growth of unions is the attention of particular industries in some areas. For example textile workers are concentrated in Ahmedabad, Bombay, Kanpur and Indore; Plantation workers are more in Assam, Tamil Nadu, Bengal and Kerala; jute mill workers are more in Bengal; workers engaged in pharmaceutical and chemical industries are concentrated in Vadodara and Bombay. As expected, the number of unions will be more in areas where a large number of workers are concentrated. It has been stated that a number of unions in rural areas is almost negligible.

9. Lack of Unity

Past experiences play that diversity of unions; political competitions, disagreement among the ranks of workers, etc. have been in India. Unity in the movement is, therefore, a necessity because "Unity is the strength". Indian labour is not only illiterate, and financially backward but also divided on the basis of their caste, creed and religion which prevent them to unite. Individual differences increase and foiled the movement.

10. Weak Collective Bargaining Process

Co-operative bargaining process is important to protect and protect the workers' interest. On the other hand, collective bargaining is proceeding separately based on the union objectives which may differ from union to union. Accordingly, collective bargaining procedure becomes weakening from industries to industries due to non-cooperation among the trade unions.

11. Neglect of Beneficent Activities

Trade unions in India have flopped to improve the devotion of workers, Trade unions are very much focussed with organising strikes or collective bargaining but they have unnoticed the beneficial activities such as provision of medical and sickness relief, help to widows or dependents, educational and cultural activities, recreation etc.

12. Statutory Support

Indian constitution considers the formation of association as a fundamental right. Indian Trade Union Act 1926 allows any seven workers to join together and form the Trade Union. This can result in the multiplicity of trade unions which defeats the very concept of the unity of workers. This act further provides for 50% office bearers and 10% leadership from outside the organization. This provision resulted from politicization and remote control of union activities from

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outside the organizations. There is no central legislation to make it mandatory for management to recognize one or more unions. 'Code of Discipline', at best, recommends voluntary recognition of trade unions.

13. Illiteracy

The majority of Indian labor class is illiterate, poor and ignorant. They fail to understand the trade unionism as well as their right. Workers could not understand the implications of the law and the outside leadership. These workers are easily brain-washed to become cardholders of political parties and work for such parties at the expenditure of working clause interest and unity. Workers are divided on caste religion, ethnic, language, caste, migratory nature, lack of self-consciousness and creed lines which go against trade union objectives of unity and identity. Illiteracy and ignorance are also regulated by outside leaders who avoid development of leaders from inside the organization. Workers are too ignorant to know their rights and often pampered with false promises by union leaders and politicians. Therefore they are easily exploited by their leaders for their own vested interests.

14. Problem of Recognition

To such an extent there is no Central Law for compulsory recognition of trade unions, the employers are under no obligation to give recognition to any union and they are free to recognize a union as per their choice. Once one union gets recognition, rival unions step in. Even if an employer seeks to recognize a union, he comes across himself in a problem as to which one to recognize and so is usually directed by his own whims and the political affiliations of the union. This makes collective bargaining very problematic.

15. Absence of Paid Office-Bearers

Most of the trade unions do not have full-time office bearers for the smooth functioning of their union. Lack of funds Union activists working on honorary basis devotes only limited time and energy to union activities. Most of these office bearers fail to do full justice to the task entrusted to them because of the paucity of time at their disposal. Union officers do not have adequate knowledge and skill to run the union office properly due to lack of proper training, weak financial position and political leadership are the main reasons for this state of affairs.

16. Lack of Work Culture

Mostly trade unions in India have to fail to develop work culture, which is too much essential for the growth of the industry, in general. Lack of sincerity, devotion, interest, etc. towards their normal duty is very much rambling among the workers of the country.

17. Apathy of Members

The majority of workers do not take the keen interest in union activities. The attendance at the general meetings of unions is very poor. Workers are frequently trapped up in the race of earning their living and they do not have time, energy or interest to involve them in union-related activities. Even those who have taken membership of the union show miserable interest for participating in the union work.

18. Attitude of Employers

In India, the attitude of the proprietors or companies has been found to be hostile to the organization of trade unions. They adopt all means to interrupt the movements and unity of workers. They also persecute the leaders of the labour movement and employ, in some cases, goondas and strike-breakers to damage the union activities. Inducing the setting up of the rival union has also been a popular practice with employers.

The Second Plan mentioned the major defects of the trade union movements – “**Multiplicity of trade unions, political rivalries, lack of resources and disunity in the ranks of workers are some of the major weaknesses in a number of existing unions**”.

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IV.CONCLUSION

There is no suspect that existence of trade union in several industries improved the bargaining power of the workers with their employers and have played important role in improving the standard of living of the workers in their particular industries. Trade unions will have to organize themselves counter-offensive, which is essential and important for a deep-rooted change. In a democratic country like India, workers unionism is massively required to accomplish their reasonable demands. A well organized labor unionism may change our country's economic as well as political condition. India has the credit of having the largest number of trade unions but their development has been very slow and uninspiring. Till present only 28% of the workers are a part of the trade unions. The existing number has also started diminishing, regularly reducing the size of the unions. It is very much satisfying that the Govt. is put together great importance to the development of trade unionism on beneficial line. The Govt. should take some initiative steps and gives proper recognition to trade unions and it also comes forward to achieve the demand of workers in the organization. Trade unions will have to organize themselves counter-offensive, which is essential and urgent for a radical change. The main task lies ahead is encouraging the emergence of a new generation of young trade unionists, who believe trade union work to be a mission and not just a job. In the words of Karl Marx, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past".

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