
INTRODUCTION

The third quarter of the twentieth century saw the birth of the trade union movement in Ichalkaranji. The movement, however, had its germination in the second quarter of this century. So this study seeks in brief history and development of the trade union movement in Ichalkaranji. This city is known as Manchester of Maharashtra. It has been a centre of powerlooms. There are various other industries also; however, this study takes the review of the trade unions related with powerlooms.

For the study purpose of trade unions in Ichalkaranji, the work has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter deals with the location and early history of Ichalkaranji. Ichalkaranji was one of the Jagirs of Kolhapur State from the eighteenth century. It was under the control of Joshi-Ghorpade who were from the Konkan. The founder of Ichalkaranji State was Naropant. After the third battle of Panipat, there were constant clashes between the Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur and Ichalkaranji. Lastly the British Government in 1847 declared the chief of Ichalkaranji to be a feudatory of the Raja of Kolhapur.

In the second chapter, the growth of textile industry in Ichalkaranji has been considered in brief. Under the able leadership of Narayan Babasaheb, Ichalkaranji became one of the important places of weaving centre in Bombay province. He was the farsighted ruler. He had given the whole-hearted support

to the industrial development of Ichalkaranji. After independence some enterprising persons brought from Bombay and Ahmedabad some old powerlooms discarded by the Mills, and laid the foundation of booming industry in Ichalkaranji. The cooperative movement also played the important role in the weaving industry.

The third chapter focuses attention on the trade movement in Maharashtra in brief as historical background. In Maharashtra, some form of trade union organisation had come into existence in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Trade Union movement in India took birth in Maharashtra. N.M. Lokhande was the founder of the organised labour movement not only in Maharashtra but in India. The immediate objectives with which trade unions have been formed in different parts of the world are essentially the same, namely safeguarding the interests of workers and improving the working conditions. In Ichalkaranji, the above mentioned objectives were considered for forming the Trade Unions.

In the fourth chapter we have taken the review of the labour force in textile industry which is related to trade union only in Ichalkaranji city. The labour force in Ichalkaranji is contained of different social groups, so it is essential to review the various characteristics of the workers mainly relating to the points like age, marital status, caste, mother tongue, education, monthly payment etc.

The fifty chapter throws light on the membership of trade union. Prior to independence, only four workers had joined the union which was named as 'Girani Kamgar Samiti'. The majority of workers in textile industry joined the union after 1967. Because the workers had some problems in the factories. They wanted to solve these problems with the help of the union. The Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, provided for the registration of trade unions. Further, the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938, provided measures for recognition of unions by employers which commanded a membership of 25 per cent of the total number of workers employed in an occupation or industry. The Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 further classified trade unions into three broad categories.

The main score of this thesis is the various trade unions which are solving the problems of the workers. INTUC is one of the important trade unions which the majority of the workers have joined. In Ichalkaranji, the above said union is working under the various names such as Rashtriya Processing Kamgar Union, General Kamgar Sanghatana, Rashtriya Kamgar Sanghatana etc. There is only one union under the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, in Ichalkaranji, that is known as Kapad Kamgar Sabha. Another important union in Ichalkaranji is, Lal Bawata Union. It is working under the control of communist leaders. More than 20 thousand workers are members of this union. In sizing unit, there is a union known as Sizing

and Waring Union. It is one of the youngest unions in Ichalkaranji.

Strike for bonus problem is another important aspect of the trade union movement. In any case, when employers are unreasonable in not conceding the just demands of workers and when all other avenues of settlement fail, the strike comes in as a last and effective weapon in the hands of workers. A strongly organised trade union has the power to strike and deprive the employer of the opportunity to operate his undertaking. Lal Bawata Union in Ichalkaranji has played important role in strike. Bonus has always been a bone of contention between the workers and the employers and has often been responsible for a number of industrial disputes. For the fair bonus, there were so many strikes in textile industries. Some times, the union could not achieve success to gain the fair bonus from the owners. Workers were unable to go on strike for long.

The universal principle that the individual in isolation is powerless and unable to defend his interests effectively, and that strength and power lie in unity, association and collective action, finds its strongest expression in trade unionism. By forming trade unions, workers can defend their rights and achieve improvements, first with regard to the individual employer in a factory, plantation or office; secondly, in all the industries and trades, and finally, nationwide.

Today, in Ichalkaranji, trade union leadership is in the hands of politicians. The existence of various political parties having an immediate interest in the working class, at times, for purely political purposes, has resulted in the absence of genuine trade union leadership. It is time that workers realise that party politics are completely out of place in trade unions, that they should not play the role of pawns in the game of party politics and that their organisations are concerned first and last with their interest and welfare.

While considering the future of trade union movement in Ichalkaranji, it is pertinent to remember that it is in its capacity to unite that labour has the most effective safeguard against exploitation and the only lasting security against inhuman conditions. A strong trade union movement run on democratic lines alone affords adequate protection against exploitation. Still, in Ichalkaranji, wages are low, hours of work are still long in loom industries, housing conditions are primitive and facilities for education, recreation and welfare meagre. Further, workers should be assured freedom of association, and their working conditions should be such as would ensure protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment. Good housing, shorter hours of work, health safety and all other necessities for decent living should also be ensured to them. Though there has been definite progress in

the trade union movement in the last one decade, trade unionism in Ichalkaranji is still in its formative stage. If industrial democracy is to work effectively, a strong and sound trade union movement has to be built up. Political rivalries, which often come in the way of settlement of disputes, lack of resources, disunity among the ranks, multiplicity of trade unions and lack of bargaining strength, are the major ills that afflict trade unions in Ichalkaranji today.

Both primary and secondary sources have been used while preparing the work. Among the primary sources interviews, questionnaires, magazines and reports were very much useful. Among the secondary sources, the books which are written by the well known labour leaders have been used for completing the analytical part of the thesis. It is realised that trade unions in Ichalkaranji suffer from inadequate funds, even to run the unions on proper lines. So, these unions cannot publish their annual reports and proceedings of the meetings regularly. Naturally it is difficult to collect the necessary documents from the union office. Some union leaders state that if there are adequate funds available, it will be possible to publish the reports and proceedings of the meetings. For this work the 56 workers have been interviewed. These workers are divided into units. The loom unit is the biggest one. So, I have interviewed 30 workers of this unit. Further, processing unit is

another important unit, wherein I have interviewed 15 workers. Last unit is Sizing-Warping. For this purpose, I have dealt with 11 workers.

I found it an arduous task to collect the material on the theme chosen here as the material is much scattered at union offices. Some times workers or the union leaders were not ready to answer properly, due to the illiteracy and political pressure. But my task was made easy by the help rendered by many persons in my endeavour and I deem it as my duty to express my thanks to all of them.

Kolhapur:

(A.K. Jadhav)

Date: