

CHAPTER - V

JOINING TRADE UNION : WORKERS' MOTIVATION

AND EXPECTATIONS



5.1 INTRODUCTION :

The trade unions are voluntary organisations of workers formed to promote and protect their interests by collective action. Individually the workers are not able to complain their problems. So they organize into trade unions mainly for maintaining and improving the conditions of their lives.

As noted in the earlier chapter, the socio-economic background have a bearing upon the role of workers. In the same way the workers' motivation and expectations determine the nature of their roles in unions. On this background the present chapter deals with the trade unions in engineering industry in Kolhapur with reference to motivational analysis and the expectations of workers from trade unions. The data regarding workers' motivation in joining trade unions, the reasons for not joining trade unions as well as the workers' expectations from trade unions, are presented in the present chapter.

5.2 WORKERS' MOTIVATION FOR JOINING UNION :

There were in all 65 respondents under study. Out of them 57 were union members and 8 were non-union members. So all the union members were asked why they joined trade union. As the question was open ended, the answers were varied. Therefore the responses were grouped under three major sections namely 'Political', 'Economic and 'Socio-psychological'.

- 1) The 'Political group' included motives like unity of workers, working-class strength, leadership in union.
- 2) The 'Economic group' included factors like to secure higher wages, fringe benefits, bonus and welfare activities by the trade union.
- 3) The 'Socio-psychological group' included desires like security through union, interest in union activities, simply along with others, freedom of action, self-expression and gaining status in industry and society.

The data regarding reasons for joining union are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS ACCORDING TO THEIR REASONS
FOR JOINING TRADE UNION

Reasons for Joining union	No.of Workers
Political	6 (10.5)
Economic	30 (52.6)
Socio-psychological	21 (36.9)
Total	* 57 (100.0)

* (8 Workers were not the members of union.)

The above table clearly indicates that the majority (52.6 per cent) of the workers had joined the union because of economic motive followed by socio-psychological (36.9 per cent) and lastly political (10.5 per cent) motives for joining union.

The similar trend was also observed by other sociologists. E.A.Ramaswamy in his study of textile trade union workers in Coimbatore observes that "there are tangible gains to be had by way of wages and working conditions by unionizing. More specifically, wage increases, reasonable work assignment, a larger annual bonus and safeguarding workers from abusive treatment by jobbers and the management have been the most important objectives of the unions".¹

The study conducted in two phases of 1961 and 1971 at Lucknow shows that "the desire to get the benefit of bonus and to get an increase in the wages are the first and the second factors respectively in order of preference. These two factors seem to be obviously the genuine motivations for the workmen to join the trade union".²

Similarly, the study at Allahabad indicates that "grievance representation and economic needs seem to predominate. An average worker is not motivated by such things as the desire to participate and co-operate with management. Social pressure from colleagues is only a minor influence for joining the union. Political aspirations or leadership do not greatly motivate him".³

Further, in the study of 713 workers of building industry in Delhi, "40 per cent respondents joined union for wage increase, 16 per cent for redressal of grievances, 27 per cent on someone's persuasion, while only 7 per cent for the reason of workers unity and solidarity and the remaining 10 per cent for miscellaneous reasons".⁴

Some of the workers had joined the union simply along with others or as other workers join the union, they may feel isolated if they remain aloof from the union. The socio-psychological motives expressed by the workers can be explained, as regards security, "the average worker needs opportunities to satisfy his personality outlets for his creative drives..... of being a part of vital, virile, permanent social group..... an integral part of a group that will give him a real sense of social security".⁵

Similarly Golden and Ruttenberg have also given importance to socio-psychological factors by stating that "workers organize into labour unions not alone for economic motives but also for equally compelling psychological and social ones, so that they can participate in making the decisions that vitally affect them in their work and community life".⁶

The present study shows to some extent the trend similar to that found among the workers at Lucknow, Allahabad and the workers in building industry at Delhi indicating more importance to economic motives.

Thus, economic motives are main reason for joining the union and then these are followed by socio-psychological and lastly political motives.

5.3 REASONS FOR NOT JOINING UNION :

Out of 65 workers, there were in all 8 workers who had not joined the union. So all the non-members were asked why they had not joined the union. The data on this aspect indicate that out of 8 workers, 5(62.5 per cent) workers had not joined the

union as they considered that the union at their unit was not functioning properly. The remaining 3 (37.5 per cent) workers had not joined the union as they had no faith in union leadership.

The following comments indicate the workers' views regarding the functioning of union at their units.

- 1) "I am not a union member as it does not function for the benefits of workers".
- 2) "I am not a union member because the meetings are not held regularly".
- 3) "I have not joined union because it does not work to my expectation".
- 4) "I am not a union member because union leaders are outsiders and corrupt".
- 5) "I am not a union member as there are no welfare activities for the workers by the union".
- 6) "I have not joined union because the problems of workers are not solved by the union".
- 7) "I am not a union member because the union is inactive and useless for me".

Thus when the unions are not active in their duties and functioning, the workers are having a negative attitude and they do not join it.

The similar type of trend was also observed by other sociologists. Mehrotra's study in 1971 of Trade Union in Lucknow indicates that "the reasons for not joining the trade union may be that workmen are dissatisfied with the services that they are

getting from trade union or the union is not fulfilling the role that the workmen want".⁷

The study at Allahabad indicates that "the main reason for not joining the union was that the members were dissatisfied with its functioning. It was felt that the union was not functioning or doing any good work or they had no faith in its activities, leadership or sincerity".⁸

The present study also confirms the view that the workers do not join the trade union if it is inactive in its duties and functioning.

5.4 WORKERS' EXPECTATIONS FROM TRADE UNIONS :

The trade unions emerged in India only after industrialization started in the country. They are formal organizations and the degree of their formation differs from certain other types of well established formal organizations. In the present century the trade union has been considered as "a continuing organization of workers established for the purpose of protecting or improving through collective action, the economic and social status of its members".⁹ The trade unions have been accepted by society also because "so long as working people have a grievance, they will find a way of expressing it. Grievance is endemic to modern organizations and the trade union is the medium through which it is expressed"¹⁰ The Govt. of India has also given importance to trade unions as a part of industrial system.

On this background an attempt has been made to understand the workers' expectations from trade unions in engineering industry in Kolhapur. An enquiry regarding workers' expectations from trade unions was made and the data on this aspect are analysed in the present chapter.

The workers were asked what were their expectations from trade unions. As the question was opened the answers were varied. So the responses were grouped under three major sections namely "political", "economic" and "socio-psychological".

- 1) The 'Political Group' included the expectations like unity of workers, working-class strength and inside-leadership.
- 2) The 'economic group' included the expectations like to secure higher wages, bonus, fringe benefits and welfare activities by the trade unions.
- 3) The 'socio-psychological group' included the expectations like security through union, self-expression and gaining status in industry and society.

The data regarding expectations of workers from trade unions are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2
DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS ACCORDING TO
THEIR EXPECTATIONS FROM TRADE UNIONS

Expectations from trade unions	No. of Workers
Political expectations	9 (13.8)
Economic expectations	43 (66.2)
Socio-psychological expectations	13 (20.0)
Total	65 (100.0)

The above table clearly indicates that the majority (66.2 per cent) of the workers were having economic expectations from trade unions and these were followed by socio-psychological (20.0 per cent) and lastly political (13.8 per cent) expectations from trade unions.

When the present data is seen in relation to the reasons for joining union, it can be observed that majority of the workers have joined union due to economic motive and here also the same trend has been reflected as majority of the workers have economic expectations from unions. This reveals consistency in the thinking of workers regarding motive and expectation.

The similar trend was observed by other scholars also. The study conducted in two phase of 1961 and 1971 at lucknow stresses the economic expectations of workers from union as "the desire to get the benefit of bonus and to get an increase in wages are the first and second factors respectively in order of preference".¹¹

In this connection Mehrotra also observes that "the workmen..... in the process of industrialization make the first and foremost demand on the trade unions to secure wages and bonus sufficient enough to provide the mainstay of workmen's existence".¹²

Chakraborty in his study of workers in West Bengal also observed that "workers feel that union should concentrate on bread and butter issues rather than involving in politics".¹³

The present study thus confirms with similar trend found in all above studies that workers were having higher proportion of economic expectations followed by socio-psychological and lastly political expectations from union.

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