

C H A P T E R - I V

TRADE UNIONS IN KOLHAPUR UNDER STUDY : AN ENQUIRY INTO DIFFERENT ASPECTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A study of 'context' helps in understanding characteristics of a role occupant in groups. In a broader sense of the term, the 'context' may involve general socio-cultural and physical environment in which the individual develops. Such an environment, to a certain degree definitely influences the human personality, as every person has to adjust with his environment. In a narrower sense of the term 'context' may mean immediate environment of the person. This study focuses its attention on 'leadership' in 'trade unions'. Therefore it was thought that, the study of one of the immediate groups, which has direct bearing on leadership role, i.e. trade union, will help in understanding leadership of trade unions. A separate interview schedule, therefore, was designed to elicit more general information about the trade unions, for which the leaders are discharging their duties. The information regarding different aspects of trade unions, which the leaders under study represent, was enquired into, so that it may be possible to appreciate the characteristics of the trade union leaders. However, it must be noted that, the enquiry into different aspects of trade unions is not

complete in all its details. But it will provide an background for the study of leadership in trade unions in Kolhapur.

For eliciting information about the unions under study, personal interviews were conducted with General Secretaries and in absence of them in the union offices, Presidents^{Joint Secretaries or Vice Presidents} or Treasurers were interviewed.

It is already made clear that 57 leaders representing 11 unions working in 17 establishments are the respondents of the present study. In the following discussion about the trade unions under study, the names of the unions and the names of the establishments are not mentioned in order not to disclose their identity.

4.2 AFFILIATIONS

Of the 11 unions, 4 unions are 'Independent' as they are not affiliated to any central union organization or any political party, 2 are affiliated to A.I.T.U.C., 1 to B.M.S., 1 to I.N.T.U.C. and 3 to L.N.P.(Lal Nishan Paksha : Name of the political party.). The list obtained from the office of the Assistant Commissioner Of Labour, Kolhapur, shows that some unions covered under the study are affiliated to L.N.P. However, when enquired about the affiliation of these unions directly to one of the main leaders of these unions, he explained that, "Lal Nishan Paksha is the name of a political party and political

party and a trade union are two different entities. Therefore it would be unrealistic to affiliate a trade union to any political party. The different unions, being run by this office are all 'Independent' unions".

If we add these 3 unions (L.N.P.) to the category of 'Independent' unions, the number becomes 7. Even if we consider majority of the unions affiliationwise, exclusive of these three unions, 'Independent' unions are dominant in those covered under the study. If we consider the unions affiliated to L.N.P. as independent, A.I.T.U.C. comes next. Only one union is affiliated to each of the B.M.S. and I.N.T.U.C. central union organizations.

The greater proportion of independent unions in Kolhapur can be explained in various ways. Firstly, as S.D.Punekar and S.Madhuri note, "The existence of many independent unions in India is attributed to the lack of strong centralizing influences, and some weaknesses of the movement itself as also latter's nascent nature."¹ Secondly, independent unions are established and run by worker leaders themselves and as it will be discussed in chapter VII, majority of the worker leaders think that outside leaders are more likely to give priority to self interests over workers' interests, therefore they might have established unions of their own. Thirdly, possibility of employers' relatively favourable attitude to establish independent unions limited to their own establishments,

rather than union being affiliated to any of the central organizations, cannot be altogether denied.

In the descending order, A.I.T.U.C. comes next. This second position of A.I.T.U.C. affiliated unions can be explained by the fact that in Kolhapur A.I.T.U.C. unions are functioning in Sugar, Chemicals, Spinning and Engineering industries, and the area of the present study is limited to these industries in organized sector. However, it is difficult to explain very low representation of I.N.T.U.C. unions in unions under study. Perhaps, there are no unionizing efforts by I.N.T.U.C. union leaders in the establishments in Sugar, Chemicals, and Engineering industries in Kolhapur, to which the study is limited. Similarly, in case of B.M.S., there is only one union in Engineering industry, which is affiliated to this organization and represents the same in this study.

4.3 YEAR OF REGISTRATION

An enquiry into the year of registration reveals that of the 11 unions covered under the study, only one union was in existence before independence. After independence upto 1960 the number increased upto 3. (two more unions emerged during this period). During following decade upto 1970, one more union was established. During 1970 to 1980, 3 more unions were registered, and

remaining 4 unions were established during 1980 to 1983.

The above description clearly shows that most of the unions under study are of recent origin. The reason for this trend becomes more clear if we look at the brief sketch regarding the industrial development of Kolhapur city before and after independence presented in first chapter. Industrial development and emergence of trade unions are related. Before independence Kolhapur was industrially underdeveloped, hence only one union under study shows its existence. But after independence, as industrial development accelerated in Kolhapur city, more number of establishments in various industries came into existence and along with them more unions started their functioning.

The relevance of above discussion regarding year of registration for the present study lies in the fact that, older the organization, more 'matured' the leadership and consequently more experience of leadership in the union field. On this background, it is not surprising to have more experience in the union field for I.N.T.U.C., A.I.T.U.C., L.N.P. and B.M.S. leaders than for leaders belonging to independent unions.

4.4 ESTABLISHMENTS IN WHICH THE UNIONS
ARE FUNCTIONING

It has been already made clear that 57 leaders working for different unions in 17 establishments are covered under the present study. These ^{establishments} are, industrywise, 1 in Sugar, 2 in Chemicals, 2 in Cotton textile and Spinning and remaining 12 in Engineering industry.

More industrial establishments in Engineering than other industries are covered under the study. It is natural because as compared to other industries Engineering industry is more developed in Kolhapur. A brief sketch drawn regarding industrial development in Kolhapur indicates the same.

4.5 TOTAL EMPLOYEES IN 17 ESTABLISHMENTS AND
AFFILIATIONWISE MEMBERSHIP STRENGTH OF UNIONS

An enquiry into the number of employees employed in 17 establishments shows that in these establishments 10,065 employees are employed, while 8,392 employees are members of 11 union organizations. Affiliationwise membership strength is as follows :

Table 4.1

Affiliationwise membership strength
of Unions under study

Sr.No.	Affiliation	Membership Strength	
1.	L.N.P.	2925	(34.85)
2.	I.N.T.U.C.	1800	(21.45)
3.	Independent (No Affiliation)	1565	(18.65)
4.	B.M.S.	1200	(14.30)
5.	A.I.T.U.C.	902	(10.75)
Total		8392	(100)

The membership strength of L.N.P.affiliated unions taken together is comparatively higher because the unions are working in 7 establishments which are relatively big considering their strength of employees. Though A.I.T.U.C. affiliated unions are also functioning in 7 establishments, these establishments are comparatively small in size. B.M.S. and I.N.T.U.C. unions have secured relatively more membership because the establishments in which these unions are functioning, are comparatively big. In case of independent unions, these are functioning in 4 establishments out of which two are big and two are small, so there is comparatively more membership strength than B.M.S. and A.I.T.U.C.

4.6 GENERAL BODY MEETINGS, MEANS ADOPTED TO
COMMUNICATE THE MEMBERS ABOUT THE MEETINGS
AND ATTENDANCE OF THE MEMBERS

An enquiry about the general body meetings held by the unions during 1983-84 shows that majority of the unions have held 1 or 2 such meetings. The means adopted to communicate about these meetings were 'Notice Board' and 'Personal Communication' by majority of them. Only two union officials reported that along with Notice Board, if needed, they use printed invitation cards for this purpose.

Majority of the union officials have reported that nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ members usually attend the general body meetings. Only two union officials reported that half of the total members usually attend these meetings.

4.7 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

In order to have some understanding about the relations between management and a union, some questions were asked. Giving recognition to the union, calling union representatives for negotiations, prompt and regular reply from the management to union letters, allowing union notices to display in the premises of the establishments, providing some other facilities to unions etc. may be considered as indicators of good relations between the management and the union.

It must be made clear that, "recognition of a trade union by the employer does not mean a representative status for it, which in some States is legally determined by the membership strength and which confers upon the union certain rights and privileges. There is no central law, determining the recognition of even majority unions. The Code of Discipline lays down certain criteria for recognition, but they have no legal sanctions. However, eventhough a union may not be representative, it may still be recognised by the employer to be representing the interests of some workers and, therefore, given certain facilities for it to function. In practice, therefore, whether a union is representative or not, some strong unions and those serving the purpose of the employer may manage to get some recognition from the employer. At the same time, there are, unions which are recognised but do not get any facilities and there are unions which continue to exist without being either recognised or getting facilities".²

On this background a question was asked "whether your union is recognised by the management?" and it received 100 per cent positive response. 2 out of 11 unions reported that they are recognised under the B.I.R. Act 1946. Similarly, all the union officials reported that their union representatives were being called for the negotiations by the managements.

Another question was asked "whether reply from management to the union letters is regular and prompt?" 8 out of 11 union officials reported their response as 'yes' while one union officer has given negative answer and one said that 'it depends upon the issue'. The remaining union official reported that there is communication by direct contact. It was reported by this union official that they held a meeting of union executives on first Saturday of every month and on the next day i.e. on Sunday they discuss about their problems with the management authorities.

Only two union officials out of eleven, reported that, management do not permit to display union notices in the premises of the establishment, while remaining nine union officials stated that management allows them to display union notices in the premises of the establishment.

Regarding the facilities provided by the management to the union 3 out of 11 union officials reported that, they are provided with some facilities. One of these three is given a room for office, in case of another, management has promised to provide a room for office, provided a notice board and has given permission to engage in union work when needed, during office hours. In case of still another one union, management has

provided a room, furniture and stationery for the office. Remaining eight unions are not provided with any facilities from the management.

An enquiry into the strikes called by the unions reveals that during two years from 1982-84 there were 7 incidences of strike and three unions were engaged in these incidences.

All above description regarding industrial relations leads to the impression that industrial relations have tended to be satisfactory.

4.8 ECONOMIC CONDITION AND WELFARE FACILITIES OF THE UNIONS

A question was asked "How is economic condition of your union?" All the union officials reported that, their unions are not economically sound but at the same time they are not very poor economically. An enquiry was made whether unions gave any welfare facilities to the union members. 10 out of 11 union officials reported that, no welfare facilities are being given to union members. One leader commented that, "they are not too rich to provide welfare facilities." One union official reported that, they use to give free books to the workers' talented children and provide free tailoring class facility to either wife or daughter of the worker.

It can be said that 10 out of 11 unions are not able to provide welfare facilities to union members because of lack of sound economic condition.

Thus the present chapter has dealt with different aspects of trade unions under study. On this background socio-economic background of trade union leaders, dimensions of leadership and leaders' views on trade union movement in India will be presented in the following chapters.

R E F E R E N C E S

1. PUNEKAR S.D. and : " Trade Union Leadership
S.MADHURI in India - A Survey"
p.13.
2. Ibid : p.25.