

## CHAPTER - III

### TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN INDIA.

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India is a developing country, both from economic and social viewpoints. Though the modern industry came to India more than a century ago (in the decade 1851 to 1860), the country is still on the path of industrialization. After Independence, some attempt has been made for rapid and balanced growth of industrialization.

The labour problem and the labour movement are the results of modern industrialization process. In modern countries like the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Soviet Russia, the industries developed in earlier times. On the lines of these developed and advanced countries, our country is also trying to build up sound trade-unions, to solve the labour problems.

#### **Pre-Independence Period:**

Comparative studies of the labour movements of the UK, the USA and the USSR is most useful. Great Britain was the first country in the world to initiate industrialization and consequently, the trade unions, in 18th and 19th centuries. The labour movement in the UK is the oldest in the world, having some features and some defects. The trade unions have played a vital role in the social and economic development of the USSR also.

India is a backward country. After Independence, an attempt was made to take the country onto the path of socio-economic development and hence, now it is being known as a 'developing country'. It is neither underdeveloped nor fully developed. During 150 years from 1800 to 1947 AD of British rule, India suffered economic exploitation and the British economy prospered at the cost of India.

The labour movement in India, like that of other industrialized countries, is a response to the challenges thrown by the modern factory system of manufacture. In India, modern industrialization started with the decade 1951-1960 with five industrial sectors - cotton mills, railways, coalmines, jute mills and plantations. It created so many labour problems. To tackle these problems, the British Government adopted some crude legislations such as Apprentices Act (1853), Fatal Accidents Act (1853), Merchant Shipping Act (1859), Workmen's Breach of Contract Act (1859) and Employers and Workmen (Disputes) Act (1860). These laws were more in the interests of the employers.

The labour movement in India can be said to have started in 1875. From that time, Indian labour problems came under the public discussion. The first Factories' Act was passed in 1881, which fixed the minimum and maximum ages of children working in the factories at 7 and 12 years respectively, and 9 hours of work per day. The defects in this Act raised a demand for amendments even before the Act came into force.

From 1881 to 1890., the labour movements were marked by many events. A number of associations for labour were established such as Bombay Millhands Association (1890), the Ahmedabad Society of Railway Servants of India and Burmah (1897), Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha (1909), the Printers' Union, Calcutta (1905), the Bombay Postal Union (1907), and Social Service League, Bombay (1910). These labour associations, but not trade unions, were loose organizations.

The immediate post-First World War period (1918-20) saw the birth of the Indian trade union movement. The factors that caused its birth were the public expectations of a new social order, industrial and economic unrest owing to the failure of earning to keep pace with prices and profits, the Russian revolution (1917), the International Labour Organization (1919), the All India Trade Union Congress (1920) and the Swaraj Movement (1920-22). These factors have made a great valuable contribution to the Indian trade union movement.

The enactment of the Trade Unions Act, 1926, encouraged the trade union movement because registration became the minimum condition for recognition of the Union by an employer. The following statistics under the Act reveals the rapid progress of trade unionism during 1927-34.

Year	No.of registered Unions	Unions submitting Returns	Membership of Unions submitting Returns
1927-28	29	28	1,00,619
1929-30	104	90	2,42,355
1931-32	131	121	2,35,693
1933-34	191	160	2,08,071

The Second World War (1939-45) posed a serious question before the Indian trade unionists: what should be the attitude of the Indian workers towards the war? This was a difficult question to answer because the war was between anti-labour, Fascist Germany and the Great Britain, our traditional enemy.

#### **Post-Independence Period:**

There has been a tremendous growth of trade unionism after Independence as shown by the statistics for certain years. The main reasons for the growth in the post-Independence trade union movement includes the establishment of political democracy, leading to industrial democracy, workers' aspirations and expectations, government labour policy and increase in a number of central organizations of workers.

Now, there are some wellknown trade unions working in the field of labour movement, as follows:

1. Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC);
2. All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC);
3. Hind Mazdoor Sabha;
4. United Trade Union Congress.

The Indian trade union movement is divided into various groups, mainly on political lines. Every political party has its own trade union. Quantitatively, Unions appear to be strong, but qualitatively, they are weak. Though there a number of drawbacks, the Indian trade unions are playing a dominant role in social, economic and industrial sphere.