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'TRADE UNIONISM AND TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN KOLHAPUR '

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TRADE UNIONISM AND TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN KOLHAPUR

2.1 Introduction :

In the earlier age of feudalism there were neither trade unions nor was there any place for them. There were guilds of merchants and traders and master artisans. In some places they constituted powerful institutions but they were different types of organisations than the trade unions of the modern age. The trade union movement is a development of 19th century. It is the development of factory industry which began after industrial revolution that created conditions favourable for the organisation and growth of trade unions. After industrial revolution there came a profound change in the mode of social production. Before this revolution, every thing depended upon the strength of human muscles. But after industrial revolution human strength of production was replaced by a machine and human beings were needed only where choice and intelligence had to be exercised. Factories brought together large masses of workers to work in co-operation with each other under the same roof. They were a helpless mass of workers uprooted from their rural traditions, surroundings and means of production . They were perplexed and bewildred by the new conditions under which they had to work. Working together under the same roof created a new bond and consciousness amongst them and it found expression in the organisation of trade unions. Thus

trade unions all over the world are the products of factory industry and the development of capitalism.

The capitalist mode of industrialisation has involved a seperation between the ownership of capital and labour, both of which are necessary for the production of goods and services. As a matter of fact the modern factory system was preceded by the creation of a class of the proletariat which had no other means of livelihood except the use of its labour power. Similarly, a class of owners of capital grew which used its capital for earning profits. A class of people came to the labour market to sell its labour power the only source of its livelihood and became the sellers of labour. The other class, with large aggregates of capital at its disposal, came to the labour market to buy labour power and to put it to productive use. As buyers they are interested in paying the lowest possible price and as suppliers of labour, the labourers are interested in securing the highest possible price. Thus the two classes with divergent and conflicting interest came together giving rise to a conflicting relationship.

In its early phase, capitalism indulged in the most inhuman exploitation of all those who could run its machine. Childern and Women were mobilised along with men to keep them running day and night. The larger the production the larger the profits. To maximise profits it is necessary to increase the surplus value created by workers. Surplus value can be increased by way of keeping longer hours of work and

paying low weges to the workers. Therefore there was no limitation on hours of work. There was no obligation to keep the place of work clean and safe. There was no provision for the payment of a minimum wage. Childern and women were the worst sufferers of the system. Men were also got only a pittance of a wage. Horrowing details of the conditions of work and life are left by inspectors who visited the factories from time to time. Karl Marx has given many examples of such horowing conditions in his famous work, 'The Capital' and used them as material for building up his case against capitalism and for communism. In the beginning workers were angry with the machines which ruined handicrafts and deprived workers of their jobs. They desired to destroy machines and around 1812 there were roits in many places with that object in view. But very soon workers realised that it was not the machines which were their enemies but the system which enabled private individuals to aquire them as private property and utilise them for making profits at the expense of workers and weaker sections of the society. Workers tried to protect their economic interests and status by submitting petitions to kings, Courts and Parliaments invoking the implementation of protective regulations of the medieval period. But all these efforts were fruitless. It is these conditions which compelled workers to buildup unions to secure a better deal from their employers.

The position first of acceptance and then recognition as a lawful and useful social institution was attained by trade unions only after a long, arduous and bitter struggle. In the

beginning they were not accepted as lawful organisations. It was not lawful for workers to form a combination to ask for higher wages and better conditions of work. The law and established customs of those days supported the employers. In those early days they resorted to many methods of coercion and persuation to prevent their workers from joining unions. Victimisation was the most effective weapon in their hands. Many a time they would not employ a person unless he gave an undertaking that he would not join a union. They also used to beat the workers particularly union leaders by using gundas. In U.S.A. employers tried more voilent methods. One of them being the use of security guards of factories to attack and terrorise workers particularly during strikes. Sometimes they go to the exteut of forming company unions, that is, unions which are more for the company than for its workers. In early stage of unionism employers in all countries used many such means to resist the growth of unions. The workers had to fought legal battles many times to win immunity from criminal and civil procecutiens. Even in a democracy workers had to wage long and bitter struggle for securing recognition of their right to organise. But generally workers, despite such bitter hurdles, insist on building up their unions. It was only in the early years of the twentieth century that the issue was at last decided in favour of trade unions.

2.2 Definition:

Unions are formed to protect and advance the interests of workers. They are defined as continuing organisations formed

with that object. They are continuing organisations and not just temporary or ad-hoc organisations. They are stable and permanent organisations enjoying legal status and perpetual succession under laws enacted for their protection. That distinguishes them from strike committees and similar other bodies that come into existance from time to time.

Sidney and Beatrice webbs say, " A trade union is a continuous association of wage - earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives"[1] Dankert fromulates what the calls a comprehencive general definition," A Trade Union is a continuing organisation of employees established for the purpose of protecting or improving through collective action, the economic and social status of its members"[2].

" A union is a continuous association of persons in industry-whether employees or independent workers - formed primarily for the purpose of the pursuit of the interest of its members of the trade they represent."[3]

" Trade Union is a mass organisation of the working class formed on a voluntary basis including manual or non-

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1 Sidney and Beatric Webbs : The History of Trade Unionism, 1920, p.1.

2 Dankert, Clyde,E.: Contemporary Unionism,p.1.

3 Punekar, S.D. : Trade Unionism In India, 1948, p.23.

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manual wage workers in enterprises, institutions, schools and irregular employments whose wages constitute their sole or main means of livelihood."[4]

To Karl Marx, in Germany, a trade union was first and foremost " an organising centre'. It provided the locus for collecting the forces of working classes. The trade unions developed originally out of the spontaneous attempts of the workers to do away with this competition, or at least to restrict it for the purpose of obtaining at least such contractual conditions as would raise them above the status of bare slaves."[5] The theory of class conflict and dialectical materialism enunciated by Marx created trade unionists who regarded labour organisation as absolutely essential for bringing about a revolutionary and fundamental change in the existing social order. He held that contradictions are inherent in the present economic order . Hence , he added a revolutionary political dimensions to trade union organisations.

2.3 Functions of a Trade Union -

(1) The first concern of Union is wage. Workers want it to be as remunerative as, possible. The wage that is secured must be protected against erosion by rise in prices. A wage is expected to provide workers a basket of goods and services. If prices of goods and services includ ing

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4 The Trade Union Laws of the People's Republic of China.

5 Lozovsky, A.: Marx and Trade Unions, p.150.

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the basket go up and the wage remains the same, workers can purchase less of them and their standard of living will go down to that extent. Unions seek to protect workers against this rise in prices by asking a compensatory allowance. In India it is known as dearness allowance. In a period of inflesion, Unions have to carry in a constant struggle for securing an adequate wage.

(2) Secondly, Unions have also to struggle for Limitation of hours of work. Initially there was no limit on hours of work. Physical endurance was the only limit. Workers had to work from Sunrise to midnight a day of 14 to 16 hours. Trade Unions through strong, long struggle have become successful in limiting the hours of work. In many countries, hours of work are fixed by the Government. But despite these laws in many cases the hours of work are larger. Therefore Trade Unions have to struggle for limitation of hours of work.

(3) Bonus -

Apart from the basic wage and D.A. these are other items considered as a part of worker's earnings. These includes attendence, bonus, production or incentive bonus etc. Profit bonus also constitutes an important component of worker's income. Until 1965 bonus used to be regulated by agreements or awards of Industrial Tribunals. The Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, formally recognised the worker's right to a share in the profit of an undertaking.

But the employers do not always readily give the bonus to the workers. Therefore the workers have to struggle with the management through their unions.

(4) The next point attracks the attention of Unions, is conditions of work. In the early age, workers had to work in filthy conditions. No attention was paid to lighting or sanitation or the provision of aminities. Conditions changed under the pressure of workers' Unions and public openions. Most of the countries, now, have laws or agreements to regulate the conditions of work in factories or other places of work, to provide for safety ,sanitation, canteen and welfare of workers. It will be the constant endeavour of unions to ensure their implementation and secure improvements in them.

(5) Fifthly, as Unions grow, their vision expands and the range of their demand also expands. They aspire for such benefits as medical relief, housing, educational assistance,canteen facilities, holiday homes and retirement benefits like pensions, provident fund and gratuity. All these and many others are considered as legitimate demands which a union can make on an employer.

Workers responded to the problems created by the industrial revolution and the factory industry by forming Trade Unions. But that was not only response. There were two other responses one the organisational of co-operative societies and the other the development of a political party. Trade Unions, began as protest organisations, protest against

low wages, longer hours and misurable conditions of work. In modern times the scope of Trade Union work has also expanded. Trade Unions are no longer concerned merely with questions of wages, hours and allowances, they are conumed with the allround life of workers as producers, as consumers and as citizens. They are interested in all national problems in economic as well as educational policies, in the problems of public health, problems of currency and credit, in welfare activities as well as in measures of national defence as well as questions of war and peace.

Workers in many countries have formed their own political parties. Following Marxism,Some of them have become successful in overthrowing capitalism and in buildingup socialist economy. Now they are trying to achieve the establishment of a free society of free and equal men, the inaguration of a new prolateriat civilization.

2.4. TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN KOLHAPUR

The growth of Industrial organisation and industrial under takings in Kolhapur city paved the way for trade unions since, 1945.

Organised industrial labour is mainly concentrated in Kolhapur city. The earliest trade union organised in Kolhapur was the Press Workers Union. It was registered under Trade Union Act, 1926. It had 61 members. The 'Shahu Mills Kamgar Sangh ' was formed in 1945. It was started on its own initiative and yet it is not affiliated to any central organisation. Afterwards in Banking area, the employees were awakened and formed their union namely, Bank Employees Union, Kolhapur. It is affiliated to the central body of Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh.

Rapid industrialisation is taking place in Kolhapur particularly after 1960s. With the increased industrialisation the number of industrial labour has been increasing continuously. The increased consciousness amongst the workers has lead to formation of their unions. Trade Unions [redacted] in Kolhapur city are affiliated to the different central organisations and there are also trade unions which are formed on their own initiative and functioning independently without affiliation to any central organisation. The detail study of the trade Unions with their registration year and affiliation is as below:-

Name of the Trade Union	Year of Registration
A) AITUC:	
1. Sakhar Kamar Union	1950

2) Sahkar Nokar Union 1961

3) Karvir Nagarpalika Karmgar Sangh 1962

4) Bekery Kamgar Sangh 1963

5) Kolhapur Zilla Vahatuk Mamgar Sangh 1965

6) Readymade cloth & Hosiesy Merchant and Manufacturers' Union 1969

7) Karvir Autorikshwaa Union 1969

8) Kolhapur District co-opt.Central Employees Union 1972

B) INTUC:

1. Shahu Mills Kamgar Sangh 1945
2. Maharashtra Raj Vij Kamgar Sangh,Kolhapur 1957
3. Govt.Rashtriya Press Kamgar Union,Kolhapur 1961
4. Kolhapur Hamal Sevak Sangh 1965

C) B.M.S.:

1. Kolhapur Zilla Engineering Mazdoor Sangh 1966
2. Bank Karmchari Union 1967
3. Bank Officers Organisation 1971
4. Zilla Parishad Medical Officer's Organisation. 1972

Any other

1. State Transport Employees Union,Kolhapur 1952
2. Kolhapur District Grampanchayat Secretary Union 1952
3. Hospital Nokar Sevak Sangh 1960
4. Shivaji Vidyapeeth Sevak Sangh,Kolhapur 1971

Table No.

Table showing yearwise distribution of Trade Unions of Kolhapur and affiliated to various central Bodies.

Year	AITUC	INTUC	BMS	Any other	Total
1945-50	1	1	-	-	2
1951-55	-	-	-	2	2
1956-60	-	1	-	1	2
1961-65	4	2	1	-	7
1966-70	2	-	1	-	3
1971-75	1	-	2	1	4

Source: Study of Trade Union Activities & Their Attitude Towards management in Kolhapur, Dissertation by D.D. Sarnaik.

The above table shows that the first trade union started in the year 1945 and the maximum of the trade unions were established in the year 1961 to 1965, and 1971-75 in this year 4 trade unions are established.

All these trade unions are formed at industry level and are affiliated to the central trade organisation viz. AITUC, INTUC and B.M.S. therefore these affiliated trade unions runs according to the rules and regulations of central bodies the man source of their income is fund which is collected from the members on yearly basis or monthly basis.

But these trade unions have been suffering from some bottle lenck such as limited membership weakness in contribution and financial fund facing the court metters and litigation and intra union rivalaries and so on.

Kolhapur Zilla Engineering Mazdoor Sangh :

Kolhapur Zilla Engineering Mazdoor Sangh was registered on 27.12.1966. Its registration No.is P.N.186/1986 . It is affiliated to the central organisation Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) .The total membership of the Kolhapur Zilla Engineering Mazdoor Sangh was 1312 in 1987. It has only one unit in Ghatge Patil Industries Private Limited, Unchgaon,Kolhapur. It has no other units in any other concern in Kolhapur . But the union takes individual cases of the workers in other concerns. The Union collects contribution of Rs.2 per month from the members. But all the workers do not pay contribution to the union regularly. Therefore due to lack of enough funds the union is unable to take any Welfare Measure for the members.

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