

## **A Study on Movement of Working Class People in India**

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It was industrial revolution which brought about thorough and lasting transformations not just economics and business but in all the aspects of human life. It was extensive innovation and technological advancement that brought changes of human settlement, labour and family life. No doubt, in Europe industrialization helped to accelerate economic growth but it also created some defects in the society. Working class of the time suffered harsh condition they were often exploited by wealthy owners and treated horribly. Long hours, low wages, child labour, physical discipline and dangerous conditions etc. posed major threats to factory workers. To improve the conditions of the industrial workers different socialist movement emerged in Europe at mid of nineteenth century. Marxism and utopian socialism movement played important role in reducing the exploitations and create more balance in the society. In India, this movement started at the end of nineteenth century. In twentieth century the expansion of labor organization took place in different sectors, which had a massive impact on the social and economic condition of the country. To analyze labour organizations and its socio-economic impact, an attempt is made to study the movement of working class in India.

### **History of Labour Movement in India**

#### **Early Period (Pre-1918 Period)**

A labour union is an association of worker to strengthen their rights and interest. This movement was emerged in the developed European countries during the period of industrial revolution in nineteenth century. Though it is true that the labour movement was started at the end of nineteenth century but the necessary conditioned was created at the mid of nineteenth century after setting up of jute and textile mills and railways were introduced in India. The first labour protest or agitation occurred in 1975 in Bomaby. It was S.S. Bangalee who leaded this agitation which was caused to establish first labour commission in India in the year 1875 in Mumbai and then the first factory act was passed in the year 1881. The Bomaby Mill Hands Association, the first organization of labour in India established by Mr. M. N. Lokhande. At the earlier social activists and philanthropists were the leaders of the unions.

In this period the movement was mainly focused on the welfare of the workers rather than promoting their rights. The strong intellectual agenda was not observed. The issues of the movement in this era were mostly concerned with women and child. Twenty-four strikes were occurred from 1882 to 1890 in Bombay and Madras region. In 1899, first strike took place in the Indian Peninsula Railways. During Swadeshi Movement, labour movement got wider political support.

#### **The Period from 1918 to Pre-Independence**

This period is marked as the era of modern trade unionism in the country. After the First World War labour movement got momentum. Postwar the living conditions of the labours were drastically deteriorated while the new economic and political conditions along with increased communication created class consciousness amongst the working class which led to remarkable growth in the movement. After the establishment of International Labour Organization (ILO-1919) the movement got truly modern sense. India was the founding members of the ILO. The unions like

Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association (1917), Madras Labour Union (1918), All India Postal and RMS Association and mostly important All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC -1920) were some of the notable labour organization formed in this era. The freedom movement, Gandhian Ideals and leadership and prevailing conditions promoted the labour movement in the country.

In the period from 1926 to 1934, the rise of revolutionary approach and split-ups of organizations was noticed in labour movement. The communists influenced to the trade union movement in the country. They split the Trade Union Congress twice. Mr. N.M. Joshi and Mr. V.V. Giri set up separate labour organization from Congress named National Trade Union Federation. In 1931, extreme leftist Mr. S.V. Deshpande and B.T. Randive broke away AITUC and formed separate organization. The acts like the Trade Union Act-1926 and the Trade disputes Act-1929 which dealt with rights and privileges of registered unions and settlement of trade union gave massive growth to the working class movement.

During the period 1934 to 1938, the unity among different labour unions enhanced. Political influence of National Congress in most of the provinces led more growth and multiple organizations. Legislative measures were adopted by the Congress for promoting workers interest as well as protecting industrial peace. It was seen in this era that resentment among the unions for suppression of their protests as a law and order issued by the state machinery.

As the First World War, the World War-2 deteriorated the living standard of the workers. Industrial chaos observed in this period. Most of industries curtail their employees which creates unemployment problem. This compelled workers to join the labour movement to secure their jobs. The membership of trade unions increased drastically in this period and labour movement became stronger. Introduction of Industrial Employment Act, 1946 and Bombay Industrial Relation Act, 1946 strengthened the movement.

### **Post-Independence Period**

After the withdrawal of the rule of British from India, a huge increase in the formation of labour unions was observed and most of the unions influenced by the political parties. In December 1947, the government passed Industrial Dispute Act for solving the disputes between employees and employers. Indian National Trade Union Congress was formed by Sardar Vallabhai Patel. In 1948 socialist separated from AITUC and formed own organization named Hindu Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), Marxist started their labour organization Center of Indian Trade Union (CITU) while in the year 1955, Bharti Mazdoor Sangh was founded by Dattopant Thengadi presently belongs to Bharti Janata Party. During the period 1947 to 1960, the number of agitations or strikes were declined but after 1960 economic recessions and low wages were caused to increase the industrial disputes. The influence of labour movement weakened to certain extent after introduction of new economic policy. Although the period of post-independence to the new economic policy has witnessed some prominent labour union protest, post new economic policy (LPG) affected its acceptance among the common public.

### **Major Issues of Labour Movement in India**

As per the data, there were more than 16 thousand labour unions which had a combined membership over 9.18 million. After independence labour unions largely divided between political parties. According to the data submitted by various labour union to the Ministry of Labour (in the year 2013), INTUC with membership of 33 million has emerged as the largest labour union. Some of the issues related the this movement needs to be discussed which are as follows;

- Labour movement in India is mostly concentrated in large cities and dominated by organized sectors. The agriculture sector, small-scale and cottage industry are extremely unorganized and labours from these sectors are away from the unions which caused lack of balance growth of the movement.
- The influence of political parties fragmented the movement. These parties are making every grievance of the workers as a political issue to attain political benefits which caused weakened the bargaining power of the movement.
- Low membership and limited financial resources weaken labour unions.
- The existence of more unions in the same industry, inter-union rivalry are unable to derive the benefits of collective bargaining.
- The Indifferent attitude of the members of certain unions is also barrier in growth of the labour movement.

Though there are number of problems have been seen with labour movement, the existence of the movement essential to safeguard collective interest of the labourers. The role of the movement is important in ensuring adoption of ethical practices. The collective bargain capacity of the labour class is need to strengthen through their unions.

### **Conclusions**

The history of labour movement has undergone certain changes. Catering the needs and necessities of the working class over time the movement have got reformed. After World-War-I the movement got momentum growth. The post-independence period various legislative acts strengthen the power of labour movement but the political influence caused to split-ups the unions and reduced bargaining power. Post liberalization period affected the movement and lacks the public interest. No doubt, the role of the movement in the development of the nation and especially maintained ethical practices in industry and social sector are well recognized. But there is need improve the unity among the unions and protecting the interest both working class and investors will help balanced economic growth and set on democratic principles.

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