

## **THEORISING CONCEPT OF TRADE UNIONISM**

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### **ABSTRACT-**

With the advancement of industrialization, both consumption and capital accumulation increased simultaneously. Free trade unionism comes into its own as an institution through which the societal tension associated with the labor management relationship may be worked out. This article examines these observations in the light of experience of England, America and Russia and contemporary under-developed nations. The review enables us to examine leading theories of the trade union movements which have been put forward at different times and places. Placed in the perspective of history thus provided, the theories themselves are seen as facets of industrialization process. These theories reflect the harsh economic imperatives of early industrialization as well as the relaxation which comes with advanced industrialization.

### **Introduction :**

Trade Unionism is the child of industrialization which caught momentum after industrial revolution in England during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 19<sup>th</sup> century England and America as well as in 20<sup>th</sup> century Russia that the generation of such a surplus involves the sacrifice of current consumption. Given the economic imperatives of economic growth trade unions are either suppressed or controlled during the period of early industrialization. It suppression of trade unions in England and America succeeded by freedom of association and the Right to strike. By Paul Fisher, when he said that until recently, the literature on economic development considered unions a hindrance to the development of less-developed countries a finding that would justify the suppression or control of labour movement. Unions engage in a wide variety of

functions, ranging from organization of workers to maintaining and protecting their rights. The origin and growth of trade unionism is the result of the increased complexities of economic structure. Industrial revolution made it all the more essential to organize workers to protect their economic rights and secure better working environment. Trade unionism is the child of industrialization born out of the stresses and strains of industrial revolution.

### **Origin of Trade Union**

The case of England : The industrial revolution first occurred in England. Examining the experience of England in achieving industrialization from the stand point of trade-union development which was suppressed in England till the year 1871-76, The legal suppression of trade unionism while England achieved industrialization was justified by the wage theory by David Ricardo. 19<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by subsistence theory of wages. His theory ascribed wage determination to natural forces. The wages theory destroyed the logical underpinning for the belief that trade unions could economically benefit the working class through forcing employers to increase the overall level of real wages. In 'principles of political Economy' John Stuart Mill discussed that wages depend on the proportion between the number of the laboring population and the capital or other funds devoted to the purchase of labour. (OS. mill : 19610). Marx believed that only capitalism was capable of extracting surplus value from labour. The trade union movement represented a prime instrument of class struggle between proletarian workers and capitalist businessman. Marx explained in 'Communist manifesto' (1955) that organization of the proletarians into a class and consequently into political party is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. Of all the classes that stand face to face with bourgeoisie today, the proletarian alone is the really revolutionary class. Marx believed that capitalism must inevitably create insecurity, exploitation and social degradation. In his eyes it was imperative that the workers of the world be collected in an international trade union movement to accomplish the death of capitalism. According to Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1932) trade Unionism extended democracy to the industrial sphere. Equalizing the bargaining power of labour and capital, it enabled and encouraged the adoption of common rules which

was practical and human trade unionism. It is an instrument for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order. Webs saw the solution of class and collective negotiation. This would guarantee to all citizens a national minimum security.

Both Marx and Webbs were keen observer of the position of labor in the pioneer industrial society which emerged in 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Webbs does not share Marx's millitance in advocating the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system. English labour, was beginning to enjoy the benefits, in higher level of consumption, of the vast expansion in national output brought about by industrialization. It cleared that worker welfare could be achieved through the evolutionary amelioration of the capitalist system. To Webbs, the trade union movement was a vital instrument of the revolutionary process.

**The case of America :**American industrialization was a societal surplus based on the exploitation of labour. A labour economists in the united states John R. Commons predicted as to the fundamental aims of the trade union movement and organized labour movement.

Regarding political and economic institutions as exerting profound environmental influence upon the development of labour movement, he noted factors influenced the development of trade movement in united states.

- (a) Free land
- (b) Universal manhood suffrage
- (c) Expansion of markets
- (d) The organs of government
- (e) Emigration
- (f) The business cycle.

The American labour movement came to rely upon its bargaining power as essential instrument through which it could achieve reform and material benefits. Immigration operated

as a potent factor against the growth of a powerful trade union in United states. Commons believed that there was a positive co-relation between the level of economic activity and the rise and fall of union activity. (John R. Commons : 1918).

He said, as long as wage earning class accepts the existing order and merely attempts to secure better wage bargains, its goal must eventually be some form of the 'trade agreement' which recognizes the equal bargaining rights of the organized employers. Perlman said that commons found in America historical records clear proof that unionism has preceded industrialization and the technical changes in the modes o production. Mark Perlman 'Labour union Theories in the United States (New York; Row, Peterion and Co, 1958, p.179.)The merchant capitalist class that commons refers to is the leadership elite that led Western Europe and the united states through the industrialization process.

The method to a study of the American trade Union movement ,as well as those England ,Germany and Russia he presented the scarcity- consciousness theory of labour movement(Perlman:1949).Although the theory has been criticized in recent year (Gulick and Bers;1953)it had an enormous influence upon many American labour economics . On the basic of Perlman study of the histories of the labour movements of the United States, England, Russia etc, he believed the differences among them explainable in terms of variations in the relative strength of three factors in Russia there are-

- A low level of resistance power of capitalism
- A labor movement dominated by intellectuals.
- A low degree of maturity of trade union mentality.

penman abandoned the revolutionary Mandan ideals in Russia and embraced with whole heart, the non-revolutionary, pragmatic trade unionism of the united states as a mature, superior type more in harmony with the 'true' worker mentality and interests. Perlman's published first work in 1928, that capitalism was natural and unique system through which industrialization was accomplished.

According to `Hoxie's:1921 unions were like minded groups bound by a consciousness of common needs and aims, a common outlook on life and the essence of unionism to be a social philosophy an interpretation of the social facts and relationships which bear upon the particular group of workers. The interpretation would, vary from one group of workers to another, depends upon following influences.

1. The job environment
2. The traditions in the particular union
3. The immediate social context of the workers group.
4. National Characteristics (a reference to the various and diverse immigrant streams which fed the American labour force).
5. Inborn variations of those propensities and aptitude which form the underlying traits of human nature.

Hoxie : 1921 found it to be essentially pragmatic of the business union type.

The Case of Russia-In the sweeping schema of his economic interpretation of history, Marx maintain the following points.

1. Capitalism destroy the structure of feudalism
2. Capitalism achieved industrialization through exploitation of labour,
3. Capitalism's institutions of private ownership of capital came increasingly into conflict with industrial modes of production, for the continual enlargement of a capitalist society's power of production was incompatible with its 'built in' and unalterable urge to check consumption, exploit labour and accumulate still more capital.
4. Socialism would usher in the age of justice for labour, an accomplishment based on socializing ownership of capital and ending thereby exploitation of labour.

The trade unions were not considered as a force independent from the communist party or the soviet Government. The trade unions must perform its task not in the capacity of an

independent, separately organized force but in the capacity of one of the principal branches of the government machinery guided by Communist Party. The trade union in Russia are not a party organization but in facts they are carrying out the directives of the party.

The historical review of the industrialization of England, America and Russia. Awareness of the intimate relationship between industrialization and trade unionism is clearly reflected too in the theories of Marx, the webs, commons, Perlman and Hoxie. Marx was convinced that capitalism was unique in its power to exploit and extract surplus value and the system's overthrow and replacement by socialism was inevitable.

Tannenbaum observed 'machine is the cause and the labour movement is the result. Hoxie observed 'Trade union appears as a group interpretation as the social situation in which workers find themselves and as a remedial programme in the form of aims, policies and method. Perlman came to conclusion that 'Trade unionism arises from the job - consciousness and scarcity of job opportunity. According to Marx, trade unions owe their origin to class struggle between the capitalist employers and their workers, who because of their common interest to get more wages resist the employers.

Individual worker has little bargaining power due to following factors such as-

- Dependence on employers for his livelihood,
- Lack of reserve funds
- perishability of the labor. Trade unions are the important indication of social unrest and social progress.

The growth of modern industrial organizations involving use of modern technology and employment of large number of workers has been followed by growth in trade unions throughout the world. The emergence and origin of trade unionism is spontaneous and inherent in the growth of capitalism.

The origin of trade unionism lies in the industrial revolution which disrupted the older way of life and created a new society. Webb and Webb (1932) 'A trade union is a continuous

association of wage earner for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives. According to Flippo' A labor union or trade union is an organization of workers formed to promote, protect and improve through collective act, the social, economic and political interests of its members

(Flippo: 1984). In the modern industrial society trade unions are a force in themselves. No manager of working organization can ignore the influence of trade union on the behavior of their work force and on the environment of management. As Yoder Dale Wrote 'unions are real; they affect the system and process of management (Dale; 1974).

### **Theories of Labour movement-**

#### **Marxian class struggle theory :**

Trade unions are essentially political institutions, a means of consolidating the worker's position on a parity with and eventually superior to that of any other member of the community. Karl Marx traced the origin of trade unionism to the growth of industrial capitalism. To Marx, the trade union is an 'organizing center' without organization, workers compete with each other for available employment trade union developed out of the attempts of the workers to do away with this competition for the purpose of obtaining at least such contractual conditions as would raise them above the status of bar slaves. The labor organization focused to the working class towards a change in the structure of the society and it was to be the centre for organizing the working class for its political emancipation. In the view of Marx, with the emergence of trade union movement, the decay of capitalism would be inevitable (Marx: 1955)

#### **Webb's Theory of Industrial Democracy :**

According to Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, trade unionism is an extension of democracy from the political sphere to that of industry and to overcome the dangers of managerial dictatorship. The function of representing and protecting the working class is just a temporary obligation, arising from the current state of modern industrial development, no does it lead

eventually to the all embracing 'dictatorship of proletariat' of Marx and Engels. Webbs as Fabian socialist said that In order to improve their number's economic status, the union seek to require each firm to pay atleast a minimum rate of wages and to provide minimum working conditions. Trade unionism may extend democracy to the industrial sphere. It may equalize the bargaining power of labour and capital. (Webbs: 1897) According to Webbs, trade union movement is not an instrument of revolution to overthrow the capitalist order. In fact, they saw the solution of class conflict in equality o bargaining power and collective negotiation. According to them, the special function of the trade union is the democratic administration of industry. It was merely to eliminate industrial autocracy and replace it with industrial democracy.

#### **Cole's Theory of Intermediate Industrial unionism :**

The theory of producer control which Cole endorsed with some qualification was the 'syndicalist' dogma of ownership and means of production. Like Webbs, Cole had

no doubt about the assumption that trade unionism exists to carry on class struggle. Cole gave the intermediate and ultimate stages of class struggle and remarked 'the control of industry may be the future destiny of the trod unions, the direct control of the whole national life, is most emphatically not for them.

#### **Hoxic's Sociological Group Theory of Business Union :**

To understand the nature of trade unionism, one has to take into account not only environmental conditions but also temperamental characteristics of the workers concerned. To Hoxie, trade unionism was a pragmatic, shifting grass-roots movement. He rejected implicitly the assignment of a fixed basic causes such as economic or political or historical, as an explanation of worker's combination. This amounted to a denial of the class struggle theory of Marx and Cole had brought him close to Common's environmental adaptation theory without the latter's underlying class commitment.

### **Tannenbaum's Industrial democracy of Anti-Technology Theory:**

The machine is the center of gravity in present-day industrial community-what land did for the noble in the days of feudalism and what the competitive market and free bank connections do for the merchant (Tannenbaum;1921). It is the dominance of machine that gave rise to trade unionism. Frank Tannenbaum emerged of trade union movement as labour's reaction to the dominance of the machine in modern industrial society. This revolution destroyed the older way of life and left the individual industrial worker to the mercy of the employer who became the catalytic agent that crystallized the workers into a self-conscious group. The workers became completely dependent upon the machine and the employer degraded them and made them insecure. Tannenbaum saw the labor movement ultimately displacing the capitalist system by industrial democracy.

### **Common's pragmatic Approach:**

Common advanced a theory of labor movement environmental factors. Common regarded the labour movement in America delayed for number of factors, as

1. Free land.
2. Reamendous expansion of market,
3. New competition upon labor movement.
4. Emigration in a competitive era, cycles of property and depression

### **Perlman's Theory of Scarcity Consciousness :**

'A History of Trade Unionism' in united states and 'a Theory of the Labour Movement' 1928 written by Perlman's who said that Unionism developed because of the workers scarcity consciousness, which arose in the minds of the worker' because of the fact that their economic position can not improve beyond that which is barely sufficient to cover minimum essential of an ordinary standard of living. Out of this scarcityconsciousness, there was growth of job conscious unionism - a unionism which controls the job opportunities.

### **Kerr and Associates' protest Theory :**

'Industrialization makes a universal demand, it requires a basic change in relationship between man and his work and inevitably also between man and his cultural setting, the new recruit to the industrial labour force resents the imposed discipline {Donlop ; Harbison and Myres) The worker often finds his work distasteful and his compensation never commensurate with his contribution. In industrializing elite, there are certain universal and the diversities which can be explained in terms of strategies of industrializing elites and cultures and environments.

### **Mahatma Gandhi's Sarvodaya Theory :**

According to Gandhi, unions are not anti-capitalistic organizations. They are least degree political and their aim is to increase their internal strength to work conscientiously and to take from the employers no more than that what is rightfully due to the workers. He considered trade unions as essentially reformist organizations and economic institutions which must be organized on the basis that capital and labour are not antagonistic but are supplementary to each other. Capital not only looking to the material welfare of the labourers but their moral welfare also capitalists being trustees of the welfare of laboring classes under them. Gandhiji was never against strike because he led himself strikes in Ahmedabad and declared that strike was an inherent right of the working men for the purpose of securing justice, but strike must be considered a crime immediately the

capitalist accept the principle of arbitration.

Gandhiji did not favour unions taking part in Political activities for two reasons.

- because the workers were not enlightened
- because the political parties exploit the workers for their own ends.

In view of pluralism, the major ideological types of trade unionism which came into existence like-

- (1) Pragmatic,
- (2) Evolutionary socialist,
- (3) Revolutionary socialist,
- (4) Anarcho-syndicalist,
- (5) Christian.

### **Observation of theories-**

After observation of theories, the birth of modern technocratic civilization presents one of the most formidable problems for the labour in the world. Labour as a commodity to be brought and sold in the market. J. Cunison remarks 'a trade union is monopolistic combination of wage earner who as individual producers are complementary to one another but who stand to employers in a relation of dependence for sale of their labour and even for its production and that the general purpose of association, is in view of that dependence to strengthen their power to bargain with employers or bargaining collectively (Cunison ;1930). Allan Randor views trade unions as a mixture of movement and organization. In Marx's view, trade unions represent a prime instrument of class struggle between proletarian workers and capitalist class. The Marxists want a temporary dictatorship role through trade unions to give way to its communist class distinction.

Gramsci gives importance to political parties and organic intellectuals those can peel the mask of the ruling class, and organize the working class on the basis of revolutionary philosophy and lead them into the revolutionary struggle. For Gramsci, the change comes from above not from below.

**Relevance-**The pluralist emphasis of Pelman's theory is useful today. Industrialization may be achieved by an economic system different from capitalism and its market mechanism, centrally planned, authoritarian economic organization of society does the job. It achieves capital formation through compulsory saving imposed on the working class.

All leading organs of the trade union consist primarily of communist who execute the party line in the entire work of trade unions. Trade union were transformed from a labour protecting arm into an arm execution of government policy and achievement of goal. The exploitation by capitalist can be retarded through activities of labor movement and the society can be changed from capitalist to democracy by the workers through their movement. Philosopher of capitalism in the name of individual freedom asserted that unionism is the negation of the sovereign right of individual freedom to enter into contract and is an interference with the natural liberty.

### **Conclusion**

British trade union were active in the creation of the Labor Party in 1901, Revolutionary socialist trade unions did not accept the gradualist approach of the evolutionary socialists.

After Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917, this trade union group allied itself with the Russian communist movement. Anarcho-syndicalism emphasized the liberty of the individual and detested all organized societal institutions designed to compel individual human being to follow group dictates. The doctrine was obviously radical and required the destruction of capitalism and private property. In socialism, Russian communism emphasized a long period of state dominance of society after the collapse of capitalism. The radicalism ideas prohibited collective bargaining, which recognized private capital in the act of bargaining and emphasized political activity for purpose of destroying those societal institutions through which man ruled man (private capital, state, church etc.) Syndicalism was somewhat less extreme than anarchism.

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