

## Quadrant II – Transcript

**Paper Code:** ECG 106

**Module Name:** History of Labour Movement in India

**Module No:** 3

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### Outline

- Meaning of labour movement and trade union movement.
- A Background of Labour Movement in the World.
- History of Labour Movement in India.
- Conclusion.

### Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the session, a student will be able to: -

- Recall the meaning of labour movement and trade union movement.
- Narrate the history of Labour Movement in India.

### Concepts

- **Labour movement** covers all the efforts made in the form of protests, legislations, welfare activities that were under taken by philanthropists, social reformers, nationalist leaders, government etc. These efforts were made by them to improve the working and living conditions of labourers. In other words, labour movement is executed **for the labourers**.
- **Trade union movement** are attempts and reforms made by the organisations formed by the labourers themselves such as trade unions to improve the economic and social conditions of the workers within the industrial system. In other words, trade union movement is executed **by labourers**.

### **A brief Introduction on Labour Movement**

- The labour movement began with industrial revolution. The traces of industrial revolution can be seen in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and it began in Great Britain.
- This period witnessed growth and development of industries and it led to the emergence of industrialist (that is employers or owners) and working class (that is, wage-earners).
- The workers were weaker and insecure party as they had no other means of livelihood whereas the industrialist being the employers or the owners were powerful and were exploiting the working class.

- The protest by individual worker against the exploitation didnot have any effect on the employers.
- Thus, labour movements in the initial years and then the trade unions helped to fight against the exploitation and also strengthen rights of workers.
- These movement initially took place in Great Britain, Europe, United States and then spread all over the world.

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

- In India, the growth of industries started with the development of railways, coal, cotton, jute industries in the mid -19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Development of industries introduced new methods and machineries that simplified work and helped in large-scale production but at the same time some of the worst features of industrialism was noticeable in India. Especially in respect to the condition of workers in the Indian factories were worse than the condition of workers in the factories in England during earlier times.
- Seeing the deplorable and pitiful condition of labourers a number measures were initiated through legislation, protest, welfare activities etc by the philanthropists, social reformers, nationalist leaders and government to improve the working and living conditions of Indian labourers.
- The growth and development of labour movement in India is classified into **two periods** namely:
  1. Regulation Period (1851-90)
  - 2.

#### **Period 1: Regulation Period (1851-90)**

- Legislative measures initiated by the British Government such as the Apprentices Act (1853), Fatal Accidents Act (1853), Merchant Shipping Act (1859), Workmen's Breach of Contracts Act (1859) and Employers' and Workmen's Disputes (1860).
- However, these laws were in the interest of employers rather than for the welfare of the workers and hence could not solve the labour problem.
- The early nationalist leader Mr. Sasipada Banerjee tried to improve the economic conditions of the workers in the industries. He started the First Labour Organization “Working Man’s Club” in Kolkata in 1870. He also started a newspaper ‘Bharat Shramjeevi’.
- Labour movement in India took up momentum in 1875, that is when the Secretary of State for India informed about the pitiful conditions of the factories and workers to the delegation of the British Mill Owners.
- On their advice, the Government of Bombay on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1875 appointed first Bombay Factories Commission to investigate conditions of the workers.

- In the same year, first attempt to organize labour in India was initiated by an Indian philanthropist Mr. Sorabjee Shapoorji Bengalee. Then onwards, Indian labour problem were publicly discussed.
- The report of the first Bombay Factories Commission, the propaganda made by the British Millowners for factory legislation, etc reflected the intensity of labour movement in India.
- In 1878, Shapoorji Bengalee drafted a bill for providing better working conditions for labourers and tried to pass this bill in the Bombay Legislative Council.
- The first Factories Act passed in 1881, it was a result of the agitation by Sir Shapoorji Bengalee.
- In 1884, the government set-up the Second Bombay Factory Commission.
- Shri Narayan Meghji Lokhande, the First labour leader in India, in 1884 organised a public meeting for workers in Bombay and had a memorandum signed by 5,500 workers and it was submitted to the Second Factory Commission.
- The memorandum made the following demands:
  1. All Millhands should have a holiday on every Saturday.
  2. Half an hour recess should be allowed to the workers at noon.
  3. Work in mills should commence at 6.30 am. and stop at sunset.
  4. The payment of wages should be made not later than the 15th of the month.
  5. A workman, sustaining a serious injury in the course of his work at the mill might disable him for the time being, he should receive full wages until recovery.
- In 1890, another memorandum was signed by 17,000 workers and submitted it to the government.

### **Period 2: Abolition Period (1890-1918)**

- The Second phase of the labour movement was marked by the establishment of a number of associations of labour, such as:
  1. In 1890, Shri.N.M.Lokhande established Bombay Millhands Association to address the grievances of mill workers. He also published a newspaper 'Dinbandhu' to legitimate the grievances of the workers.
  2. In 1897, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India and Burma.
  3. In 1899, first strike took place in the Indian Peninsula Railways. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's newspaper 'Kesari' and 'Maharatta' supported the strike and launched campaign for months.
  4. In 1905, the Printers Union, Calcutta.

5. In 1907, the Bombay Postal Union.
6. In 1909, the Kamgar Hitwardhak Subha
7. In 1910, the Social Service League in Bombay.

**Conclusion:**

The period from 1850 to 1918 witnessed a number of measures through legal enactments, memorandum, welfare activities etc which were taken up by the social reformers, politicians, government, management and social workers to improve labour conditions.

These initiatives undertaken by them were taken for the betterment of workers thus it reflects labour movement rather than trade union movement. The approach of labour movement during this period was moderate and could not mitigate the evils of modern industrialisation. Thus, it led to the birth of trade union movement in India.