

Growth of Industrial Labor Force in India: A View

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Abstract: This paper tells about growth of industrial labour force in India such as growth before independence like appointment of welfare officers, unrest among industrial labourers, appointment of labour Commission as well as growth after independence like enactment of labour legislations like Factories Act, 1948, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 etc., training of labourers, enactment of labour legislations before and after emergency. In the last, this paper tells about women force in labour class.

Key Words: Welfare Officer, Industrial Labour Force, Royal Commission, Legislation

Introduction: One of the factors which affects the industrial labour in the growth of Industrial Force in India which can be considered in two ways, i.e., the growth after the independence of India and the growth of industrial force which was before the freedom of India.

I. The Growth of Industrial Labour Force before Independence

a. Appointment of Welfare Officers:-

Before independence nothing commendable was done either on the part of employers or on the part of Govt. for the development of industrial relations. The growth of industrial force in India was as late as in 1920 when labour welfare activities were initiated by some Indian business enterprises like Tata Group, British India Corporation, Calico Mills, Empress Mills, etc. who appointed labour welfare officers to look after the interest of the working people and of the enterprise in relation to the human problems¹.

b. Unrest among the Industrial Labourers:-

In 1920, there was a great unrest in the industrial labour class. Hence, the year 1920 is known as the year of industrial unrest in India. In this year, that different

¹ Debashish Bhattacharjee, "Organized labour and economic liberalisation India: Past, Present and Future" (1999) pp.43-44, *International Institute for Labour Studies, Geneva*. [ISBN 92-9014-613-3](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00000000).

steps were taken by the British Government in India as well as the employers to resolve the various conflicts and ensure better industrial relations which include the recognition of trade unions but in spite of this on the whole, the progress related to industrial relations was far from satisfaction.

c. Efforts of the Government:-

Both the Central and the State Governments, before and during the 2nd World War played a leading role in the development and improvement of the labour-management relations in the Industries in India. With the efforts of the Government of Bombay, the disputes of labourers were resolved where the Labour Commissioner acted as Chief Conciliation Officer. Other States also appointed the Labour Officers to resolve the labour-management disputes.

d. Appointment of Royal Commission:-

In the year of 1939, the Royal Commission made recommendation for the appointment of Labour Officers to reconcile the problems of labour class amicably. A triplicate Labour Conference was also convened by the Union Government of India to evolve a proper system of handling grievances to set up a conciliation system in matters related to industries and to make discussion to the extent of labour laws in Indian industries.

II. Growth of Industrial Labour Force after Independence

a. Enactment of Labour legislations- Govt. of India did commendable work in this direction. On the recommendations of the Central Labour Investigation Committee 1946, several labour legislations were enacted such as, Labour Disputes Act, 1947, Industrial Employment Act, 1946, Factories Act, 1948 etc. the Factories Act, 1948 provided the appointment of a labour welfare officer in every industry employing 500 or more workers for the purpose of helping the management in providing welfare measures to the workers as enunciated in the Act. Now the urgency of appointing personnel or labour officer is being felt even in such industries where there is no legal compulsion to appoint welfare officer as there is a need of such agency to guide the management in tackling the ticklish labour problems by providing the specialized services. The services of these

labour welfare officers are not up to the mark even now because of their taking a biased view. While dealing with the workers, they consider themselves as an agent of management.²

b. Training of Workers- The Govt. arranged for the training of workers and management personnel in India and stated several training centers and institutes for imparting training in industrial relations. In 1949, for the 1st time in independent India 'Xavier Institute of Labour Relations' was established. Several other institutions were started later on such as Indian Institute of Personnel Administration, Calcutta, Indian Labour Management Institute, Bombay, Institute of Industrial Relations, Bangalore, Federation of All India Labour Welfare Officers, and Indian Productivity Councils, Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources at Delhi.³

c. Labour Reforms during Emergency:- In 1975, the government of India declared emergency and took up various administrative steps to abolish the system of bonded labour and to give extension to the scheme of apprenticeship and to give impetus/boost to the scheme of participation of workers in the management in industries in India.

d. Enactment of Labour Legislations after Emergency:- A comprehensive Industrial Relation Bill was produced by the Government of India in Parliament in the year of 1978. The aim and objective of this bill was to bring improvement in the labour-management relations in industries through a collective bargaining by the consolidation of Trade Union Act, 1926.⁴ The government tried to place before the Lok Sabha, the Industrial Employment Act, 1946 and Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. But these bills could not be passed because of the dissolution of Lok Sabha in the year of 1979. The President of India proclaimed an ordinance in 1981 which empowered the government of India to put ban on strikes in essential services for a period of six months. The following departments were considered the part of essential services:

- Hospitals

² M Swaminathan. "Understanding the informal sector: a survey" (1991) pp. 25.

³ Tripti Lahiri. India Passes 1.2 Billion Mark"(April 2011) p.29 *The Wall Street Journal*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

- Railways
- Airports
- Banks
- Water and Sewer Disposal
- Telephone
- Post and Telegraph
- Defence⁵

All the above services were included in the ordinance proclaimed by the President of India. Moreover, in the ordinance, the government was assigned the power to declare any service as an essential service. The government of India also amended several labour laws in 1982, i.e., Industrial Employment (Standing Order) Act, 1946, the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947..

III. Women in Work force

Sociologists have rightly remarked that the employment of women is one of the key determinants of a country's social growth and development. If this statement is examined from the Indian perspective, it would be observed that certainly the Indian working women are at the lowest level of developmental hierarchy. In fact, on the various employment indices, they have given a poor show. They stand nowhere in comparison to working women of developed and developing countries and lag far behind the Indian working males. Their miserable plight has been well summarized in the annual report, Ministry of Labour (1994-95) which reads that "they lag behind men considerably both in terms of level and quality of employment."⁶ An all the time inferior position of Indian working women is obvious from the fact that in the total working population of 314 million, only 90 million are women. Further, a vast majority of women workers are found employed in rural areas. Among rural workers 8% are employed in agriculture as labourers and cultivators. Also, in urban areas as much as 63.30% women workers are found working in unorganized sectors like house-hold industries, construction, etc. further, working women of Japan where it is

⁵ Seth, B.R, "*Labour in Indian Coal Industry*"(1940) pp. 441-442, D.B Taraporawala Sons &Co, Bombay.

⁶ Annual Report, Ministry of Labour, (1994-95), p. 100.

41.3% (1990), Malaysia 31.1% (1987), Sri Lanka 30.1% (1990) and of Indonesia where it is 34.50% (1988).⁷

The accurate data of women in skilled and highly professional jobs of their employment is not available. The literacy of women has increased; therefore, the participation of the women in the industries has also increased. If this is compared with the participation of male workers, the data seems insignificant in the overall workforce of women. Many various conflicting and contrary dimensions represent the working women force in India. For example, the work of sweeper is limited by a caste structure, the work of a housewife cuts all the differences and deviations, the work of a doctor is also limited to a communal difference. In agricultural industry, the workers are represented in urban-rural dimension. The range of occupations in the highly educated elite with the low paid workers who belong to the poverty-stricken society in the country varies in the fields like farm-workers, sweepers, street-vendors, stenographers and clerks with those politicians, lawyers, executives, administrators, professors, and journalists etc..

There is a fairly good amount of diversity in the life styles and working conditions of the vast majority of women in India. Their work in India, unlike their counterparts in Western countries, is not accounted as family labour.⁸ The inconspicuousness of women working class leads to under evaluation of the women in their economic role which has a far reaching-results in the programmes of their development. The participation of the women working force in this country reflects a low rate and it has also a declining rate in their economic participation. The statistical data is that there is the decline of participation of women workers in the industry. In the past three decade, it is evident that a number of trends which have affected the employment of women are also related to this. For example, the proportion of female is declining and their representation in the decision-making bodies is also declining, the gap in male and female population is increasing, there is low mobility in the literacy rate and the access to health and medical services is also not equal.

⁷ Handbook of Labour Statistics, (1993), pp. 121-22.

⁸ Monal Arora, "*Industrial Relations*"(2007) p. 85, Excel Books, New Delhi.

The awareness among the women towards their status and rights is also coupled with their greater role in the field of education and several legislatures have been enacted for the protection of women in so many labour laws. In the coming years, it is believed that the employment of the women in the economic sector will be added. It is good enough that a special cell under the ministry of labour is functioning for the welfare of child labour and working women and a special attention is paid to their problems.⁹

After 50 years of Independence and the percentage of woman literate increasing year by year the women workers in the year 2000 constitute a significant proportion of the work force of the country. The employment of women in the organized sector as on March 31, 2002 was about 4922.8000. This constitutes 17.6% of the total organized sector employment in the country. Employment of women was highest in the Southern Zone and lowest in the Central Zone.¹⁰

Conclusion: Thus, we can say that industrial labour force developed gradually. It still being developing day by day. Women force is also growing day by day. Several legislations have been enacted to strong the industrial labour force in India before independence and after independence, before emergency and after emergency. But there is still need strict implementation of legislation enacted for the aforesaid purposes and such force requires healthy and supportive environment for its growth.

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⁹ Annual Report, Ministry of Labour Govt. of India, (2001-2002) pp. 212-218

¹⁰ *Ibid* at p. 414.



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