CHAPTER V

AN ANALYSIS OF LABOUR WELFARE MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

- THE TEXTILE LABOUR ASSOCIATION
- THE MILL MAZDOOR UNION, INDORE
- THE MAZDOOR SABHA, KANPUR
- THE RAILWAYMEN’S UNION, INDIAN FEDERATION OF LABOUR IN U.P. AND TRANSPORT AND DOCK WORKERS’ UNION IN BOMBAY
- THE NILGIRIS DISTRICT ESTATE WORKERS’ UNION
- THE RASTRIYA MILL MAZDOOR SANGH, BOMBAY
- ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN LABOUR WELFARE
An Analysis of Labour Welfare Measures Adopted by the Trade Unions and the Voluntary Organizations

The Indian Trade Unions have miserably failed to provide welfare to its own community. In fact, it is futile to think that they would undertake any welfare activity for the benefit of its members when they themselves are trapped in a host of tricky problems. But it does not mean that all the unions have failed in this regard. In fact, at the industrial centres where the trade union movement is very well developed, unions have taken steps for the welfare of workers.

The activities of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association, the Mill Mazdoor Union, Indore; the Mazdoor Sabha, Kanpur, the Railwaymen’s Union, Indian Federation of Labour in U.P, Transport and Dock Workers’ Union in Bombay and the Nilgiris District Estate Workers’ Union have been of special mention. The welfare activities undertaken by these unions include day and night schools, residential boardings house for working class girls, study homes for boys, reading rooms and libraries and physical and cultural centres. These also maintain Allopathic and Ayurvedic dispensaries and maternity homes. Besides, trade unions do also organize a number of cultural, social and educational activities for the benefit of workers and their families. Vocational training in tailoring is also being imparted to workers.

In the field of Women’s Welfare, lady workers do conduct a number of activities like health, cleanliness, literacy, music, cooking, sewing, knitting, picnics and reform in social customs. The trade unions’ activities also include children’s welfare centres and a network of cooperative societies. Thrift is the being encouraged by providing banking facilities. Training is imparted in alternative occupations to provide continuity of employment. Some Associations also maintain
Workers’ Cooperative Bank from where workers may get loan repayable in every installments.

The welfare activities undertaken by different trade unions/associations are summarized as under:-

(I) **The Textile Labour Association (TLA) of Ahmedabad** is one of the notable organizations that has created history in the field of labour welfare. A foregoing discussion gives an account of various labour welfare activities undertaken by it.

(1) Pre-natal and maternal care through maternity home and dispensary at the Khanpurl area.

(2) Creches at various labour colonies.

(3) Pre-school facilities in slum area.

(4) Supply of free clothing to orphans in labour colonies.

(5) Game centres for school-going children.

(6) Gymanisums for workers and their children.

(7) Tuition class for workers’ children.

(8) Hostels for students for staying and studying and one girls’ hostel for backward communities.

(9) Voluntary corps of disciplined workers for serving the community needs of textile workers.

(10) Educational help to each medical and engineering students of workers’ families.
(11) Encouragement of cultural and religious activities such as bhajan, kirtan, musical training, kathas, mushairas and kavi-samelans.

(12) Celebration of national festivals.

(13) Vocational training and sewing classes for girls and women workers; and training in home-craft and good house-keeping;

(14) Workers education and training programme.

(15) Attending to social and education work among socially and educationally backward communities.

(16) Formation of Community Development Centres with accent on cleanliness, literacy, thrift, prohibition and healthy living.

(17) Arrangement for treatment of sick people in hospitals.

(18) Blood bank and blood donation camps and propagating family welfare schemes.

(19) Aid to the family members of deceased workers.

(20) Conducting consumer stores, credit and housing societies

(21) Running a co-operative bank

(II) **The Mill Mazdoor Union, Indore**, has established labour welfare centres to provide cultural, recreational and other amenities to its members. It organizes music, dance, and social get-together. It runs a Balmandir where educational facilities and games are offered to the children of the employees. In Kanya Mandir, elementary education, tailoring, spinning, knitting, training in hygiene and care of children are organized. In Mahila Mandirs arrangements are made for providing educational facilities and craft training for indoor and outdoor games are also provided for the benefits of workers.
(III) **The Mazdoor Sabha, Kanpur**, has maintained a reading room, a library and a dispensary for the welfare of the workers.

(IV) **The Railwaymen’s Union, Indian Federation of Labour in U.P. and Transport and Dock Workers’ Union in Bombay**: These also organize cooperative societies and set apart various kinds of funds for providing specific assistance such as legal defense, death and retirement benefits, unemployment and sickness benefits and life insurance. Besides they provide funds for unforeseen contingencies and running co-operative societies and granting scholarships to the children of their members.

(V) **The Nilgiris District Estate Workers’ Union**: It has also organized welfare work in the plantations in the Nilgiris, and encouraged the spirit of self-help and cooperation among workers’ families. Education/cultural activities are increasingly becoming a part of the activities of well organized trade unions in different region.

(VI) **The Rastriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh, Bombay**: undertakes these welfare activities for its members; (i) workers’ education centre at Khandala; (ii) provision merit-cum-need based scholarships and text books for needy students; (iii) maintains a reference library with research cell; (iv) arranges for sewing and tailoring classes for family members of employees; (v) provides medical facilities to union members in its allopathic and homeopathic clinics; (vi) publishes “Kamgar” and other booklets of interest to its members; (vii) arranges for dramas and cinema shows; and (viii) maintains a holiday home (Ametaker Smriti) at Khandala and runs a housing co-operative society for its members.

**Role of Voluntary Organisation in Labour Welfare**

Information about the nature and volume of welfare activities undertaken by various voluntary organizations is scattered but special mention may be made of some of them. Started by the Servants of India Society, the Bombay Social Service League conducted several welfare activities like promotion of education, recreation and cultural activities. In Assam, the Government has continued the policy of
encouraging the activities of various voluntary organizations mentioned earlier. The Five Year Plans of the State have earmarked funds to assist them to carry out their welfare activities, more specially training-cum-production activities.

In recent years, the voluntary organizations have started giving attention to the welfare needs of the workers. According to Dr. Varma three types of facilities are made available to workers namely:

(1) certain facilities are provided at the site of work itself, such as subsidized canteens, crèches, medical facilities

(2) some facilities relate to the economic needs of workers such as co-operative credit societies, consumers’ co-operative stores, staff benefit funds, the educational assistance to workers’ children

(3) certain institutions like community centres, welfare centres and educational institutions.

In an industrial society, the trade unions as well as voluntary organizations occupy an important place. Both of these strive to safeguard the workers from being exploited and put pressure on employers to ensure the implementation of different labour laws connecting with labour welfare measures. The employers are in general of the point of view that the expenditure on labour welfare measures is unproductive which is an irrational fact. The active role of trade unions not only safeguards the interests of the workers but also extends full contribution in the establishment of a socialistic exploitation-free society. The welfare measures adopted by trade unions and voluntary organizations in large scale industries of kumaun region have been assessed by the workers as under:

**Table 5.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Description of Welfare Measure</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Estelar
The analysis of the data available reveals that the trade union and voluntary organizations are available in Kumaun region in a very limited number i.e. only 6. In this region the industrialists discourage the formation of trade unions. As the region is in infancy stage of its industrialization, the role of trade union and voluntary organizations, may not deem to be significant. The excessive labour supply in the region has resulted in poor bargaining power. This is why the workers dare not to open their mouth before the mill-owners.

The ineffectiveness of trade unions has led slackness in the implementation of labour welfare activities. This ineffectiveness has been recorded as under:

**Table 5.2**
An Assessment of Ineffectiveness of Trade Unions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Cause Responsible for Ineffectiveness</th>
<th>Percentage of Agreed Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Limited scope of trade unions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii</td>
<td>Shortage of funds</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
<td>Lack of Stability</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv</td>
<td>Undue pressure from employer</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>No use of powers stipulated in the Act</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi</td>
<td>Entry and leadership of political parties</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii</td>
<td>Dependence on external financial assistance</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii</td>
<td>Ideological difference in officials</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix</td>
<td>Disorganization of workers on different ground</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Non-cooperation by the employers</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi</td>
<td>Weak and incapable leadership</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xii</td>
<td>Illegal call of strike by the trade unions</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiii</td>
<td>Over looking of labour welfare measures</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Results based on survey conducted.

The analysis of above table shows that the causes, mainly responsible for ineffectiveness of trade unions, have been shortage of funds, undue pressure from employers, taking of no advantage of powers as envisaged in Trade Union Act, 1926, entry of political parties in trade unions and taking of their leadership in their hands, opposing of formation of trade unions by the employers and over looking of labour welfare measures by the trade unions. The ideological differences among the union officials have resulted in fall in their effectiveness. All these factors caused poor performance of labour welfare work. The voluntary organizations too do not exist in the area. This is why their contribution is nil. In the times to come when the industrialization process in the region gets momentum, some voluntary organization may come-up to undertake the labour welfare work.