Trade unions are a legitimate system for organising workers to voice for their rights and grievances. Without unions, employers would become either too paternalistic or too dictatorial. The aims and objectives of the major trade unions in India are seen to vary according to their left or right political ideologies. For instance, some unions are influenced by Leftist principles aimed at overhauling the capitalist mode of production as a whole. However, irrespective of trade unions’ political affiliations, their generic functions are to promote and protect the interest of its members.

The Trade Unions were premised on the Constitutional principles and ILO Conventions and Recommendations. Trade unions and allied collective institutions had a role to play and were involved as partners in development. The classical system has gradually been diluted as economy progressed and the final curtain to this was pulled as the economy went on the liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) path more decisively since 1991 in India. Globalizing forces have unleashed tough times for the trade unions as the onslaught on the labour rights both in formal and informal sectors are felt by every trade union. Even the judiciary spelt judgments singing the tune of dynamics of market economy. However, Trade Unionism even now, continues to have a very strong appeal as an instrument for establishing economic and industrial democracy and Trade Unions, of course, have waged spectacular and united battles to resist these pressures.

The right to form a union and bargain collectively to protect workers from exploitative and abusive conditions at work and to put pressure on employers to share productivity gains with their employees is very much relevant even today. Protection of basic interest of workers and their human rights necessitates unionisation so that the working population can reap the benefits of economic growth.

The strategy of state intervention has significantly weakened the growth of bipartite institutions like trade unions. In the post-reform period, the shift from state regulation to market determination, larger role for private enterprise, reduction in space for the public sector, and opening up of the economy were some of the radical changes introduced in the industrial sector. Given the interface between product market and labour market, pro-reformers demanded liberalization of the labour market. But the product market reform measures have increased the bargaining power of capital vis-à-vis labour. Capital has become more mobile and least regulated, while labour is less mobile. Greater ease of mobility gives greater bargaining power to capital adversely impacting the unionized sectors.

The manifold impacts on labour by the current wave of globalization are that it weakens the organizational base of workers, restricts the economic options available to bargainers in the wake of intense competition, and reduces the government’s ability to sanction workers’ demands as in the past. Economic factors such as protracted crises, high unemployment, the technological changes and
the resultant restructuring efforts are some of the reasons for weakening of the bargaining power of trade unions.

This Ph. D. thesis is based on active, productive consultations and interactions with the trade union leaders, workers and management executives of both organised sectors like banking and insurance and un-organised sectors like construction and agriculture of Odisha and with central trade union leaders. This thesis forms the basis of a productive and effective course of action to that imposed in the name of market economy. It focuses on sector level trade unions, particularly those of the Banking & Insurance in Organised sector and Agriculture and Construction in Un-organised sector. This exploratory study of the different trade unions operating in these sectors also highlights their ideologies, objectives and structures. It aims to capture the changing paradigms in the roles of these sector level unions: from maintaining industrial relations, once considered their primary role, they now work actively to improve the quality of life of workers, a role earlier considered to be secondary.

This thesis has been written on the basis of data collected and interview conducted in a structured and scientific manner from 2007-08 to 2015-2016. It contains the result of research undertaken at the Department of Political Science, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Odisha. It is an original intellectual product, unpublished, independent work by the author after an arduous fieldwork. The author was the lead investigator, responsible for all major areas of concept formation, data collection and analysis, as well as manuscript composition. All the data used in this thesis are with the permission from respective sources.

The thesis begins with an introduction in chapter 1 which summarizes the aim and purpose of the thesis. It attempts to present the nature and framework of the present study. It discusses the nature of the problem under investigation, the rationale, the significance of the study, the questions, the hypotheses, and the delimitations of the study. Moreover, the chapter clarifies the kinds of data used and the method adopted for the analysis of the data and finally at the end of the chapter the research (literature review) done in the area of this present study is included.

The second chapter is divided into three main parts; the first part focuses on the Differentiated Trajectories and Industrial Reorganization – State Intervention, Social Development, Human Resource Management, Labour Markets & Trade Unions. The second part deals with Free Market Economies, Globalization & Industrial Relations giving an account of the situation of free market economies, globalization and functioning of industrial relations.
The third chapter devotes its contents for Labour Movement & Democratization under Economic Development Strategies by focusing on main theoretical framework for democratic trade union movement.

The main content of the fourth chapter is on the various challenges faced by Trade Unions in India & Odisha today.

The fifth chapter focuses on core part of this research. It discusses about the State, the economy & the labour markets in India & Odisha – Trade Unions & Industrial Relations in organized sector like bank and insurance and un-organised sector like agriculture and construction and makes an analysis of data/responses received on two questionnaires from the respondents. Further, statistical data collected from different sources on various aspect of trade union functioning were analysed and computerized with Microsoft Excel Program with mean score and standard deviation. Observation, interpretation and discussion of each item in questionnaires are given in details.

Chapter 6 deals with the future of Trade Unions, Labour Markets under the umbrella of Globalization.

Chapter 7 deals with the findings, suggestions/recommendations for policy intervention, pedagogical implications, conclusion, limitation of the study, and recommendations and suggestions for future studies. The most important results are outlined in this chapter.

A list of referenced literature is indicated below every page and after the end of every short headings and chapter as well as in the bibliography which additionally contains appendices and list of publications respectively.

Many inspiring people have been involved in the work leading to this Ph.D. thesis. Therefore, the study owes thanks to many who ensured great expertise on themes for their constructive feedback in relation to manuscript preparation and contributions to the studies conducted during my time as a Ph. D. student and I specially thank Prof. B. Satpathy for his positive attitude, always ready to answer my questions and based on an excellent professional knowledge.

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