CHAPTER III

ORGANISATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Concept of Trade Union Organisation has come with the birth of modern factory system. The Industrial Revolution in England gave birth of this system and a new working force in the form of factory workers emerged. The Industrial Revolution created a congenial atmosphere for the growth of the Trade Union Movement. The movement became more vigorous in industrially advanced countries. The workers arose as a reaction to the prevailing intolerable and inhuman conditions of life and work such as long working hours, low wages, insecurity of employment, unhealthy working conditions, etc. The workers got themselves organised to bargain for the legitimate interests of the workers and such organisations paved the path for Trade Union. Trade Union is, therefore, considered as an organisation of workers formed to protect the rights of the workers. There are various definitions of the concept of Trade Union Organisation.

3.2 DEFINITIONS

According to New World Dictionary, Trade Union means "An Association of workers to promote and protect the welfare, interests and rights of its members primarily by collective bargaining."  

According to this definition trade union is not an individual organisation. It is an united effort to bargain with the owners or the management to achieve the demands of the workers.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, Trade Union is "an organised Association of workers in a trade or group of allied Trades or a profession formed for protection and promotion of their common interests."\(^2\)

V.V. Giri defined Trade Unions as "Voluntary organisations of workers formed to promote and protect their interests by collective action."\(^3\)

The above definitions point out that the aim of trade union is to promote common interest of the workers and to work for improvement of the working lives of the workers. But in these definitions there are no such explanations as to on what conditions and circumstances it is being organised.


Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the famous historians of the British Labour Movement in 1819, in their history of 'Trade Unionism' define the term Trade Union as "A continuous Association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives."\(^4\)

This definition is found to be too limited. Many registered trade unions of India have gone out of the scope laid down by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. According to this definition trade union is an association of wage earners. The unions of self-employed, professionals like the medical practitioners, journalists etc. cannot be regarded as trade unions. But in India these may be registered under the Indian Trade Union Act, 1926.

In the Indian Trade Union Act of 1926 the definition of Trade Union is given in the following lines:

"Trade Union means any combination, whether temporary or permanent, formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relations between workmen and employers or between workmen or women and or between employers and employers or for imposing respective conditions on the conduct of any trade or business, and includes any federation of two or more trade unions."\(^5\)


\(^5\) The Trade Unions Act, 1926 (Act No. 16 of 1926) as amended up to 1985, Delhi Law House, pp.2.
According to this definition trade union means the organised organisations of the workers and those primarily determined the relations between the workers and the owners or workers and the workers and owners and the owners and those imposed restrictive conditions of the management of the business. These organisations include the permanent and temporary united workers' organisation comprising of two or more workers' organisation.

The above definition is defective as it includes in trade unions even the association of the employers. Though to reach the aims as stated above the organised organisations of the owners are also included within the ambit of Trade Unions, but generally it is understood that Trade Union means the organisations of workers and these are organised to determine the relations between the owners and the workers.

To Karl Marx "The Trade Union was first and foremost an organising centre. It provided the locus for collecting the forces of the working classes. Without organisations, workers competed with each other for available employment. The Trade Unions developed originally out of spontaneous attempts of the workers to do away with this competition, or at least to restrict for the purpose of obtaining at least such contractual conditions as would raise them above the status of bare slaves."\(^6\)

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According to Karl Marx, the real cause in all class struggles has been technical progress. Referring to the struggle between the class of wage-earners and the class of employers, Marx brings out that modern machine technique has concentrated the social means of production under the ownership of the capitalist, who, thus became the absolute master. The labourer indeed remains a freeman to dispose of his labour as he wishes, but having lost possession of the means of production which he had as a master, workman during the proceeding handicraft stage of industry, his freedom is an illusion only and his bargaining power is no greater than if he were a slave.\(^7\)

The theory of class conflict enunciated by Marx created a class of trade unionists. The labour organisation is, therefore, according to him is the focal point for the functional organisation of the working class towards a change in the structure of society.

Recently the British Ministry of Labour has defined trade unions as all organisations of employees - including those of salaried and professional workers as well as those of manual wage earners - which are known to include among their functions that of negotiating with employers with the object of regulating conditions of employment.\(^8\)

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This definition includes salaries, professional as well as wage-earner. But this definition does not convey the true meaning, because here it is said that the workers negotiate with their employers with the object of regulating conditions of employment. Even though professionals may have no employers, they may form an organisation in the form of trade unions to protect their rights. Rickshaw pullers may not have their employer, but they form trade unions to get justice in respect of fixation of rates and against physical assault, etc. Thus professionals without having employer may form trade unions for mutual and common welfare. Such type of organisations are registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926.

There is no universally accepted definition of trade union. With the passing of time the concept of trade union is also changing. But from the above definitions it becomes clear that trade unions are the organisations of the workers not of the employers.

3.3 OBJECTIVES OF TRADE UNIONS:

Trade Unions are generally formed with the objective of protection and promotion of the interests of the working class. The primary objectives include the protection of workers against exploitation, improvement in standards of living and working conditions, security of services, etc.
In the definition of Trade Union laid down in the Indian Trade Union Act 1926, the word primary is used. The use of the word primary suggests that trade unions can have other secondary objectives as well. We can distinguish three classes of objectives which a trade union can have. The first may be classified as purely economic objectives i.e. those which relate to questions concerning wages, hours of work, working and living conditions. The second one, viz., benefit purpose, includes dispersion of various benefits like sickness and unemployment. The third group consists of social and political objectives.  

Clause sixteen of Chapter III of the Indian Trade Union Act 1926, mentions the political objectives of a trade union. The political system and the sound political atmosphere is mainly responsible for the fulfilment of the hopes and aspirations of the common people. Therefore, Trade Unions may adopt a political ideology for getting their objectives achieved. They may try for improving their political status also. Though different trade unions may follow different political ideology or may have political objectives, the protection and the promotion of the working lives of the workers is the immediate goal.

3.4 FACTORS THAT LED TO THE GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONS IN INDIA:

The main element in the growth of Trade Unions in India is the setting up of large scale industrial units creating conditions of widespread use of machinery, change in working and living environments of workers and concentration of industries in large towns, all of which introduced a new class of workers who were dependent on wages for their livelihood.

After the First World War (1914-18) there was a rise in prices of all the daily necessities as a result of which the wage-earners had to face with financial problems. "The world wide uprising of labour consciousness extended to India, where for the first time mass industrial workers awoke to their disabilities, particularly in the matter of wages and hours and to the possibility of combination." 10

In 1919 the International Labour Organisation was formed to promote industrial peace and social justice. The formation of the I.L.O. gave impetus to the Indian workers and the later felt the need of forming one nationwide organisation to improve the conditions of the

workers as a result of which All India Trade Union Congress was formed. Hence it can be said that economic conditions of workers in India have been one of the major factors of industrial discontent and this led to the formation of Trade Unions.

There are noneconomic factors influencing the growth of trade unionism. The enactment of the Indian Trade Union Act 1926 legalized the trade union organisation. Achieving greater freedom, the Indian workers began to get themselves organised in the form of trade unions to achieve their legitimate demands.

The attitude of the Government of India towards workers after independence helped in the growth of trade unions. The Constitution of India that was accepted after independence conferred on all citizens a fundamental right to form associations and unions. In Article 19 of the Indian Constitution it lays down:

"All citizens shall have the right [a] to freedom of speech and expression, [b] to assemble peacefully and without arms; (c) to form associations or unions."\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) Diwan Paras, Rajput Pam, Constitution of India, Article 19, pp. 84.
To quote the First Five Year plan "the workers' right of Association, organisation and collective bargaining has to be accepted without reservation as a fundamental basis of the mutual relationship. The attitude of trade unions should not be just a matter of toleration. They should be wellaimed and helpful to function as part and parcel of industrial system." ¹²

There are some international factors which also helped in the growth of trade union organisations in most of the countries of the world. The International Trade Union Movement has succeeded in getting the I.L.O. to adopt certain conventions which define the workers' right to collective bargaining, etc. Convention Number 87 of 1948, pertains to freedom of Association and protection of the Right to organise. Convention number 98 of 1949, pertains to right to organise and collective bargaining. ¹³

India has been a member of this international institution since its birth in 1919. As one of the founder members of the I.L.O. India has been taking an active part in the Conference and meetings convened by the organisations and the various conventions have influenced the Indian workers.

¹² First Five Year Plan of India, pp. 573.
¹³ Bardhan A. B., "Lecture Notes" (Part I and II) AITUC Publication, pp. 97.
Lastly we may say that greater freedom for trade union workers and reduced fear for victimization was another factor. Various legislations were passed which conferred greater rights and privileges on trade unions. Victimization cannot be easily resorted to.

3.5 GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONS IN INDIA:

The period 1918-1921 was an epoch making period in the history of the India labour movement. Before this, some attempts were made to organise workers and to protect them against inhuman conditions under which they had to work. But these efforts were sporadic and lacked continuity. India's first trade union, the Madras Labour Union, established in the first quarter of 1918, became the forerunner of trade unionism in India. Since then trade unions in different industries were formed. After independence trade unions in different industries in India made a rapid stride. The number of registered trade unions in India were 4,323 in the year 1951-52, but it was increased to 35,750 in 1980. The following Table will show the growth of trade unions and its memberships from 1951-52 to 1980.
TABLE - 3.1

Growth of Trade Unions and its membership.¹⁴

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of registered Trade Unions</th>
<th>Number of unions submitted no return</th>
<th>Memberships of unions submitting return (in thousand)</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>51-52</td>
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<td>2,556</td>
<td>1,847</td>
<td>136</td>
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<td>421</td>
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<td>[91.8]</td>
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<td>5,771</td>
<td>433</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[21.6]</td>
<td>[94.1]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ibid, pp. 44
3.6 CENTRAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL TRADE UNIONS:

It was in 1920 that India's first central organisation of labour, All India Trade Union Congress was formed to coordinate the activities of all labour organisations in all trades and further to protect the interests of Indian labour. After that various other central organisations were formed namely the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Hind Mazdoor Panchayat (H.M.P.), Hind Mazdoor Sabha (H.M.S.), United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), United Trade Union Congress-Lenin Sarani (U.T.U.C-L.S), Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (B.M.S.), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU).

Besides the Central Trade Union Organisations there are the following national level trade unions in India which are not affiliated to any Central Trade Unions:

1. All India Bank Employees' Association.
2. National Federation of Post and Telegraph Workers.
3. All India Port Workers' Federation.
4. All India Mine Labour Federation.
5. National Federation of Indian Railwaymen, etc.
3.7 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FORMATION OF THE TRADE UNION ORGANISATION IN ASSAM:

Foundation of labour organisation in Assam was laid on the working condition of labour engaged in the tea gardens in this province. Assam Company was established at Nazira in Sibsagar district in the year 1839 by the British and started opening of tea gardens one after another. After the Assam Company, Jorhat Tea Company was established in 1858. Shortage of labour became a problem for the expansion of the gardens. Initially Assamese people used the work in the tea gardens. But due to the growing demand of labour, outsiders were brought to Assam to engage in tea gardens.

All the Tea Companies of Assam formed an Association in the year 1859 and established an office at Calcutta. This association engaged a few agents in Bengal, Bihar and Orrissa to recruit labour. Virtually labours were purchased at a minimum rate and sent to Assam and in exchange agents used to earn commissions from Calcutta Office.

The tempting remuneration induced the agents to secure recruits by all possible means, fair or foul.15

The recruitment machinery continued to function in order to regulate the labour supply according to the requirements of production. In course of time there came into being a class of wage-earning workers in Assam making outside requirement unnecessary.¹⁶

In reality the labourers engaged in Assam tea gardens were treated like slaves. The Manager had the magisterial power in his respective garden area and could arrest the offending workers and this power was misused by the employer in general and the Garden Managers in particular.¹⁷

With the tea gardens, coal mines at Margherita and Ledo, Dibrugarh-Sadya Railway Line, Oil Rigs and Refinery at Digboi were established by the British for their necessity to rule the country and to continue imperialist exploitation. And thus a new working class gradually came in to being irrespective of their case, creed, religion and language. In reality the workers of these industries have the same history of exploitation as that of the tea gardens workers. This condition of the working class paved the path for the trade union organisation in Assam.


¹⁷. Ibid, pp. 393.
The history of the trade union movement in Assam can be traced from the year 1920-21. The price situation in Assam is essentially a manifestation of the All India phenomenon of rising prices. The rising prices of all the essential commodities after the First World War also affected the wage-earning population of Assam. In the beginning of the year 1920, the wage-earning population of Assam comprised primarily the emigrant labourers who worked mainly in the tea gardens.

Between 1913-1920, the cost of living in the province shot up by about thirty-three to fifty percent. Yet in the tea gardens the rate of wages in force had remained unchanged for a quarter of a century.\(^{18}\)

Dissatisfaction grew among the garden labourers. The price rise in the same period affected the wage-earners of oil, coal, railway and other industries also. Though the wage-earners at that time struck work to fulfil their legitimate demands, mainly the increase of their wages, they fought in a disorganised way.

3.8 FORMATION OF ORGANISATIONS AND ITS GROWTH IN ASSAM:

The Non-co-operation Movement paved the path for the labourers to organise themselves. In fact, the non-co-operation movement brought

the Congress workers in close touch with masses in general and labourers in particular.

Sri Amiya Kumar Das, the then Editor of *Asamiya* investigated the conditions of labour in Assam with Purcell, a member of the British Parliament, and Hallswarth, General Secretary of the National Union of Distributive and Allied workers in England, who came to India to attend the AITUC Sessions held at Kanpur and also visited Assam in 1927. All of them came to a conclusion that the labourers should be organised and trade union movement should be developed in Assam.

The credit of organising the industrial labourers in this province also went to the socialists and communists like Subhash Chandra Bose, M. N. Roy and labour organisers like Jalaluddin Hashemy, Chowku Singh, Dinkan Mehta and Sudhindra Pramanik.

In the year 1938, the first trade union organisation in Assam under the name of "The Assam Oil Company Labour Union" was registered under the Indian Trade Union Act, 1926.

Simultaneously with the Oil Company Labour Union, Tea Labour Organisations, Dhubri Match Factory Labour Union, Union in the Government press came in to being and were registered under the Indian Trade Union Act.
The growth of trade union organisations in Assam had been particularly rapid after independence. With the expansion of public sector industries and public service establishments, organisations of workers and employees were formed in these sectors also.

The number of registered trade unions in Assam increased from three in 1938-39 to sixty seven in 1949-50.  

According to the Annual General Administrative Report of the labour of Assam for the year 1968-69 and 1980-81, the total number of registered trade unions was 195 and 347 respectively.

3.9 TRADE UNION ORGANISATION OF ASSAM UNDER DIFFERENT CENTRAL TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS:

Up to 1947 i.e. up to the formation of Indian National Trade Union Congress, Assam Branch, AITUC was the only central organisation that was working in this province. The provincial branch of this organisation (AITUC) was set up as early as 1943. Organisations started


in tea gardens, oil, railway and these came under the banner of AITUC. In 1944-45 organisations began to grow up in other industries and establishments. Thus sprang up the Military Accounts Employees union, the Guwahati Press Workers' Union, Assam Motor Transport Workers' Union, Guwahati Electric Supply Workers' Union and several others. Towards the latter part of 1946 the leaders of the AITUC began to organise the workers of Post and Telegraph. After the formation of INTUC, also, AITUC continued their functions and a large number of unions were affiliated to AITUC.

The Assam branch of Indian National Trade Union Congress came into the existence on 3rd September, 1947 with Kamakhya Prasad Tripathi as its President. The INTUC was taking special care in expanding its activities in the tea, oil, coal, oil fields and other industries in Assam. In the post independence period, it has become the overwhelming force among the industrial labour.

The organisation (INTUC) has a sound footing in all most all such important industries of the state as electricity, match factories, printing press, engineering, sugar mills, etc. It has also strong unions in transhipment and motor transport.21

As on 31st October, 1964 the unions affiliated to INTUC were 28 with total membership of 199,703. With the passage of time the number of affiliated unions is expanding rapidly and more and more unorganised workers are coming under its fold. According to the Secretarial Report of the 20th biennial session held at Tinsukia on 14th and 15th November, 1987, there were 58 affiliated unions of INTUC in Assam with 3,57,007 members at the end of the year 1986.

Besides AITUC and INTUC, other central trade union organisations i.e. H.M.S., B.M.S., UTUC, CITU, etc. have their branches in Assam.

H.M.S. came into being after 1948 and now it has become one of the most important labour organisations in the state with its provincial head office at Dibrugarh. They have their organisations among the tea workers, motor transport, mill and factory, rickshaw pullers, etc.

All Assam Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Sangha, Lakhimpur, Assam, Indian Tea Workers' union, Doom Dooma, Bagicha Sramik Sangha, Goalpara, Brihatar Guwahati Selai Sramik Union, Aaycee Carbon Workers Union, Bamunimaidan, Guwahati, Kumar Iron and Steel Mazdoor Sangha, Zoo Road, Guwahati - these are the important unions affiliated to B.M.S.

UTUC formed in 1960, have some organisations. North Eastern Handicraft and Handloom Co-operative Employees' Union, Guwahati, South Bank Motor Workers' Unions, Goalpara, Modern Metal Employees' Union, Guwahati, Bongaigaon Aluminium Labour Union, etc. are the important organisations affiliated to UTUC.

In 1969 the Centre of Indian Trade Unions was formed. In Assam the First Conference of the CITU was held in Guwahati in 1970 and a new phase of trade union movement started in Assam. They began to organise the unorganised labour in various industries, commercial establishments, etc.

According to the Secretarial Report of the 4th Session of CITU, Assam Branch, the organisations under CITU in different districts are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar (undivided)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara (undivided)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darrang (undivided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CITU has its strong footing among the workers of the plywood industries. The members of All Assam Veneer Plywood and Saw Mill affiliated to CITU, were 2014 in 1979. It was increased to 3207 in 1985.24

Among the tea workers' unions affiliated to CITU, the Akhil Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Sangha of Rangapara in Sonitpur District, is the oldest and the biggest. The members of this union were 6384 and 7006 in 1979 and 1985 respectively.25

In 1981 Cachar Chah Mazdoor Samiti was organised and was brought under the banner of this central organisation taking 1461 members. The members were increased to 2985 in 1985.26

Besides plywood and tea they have their unions among jute workers, bidi industry, rickshaw pullers, P.W.D. Workers, motor transport workers, shops and establishments, etc.

3.10 ORGANISATIONS IN VARIOUS INDUSTRIES OF ASSAM BOTH IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR, GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENT ETC.

Now we shall discuss the organisations of some important industries of Assam both in private and public sectors, Government employees, commercial establishments, etc., separately.

24. Ibid, pp. 59
26. Ibid, pp. 55
3.10.1 ORGANISATION IN TEA INDUSTRY:

The first plantation workers' union was formed and registered under the Indian Trade Union Act 1926 on 27th April 1939, under the name of Sylhet Cachar Chah Mazdoor Union. In consequence of the partition of India Sylhet District was included in East Pakistan and the union was renamed as Cachar Tea Workers' Union. Many organisations of tea workers viz., Assam Tea Company Labour Union, Rajmai Tea Company Labour Union, Greenwood Tea Company Labour Union, Makum Tea Company Labour Union were registered in 1939.

From the year, 1943, the communist leaders began to organise the tea labourers under the banner of AITUC. In 1946 Assam Chah Bagan Mazdoor Union was formed by the communists. Till 1946 some other trade unions among the workers of Surama Valley and Brahmaputra Valley were organised by them.

The organisation among the tea garden labourers was rapid after independence and with the formation of INTUC.

After congress came to power in Assam following the election of 1946, the Assam Provincial Congress Committee formed a separate department for the organisation of labour and Shri Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati was put in charge of this new department. Sri Bhagawati
convened a meeting of the labour/workers where an organisation named Assam Banua Sangha was formed which ultimately resulted in the formation of the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (A.C.M.S.). In this conference, it was stressed that an organisation of members of the tea garden staff would pave the way for organising the labour.27

The Congress labour cell decided to form at first a trade union of the office employees of the plantation. Accordingly, Assam Chah Karmachari Sangha was formed on 9th February, 1947 at a meeting held at Tinsukia and was registered under the Trade Union Act of 1926 on 21st April 1947 with its headquarters at Dibrugarh. Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati was the President of this powerful union. This union had 10,703 members with 10,448 male and 255 female members during the time of its formation.28

In 1948 Chah Mazdoor Sangha was formed with Late Mohendra Nath Sarma and Jadu Nath Bhuyan as the joint secretaries under which there were sixteen independent trade unions operating in seven districts of Assam. Sri Shanuran Kheria, an Ex-M.L.A. of Golaghat was the founder president of this union.


The labour leaders later felt the need of a machinery for co-ordination among the different independent trade unions. Ultimately a union of all Assam bases was formed on 9th August, 1958 in a meeting of the members of the general council of INTUC, Assam branch and representatives of Chah Mazdoor Sangha with the objective to have a stronger union. The new union was named as Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha with its head office at Dibrugarh. It was registered under the Indian Trade Union Act on 8th November, 1958 with the registration number 445. The total number of members of this union was 1,67,746.

Two other unions, viz., the Surama Valley Tea Workers' Congress and Surama Valley Tea Workers' Unions were registered in the year 1940. It was decided in 1947 to unite both the unions under congress influence into one union. The united union was newly named as Surama Valley Tea Labour Union. Main Office of this union was established at Karimganj. In 1950 another union Cachar Chah Sramik Union was formed by INTUC.

Some more trade unions have also emerged in the tea gardens of Assam: with the provincial head office at Dibrugarh, H.M.S. is one of the most important labour organisations in the state. They penetrate in the tea gardens through two organisations, namely Dibrugarh District Chah Mazdoor Panchayat and Sibsagar District Chan Mazdoor Panchayat.

Besides the above, the following labour unions are currently functioning in the tea areas of the State.

Assam valley -

1. Akhil Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Sangh,
2. Uttar Asom Chah Karmi Sangha (Independent),
3. Chah Mazdoor Union, Assam, Jorhat, affiliated to CITU.

Cachar valley - Assam Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Sangha, Cachar.

The Uttar Asom Chah Karmi Sangha with its Head Office in Biswanath Chariali in Sonitpur District has been functioning from the year 1975.30

3.10.2. ORGANISATION IN OIL INDUSTRY:

For a period of four decades no organised trade union could grow in the oil industry. The first union in the oil industry was the Assam Oil Company Labour Union which was formed in 1938. Sudhindra Pramanik, a veteran trade union leader of Bengal, Abdul Bari, an assistant to Subhas Chandra Bose and closely connected with Tata Nagar Labour Union, Jalaluddin Hasmey and others took active interests in the union activities. "They held several meetins where they impressed

upon the workers about the importance of organised movement." In one of their meetings held on 22nd February 1938, they formed the A.O.C. Labour Union under the Indian Trade Union Act, 1926.

The union could not function in the Digboi-Tinsukia protected area during the war period between 1939 and 1946. It was said that the union was revived, however, on the 7th September 1946.

The A.O.C. Labour Union was again registered on 27th February 1947 and still continuing its existence. There are other unions also in oil industry at Digboi. Assam Petroleum Mazdoor Union is affiliated to INTUC. There is a union of the contractor workers affiliated to CITU.

After the formation of Oil India Limited, Duliajan, a large number of workers were transferred to it from Digboi. These workers with the experiences of trade union activities could soon form trade union of the workers in the Oil India Ltd.

The first trade union was organised at Duliajan under the name and style of Indian Oil Workers' Union. The union got recognition from

31. Banerjee, Dipankar, "Non-Plantation Labour Movement in Assam Oil Company Workers' Strike 1939", reprinted from the proceedings of the North East India History Association, Second Session held at Dibrugarh, 1981.
the management and remained so till 1966 when the second union was formed.

Assam Petroleum Mazdoor Union (INTUC) of Digboi opened a branch at Duliajan in 1966 and within a very short period management withdrew recognition of former union. Up till now the INTUC union is the recognised one.

In 1977 a CITU union namely Tel Sramik Union was formed in the Oil industry at Duliajan. There is another union namely Oil India Contractor Workers' Association affiliated to AITUC.

The workers of the Guwahati Refinery got themselves organised. There are mainly two workers' union - India Oil Corporation Mazdoor Union, affiliated to AITUC and Refinery Workers' Union affiliated to INTUC. The members of the 1st union were 661 in 1973.

Oil and Natural Gas Commission workers, Sibsagar organised one union under the name of O.N.G.C. Workers' Association with the total members of 5787 in 1969. In 1979 another union was registered namely Oil Workers' Union, O.N.G.C., Sibsagar and was affiliated to CITU.

Bongaigaon Refinery and Petro-chemicals Union was registered in the year 1977 with the total membership of 829.32

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32. Register on trade union organisation for the year 1977, collected from the Labour Commissioner Office, Guwahati, Assam.
3.10.3 ORGANISATION IN PLYWOOD INDUSTRY:

With the increase of the plywood industries, the number of workers also increased and they began to organise themselves. The first union in the plywood industry was established in the year 1954 under the name of All Assam Veneer Plywood and Saw Mill Mazdoor Union under the registration number 290 with 2842 membership. Sri Golap Borborah was the first president and Samaria Prasad Thakur was the first secretary of this Union. It was affiliated to AITUC, but during the division of AITUC (1970) this Union went to CITU. CITU is still carrying the banner of militant union in the plywood industries. According to the secretarial report of the Silver Jubilee Conference of Sadau Asom Veneer Plywood and Saw Mill Mazdoor Union held at Ledo on 7th and 8th November 1981, there were 15 unions affiliated to CITU in the plywood industries and the members of these organisations were 3824.

In that year the number of total factories was 39 with total workers of 5792.

Besides CITU there are unions of AITUC and INTUC. There are some independent unions also in the plywood industries.

33. Register of Trade Union Organisation for the year 1954.
34. Chief Inspector of Factories, Government of Assam, Guwahati.
3.10.4 ORGANISATION IN COAL MINES:

In 1951 Assam Colliery Mazdoor Congress was founded and was registered under the Indian Trade Union Act. The ACMC could enrol only 120 members initially. It could increase its membership up to 1600 out of total 4500 employees within 10 years of its formation. It was possible because it was the only recognised unions by the management. This organisation is affiliated to INTUC since its birth. ACMC have a permanent seat in the Indian National Mine Labour Federation.

There are two unions belonging to AITUC both the mines and office of the coal and they are Assam Coal Mine Workers' Union and Assam Coal Mine Mazdoor Union.

Though membership of the first one is found in Ledo, Borgolai and Joypur, only the union at Joypur Colliery is recognised.

The second one exists in the offices, hospital, workshops, stores etc. of Coal India at Margherita and here it is recognised. In other collieries unions under INTUC are recognised.

35. Statement from Hiteswar Borgohain, President, Assam Colliery Mazdoor Union, Coal India Limited, Ledo, on 8th September, 1990.
3.10.5. HINDUSTAN FERTILIZER CORPORATION, NAMRUP UNIT:

In the year 1963 the Fertilizer Workers' Union was formed. Initially only 16 members started the union activities in 1963. Gradually the membership of the union raised up to 265 out of 500 workers in 1965.  

Initially Namrup I Unit was started. Namrup II Unit was proposed in 1966. This time most of the educated youths were recruited, which helped to develop the membership strength and consciousness of trade unionism amongst the Fertilizer workers. Thus number of membership raised up to 1155 in 1969-70 out of 1439 workmen. After installation of Nampru III plants, workers' strength raised upto 2124 in 1980.  

Initially the union was inclined to INTUC upto 1966-67, then it converted to AITUC in 1969-71, then again it inclined to CITU in 1975-80, though the union was never affiliated to these central trade unions. The Fertilizer workers' union played leading role in forming the All India body "The Fertilizer Workers' Federation of India."

There is a union of the Contractors' labours known as the Contractor Labour Union, Namrup with 658 out of which 629 are male and 29 are female members.  

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36. Statement from Bhaba Gogoi, General Secretary of Fertilizer Workers' Union, Namrup since 1984.
37. Ibid.
38. Register on trade union organisation, Assam, collected from the Labour Commissioner Office, Guwahati.
3.10.6 ORGANISATION IN OTHER INDUSTRIES:

Besides the above mentioned industries, the workers of press, cement industry, Assam motor transport, paper project, newspaper industry, mill, automobile engineering, bidi industry, match factory, jute mill and several others are organised in the trade union form.

3.10.7 ORGANISATIONS IN BANKING AND INSURANCE SECTOR:

In Bank and Insurance trade unions are functioning as branches of all India organisations. In State Bank of India employees are united under the banner of State Bank of India Staff Association. In other nationalized banks employees are working under Assam Provincial Bank Employees Association, affiliated to All India Bank Employees Association. Though APBEA was formed in the year 1951, Reserve Bank Employees Association and UCo Bank Employees Association walked out from APBEA in the seventies. In the first part of Eighties another section of employees came out from APBEA to form a separate organisation to newly formed Bank Employees Federation of India. Employees of Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd. have a separate organisation affiliated to INTUC.

In Insurance sector, Hindustan Insurance Company Union was formed in 1947, Bhaskar Insurance Union in 1946, All Assam Committee of Insurance Employees was formed in 1951 and Guwahati Divisional Insurance Employees' Association began its activities from 1957.
3.10.8 ORGANISATIONS OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES:

3.10.8.1 State Government Employees:

The State Government employees got involved in trade union activities even before independence in different names in different departments. The organisations of the Government employees was built-up in Assam in 1915 for the first time. The Secretariat Employees Association was formed in 1928.

Assam Secretariat Employees went on strike for forty three days in the year 1965 on some specific demands. The striking employees faced atrocities unleashed by the State Government and the State Government employees realised that a common platform for all the employees of State Government departments is essential and this realization culminated into reality on 24th September 1966 by forming a State Co-ordination Committee on All Assam basis by fifteen organisations of different departments.

After this delegates representing different organisations of State Government employees met in a convention held at Cotton College on 21st January 1979. Here it was decided to form one organisation under the banner of State Government Employees Federation by uniting State Co-ordination Committee and Sangram Parishad.
3.10.8.2 Central Government Employees:

In Central Government departments like Food Corporation of India, Post and Telegraph, Railway, Income Tax, etc. the employees and workers are doing their trade union activities as state branches of their All India organisations.

3.10.8.2.1 Railways:

Railway Department is the biggest central department. The work of organising railwaymen in Assam began in 1938. During the course of the Second World War Assam-Bengal Railway, Dibru-Sadiya-Railway, Jorhat Provincial Railway, Tezpur-Balipara Railway, Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway and East Bengal Railway were amalgated into one single railway system known as the Bengal and Assam railway with its Headquarters in Calcutta. After that Bengal-Assam Rail Road Workers' union was registered in Calcutta.

After independence taking the rail roads within the State Assam Railway was formed and after its organisation it was known as North East Frontier Railway and a union North East Frontier Railway Mazdoor Union was organised in 1955.

There is an Employees' Association known as the Assam Railway Karmachari Sangha affiliated to INTUC.
3.10.8.2.2 **Post and Telegraph Union:**

All India Postal and R.M.S. Union and All India Telegraph Employees union were formed under most adverse circumstances during the foreign rules by Babu Tarapada Mukherjee and Mr. Henry Heron respectively. After successful establishment of the All India Postal and Railway Mail Service Union, a third organisation All India Postmen and Lower Grade Employees' Union came in to being after 1921.

Till May 1946, the whole of Assam and Tripura were within the Bengal and Assam Circle under Post Master General, Calcutta. The area had one R.M.S. Division with Headquarters at Silchar and three postal divisions, viz. Upper Assam (Dibrugarh), Lower Assam (Tezpur) and Surama Valley (Silchar). The postal and R.M.S. employees were members of the All India Postal and R.M.S. Union.

After 1946 a militant section of the P and T workers throughout India organised a new organisation named Union of Post and Telegraph Workers (UPTW). A branch of UPTW was first formed in Assam in 1948 and within a very short period of time all the employees in old All India Postal and R.M.S. Union joined the UPTW branches and in course of time this union grows to be a mighty organisation and front rank trade union of the Central Government employees.
3.10.8.2.3 The Other Central Government employees:

The Central Government employees like Income Tax, Defence Accounts, Customs and Central Exercise etc. have their unions though not very active.

3.11 GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONISM AMONG JOURNALISTS:

With the growth of the newspaper industry, the activities of the journalists began to grow. Differences between the owners of the industry and the journalists also began. With the growing differences coupled with the economic difficulties, trade union consciousness also began to grow among the working journalists. The National Convention of working journalists was convened in November 1950 and the Indian Federation of Working Journalist was formed. Assam Union of Workers' Journalist, Guwahati was formed in 1974 and was affiliated to Indian Federation of Working Journalist.

3.12 ORGANISATION IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE:

Organisations began to be organised in educational Institutes also. In 1952 Gauhati University Workers' Union was formed and was registered under the Indian Trade Union Act 1926, under the registration number of 291, with 789 male and 35 female members. 39

39. Register on Trade Union Organisation, collected from the Labour Commissioner Office, Guwahati, Assam.
Assam Agricultural University Workers' Union was formed in 1964 under the registration number TU/CR/K/84/84. Assam school teachers and Assam College teachers also have formed organisations to get justice and to fulfill their legitimate demands.

### 3.13 THE MUNICIPAL WORKERS:

Harizon Mazdoor of the Municipal Corporation have formed trade unions and they are affiliated to any central trade unions. Dhubri Municipal Harizon Mazdoor Sangha, All Assam Harizon Sangha, Nowgong are affiliated to CITU, Guwahati. Municipal Harizon Mazdoor Karmi Sangha formed in 1969 is affiliated to AITUC.

Besides the above mentioned organisations, there are some organisations in this State which are registered under the Indian Trade Union Act. These are All Assam Drugs Establishments Workers Union, Paltanbazar, Guwahati; Drugs India Employees Union Guwahati, Commercial Representative Union, Guwahati, organisations among the Rickshaw pullers unions in the shops and establishments etc.

### 3.14 RURAL WORKERS:

"A rural worker is any person engaged in agriculture or a related occupation in a rural area, whether as a wage earner or as a self-employed persons."

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ILO Convention concerning Organisations of rural workers and their role in Economic and Social Development, 1975, laid stress on the organisation of the rural labourers. According to the convention Number 141, organisation began to be started in different parts of the world after 1975.

In India INTUC took initiative to organise the rural labourers after 1978.

In Assam, though few in number, rural workers are organised under the banner of INTUC. There are two rural labour unions affiliated to INTUC and they are Kamrup Peasant and Rural Labour Union formed in 1979 and Women Rural Labour Union at Daygrung of Golaghat District. It was formed in 1984 under the Registration Number TUR(S)15/84.

3.15 WOMEN WORKERS UNDER TRADE UNIONISM:

Participation of women in socio-economic activity is prevalent in all countries, whether developed or developing. In India the right of women to public employment is recognised under the Constitution. Article 16(1) and 16(2) of the Constitution grant the right of equal opportunity in regard to employment to men and women without any distinction.
The North Eastern Zone consisting of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura registered the highest increase in the total employment of women.\textsuperscript{41}

Unionism of women labour is positively co-related with the quantity of employment of women.

Trade unionism reflects the consciousness of the rights of industrial workers and measured by this yardstick, it can very well be said that class conscious among women is increasing day by day.\textsuperscript{42}

In the year 1950-51, women membership of trade unions were 25,941 out of total 112,736 members.\textsuperscript{43}

The membership was increased to 26,325 out of 149,798 total members.\textsuperscript{44}


\textsuperscript{43} Mathur, A.S., Mathur J.S. - "Trade Union Movement in India". Chitanya Publishing House, pp. 75.

\textsuperscript{44} Giri, V.V., "Labour Problems in Indian Industry, Asia Publishing House, 1st Edition 1958, pp. 401.
Tea Industry of Assam employs a large number of women. So the number of women members in Tea garden unions is the highest compared to women members in the unions of other industries.

In 1958 Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha was formed with total membership of 167,746. Out of these 88,481 were male and 79,265 were female members. All Assam Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Sangha that was organised in 1969 included 33,165 female members out of 65,096 total members. The number of women members of Akhil Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Sangha is also remarkable. During the time of its formation out of 7970 members, 3549 were female while 4421 were male members.\(^4\)

There are women members in plywood, railway, oil, fertilizer, coal, mine, and other industries and establishments.

In the plywood industry there were 133 women members out of 2019 total members in the year 1979. It increased to 211 out of 2605 members in 1980.\(^5\)

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45. Annual Report of Labour for the respective years.

3.16 BIRTH OF JOINT COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS:

Birth of Joint Council of Trade Unions in the year 1973 was a significant move in the history of trade union movement of Assam. The sole aim of J.C.T.U. is to provide a common platform to all sections of workers to co-ordinate their trade union activities.