THE 21ST CENTURY TRADE UNION CHALLENGES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

A trade union or labour union is an organization of workers who have banded together to achieve common goals in key areas such as wages, hours, and working conditions, forming a cartel of labour. India has the largest number of trade unions. But they have developed very slowly. In spite of the slow growth, the unions brought about some economic, political and social betterment of the workers. Economically, they have improved the lot of the workers. Politically, the unionism has produced a mighty secular anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, equalitarian and socialistic force of national economy. Socially they have emerged as a unique force of national integration in spite of the hindrance offered by illiteracy, rural background of the worker and their migratory character, by communalism, casteism and linguism. Trade unionism has not influenced a variety of industries. The degree of unionisation varies widely from industry to industry. Another important feature of the unionism is that it is mainly concentrated in a few states and in bigger industrial centres. The main reason for the development of such industry-cum-centre unions has been the concentration of certain industries in particular areas. Multiple trade unions are the biggest curse of Indian trade union movement. Existence of many unions each trying to compete with each other on membership drive and securing management support to recognise their union, not only weakens the trade union movement but also cause inter-union rivalry and disunity among the workers. Though trade unions are of various sizes with thousands of members, yet, most of the unions are still characterized by their small size and small membership. Majority of Indian labour is illiterate, ignorant and poor. They are exploited by unscrupulous trade union leaders, which result in the following problems. In a democracy, political influence of trade unionism cannot be avoided. Through this research paper we will discuss about how in India, the historical development of trade-union movement was inseparably intermingled with political movement through liberation struggle due to the 21st Century Challenges in front of the Trade Unions.