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SPECIFIC FEATURES OF INTERESTS' REPRESENTATION IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF INDIA

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RESUME
Interest groups together with political parties played a key role in political modernisation of India. In the political system of India we can find wide spectrum of interest or pressure groups which are comparable to those in Western democracies as well as interest associations typical and unique only for given political system conditioned by its original particularities. This contribution focuses on chosen features of interest representation in India borne by interest groups, basic classification and main factors and determinants having impact on pressure groups formation and politics. The second part of the paper aims at case study of associational interest group – trade union movement – from the perspective of chosen basic economic and workforce characteristics, political and historical background of its formation and operation in India.

Key words: Political System of India, Interest and Pressure Groups, Political Parties, Trade Union Movement, Labour, Workforce

Introduction

In addition to the array of political parties and revolutionary movements which have existed in India since Independence (1947), there have also been a great number of interest groups. Like the parties, some existed before Independence, some have come into being only since Independence, some are institutionalised, others ephemeral. Interest or pressure groups formation and development in the political system of India has been considered an essential element of the process of political modernisation and represents increasing functional differentiation and decline of traditional type of governance (Hanson; Douglas, 1972). Since the formation of modern political system after 1947 the most dominant interest groups were not centred on the economic and social interests (unlike in Western democracies where modernisation and industrialisation brought increase of pressure groups articulating economic and

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social interests of the members they represented) but represented objectives of castes, communities, regions, religion or language groups. Gradually the most powerful groups have become those concentrated on capital and business.

Contemporary pressure groups system is a consequence of the Indian political and socio-economic infrastructure. *This infrastructure consists of basic building elements which represent caste, religion, language and organised business* (Fadia, 1980). Indian society is framed on a caste basis and it is a caste-oriented society. Caste structures provide one of the most important organisational clusters in which the population is found to live. Politics must strive to become organise through such a structure. By drawing the caste system into its web of organisation, politics finds material for its articulation (Ibid in Fadia, 1980). Although India is a secular state where no religion enjoys an official status, religion plays an important part in the elections, for instance. Religious minorities are given enough representation in the state legislatures, the Parliament and Council of Ministers.[1] Language associations also have contributed to the processes of modernisation and political development in India. They performed a crucially needed representational function forging linkage between the remote centres of power and the immediate peripheries of existence of the newly-politicised masses. Organised economic or business interests also play a significant role in influencing policy of the State mainly through the chambers of commerce or big businessmen who also co-create economic environment of the country.

When the British Government instituted a system of Western education, it prepared a crucial base for the rise of new Indian elite. The social leadership of these elites came from the educated middle class. Out of this leadership a politically conscious class of people arose and, in association with other educated people, attempted to build a form of organisation that would enable them to promote their own interests as well as those they believed were of the population as a whole. They sought to increase their appeal by organisational efforts through the establishment of various secondary associations with specific programmes. Their immediate task was "to create a new public – a public that would be detached from the traditional source of authority and would become a conscious instrument initiating social changes" (Fabia, 1980, p. 34). In the beginning most of the organisational efforts began on a very limited scale.

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[1] This is the case, for instance, in Punjab where the Sikhs community is dominant, or in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala where Muslim community has its strong influence.

They were limited to small groups of like-minded reformers, educators and students which emerged in the first half of the 19th Century[2]. Most of their associations did not openly discuss political issues. However, political issues were gradually and increasingly included in their legitimate order of business.

Determinants of pressure group politics in a parliamentary system are quite different from the presidential one. In a country with a parliamentary type of government, pressure is mainly exerted on the executive branch for the simple reason that "legislatures live like a toll in the hands of ministers who, in turn, are a toll in the hands of the bureaucracy" (Fadia, 1980, p. 29). It is observed that in India governed by the parliamentary system pressure groups maintain close contacts with the civil service at the various levels of administration. This means that activities and efforts of pressure groups are focused on executive branch of power, while form and nature of pressure groups politics is determined by administrative machinery structure. Since India is federal and decentralised state, pressure groups efforts to enforce their interests and objectives are not confined only to a central branch of government, but also up to regional and local levels.

1 Basic Classification of Interest Groups in India

In general, interest groups in India could be divided in to two basic categories. The first one is composed of interest groups that are by their character alike and comparable with those in Western democracies. The second category consists of those interest groups that are specific and typical only for given political system.

The first mentioned category is represented by *organised interest gro*ups (e. g. trade unions, employers and business associations, professional chambers, government employees associations etc., as well as a number of

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[2] Cases in point are The Atmiya Society (1815), the Brahmo Sabha (1830), the Dharma Sabha (1830), the Young Bengal Group (1831). These groups had their own newspapers or those of friends to publicise their views and apparently were fortunate enough to have the financial support of a few upper class individuals. Some studies show that during their initial years about 40 per cent of their most prominent founders and spokesmen were governmental officials of relatively upper rank and 20 per cent were lawyers (Fadia, 1980, p. 35). Gradually similar societies with a broader social base were established during the 19th Century in India, e.g. Satyashodhak Samaj (1873) of Poona, Prarthana Samaj (1867) of Bombay, Arya Samaj (1875) of Punjab. In the field of political reform the educated classes were becoming equally organisation-minded. From the small beginning to the larger all-India based political associations, the strategy was one of gradually widening the support of the educated middle class for organised activities.

merchants and tradesmen or self-employed associations) operating at central – national, state or local levels. Such organised interests operate only within a small segment of Indian society, namely, in the sectors dominated by large-scale, bureaucratic organisations: factories, urban trade associations, professional groups, and civil servants whose constituencies comprise no more than 10 per cent of the population of the country. These organised groups, moreover, have much less influence than their Western counterparts in the formulation of broad policies and legislation. It is largely after the passage of legislation and after the formulation of rules and regulations that interest representation – as opposed to outright blocking of government legislation – become relevant in India; moreover, it consequently becomes highly individualised or localised rather than a matter of general policy formulation and implementation. For instance, it is rather the application of general rules to particular cases which matters most for business, and the mediation of labour tribunals in local labour-management conflicts that matters for labour on a day-to-day basis (Brass, 1990). A further feature of the large apex organisations in India is that they are often "paper organisations" which cannot mobilise their memberships or they cancel each other out in such a way that either only the organisation recognised by the state is left with influence, or there is no organisation left with influence at the highest levels of government. Finally, there is a general tendency at all levels within even the "organised" sectors of Indian society toward multiplication and fragmentation of organisations.

The second type of interest groups are *demand groups* defined like groups or movements which arise to make demands on behalf of persons in the relatively less organised or bureaucratised sectors of society, such as students or peasants or the entire religious, language or regional groups, rather than specific functional groups (Rudolph; Rudolph, 1987).

The third general type of interest group in India is the *influence group* with informal leaders or elites in its leadership who are presumed to be able to mobilise larger numbers of people for specific purposes. Examples of this type are caucuses of Muslim or Scheduled Caste MPs in Parliament, who may seek specific concessions from government, or generally influence government policies on matters of concern to their constituencies simply by their evident presence or may intervene through their leaders at crisis points.

Operating across all three types of representation are two types of specialised interest groups which are either unique to India or at least more prevalent in non-Western societies in comparison to Western democracies.

Their existence is conditioned by historical, religious, political and social particularities of a given society. These are *revivalist movements* and *caste associations*. Revivalist movements are formed either to protect or promote aspects of indigenous culture or practice which allegedly were destroyed or suffered severe disadvantages during the long periods of alien and colonial rule, or to eliminate practices which were allegedly introduced and which were not in conformity with traditional practice[3] (Brass, 1990). Although many revivalist movements have taken the explicit organisational form of modern, bureaucratic interest associations and are indistinguishable in these respects from their non-revivalist counterparts, revivalist movements in general are distinguished by their greater capacity to act as demand groups and to speak or claim to speak on behalf of a much wider group[4]. These associations which have existed since at least the late 19th Century may sometimes also launch mass movements with the participation of other organisations.

Caste associations operate both as formal interest groups in the organised sector of Indian society and as formal and informal interest groups in the small towns and rural areas of the country. The local, informal organisation of a "jati" (local caste group) may be mobilised at any time for specific local or broader political purposes, such as an election campaign or a confrontation with caste rivals or with the local police. Formal caste associations exist for many caste categories, that is for castes which are not necessarily interconnected by kinship and other local ties, but which have the same name and a similar status over a broad area. Politicians from large and important castes often also act as leaders of influence groups in the state legislatures, where they may caucus

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[3] Examples of this type of movement would include such very important religious organisations as the Arya Samaj, which arose in Western India in the late 19th Century and became especially prominent in the Punjab where it continues to be a major force today. This movement flourished amid the religious controversies in the Punjab among Christian missionaries, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and took as its main goals the purification of Hindu faith by going back to the original teachings in the Vedas, eliminating accretions since those days such as practices of caste discrimination and inviolability, and defending Hinduism against missionary activities of Christians or Muslims or Sikhs. A leading non-religious example has been the movement to revive, reform, and promote the teaching and practice of the Ayurvedic system of medicine throughout India, which emerged at the end of the 19th century, as well.

[4] For example, there are permanent interest associations and societies for the protection of the cows in India, which regularly publish journals and lobby state and central legislatures to prevent cow slaughter and to provide "gosthalas" – rest farms for old and non-productive cows. It is evident that existence of such unique interest group with such original objective is determined by religious particularities of Hinduism that considers cow to be a holy and untouchable animal.

across party lines or within a single dominant party, especially the Congress, to achieve ministerial office for themselves and special favours for their constituents.

There are two other forms of political "representation" in India where the term "intermediation" is preferable to be used. The term "intermediation" or "intermediaries" could be used here to refer to "informal structures and individuals who act as links between the formal institutions of the Indian political order, parties and bureaucratic agencies, and the social institutions of Indian society, caste, family, and village." (Brass, 1990, p. 109) Two important examples of intermediaries are *factions* and *brokers*.

Although aspects of factions and factional politics found in India exist elsewhere, the combination of features which describe Indian factions are unique and consist of some special elements. First are personalised, leader-follower relationships modelled in part on the master-discipline relationship so that some of the followers of faction leaders are, in effect, tied to the leader in a form of political apprenticeship. Secondly, however, it is also the leader's duty to care for the material interests of his followers, failing which all but the most intensely loyal will go elsewhere. The factional relationship between leaders and followers and between different factional leaders in broader factional coalitions is, therefore, markedly transactional in character, based on an exchange of favours for support. There is, consequently, a curious and specifically Indian combination of devotion and materialism in the factional tie. Thirdly, the central concerns of faction leaders and followers in the provinces and districts of India are different from those of the ideologically oriented leaders in Delhi and in some of the state capitals and centre around three sets of issues and interests in particular: land control, inter-caste and inter-communal relations, and access to local resources in general.

There are also "brokers" between the people and administration. The extent of rural development activities has also involved a proliferation of departments, agencies, and special programs to implement them, which are invariably poorly coordinated and often in conflict with each other. The brokers are the only persons in the local scene in a position to link the disparate activities of numerous development agencies, and they have the incentive to do so. Moreover, the potential profitability of the broker's activities also increased substantially as government began to include cash loans and subsidies in its programs for the rural cultivators (Brass, 1990).

H. S. Fartyal (1971) divided the Indian pressure groups into four different categories, namely *special interest groups; communal and religious groups; caste, language and regional groups; groups based on Gandhian ideology*. **Hanson** and **Douglas** (1972) distinguished between *the modern pressure groups* – those which spring from the modern centres of society such as business, labour and the Universities – and *the traditional pressure groups* – those that are based on traditional social structure associated with religion, caste, tribe or language. **O. P. Goyal** (1977) also offered classification of pressure groups as *business groups; trade unions; peasant groups; student groups;* and *community associations.* According to **B. Fadia** (1980) there are four categories of pressure groups operating in India which are identical to **G. A. Almond** and **G. B. Powell's** classification: *institutional pressure groups; associational pressure groups; non-associational pressure groups;* and *anomic pressure groups.*

According to **G.A. Almond** and **G. B Powell** *institutional pressure groups* are to be found within such organisations as political parties, legislatures, armies, bureaucracies and churches. There are formal organisations, composed of professionally employed personnel, with designated political and social functions other than interest articulation (Almond; Powel, 1978). In India these groups may occupy powerful positions in the political system because of possession of an organisational base, existence of a limited number of associational pressure groups or their ineffectiveness in action and because they are part and parcel of the governmental process and they represent the interests of varied groups in the society. The most important pressure groups of this type in India are *the Congress Working Committee; the Congress Parliamentary Board; the Chief Minister's Club; the Central Election Committee; the Bureaucracy;* and *the Army*.[5]

Associational pressure groups are the specialised structures for interest articulation, for example trade union organisations of businessmen or industrialists, or ethnic associations organised by religious denominations and civilian groups. Their particular characteristics are explicit representation of the interests of a particular group, a full-time professional staff and orderly

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[5] In fact, India for long has been governed by the Congress Party. The Constitution of the Congress Party has been evolutionary in character and piecemeal amendments have been its characteristic features. The Congress evolved from a national movement to a political party and inherited the advantages of an established network of organisational structure evolved during the pre-independence period.

procedures for the formulation of interests and demands (Almond; Powell, 1972, p. 78). Associational interest groups in India are of two types: *occupational* and *community*. The occupational groups spring from the modern centres of society, such as industry and the universities. The community groups are based on traditional social structures associated with religion, caste or language. The most important associational pressure groups in Indian politics are: *trade unions[6]; business organisations; peasant organisations; student organisations; government employees associations;* and *associational groups of community*.

By *non-associational interests* we have in mind kinship, ethnic, regional, religious and class groups, which articulate interests informally and intermittently through individuals, cliques, family and religious leaders. The distinguishing characteristic of the non-associational interest groups is that the structure of interest articulation is latent and often informal. They have been active in Indian politics since the very beginning and they are also known as traditional groups. Some important non-associational groups are *communal* and *religious groups; caste groups; gandhian groups; language groups; the syndicate; the ideological Left;* and *Young Turks*. Communal groups and religious bodies have entered politics as regular political parties in India. The term "communal" is used for an organisation that seeks to promote the interests of a section of the population presumably to the detriment of the society as a whole. Communal organisations represent narrow ethnic and religious units and endeavours to get better facilities for their respective communities. India is a secular state where interaction of religion and politics is of immense significance. Religion remained a significant aspect of human relations even in modern societies, and its influence overflows into the political sphere as well. Caste has provided a far more fertile field for pressure groups activities. Traditionally, the caste associations were primarily concerned with the behaviour of their own members and with the preservation of distinctive caste practices. They were predominantly local, non-political and often hardly visible. Caste groups have always influenced power dynamics in Indian politics. The competitive politics in various States of the Indian union is a politics of caste groups (Fadia, 1980, p. 65). Organisations representing Gandhian ideology also influence Indian life. These types of pressure groups are not to be found in any other country except India and are mainly composed of persons who were associated with **Mahatma Gandhi**, and try to project the policies and views of

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[6] See chapter three of this contribution.

the father of the nation.

Anomic pressure groups are the characteristic features of developing countries. By anomic groups we mean more or less spontaneous breakthrough from the society into the political system, such as riots, demonstrations, assassinations and the like. Anomic groups are generally the result of turmoil and excitement. Consequently, their actions are often violent. They are characterised by their lack of formal organisation, absence of obvious leaders, as well as their temporary and loose coordination of efforts. They are short lived, spontaneous aggregations of people who share a common concern over a particular issue (Shively, 2000). In fact, on many occasions governments (central, state and local) in India ignored the demands of the large but peaceful groups and granted complete concession to the group that pressed demands violently.

The scope and intensity of group politics are conditioned by various *factors like policy, attitudes, structures and inhibitions on political mobilisation, economic and membership sources, tools used for its objectives achievement, ability to mobilize members as well as non-members for collective action, ability to mobilize public opinion and relations with political parties*. The structure of India's parliamentary system has to be understood in connection with its party system. Though the multiparty system operates in India, until recently the system is in fact to be called a one-party dominant system. Pressure groups are thriving under the camouflaged support of a leading political party and are maintaining an intimate relationship with the party in power by posting a condition of political neutrality. With reference to **B. Fadia,** the effectiveness of a pressure group in India depends on the following factors:

- whether a group is aligned to a political party or not and whether this party is a ruling party or an opposition party;
- whether a group can lavishly contribute to party decisions or not;
- the size of membership and the list of elite members;
- whether the group can recruit eminent leaders, writers and politicians or not;
- the capacity, ability and professional competence of the staff working for the pressure group;
- whether a group can indirectly oblige the state administration or not and can maintain liaison officers at the decision-making levels and places for manipulative activities (Fadia, 1980, p. 31).

According to above-mentioned we could summarise that *success, results and objectives achieved by an interest group in India are determined mostly by relations with political parties and character of such relations; relations with state administration and bureaucracy; elites representation and support; and staff capacity and mobilisation ability.*

2 Trade Union Movement in India: Associational Interest Group Case Study

2.1 Historical and Political Background of Trade Unionism in India

In general, the period of the trade union movement existence in India could be divided into few distinctive phases paralleling the economic and political development in the country (Singh, 2011).

During *the Pre-independence phase* India was an agricultural country where trade unionism was largely restricted to industrial areas[7]. This period is characterised by trade union organisation formation and establishment and basic key legislation relating to trade unions introduction. Trade union movement in India began after the end of World War One. After a decade following the end of the World War One, the pressing need for the coordination of activities of the individual unions was recognised. Thus, The All India Trade Union Congress was established in 1920 on a national basis; the Central Labour Board in Bombay and the Bengal Trade Unions Federation were formed in 1922. The Indian government passed the Trade Union Act in 1926, thus legalising registered trade unions in India. The Act also granted protection to trade unions against certain civil and criminal cases. Until 1945 all trade unions were united and covered by central trade union organisation, the All India Trade Union Congress.

The first Post-independence phase (1950s – mid 1960s) corresponds to an era of state planning and import substitution, when public sector employment and public sector unionism rose phenomenally. Unions and bargaining

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[7] The earliest known trade unions in India were the Bombay Millhand's Association formed in 1890, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India and Burma formed in 1897, the Printers' Union formed in Calcutta in 1905, the Bombay Postal Union formed in 1907, and the Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha formed in Bombay in 1910.

structures were highly centralised; the two main central trade union federations were the communist All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and nationalist Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). State interventions in the determination of wages and working conditions were the norm and "state-dominated pluralism" prevailed. There was a spurt in union membership and also an increase in labour fragmentation with new political parties/break-away groups emerging in the fore front of national politics. The Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), as another central trade union federation launched in 1948, emerged stronger with its focus on the nationalisation of key industries, securing effective recognition to bargain collectively, workers' participation in the regulation of industries and advocating the cooperative movement.

The second Post-independence phase (mid 1960s – 1980s) was a period of economic stagnation and political turmoil. Many more trade unions emerged in various parts of India, based on local political support. Indian politics also became more heterogeneous with numerous dissident groups emerging. Employment slowed down; there were massive inter-union rivalries, and industrial conflict increased. Centralized bargaining institutions now started feeling the pressure of dissent from below, and both the HMS and the communist Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) made significant progress in the labour movement. The crisis culminated in the May 1974 railway strike that was followed by the 1975 – 1977 Emergency Regime[8] of **I. Gandhi**. An "involuted" pluralism dominated Indian labour relations during this phase.

The third Post-independence phase (1980 – 1991/pre-liberation era) corresponds to a period of segmented and uneven economic development. Decentralised bargaining and independent trade unionism entered a stage in a significant way. Two major strikes (1980 – 1981 Bangalore public sector strike and 1982 Mumbai textile workers' strike) marked this period and inter-state and inter-regional variations in the nature of labour-management regimes became much wider. In the more profitable economic sectors the unions gained, but in unorganised and declining sectors workers lost and the unions were left out with few strategies.

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[8] The Indian Emergency of 25 June 1975 – 21 March 1977 was a 21-month period, when President **Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed** upon advice of the Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi** declared a state of emergency under Article 352 of the Constitution of India, effectively bestowing on her the power to rule by decree, suspending elections and civil liberties. It is one of the most controversial times in the history of independent India.

The fourth Post-independence phase (post-liberalisation era) represents the post-economic reform period. The stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes led to demands for increased labour-market flexibility, especially employment flexibility. This has led to a recruitment freeze in many public-sector sites and the unions in these sectors had to cope with competition at the local level. In non-viable public enterprises unions were coming to terms with "voluntary" retirement schemes. In the early years of economic reform there were sincere attempts by all parties to engage in tripartite consultations but there now seem to be several barriers to this form of engagement.[9]

At this part it is important to mention that trade union movement formation in India was deeply wedded to Indian Communist Party establishment in 1920. The development of political associations as well as groups representing "modern" interest sectors (as distinguished from "traditional" interest groups like caste associations) in the late 1920s and the 1930s was both a cause for and a consequence of the change in Congress policy towards the princely states (Chatterji, 1980).

Political tradition of political parties' dominance over trade unions in India has remained in place until the present time. It was mainly the Communist or Socialist party having the non-neglectable influence on trade unions but it could be stated that trade unions have been under influence of almost all relevant political parties with tendency gradually establish their own trade union centrals. In this place we can demonstrate the proportions of influence of particular political parties over respective central trade union organisations. The second central trade union organisation Hind Mazdoor Subha was founded and supported by the Socialist Party (Praja Socialist Party, PSP); Indian National Congress (Congress) formed and dominated Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC); Indian Communist Party (ICP) had its influence over All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC); and Marxists dominated United Trade Union Congress (UTUC). In 1970s, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), politically attached to the Indian Communist Party, was established as a result of split in the party and AITUC. In 1954, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sabha (BMS) was established. It was viewed as a productivity-oriented and non-political trade union based on triple ideology: nationalise labour, labourise the industry, and industrialise the nation.

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[9] Trade unions in India operate at three levels: the shop-floor level, the state level and the central level.

In India colonial modernisation politicised religious, language and ethnic differentiation, while slow industrialisation allowed only limited growth of the working class. Land reform after Independence thinned down traditional feudal class relations and plunged Indian peasants (who represented two thirds of the population) into the "sack of potatoes" (Marx in Mehra; Khanna; Kueck, 2003). New technologies and modernisation supported a particular group of "new peasants" and simultaneously reduced volume of hired labour. But no major organisation representing workers in agricultural sector was established. At the same time, an effort of rich peasants to establish commercial units and business cartels was marred. It was much easier to achieve an increase in their benefits through the political pressure on government during the election campaigns. Trade union membership has never exceeded 10 per cent of the whole workforce (Mehra, 2003, p. 218) and due to structural changes this proportion has been markedly reduced. At the present time the highest priority is to secure a job whereby in such "contest" the key role has been still played by caste, language, ethnic group or community ties.

The origins of trade union movement in India cannot be separated from the Indian Communist Party (ICP) establishment. Although ICP did not play any key role in the Indian national movement, Indian party system cannot be analysed without ICP. Communist Party commenced its formation in the 20s of the 20th Century, but springs of "leftism", and as well as trade unions appearance it has been noticed at the end of World War One. Between 1918 and 1920 about 125 trade union organisations became united in the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). This period was marked by wave of strike activities which paralysed industry, whereby trade unions pushed for wage increase, family allowances, shorter working time, etc. This intensified class-consciousness and solidarity, as well as formed political base for communist influence and activities. Trade union unity under the umbrella of AITUC lasted until 1947. This year, due to ICP's strong influence and dominance over AITUC, Congress Party decided to withdraw its support for AITUC and establish its own central trade union organisation called Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). Since trade unions have been united within AITUC under the influence of almost all relevant political parties (socialists, communists, Marxists or Congress) this step unleashed contest among political parties for control over the trade union movement. After 1947, Congress Socialist Party also decided to found its own trade union organisation separate from both AITUC and INTUC. To a certain extent it was also result of internal split and conflict led between socialist wing

and the rest of the Congress[10]. Consistent split in leftism led to trade unions disunity. As mentioned above, disagreement with Communists' dominance over the AITUC led to the establishment of Congress-influenced INTUC in 1947. Conflict between Communists and Socialists led to establishment of the Socialists-supported Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) union in 1948. In April, 1949, radical leftists[11] founded another central trade union organisation called United Trade Union Congress (UTUC)[12]. Until 1949, therefore, four central trade union organisations have been formed, each ruled by different political party or political group. In spite of some tendency to unify trade union movement at the beginning of 1950s, this effort failed in 1953. The main reasons for this failure are to be found in attitudes, fears of influence loss and mutual disability to cooperate among respective political parties which have dominated trade union organisations for the entire period of their existence (Weiner, 1990).

The reason for the fact that labour organisations started to flourish all over India in the late 1920s and the 1930s is to be seen in the emergence of a new class of leaders with a new political outlook, predominantly a leftist one (Chatterji, 1980). The importance of the role of personal leadership both in the development of associations and in general political activity in India has prompted a number of observers to accord relatively greater importance to his factor than to the structural changes in the economy of society. Thus, the operation of entrepreneurial leadership is considered to be a crucial factor in the growth of labour unions in India. Other reason (or the consequences of above-mentioned) could be found in legislation adopted in that period by the Government of India. It was The Reform Act of 1919, which for the first time provided for labour representation in the central and state legislatures in a very nominal way – representatives were to be nominated. Then, in 1926, The Trade Unions Act provided for registration of employers and workers in trade unions, and in certain respects it defined the law relating to registered trade unions. It conferred legal and corporate status on registered trade unions. Finally, The

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[10] See Weiner, M. 1990. Party Politics in India: Development of a Multi-party System., p. 42 - 62

[11] Revolutionary Socialist Party, Bolshevik Party, Revolutionary Communist Party of India, Socialist Republic Party, Socialist Unity Center.

[12] At the present time the most important central trade union organisations in India are the following: the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) formed in 1920; the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) formed in 1947; the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) formed in 1949; the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) formed in 1948; the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sabha (BMS) formed in 1954; and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions formed in 1971.

Government of India Act of 1935 provided ten seats for labour (as against eleven for commerce and industry) at the central legislature and 38 seats for the provincial legislatures. It also replaced the system of nomination of labour representatives by the system of election through special labour constituencies. It was basically in response to these developments that Congress Labour Committee was established in 1935 and it was decided that this Committee should act in cooperation with other labour organisations including the AITUC to mobilise the workers for election purposes. It provoked increased interest of the Congress, previously not paying any serious attention to these issues, in labour organisation and mobilisation. This implies that public policy has a very crucial role to play in matters of either activating new groups by mobilising potential interests or by subduing already existing groups.

Last but not least, another reason for the flourishing of trade unions in India during 1920s and 1930s could be found in the Communist movement activation and influence, as we can see in recommendations from the 1924 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Comintern to the Indian Communist Party: "The Communist Party must bring the trade union movement under its influence. It must reorganise it on a class basis and must purge it of all alien elements." (Chatterji, 1980, p. 80).

To sum up, we may conclude that while the difference in the number of organised labour unions was expected in the context of the disparate economic and political development and varied structural differentiation, the identity among them in terms of the timing of union growth has been due to the fact that the growth of unions has depended to a very large extent on the presence of an entrepreneurial leadership thrown up by the political and general societal conditions and that such leadership came to be available for the country only by the late 1920s and the early 1930s. The international communist movement as well as domestic public policy have also deeply affected the growth of organised labour unions in India.

2.2 Some Economic Aspects of Trade Unionism in India

When we want to analyse trade union movement in India we have to take into account also the *economic features together with the workforce and social structures of the country as the major determinants of trade unions politics*. As **B. Harriss-White** points out, fewer than 12 per cent of the Indian population live in metropolitan cities, over 74 per cent of the population is rural, and 14 per cent live in towns with populations under 200 000 (Harris-White, 2003, p. 1). This 88

per cent is sometimes called "local", as opposed to national, or state-provincial, but "local" is often also used to refer to the detail of activity carried on in cities. It has been called "real", actually "existing", and even "authentic", to distinguish it from the imagined economy that is so often inferred from official data in a selective way to support orthodox economic theories. "Real" is also a term used to distinguish productive activity from financial capital. Its markets have been called "mud-floored". Its economy is sometimes called "unorganised" to distinguish it from the "organised" and registered economy. It is called "bazaar" economy, but this term tends to play down the scale of capitalist accumulation involved. Other labels are "informal" and the "black" economy (Harris-White, 2003, p. 3). The informal economy is the economy not covered by official data on registered enterprises. The first meaning of informal economy is the economic activity of firms and individuals that is not registered for the purpose of taxation and/or regulation by the State. The fact that it is not regulated by the State does not mean that it is not regulated at all. There are four main reasons why an economic activity is not registered or regulated by the State:

1. It involves production of exchange that does not take the form of market transactions (non-capitalist production, household production, reproductive work, non-monetised market exchange etc.).
2. It consists of market transactions by units or firms that fall below the size threshold for direct taxation or licensing – generally where the revenue collectable would be less than the administrative costs of collecting it.
3. It involves various kinds of mobile exchange and production (much of which is either below all tax thresholds or concerns untaxed products). In this case it is capital and commodities rather than people which are constantly moving.
4. It is criminal business activity.

Approximately 83 per cent of the population work wholly in the informal sector. The second meaning of informal economy – a kind of activity practised by firms in the formal economy and even in the interstices of the State itself, which is itself not covered by state regulation or record-keeping. It includes fraud and theft from the State, the corrupt abuse of public office, the illegal privatisation of public property rights, the theft or privatisation of public time (moonlighting).

Labour force in India represents almost 400 million people where 7 per cent are in the organised sector (workers are on regular wages or salaries) in registered firms and with access to the State's social security system and its framework of labour law. Only half of that 7 per cent are unionised, trade unions are deliberately disorganised. The rest (83 – 93 per cent of the workforce) is in the unorganised or informal economy. All this unorganised labour is unprotected by the regulatory regime of the State because what little exists is not enforced. It is thereby deprived of rights at work. Unorganised firms are supposed to be small but they may have substantial workforces, occasionally numbering hundreds, but workers are put deliberately on casual contracts. There is no neat boundary between organised and unorganised labour.

Unemployment and underemployment are on the rise and the real wages of workers in the unorganised sector have begun to stagnate and in some areas have declined (as a result of left agriculture, the construction industry, quarrying and petty trade to act as shock-absorbers with weak elasticity of employment, investments in public infrastructure with private investments in synergy have atrophied). For most of the 20th Century and long before the era of flexible specialisation or economic liberalisation a process of decentralised agro-industrial mercantile accumulation gave rise to a numerically powerful stratum of small-scale capitalists with low managerial costs and flexible labour practices, a stratum that was almost literally a law to itself. The regulation of workplace relations by the State was not imposed on capital after industrialisation, but was put in place as industry developed. From the very start, strong incentives were created for capital to evade these laws, and the State has tended to act in the interests of capital whenever organised labour tried to push for the law enforcement. From the 1970s onwards, the employers' response to trade unionism ensured that in India labour was informalised through subcontracting, putting-out, and casualisation even in so-called organised firms. Informalised labour not only lacks rights, it lacks stability of income and occupation.

Table 1
Chosen economy data on workforce in India from 1977 – 78 to 1993 – 94
(Harris-White, 2003, p. 18)

Index	Percentage
Economy growth	5 %
Population growth	2,2 %
Employment in the organised sector growth	0,1 %
Public sector employment growth	2,2 %
Unorganised employment growth	2,6 %

The biggest component of the unorganised workforce (363 million) consists of the catch-all category of the "self-employed". Although self-employed may cover small family businesses, the decisive part of people classified this way are semi-independent peasants with small assets, petty commodity producers and traders. They exploit their own household members and often both hire in and hire out labour according to seasonal peaks; their independence conceals sundry forms of wage labour. 56 per cent of all Indian workers are self-employed, in this sense, 29 per cent are casual wage labourers and just 15 per cent are in any kind of regular waged or "salaried" employment, whether organised or not (Harris-White, 2003).

Indian capitalism has developed in distinctive areas, strata, sectors and regional blocks. The tiny minority of labour in the corporate and public sector – so called "commanding heights of the economy" – now produces about 20 per cent of GDP. Its standard of living depends on wage goods produced by the much cheaper labour in the informal economy. The informal economy has now been estimated at 60 per cent of GDP. Agriculture is still the largest single sector. Its labour productivity remains stagnant, currently at around one-third of that in manufacturing and services. The typical features of the Indian capitalism are as follows:

- large-size and high growth and labour-absorptive capacity of the unorganised economy;
- unskilled nature of much of this work, reinforced by the use of casual labour and flexible employment practices, so that little importance is attached to training and the development of the skills; absolute poverty of the workers. Organised workers receive a third of all wages and incomes,

36 per cent of the population survive on incomes below the nutrition-based official poverty line[13].

Labour[14] is controlled not only through the manipulation of various non-class social identities but also through the segmentation and fragmentation of labour "markets". The blurred boundary between the organised and unorganised sectors is also a division of castes and gender. These social identities still affect the tasks most people do – the kinds, terms and conditions of contracts they are offered, and either settle for, or refuse. *Labour contracts could be affected by gender, land, age, caste, region, sector, and household composition*. All these factors may lead to variations in the earnings of landless labourers.[15] Multiple solidarities tend to make collective, class-based action much harder to achieve. Under capitalism, gender, caste and household structures are modified slowly, unevenly and in a great diversity of way. These different kinds of social identity generate the volatile political forces – the struggles over class – that overlay the glacial development of the conflict between classes.

India's trade unions share the competitive pluralism of Anglo-American interest groups. Such pluralism features union-employer relations based on private and voluntary agreements among a large number of individual actors, firms and unions and restricts state action to the regulation of entry, bargaining and conflict. In Europe, unions often convert this competitive situation into an oligopolistic one, aspiring to the power and standing of an apex organisation. Their relatively cohesive labour federations are in a position to bargain at the national level with industry associations and state. This has not happened in

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[13] There are 22.15 per cent of people living under the poverty line in India according to a 2004-2005 survey by NSSO. Poverty is widespread in India, with the nation estimated to have a third of the world's poor. According to a 2005 World Bank estimate, 41.6 per cent of the total Indian population falls below the international poverty line of US$ 1.25 a day (PPP, in nominal terms ₹21.6 a day in urban areas and ₹14.3 in rural areas) (Worldbank, 2005). According to a new UN Millennium Development Goals Report, as many as 320 million people in India and China are expected to come out of extreme poverty in the next four years, while India's poverty rate is projected to drop to 22 per cent in 2015. The report also indicates that in Southern Asia, however, only India, where the poverty rate is projected to fall from 51 per cent in 1990 to about 22 per cent in 2015, is on track to cut poverty in half by the 2015 target date (UN, 2011).

[14] It is important to distinguish between politics of labour and politics of the poor.

[15] Study of West Bengal village where 12 different types of wage labour contracts were found (Rogaly, 1999 In Harris-White, 2003)

India. The Indian trade unions do not concert with the state (Rudolph; Rudolph, 1987). The industrial relations regime within which Indian unions and industrial federations and firms operate inhibits both competitive pluralism and oligopolistic competition among organised producers' interests. Indian apex unions are multiple, their internal structure is characterised less by democratic and participatory arrangements and more by structural autonomy at regional, municipal, and shop floor levels, which makes it difficult for national leadership to speak for followers.

Unions are interest groups but interest groups are also organisations. How efficiently interest groups operate would depend on how effective they are as organisations. Inter-union rivalry and entrepreneurial leadership have extended beyond the formative years of the trade union movement to become more or less its permanent features. As labour unions are organisations of workers, like any other organisation they also have certain goals. Organisational goals refer to a state of affairs which the organisation is attempting to accomplish. A goal is a vision of the future which may or may not be brought about. Organisations may have two sets of goals: one "stated" or "public" goal, and the other "actual sociological" goal – the former having a "legitimating function" and the latter having a "directing function". (Chatterji, 1980, p. 88)

When we look at the goals of the major trade unions in India, we find they essentially have two broad types of goals: first, *ideological and political*, and second, *economic and wage-oriented*. Formal organisations are profoundly affected by environmental forces that try to influence or control organisational goals, politics, and resource allocations, and by participants' efforts from within to use environmental forces to benefit the organisation or their own position. The environment in which an organisation operates influences not merely its goals, but also its effectiveness. The effectiveness of trade unions would primarily consist of membership and the degree of internal cohesion and also in the amount of influence it can exert on those public policies it are considers relevant. The most significant environmental forces that affect both the organisational goals and effectiveness of unions in India are the *political parties and public policy*. These forces not merely affect goals and effectiveness directly, but also, by affecting the goals, they further influence organisational effectiveness as well as the pattern of leadership of the unions.

Conclusion

When we intend to summarise the specific features of interests' representation in the political system of India it is important to say that there are several unique factors having influence and impact on interest groups politics in India. They are caste, religion, region, gender and culture, constituting mostly determinants of traditional pressure groups politics. Most of the associational groups are dominated and controlled by political parties. In the beginning organised interests groups had little impact on the formation of public policy but this still has been mostly "in the hands" of political parties. Mass movements, rallies, strikes and sometimes even violence are the instruments used by anomic or associational groups to press their demands in India.

Through the brief introduction to trade union movement formation in India we also aimed at pointing out the fact that trade union movement in India has not been independent from political parties[16]. Trade union leaders mostly come from the political parties and their trade union work is considered to be a part of their political agenda. Relations among respective trade unions depend on relations among political parties. These relations to a great extent influence the degree of unity or fragmentation of trade union movement. Trade unions have not been effective agents of interest articulation in India. Due to the ready labour supply from the ranks of the unemployed, the labour movement has been weak and unable to bargain effectively. The strength of the left was often related to its presence and strength in the trade unions. Over the past two decades in general, and in 1990s in particular, the trade unions themselves have become weak. The social and political weight of the trade unions has declined. They have not been capable of launching any general struggles. They have also lost an ideological battle and now encounter a general hostility from the middle class. In this place it is worth to mention **Vora**'s and **Palshikar**'s observation that at present trade unions of non-left political forces are stronger than socialist/left trade unions. The trade unions do not have much influence on the political process. Except for the unions of white collar workers other unions have a very limited role in the present situation. Historically, the trade union

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[16] The decline of the Congress dominance since the late 1970s witnessed the emergence of independent trade unions without affiliation or domination by political parties. These unions were centred on prominent trade union leaders with Congress as well as leftist background. Such unions emerged mostly in unorganised sector where the previously party-affiliated trade unions were lukewarm to cater to their needs (Singh; Saxena, 2008).

movement represented the working class. But within the trajectory of India's social development and political economy, organised labour is in a comparatively privileged position. Besides, in the last two decades there has been the considerable growth of the "middle classes" and at least some sections of the working class qualify for a position among middle classes. This situation weakens the claims of the trade union movement regarding transformative politics (Vora; Palshikar, 2004). Unions are poorly organised, membership turnover is great, the payment of dues is limited to a few and is irregular, and union activities are limited to strikes, demonstrations, and election work. Only rarely does a union provide services for its members. Rival unionism is rampant, unions are led by outsiders, and control of unions is often in the hands of political parties seeking to use them for their own ends. The power of trade union movement is also rather weakened by unorganised sector where predominant part of labour has been concentrated. The main problems which trade unions in India have to face could be summarised as follows: the politicisation and proliferation of unions, outside leadership, inter-union rivalry, small size and financial insecurity, the changing demography of workforce, the recognition of unions and unfair labour practices with regard to trade unions[17].

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[17] See International Labour Organization's Report for the WTO General Council Review of the Trade Policies in India, Geneve, 2007. See also International Trade Union Confederation's Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, Brussels, 2011.

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